



Biblical Foundations For Freedom

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[Pray BFF #139](#)

September 7-20, 2008

These exciting September prayer updates are collated from the North India short term team (STM) by Paul Bucknell and Keng Lim.

STM08 NORTH INDIA UPDATE 9/7/08

☞ **Sunday, Sept 7th, 2008**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

We very much appreciate your prayers! Thank you for your concern. It is as these times when we part from our families and familiar surroundings that the going becomes more difficult. Do pray for our families.

Right now Keng and I are at here at the Pittsburgh airport. We do not know whether we will be able to write to you along the trip but want to introduce what we are up to. We (the North team) will minister in two places.

#1 near Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh - Hindi language

We will both speak at a ministry school training those going out into full-time ministry. Our focus is on training them in the area of discipleship.

#2 Siliguri (north of Calcutta) - Bengalese language

We will start with a full day of ministry on Sunday to believers and then a pastors' seminar of about 100 attendees. The church there only had a handful of believers there 7 years ago but now is quite strong. They all need to know so much more of the scriptures.

Do pray for the south team. Although they will leave after we return, they need to make a decision on whether to stay a few extra days (unfortunately the tickets are all bought) so that they can minister to a youth conference of about 400 students.

Other prayer items:

Focus on preparing and delivering messages

Power of the Holy Spirit

Protection from outside threats

Good health.

Do join us regularly in this trip to North India through your prayers. May God strengthen the church leaders there so that the Gospel go out in its full power.

In Christ's Glorious Service,

Paul and Keng

Short Term Ministry in North India

STM08 NORTH INDIA UPDATE 9/9/08

North India Prayer Update Sept 9th

We left Delhi and arrived at the Kangra airport in Himachal Pradesh. The small propeller plane seats around 40 people by my estimate. Unknown to us, the Dalai Lama was also on our flight. Due to his celebrity status, he gets to board the plane last, and deplane first. We did not see him, but later, our host, Rev S. was able to show us a picture of the Dalai Lama, taken from his cell phone, leaving the airport ahead of us. For the next three days, Rev S. will be our host about 40 km away from the airport.

We got to know S. and his family for the rest of the afternoon and evening. Other than heading up his church of 60 strong people, he runs a discipleship school which trains and equips Indian believers in the area with in depth discipleship training and micro-business skills. He is also well connected with the local Christian pastors and church planters. His father in-law served in the army, and was a bi-vocational minister for over 30 years. Praise the Lord that through these years that though the church is small it has sent out 78 people into the ministry. We also met another pastor who is currently a resident pastor here at S.'s church.

Sept 10th

Himachal Pradesh has about 6.5 million people and only some 40,000 Christians (0.02%). Unlike the southern states of India like A.P or Kerala, there are no Christian colleges or Bible schools in this state. The state government has outlawed Christians from witnessing publicly to Hindus. Security against Christian activities is tight. As an example, our names were taken down by the local Internal Security Bureau (like the security in China).

The Christians here face not only opposition from the government but also from the local Hindus. Persecution has not been as rampant as in the state of Orissa but still occurs. One of the pastors attending our training was kicked out of his house along with the rest of his family about two years ago. The entire family suffered physical beating and injuries that led to the death of the pastor's father. The home was converted by the Hindus into a temple and a 10-foot idol stands in what used to be their living room. There are many more stories that we could tell of the severity of persecution that Christians face here in India. Please remember them in your prayers.

This was the first day of the discipleship training for the pastors. The class started with 9 people, by noon, we had 24. They need to travel a good number of hours over windy mountain roads. We praise God that the students for the class received the training well. They were attentive and provided good interaction during the class. We also received feedback from Rev S. that the students

reported to him that the classes were helpful.

Prayer Requests:

Tomorrow will be our final day of training here in Himachal Pradesh. Please continue to pray that God will give us grace in communicating God's truth.

On Friday, we will be visiting Dharamsala, the capital of enlightenment for Buddhists. Dharamsala is the official residence of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government that is in exile. We want to pray that one or more of these officials and the high ranking monks will come to know Christ.

We will also be doing some additional flying as we make our way to Delhi, and then to West Bengal. Please pray for traveling mercies as domestic flights here are frequently cancelled.

