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**STRIVING TO DO
GOD'S WORK, GOD'S WAY, FOR GOD'S GLORY**

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to HIS WILL, He hears us. And if we KNOW that He hears us, whatever we ask, we KNOW that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” — I John 5:14-15 The blessed assurance of this precious promise resonates in my heart, as I consider the mighty works of our Lord in the most recent Pastor’s Conference in the State of Odisha, India!

Only a few weeks ago, I was graced with the tremendous privilege to teach “Christ-centered Evangelism” to 150 church planters in the state of Odisha, which is located on the east coast of India. The conference was held undercover, because of the fierce persecution of the Gospel in this area. The Joshua Project designates this particular area in India as an unreached people group. Only 0.18% of the vast number of people even claims to be a Christian! Then the math would inform us that 99.92% of the residents in this state would be antagonistic to Gospel truth! The born again disciples of Jesus face ongoing persecution from the government. This was the first state, in the nation of India, to enact an ‘anti-conversion’ law. This harsh regulation states that ‘no person shall convert or attempt to convert either directly or indirectly from one religious faith to another, by any inducement or any fraudulent means’. In other words, if a Hindu converts to Christianity they can be imprisoned. If a born again believer is caught seeking the conversion of a Hindu, through evangelistic outreach to that person, they too, will face imprisonment. Furthermore, to complicate this issue, there is no legal explanation of the difference between ‘conversion by force or by conversion by persuasion’. Subsequently, this extremist ‘state constitutional measure’ has opened the door for radical Hindus to take the law into their own hands. This has resulted in ‘burned down churches, severe beatings of pastors and other believers and even, in some cases, martyrdom’! One of the leaders of this militant Hindu nationalist movement has recently made this declaration on television, “We must also pass a reconversion law, and force all Christians to reconvert to Hinduism. If we can pass this bill, we will make India free of Christians by December 2021.”

And yet, in spite of this severe pressure and persecution, these 150 ‘house-church pastors’ congregated from all over this state, to study ‘Christ-centered Evangelism’ at an undisclosed location. The concept of holding this conference, in this very difficult area, was initiated by the Lord, in the heart of another dear friend and brother in Christ, Craig James. Bro. Craig is the Director of Missions for the North Central Baptist Association in Louisiana. Bro. Craig had shared with the Baptist leaders of Odisha about “Christ-centered Evangelism”. He testified to those leaders that they needed to have this teaching for all of their pastors. Accordingly, I was contacted approximately three years ago, concerning the possibility of coming to Odisha to teach this study on biblical evangelism. You may recall, it was the Missionary William Carey, who translated the Word of God into the Odia language in 1808.

Pastor and church-planter Bimal Jena is one of the key leaders in the Baptist work in this state. He would be the brother who would translate the evangelism workbook into the Odia language. He would also be my interpreter for the conference. Furthermore, Bimal would be the co-director for the entire conference. However, approximately 2 years ago, I received the horrific news that Bimal had become extremely ill. He had been diagnosed with stage 4-colon cancer. The specialists were going to attempt colon surgery; but they were preparing Bimal and his family that this diagnosis was terminal!

During his illness, another dear American brother (Scotty McDowel) had given a gift to aid in the care of Bimal's family for a period of time. But sadly, I was receiving nothing but news of his imminent death. After a long period of time had passed, I assumed that Bimal had graduated into glory.

Now on my end of the situation, I have a "Christ-centered Evangelism" workbook, which was translated into the Odia language. But now, I had no interpreter, no director and no known avenues to move forward in ministering in this state. I had been persevering in prayer, asking that if it would please God, that He would open doors into new states of India, for this specific teaching. It has already been translated and taught in 5 different languages in India. However, there are 22 major languages within this vast nation. It appeared as if the door had been closed to the Odia language, as far as this teaching was concerned. Oh, but brothers and sisters, I must always remember, "The prayer that reaches Heaven is the prayer that was initiated in Heaven!"

"We are ready to receive you in Odisha state Bro.Ed."

God has answered our prayers, ...

An entire year passed by, and there appeared to be no in-road to hold this conference in Odisha. Oh, but then (in God's perfect timing), I received an email from Bimal Jena! With great rejoicing, he wrote these words, "I have fully recovered from colon cancer. It took a full year, but I am in perfect health now. We are ready to receive you in Odisha state Bro. Ed!" God had answered our prayers, according to His sovereign will, His divine agenda and in His perfect timing!

