

India Equipping and Church Planting Operation Report

January 22 – February 5, 2007

Overview

The India Equipping and Church Planting Operation was two years in planning. At the early stages, we viewed it as an operation for saturation church planting targeting 120 remote villages some 4-8 hours distance from the Mount Zion Regional Training Center in Pangidi, located outside Rajumundry, Andhra Pradesh. However, the Holy Spirit revealed a “gateway strategy” of planting 30 local churches in key villages over a 4-day period and planting 300 house churches over a 3-4 month period in the villages surrounding the “gateway” churches. We were actually able to plant 32 new local churches in four days and exceeded our minimum goal of 900 salvations with a total of 1,600 Hindus receiving Christ. In addition, there were enough resources to provide a basic church planting kit (a bicycle, drum set, and lantern) for the young pastor/evangelist of each new “gateway” church plus a monthly salary to support them and their families for one year. Although the initial training phase consisting of a 3-day conference attended by at least 300 leaders encountered a number of disruptions, the field operations were very efficient. Eight teams of at least 10 each went forth like an army of one under the command of our Lord Jesus Christ to remote regions in the north and south. There were enough spiritual leaders from other nations to send with four of the teams. Regional team leaders returned with reports of many new salvations, healings and deliverances. In fact, at least 400 healings occurred during the operation to the remote villages. Our key apostolic leader for the region, Dr. Santhosh Desabattula, received the reports from all teams for us and provides the following information:

Total established Churches: 32
Total Trained young leaders: 300
Total New salvations: 1600
Total Healings: 400
Total NT's distributed: 1600
Total Church planter kits distributed: 32
Total gospel tracts distributed: 64,000
Total people heard the Gospel: 20,000

Highlights

JAN 22-24: Leaders came from Singapore, Armenia, Northeast India, and the United States. No one knew that the airport at Visakhapatnam was closed due to weather conditions (heavy fog); therefore, leaders arrived at different times by train and rented vehicles. This coupled with the fact that Santhosh & his wife were delayed in returning from the USA due to the theft of their passports in Houston, Texas and that a number of leaders coming in were new to the operation challenged the effectiveness of the Conference or teaching portion of the operation. We viewed this all as the devil's

attempts to disrupt the operation. However, we knew from the beginning that we would be victorious because God knew this operation.

JAN 25: The Conference began with teaching sessions in the morning and afternoon. Les Wheeldon, Head of Biblical Studies of Marketplace Bible Institute in Singapore presented a session on Jesus' question, *"Who do you say that I am?"* He stressed the importance of knowing Jesus as the secret of everything. *"Jesus called the twelve disciples that they should know Him. Christ revealed by the Holy Spirit is the key to building the church. The fulfillment of all the ages is here in Peter's extraordinary confession that Jesus is the Messiah!"* There was a prophetic utterance that came forth during the day: *"The voice of the Lord will be like thunder and lightning. It will break hard hearts, government strongholds, and principalities. The voice of the Lord will also come upon the still waters and the still waters shall begin to flow bringing life to the lonely and the helpless."* Samuel of Armenia received Isaiah 42:14-17 as the prophetic word was given. The word served as a promise of God's help. The Armenian team (Vachagan, Arman and Samuel) from Burning Bush Church ministered powerfully in the evening service. Vachagan used Isaiah 6:1-8 to remind us that God's call today is to *"bring people out of a big sin world into Christ's kingdom."* *"If we have pain in our hearts for the Hindu villages, then we are in God's will."* He shared how God touched Isaiah's lips for cleansing and also for another reason – to go! Vachagan concluded with an emphasis on bearing fruit for God and that *"we must stand before God like Rachel and cry, 'Give me a child or else I die!'"* This apostolic message ignited a strong move of the Spirit upon the hearts of the people. Many came forward to receive prayer. We discussed later that we must stay focused upon God's mission to the Hindu villages.