Please lift up the Christians in Himachal Pradesh in your prayers. Pray for their faith to be strong in spite of persecution they face.

For the Southern Team,

Please pray that Pastor Ed Jiang's visa application to India will soon be approved. Please also pray as Philip and Pastor Ed decide if they should stay a couple of extra days in India for the purpose of ministering at a youth retreat to be attended by some 400-600 people.

On behalf of the Northern Team of Paul and Keng,
Keng.

STM08 NORTH INDIA UPDATE 9/11/08

Thursday Sept 11

In the second day of the pastors training, we learned that quite a few of the pastors are actually Indian national missionaries/church planters who left their home from other states to serve God here at the foothills of the Himalayan mountains. Several of them relocated as far from the southern states of India such as Kerala. Quite a few of them are young, with the youngest one being at 21 years of age. At present, there are 370 church planters in Himachal Pradesh. Many of the stories we hear from the pastors are very much the same.

During one session, the pastors poured out their hearts on the difficult circumstances that they face. The pastors face severe opposition and persecution from the Hindus and from the state government. They also face severe financial stress. Some are only earning as little as USD \$50 a month. Due to the geographical isolation from the mountainous terrain, the cost of living in these mountains are slightly higher than elsewhere in India. Can you imagine feeding a family of 3 on USD \$50 a month. Under such circumstances, some pastors were discouraged and had left the ministry. We felt God's leading to exhort these pastors and by God's grace, we changed our messages on the spot to encourage these pastors from the Word of God. Many of them thanked us later for the

exhortation and encouragement.

One pastor travelled some 200 km (125 miles) to attend the seminar. He lives with his wife and daughter on the borders of Jammu Kashmir. He spoke with Keng after the session for insights in outreach. His heart was also distraught as he received a call earlier from his wife that his 2 year old daughter was having difficulties breathing. Keng and the pastor prayed together for healing. Later in the evening, we found out that the daughter was well again. We praise the Lord for answering prayers!

Friday Sept 12

Rev S was kind enough to take us for a short tour of Dharamshala. We visited the Dalai Lama's residence. There are many foreigners in Dharamshala seeking spiritual enlightenment. As we walked around, snapping photos away like tourists, we were also prayer walking: praying for God to break the binding the evil one has on this place. The Tibetan noodles that we ate were amazingly like those we might find in a Chinese restaurant (except our bowl had mutton). We even had chopsticks!

We returned back to Delhi in the afternoon and tomorrow, we will be off again to Siliguri, West Bengal.

Prayer Requests

Pray for the church planters in Himachal Pradesh. May God supply for all their needs.

Pray for the Buddhists and the many who travels to Dharamshala for spiritual enlightenment. Pray that God will break the binding the evil one has on that place.

Please continue to pray for safe travels. In particular, please pray that we can catch our flights, and none of them are cancelled. We leave early Saturday morning.

Please pray for good health. Keng's tummy has been weak. He has not been able to cope with the food as well as Paul.

* Pray that we will be used by God to minister to the pastors and believers in West Bengal. We will speak all day Sunday to a large group of believers and start the seminar on Monday night.

For the Northern Team of Paul and Keng,
Keng.

STM08 NORTH INDIA UPDATE 9/13/08

Sept 13

As some of you may have read, there were five bomb blasts (at the time of this writing) throughout the city of Delhi. A sixth bomb was found and disarmed before it detonated. Many were injured and some killed. As you can imagine, there is chaos and tightened security in a city brimming with people. By the grace of God, we left Delhi in the nick of time before all of these. Emmanuel! God is with us.

On our way leaving the Delhi airport, we met a European “worker” familiar with the area for the past 8 years. Some may call it a meeting by chance, but he approached us because he saw Keng reading his Bible. Can you believe in divine appointment? It was good to meet him, as he was resourceful and able to prepare us with information about Siliguri. He was also able to confirm with us that the Bengalis is one of the largest unreached group in India.

We arrived at the Bagdora airport in Siliguri. Pastor B met us along with with a few other brothers. The road to the center of town is full of pot holes and incredibly dusty. By the time we reached our hotel, we had a layer of dust on us. In the evening, we visited a house church hosted by Pastor J. There were about 30 people or so in a 15x15 ft room, with no air flow, and plenty of body heat and perspiration. The temperature outside was in the high 80s, so you can imagine how hot and humid it was in the room.