Oh, precious believers, this conference was an awesome time of the mighty working of the Spirit of God in our midst. My heart overflows with rejoicing, as I recall the precious privilege that our Lord has given, to serve these 150 pastors, in an extremely difficult spiritual environment. For even in the midst of this heavy pressure and persecution, these brothers exhibited such hunger, so much humility, tremendously teachable spirits; and so very penitent over various areas of their doctrine of evangelism, their message of evangelism and their methods of evangelism. One particular evening, as I was preparing for the next day's teaching, I could hear the radical Hindus (who are avowed enemies of the Gospel), as they paraded passed the facility in which we were holding the conference. These adversaries were singing their mantras and beating their DRUMS. If these Hindu radicals had known what was taking place within the walls of that facility, they would have surely stormed it with clubs and began beating these pastors. And yet, as I heard those chants and drumming in the worship of their false gods, my heart was overwhelmed with thanksgiving for the amazing grace of the One and Only true God. For I was once an enemy of the glorious Gospel! I was once beating on my drums, as an ignorant and arrogant rock and jazz drummer! BUT GOD, Who is rich in mercy, made me alive when I was dead in trespasses and sins.

HUNGRY! HUMBLE! TEACHABLE!

Each of these precious men is a pastor of at least 2 to 3 house churches within their various communities. The persecution is so fierce that they would never be allowed to build a church structure of any type. So the born again believers meet and worship in various houses. These dear pastors exhibited such a tremendous appetite for these teachings on evangelism from God's word. Only 3, out of the 150, have had any Bible College training. The rest of them were laymen who had been converted and later called to preach. The only training that they would have received would be training from their pastor. Consequently, they were extremely grateful that someone would travel from the other side of the world and teach this most vital subject of biblical evangelism.

During the lunch break on the 2nd day of the conference, I experienced one of the most humbling and self-abasing events in my 39 years of walking with the Lord. I had been teaching all day, (which is almost an 11 hours difference from the U.S.). Of course, as always, my feet were fiercely burning from the peripheral neuropathy that I have been afflicted with for 16 years. But for some reason, the pain has increased in intensity lately; and this week was especially difficult, so I was preaching barefooted. However, I was the only person in the room who was aware of the reason for which I had taken off my sandals. **Continued on next page**

Upon the conclusion of the morning sessions, I stood at the exit door to greet all of these precious brothers. Out of the 150 pastors, only 3 of them spoke any English. So as they would exit the teaching room, I would stand by the door and shake their hands and give them a smile. But on this particular lunch break, these dear pastors, being overwhelmed with gratitude for the teaching of God's Word, began (one by one) bowing to the ground and would kiss my filthy, burning and swollen feet!!!! Bimal told me that many of them were quoting, "How beautiful are the feet of them who bring Good News." Of course, my eyes filled with tears, for I was overwhelmed by their humble hearts of gratitude to God for the teaching of His Word.



How Beautiful are the Feet of
Those Who Bring Good News

Romans 10:14-21

A Humble task, yet a great privilege

Oh, there are so many testimonies that I could give to you, of how the Spirit of God worked so mightily in our midst. But let me share the words of Pastor Bimal Jena, as he shared a few of his thoughts concerning the conference, *"Dear Bro. Ed! It was indeed a blessed time to serve the Lord alongside you in the 'Christ-centered Evangelism' Conference in the Odisha state of India. It was a great joy to see you face to face, after about 3 years of email communications. The Lord answered our persevering prayers, in granting the Odisha pastors this tremendous opportunity to be a part of this very meaningful conference. We all praise God for your life, as well as, the teachings that you prepared for the 'Kingdom building' in the state of Odisha. I also want to thank God personally, for I too was extremely blessed by the teachings. My thinking has been radically and gloriously changed, concerning God's way of evangelism. As I was interacting with the pastors, during the evenings of the conference, I realized that all of these precious pastors have been greatly blessed by these biblical teachings. These teachings were very powerful and uniquely scriptural. Furthermore, the workbook format was so very helpful to all of us.*

The awesome truths of 'Christ-centered Evangelism' have shifted us from the 'so-called' traditional ways of evangelism to a far more 'biblically-based evangelism'; both in the methods that we must employ and the message that we must proclaim! Bro. Ed, you had previously informed all of us that the first two days of teaching would produce many questions to our minds; but, that the last two days would give us all of the answers from the Word of God! You were absolutely correct! We have clearly understood how to do 'God's work; God's way; for God's glory!'