JAN 26: We began the morning with team prayer. The entire team, including Santhosh, was now on site. Brother Michael taught the first session on house churches as an apostolic pattern. This involved an examination of Jesus' ministry, His mission instructions, and the ministry of the church of Jerusalem. Brother Chungthang Thiek of Manipur, Northeast India, followed with a strong word from II Peter 1:2 about the grace of God. He explained how grace came first and then faith and how we are sustained by grace. He shared about the three types of grace: 1) saving grace; 2) all sufficient grace and; 3) restoring grace. *"Lord, I have no strength. My faith is little. But I see your grace is so great!"* This became a substantive word to prepare us all for the upcoming village operations. Participants were divided into five groups in the afternoon for workshops. This was an excellent strategy that increased the effectiveness of the teaching ministry. Dee Copley, pastor of Revival Connections in Vermont (USA) declared in the evening service that praise will release hundreds when we go out to the villages. She shared how praise releases the harvest and victory, as well as increases the anointing. The remainder of the message concerned a revelation she had received in the night. *"There's been a war against the feminine and the Bride."* This led to a very profound and prophetic statement that resonated in our hearts and minds, *"Men and women together are the secret weapon of the apostolic age."* Arman had a word that there was sin in the camp. He said, *"We have a great battle in the days ahead and must make sure God is with us. Every sin confessed will be forgiven by God."* There was a vision of a serpent crawling in the midst of the people to make noise in their ears and confuse them. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove as people confessed sin and received God's forgiveness. At least two people in the crowd came forward to reveal they saw

Satan run away. God continued to prepare us for battle with a brief message by Daniel Vaduva, a young evangelist from the Romanian Pentecostal Church in Houston, Texas. He explained how Jesus can bless our little faith and do big things in ministry. Duane Wilt, a teacher of Be One Ministries in Quinlan, Texas, concluded the evening with a teaching encouraging God's people not to give up or grow weary. The service continued very late in the night with much struggle to arise and enter into the Spirit's bidding; however, there was a flow of spiritual water upon us and the people.

JAN 27: We continued to uphold the primary mission to the Hindu villages from beginning to end so not to get out of step with the primary purpose of God. Michael finished the teaching on the apostolic pattern of the early church with a thorough examination of the apostolic teams and journeys sent forth from Jerusalem and the church of Antioch. We all joined together to pray over and anoint 32 young leaders to go forth as church planters for the new "gateway" churches. Vachagan followed with a strong apostolic teaching of how God's plan through apostles is to set the atmosphere in the church. He revealed that the traditional church is receiving only three aspects of the real church: pastor, evangelist, and teacher. *"It is impossible to prosper if the church is not on the foundation of apostles and prophets. God wants to change church today to be like the church of the Bible."* Vachagan continued by sharing the importance of house church ministry from Acts 2:46 and its importance in Armenia. *"Because we ate a piece of bread together we cannot forget each other. We open our houses for Christ. Receiving others, we receive Christ. If we don't open houses, we lose the opportunity to receive angels. The house church is God's will and God's program. The Church today needs to build the 5-Fold ministry."* Santhosh informed us that the pastors of existing churches were no longer satisfied with one church. As a result of the teachings, they now want to plant house churches. The Equipping Conference concluded with the afternoon workshops and the evening service. Irving King, an evangelist of Amazing Grace Ministries in Sterling, Massachusetts, explained how the goodness of God leads to repentance. He exhorted the people to stand your watch and that we sit at the gate of authority in Christ with the weapons He has given us. Les Wheeldon followed with a final message from Mark 5:6 to reveal the extent to which sinners are crying out everywhere for help. *"When you go to the villages the people are crying for you to come. No power anywhere can stop you from coming to Jesus. This man ran to Jesus, knelt down, and worshipped Jesus. Jesus spoke to the demons with the voice of a lion – Go! When Jesus speaks to the soul He does so with the voice of a dove. Nations are waiting for the voice of the bridegroom."* There was the sense that the army was now ready to go forth.

JAN 28: Teams were sent to local churches in the area for preaching in the morning. In the afternoon, at least two orphanages were visited at the request of several team members who would be departing early to return home or go to other scheduled missions. Those of us left gathered in the Conference Hall late in the evening. Stationed before us were 8 teams of at least 10 men each. They were standing in rank like soldiers. They represented God's Special Forces for field operations. Vachagan and Michael spoke God's commissioning over them, prayed for them, and anointed them with oil. This was the army the devil was so fearful of. They were very encouraged when we declared that we were going with them to the villages. Several of the teams left in the middle of the night to reach the farthest and most remote villages.