The meeting was attended by Nepalese and Bengali believers. Siliguri is geographically sandwiched between Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. There are scores of Nepalese in the area, and many of them are very responsive to the gospel. One Nepalese man of small frame and about 82, was introduced to us. He travels around, as far as Nagaland, sharing and preaching the gospel. In his words, "I am old, but young at heart for Jesus". We also met a young man by the of Jagdo. Before he came to Christ, he was an opium smuggler, taking the loot to places as far as Mumbai. Since coming to Christ, he has turned over a new leaf, selling chapati (Indian wheat crepe) for a living, and readying himself for the serving the Lord by learning how to read and write. Another brother used to be a bomb maker for one of the radical political parties and has killed a number of people in his life. Since coming to Christ, he is now a pastor in south Bengal and is no longer vindictive or angered by those who oppose him or the gospel. Have we figure out a way in the war on terror? The testimonies we heard of the lives changed by Christ were simply amazing!

Sept 14

We drove to a small village called Saureni, situated on the mountains, 4000 ft above sea level, and 25 km from the border of Nepal. All around us are tea plantation. We visited a Nepalese church where believers travelled by foot over the mountainous terrains for 3-4 hours to get to church. Many of them work on the tea plantation, make and sell handcraft, and plants a variety of things in their yard. At the church service, some believers offered up first fruits from their harvest to the church. There was a gigantic cucumber and a bag of ginger. We ministered to the believers and shared with them 3 messages. The church service was made specially long (into the afternoon) to accommodate our visit. The Nepalese believers, including many of the children showed great resolve and patience and sat through the entire service with great interest. Even though many of them are poor, they have big hearts for the gospel ministry. Some of them made handicrafts to sell, in order to raise

support for Pastor B's ministry to the Bengalis.

For lunch, we ate some Nepalese curry chicken, curry pork, boiled squash and a spicy salad. This time it was Paul's turn with tummy upsets. But God is bigger than any tummy upsets! We last asked that you pray for Keng's tummy. He is all better now. Please pray for Paul.

Prayer Requests

Sept 15 will be the first day of the 4-day Pastor's Seminar that we are conducting. Please pray for God to ready the hearts of the pastors to receive instructions. Please also pray that both Paul and Keng are sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading.

Pray for good health for both of us.

Pray for political stability in the area. The Nepalese are very responsive to the Gospel. By Pastor B's account, ministry to the Bengalis is also growing. However, the Nepalese are demanding a separate state for themselves. We witnessed a political procession while driving back to Siliguri from Saureni. We are not under threat in anyway, but it is one other tension in this democratic state of India.

STM08 NORTH INDIA UPDATE 9/15/08

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We do appreciate your prayers. The seminar started on a good foot today. However, Philip and Ed are not having an easy time getting visas for India and they are to leave next Monday.

Please pray for their visas.

Paul and Keng

STM08 NORTH INDIA UPDATE 9/18/08

Prayer Requests

We praise God for giving us the privilege to serve Him in India while the doors are still open. Although there are many Bible schools in the cities, the poverty and large population makes it hard for many of the pastors to gain any Biblical training. Furthermore, evidence seems to indicate that some of these Bible colleges are not sufficiently equipping the pastors. Like in America, some of these Bible colleges are no longer teaching God's Word. Those who have attended such Bible colleges told us that they greatly benefited from our teachings. During the testimony time allotted, participants gave praise to God, saying that the seminar was unique and different from other seminars they have attended. The hunger and thirst for Biblical teachings in India continues. Pray for more Biblical instructions to be provided to all believers in India.

At the time of writing this update, only one of the two brothers of the Southern Team has received a visa to visit India. We thank God for providing Ed a visa. Please continue to pray with us that Philip will also receive a visa for entry to India. Please pray for their preparation as well.

We thank God for keeping both Paul and Keng safe and in relatively good health. Thank you so much for all your prayer support. We so very much appreciate your support!

The rest of this update contains some details of what transpired during the last few days we have been here.