Most of these Baptist pastors minister in various villages throughout the state of Odisha. They are all pastoring at least 2 to 3 house churches. Very few have somewhat larger congregations, because of the terrible persecution in this state! Oh, but I am so encouraged to inform you that all of them will now have the privilege to use the teaching materials, in their ministries. Bro. Ed, I also want to state that, "I praise God that, in spite of your many health challenges; you served us so joyfully and enthusiastically. The Lord also enabled me and gave me the strength to serve Him alongside with you, in the translation of your teaching. We do pray for you, your health and the God-given ministry that you are doing in many parts of the world. May the Lord open the door for you to serve Him again in the Odia and Hindi regions of India in the coming days. On behalf of your entire Odisha team of pastors, I want to give our thanks for your love, your labor and your concern for us. Please pray that we will be able to multiply all of these teachings into the lives of many others. Yours in His mission - Bimal Jena."

To understand more fully of these pastors' hunger for the Word of God, I will give you a little glimpse into the daily schedule for the conference. I would teach all day, with a short break for lunch. Then afterward, I would return to my room to prepare and pray toward the next day. Meanwhile, after their evening meal, the other men would gather again and Bimal would go over all the teaching of the day. But they joyfully and intently sat through all the training, because of their yearning to learn more about the Word of God.

A DIVINE APPOINTMENT AS AN ANSWER TO A PRAYER

After the conclusion of the conference, I boarded a flight from Odisha to Mumbai, India. I was absolutely exhausted from the grueling pace of 'preaching all night long' (in America time) for the past 4 days! However, I prayed that the Lord would open a door to testify to the person who would sit beside me during my travel.

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You must remember that the chance of an unbeliever sitting next to me on this plane is 99.92%! In a few moments, a young man sat in the middle seat and immediately stuck in his earbuds. Of course, I thought to myself, "There is not going to be an opportunity to witness on this flight". So I opened my iPad and began to read my Study Bible. But unbeknownst to me, another young man who had taken the aisle seat noticed that I was reading the Word of God! He later told me, that when he saw that I was reading the Bible he said to himself, "He must be a Christian!" After studying the Word, I began reading a book by Martyn Lloyd Jones. So the young man began thinking to himself, "He's a preacher! God has answered my prayers! He is going to help me with my evangelism!" When the plane finally landed, and we stood in the aisle, this young man asked, "*Are you a Christian?*"

Are you a Christian?

Are you a Preacher?

I responded, "Yes, I am". Then he asked, "Are you a preacher?" I said, "As a matter of fact, I am". Then he exclaimed, "God has answered my prayer! He continued saying, "I have been converted to Christ in recent months. I live and work here in Mumbai. I have just returned from witnessing to my beloved family. But they have all rejected the Gospel and they have officially disowned me! Also, I have been attempting to witness to people and they have all rejected the message. So I prayed to God to please send someone to teach me how to evangelize. You are God's answer to my prayers!"

God has answered my prayer!

We stood together in the baggage claim area for quite a while. I had the joy of encouraging this young believer in the faith. I also gave him all of the information about the "Christ-centered Evangelism" teachings on our website; as well as, the fact that he could download the workbook and fill it out, as he listens to the teachings. We both departed, with hearts that were overflowing with joy, because of the glorious truth that "The prayer that reached Heaven was the prayer that was initiated in Heaven". We planned to keep in touch, as he grows in his understanding of biblical evangelism. Even yesterday, I received the great news that Bro. Bimal has begun the printing of the "Christ-centered Evangelism" Gospel tracts. He will give each one of these pastors a number of the tracts. Dianne and I are absolutely overjoyed with the blessed report that these biblical principles of evangelism are going to be multiplied in an untold number of lives. Glory to God! Please continue to pray for these precious pastors in the state of Odisha.

**OUR HEARTS ARE FILLED WITH JOY
IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE WILL OF GOD
THROUGH YOUR LOVE, YOUR PRAYERS, AND SUPPORT FOR THIS MINISTRY!**

Our Lord has employed your love for others, your intercessory prayers and your financial support to accomplish His will 'in and through this ministry'! We are so very grateful that our Heavenly Father has led you to stand with us, in prayer and support, for the extension of His Kingdom and the accomplishment of His purposes. We have seen our Omnipotent Father accomplish His mighty works in answer to the prayers of His people. You have called unto our Lord and God on our behalf. And He has shown us great and mighty things, which we did not know! He has shown Himself strong on our behalf! Your love, prayers and financial support have become the vehicle through which God has accomplished His will! "If we ask anything, according to HIS WILL, He HEARS US!" For our God always hears the prayers of His adopted children, which are voiced within the parameters of His will. Our Lord and Savior has given a promise to each of us, "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full". Thank you, dear friends, for all that you do to help us reach out to others, for His Name Sake.

Your Servant for Jesus Sake,

Ed Lacy