JAN 29 – FEB 1: *(We report the details of only one team here as experienced by Santhosh and Michael)* We traveled several hours to the home of Paul, the regional leader for our team. The villages are noticeably more peaceful. We noticed this as we drank coconut juice for physical cleansing and strength. The first night we traveled to the village of Ranga Puram where we ministered to the “Koya” tribe. There is much superstition and witchcraft in this tribe. In addition, there is a strange sickness common to this region involving fever and weakness of body. Around 90-100 attended the evening service under a simply constructed canopy. I preached from Acts 10 proclaiming that God shows no partiality. Two men, two cities, two visions, and yet one God accepting those from every nation who call upon His name. Santhosh testified that the faces of the people were different at the end of the service than at the beginning. Paul counted 63 salvations. We prayed for Victor Paul, a young “Koya” man and graduate of the International School of Ministry, who will pastor this new living church. In the morning, Paul reported it was a great service and message and that many were weeping. He informed me that people prayed from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM for the meeting. He also shared that a team goes before us to pray over the village and to go house to house. A team also follows us to visit the new believers in their homes, distribute more gospel tracts, and give details on the place of the next meeting. Later in the morning we visited a woman who is a land owner of 100 acres and supervises a number of migrant workers. She testified she was secretly a Christian. We prayed for her to begin gathering believers in her home and encouraged her to welcome and obey this as God’s plan. We prayed for a woman’s fever to leave, a barren woman, and one with child before leaving. Later in the day, a woman brought her 16-year old niece who has had fits for the past three years. We cast out the spirit in Christ’s name. In the evening, we traveled to the village of Marrigudem. This village was more isolated than the previous one. About 45 attended the service and around 30 received Christ following the preaching. We also prayed for many to be healed and against all witchcraft affecting the people. There were a number of young men who gave their lives to Christ and they were very sincere. Pastor Baburao will pastor this new church. The village will need more prayer as strongholds remain. On the third day, we were experiencing some fever, but were determined to push on in God’s strength. We desired to check on the other teams; however, the cell phones were out of range. Eventually we were able to use the local phone service to learn that all teams were well as the “dragnets” were being pulled in day by day. The next village, Reddy Gudem, was in bondage to a corrupt man claiming to be working for the human development service. Unknown to us, this man had forbid the people from attending the meeting. Nevertheless, about 20 gathered for the service with many listening from their homes. I preached from I Corinthians 1:19 on the message of the cross and despite this man’s control over the village 7 received Christ. Although the team will need to do much spiritual warfare over the village, we believe an initial battle was won for Christ’s glory. Pastor Pedro will live onsite with his family to further the work. The fourth day we departed for the village of Chintalapudi. Both Santhosh and I claimed our healings from the fever that had periodically attacked our bodies. There were at least 80 villagers gathered for the meeting. I preached on the woman at the well in John 4. The message was well received since the people were noted for their skill in digging wells and building foundations. At least 70 prayed to receive Christ. In addition, many pressed in for

healing as Christ's power went forth to heal the sick. Pastor Timothy will stay with his family in the village to lead the new church.

FEB 2-4: All teams arrived back at Mt. Zion Regional Training Center during the night and very early in the morning. It was good to go into the field of battle with the young warriors. This encouraged them beyond measure. After meeting with the team leaders and praying for one another, we departed for the church in Visakhapatnam arriving just in time for the welcome and to preach. We preached the next two evenings in the church. The airport miraculously opened up for team members to begin their individual journeys to their respective nations.

Lessons Learned

- Saturation church planting does not guarantee the start of a church planting movement. A church planting movement is indicated when there is "a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment."
- Church planting operations require a much higher level of spiritual warfare than other operations. Having intercessors onsite is highly recommended.
- Only God is able to empower those who go to the villages. *"Villages are generally very welcome of foreigners and very hospitable, for the most part. The village is more quiet and peaceful being away from the fast pace and noisy city atmosphere. Villages, though, are steeped with witchcraft and frequently curses are placed upon others. The gospel is a welcome message in the midst of such things."* (Excerpt from Brother Michael's journal)
- Larger teams with several valid focuses can reduce the effectiveness of a church planting operation; however, the experience and maturity of a team overcomes this.

Conclusion

The latest population figures list India at 1,114,327,000 people. This is currently 16.8% of the world's population. It is projected that India will surpass China in population by the year 2045. The government of India still reports Christianity at fewer than 3% of the population; however, local census reports are as high as 8%. Most conclude that the government figures are purposely kept low and that Christians most likely make up 5-6% of the population, which is a phenomenal growth rate. Recently, Christian leaders have launched the 20/20 vision with the objective that 20% of India will be Christian by the year 2020. The igniting of church planting movements across India will accomplish much to reach this goal. This operation confirmed that God's kingdom is rapidly advancing in this most populous and idolatrous nation. We ask that you lift the teams in prayer as they plant house churches in 300 surrounding villages over the next 3-4 months.

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