Sept 15

We checked out of the hotel and made our way to a Christian retreat center where the seminar will take place. We found out later, that about 0.5 mile away from our hotel, there was a state-run brothel that housed some 3000 prostitutes! For a country that boasts all things spiritual, India is as carnal as it gets.

With all the poverty and travesties going on in India, it seems like there is a human tragedy in the making every second. Yet under this veil of spiritual darkness, the gospel of Jesus is alive and well in the lives of believers we have met. One such person is a sister we met on our way to the retreat center. She owns a restaurant. She sells Nepalese food. This sister doesn't really need the income from the restaurant, but she chose to open the restaurant because it is strategically located at a taxi stand and provides the restaurant with plenty of customers that she shares the Gospel with. In the area where the restaurant is, there are many street children who collect plastic containers for a living. Many of these children come from abusive or absentee parents. Some are orphans. Drug abuse is also prevalent among the street children. The sister we met has a great burden to rescue these children from the streets. She is hoping to start a school soon for these street children along with the help of Kristalaya Mercy Mission. Pray for this endeavor.

The Campus Crusade Conference Center is about 5 miles from the city center of Siliguri. The compound is gated and is surrounded by paddy fields. By India standards, this is one of the nicer meeting places we have held our training seminars.

The Seminar officially started in evening. Many of the attendees from the northern districts of West Bengal were late due to a road accident that delayed the arrival of the buses. Some from the south travelled overnight on 12-hour train rides. The attendees from the northern districts traveled some 150 miles to get here on buses. The bus rides are bumpy because the roads are filled with pot holes. According to one pastor, "it doesn't feel like you are in bus, with all the swaying and rocking, it feels like you are in a boat". Because the pot holes are plenty and plenty big, it is not unusual for some of these buses to topple over. These attendees traveled far and traveled uncomfortably to come to the seminar. There is a real hunger here to know more about God. There is a real thirst to learn more about Scriptures. We are truly humbled to be used by God for dispensing His truth.

Sept 16

This is the first full day of the Discipleship Training. We received feedback that the instruction provided was refreshing. Many of the churches and believers are familiar with Jesus' command to make disciples in Matthew 28:20. However, how disciple making is actually carried out is not as well understood. Praise God that we can be used to help them gain a better understanding.

One of our translators is a pastor from Kolkhota. He travels about 25 days every month, devoting his time in training and discipling full time ministers. He is the exception in the crowd of participants. He understands the importance of discipleship. One time, he was in the far north east region of West Bengal and he needed to travel home to Kolkohota in the south. He had no money, but believed that God wanted him back in Kolkohota. He started walking, but after a few steps, someone stopped him and gave him some money. Before long, a few more people gave him money too. God intervened and provided enough money so that he could take the public transportation and need not walk home. God is good.

A group of brothers attending the seminar were formerly with a Christian missions organization that is quite well known in the State side. According to them, the organization is misrepresenting itself, misappropriating funds and most important of all, missing the mark of its mission to spread the gospel to the nation of India.

These brothers left the organization out of a sincerity to serve Christ in the missions field of India. If any of the alleged horror stories I heard about this organization is true, the tragic truth is that U.S. Dollars that you sent to this organization for missions work is being siphoned off for sordid personal gain. Unfortunately, this is not the first time I have heard such allegations about this organization from Indian national grass root pastors. Pray that God would reform this organization or expose them for who they really are. In the meantime, you can better serve India on missions by coming to India yourself. Will you pray that God would send you?

Sept 17

We spent half a day fasting with the attendees and interceding in prayer for the state of Orissa. Homes and churches have been destroyed; it has been estimated that about 50,000 families in Orissa have been displaced from their homes since the persecution of Christians began in December 2007. Countless have been killed, many wounded. One pastor in Orissa was dragged out of his house along with his wife. He was hacked away with machetes. The wife was spared her life but the violence she witnessed has left her in a state of shock.

Roman Catholic priests were forced to do despicable and humiliating acts to nuns. There is no visible end to the torment and persecution. In fact, the pastors in both of the states that we have visited are deeply concerned because the persecution is gradually spreading to other places. Yesterday, some churches were destroyed in Mangalore. Today, we heard news that RSS, the militant arm of the Hindu radicals have threatened to kill 18 pastors in Bangalore. In the state of Kerala, some skirmishes also took place. One of the political parties is proposing an anti-conversion law to be implemented nation-wide. Why have you not read this in the news?

Do you think the Indian government would want such news to be publicized world wide as they ne-

gotiate for greater autonomy in the use of nuclear power? Draw your own conclusion. Pray that God would comfort the believers and strengthen their faith. Pray that God would save those who are enemies of His church in India. May God have mercy on their lives. Pray for healing and comfort for those that are suffering from the persecution.

For our second full-day, the teachings that we provided were once again well received by the participants. We give praise and thanks to God. Through our translator, the participants found the teachings to be simple truths, yet highly practical. They were also greatly blessed by Paul's overview and exposition on the book of Joshua. After the Joshua message, they were discussing about it over dinner. We pray they can carry the discipleship training that we are providing them to their field of ministry.

Amongst the participants, we have a good number believers from the Bodo tribe. This people group have lighter skin and look more like Malays. However, these Bodo believers have a real heart in reaching out to the Bengalis for Christ. There are times the Bengalis would reject Bodo believers and the message they share because the Bodo people look different from the Bengalis.

Out of their fervor to reach the Bengalis, the Bodo believers would organize outreach in Bengali villages and invite Bengali pastors to speak while they do all the hard work of organizing, handing out tracts and inviting villagers to the evangelistic meeting. Give praise to God for the Bodo believers who are actively reaching out to the Bengalis, one of the largest unreached people group in the world.

Keng
For the North India Short Term Team

STM08 NORTH INDIA UPDATE 9/20/08

Prayer Requests Sept. 20, 2008

We give praise to God who continues to amaze us with answered prayers. We have been asking for prayers that the Southern team would receive their visas for travel to India. Praise God! Both brothers have now received their visas and will be on their way to India from Monday 9/22 onwards. They have a very busy schedule.

Both Paul and Keng are now safely back home in Pittsburgh. Thank you again for being part of our team through your prayer and financial support. We are truly blessed to have you be part of our team. We were touched to hear how God so wonderfully used the last seminar to help those attending.

Our mission is far from over. Please continue to support us in prayer as the Southern team leaves for India this Monday.

Reflections (from North Team member, Keng)

William Carey, Mother Teresa, Graham Staines, and the list goes on; missions work in India is nothing new. In fact, the historical footprint in India traces all the way back to the apostle Thomas who came to India with the Gospel and died in India for the Gospel (according to traditions). However, India remains a mission challenge. 88% of the 2600 people groups in India remain unreached for the Gospel. Only 2.3% of the 1.2 billion people in India are Christians.

India is well equipped this century to be a major economic force with a growing population which is trained and skilled in many professions. Some of the richest people in the world are from India. However, the great divide between the haves and have-nots is not shrinking. 25% of the population still live below the poverty line. On the social side of things, the caste system is alive and well, especially in the villages and smaller cities. People from the lower caste are down trodden. Injustice against women and children are widespread. On one of our domestic plane rides, we read in a secular magazine about the plight of widows in villages. Many of them are raped and forced to perform sexual favors. Street children are plenty. Many are addicted to drugs. They take drugs so that they can forget their hunger pangs.

The future is bleak for the poor and the destitute in India, with no hope of a better life. Amidst the poverty stricken community that we visited, God has placed big dreams in the lives of several believers. Although they are neither highly educated nor wealthy, God has placed a vision in the lives of these brothers and sister to be rescue agents for the Gospel of Jesus. One sister we met wants to start a tuition center to help educate the street children. A brother we met sells chapati bread in the train stations. Even though he is illiterate, his mission field is in the train stations, gathering the children roaming the train stations to a tuition center that has been set up for them by our host, Pastor B. The only real hope these children is the living hope we have in Christ Jesus.

I leave India with this thought in mind. Several believers in India asked if I was Korean. Some asked if I was Nepalese from the Lhasa tribe. No one asked if I was Chinese. I have no statistics to back me up, but I am going to guess that few missionaries today of Chinese descent are truly cross cultural. I am reminded of a challenge Dr. James Hudson Taylor III gave to attendees at a Chinese Missions Conference about a decade ago. Dr. Taylor asked then, "Chinese Christians, where are you?"

In India, the harvest is plenty, the workers are few.
"Christians, where are you?"