

April 29, 2012 by Steve Brandon



## Impressions From Nepal (Various)

As most of you know, Yvonne and I have been in Nepal. We left two and a half weeks ago and arrived home yesterday. We spent the first week with Leadership Resources International (LRI), training pastors and their wives. The second week, I continued training pastors and Yvonne spent her time visiting several places with First Love International.

The focus of LRI is pastoral training world-wide. In fact, their mission statement has the aim of "Launching Pastoral Training Movements Worldwide." The strategy of LRI is simple: dig deep into a few, and encourage them to multiply. So, through contacts that they have made in a country, LRI will identify 12-20 key leaders who they can train, who then can train others. Twice a year for four years, LRI will meet with these leaders and teach them about preaching. They then are expected to pass on this training to other leaders in their sphere of influence. The hope is that these leaders will train a third generation (or even a fourth generation) of leaders.

Thus, they call their strategy "TNT", which means "Training National Trainers". Their curriculum is very simple and transferrable. It focuses on reading comprehension. The idea is that you read through the Bible so that you understand the Bible. Then, you preach in such a way that others can understand the Bible. In other words, "Preach the word, not your own ideas."

It sounds simple, but it is really revolutionary. After going through some of this training, people often say, "I used to preach my own ideas; but now, with this training, I see that I need to preach God's ideas." This isn't only the first generation of trainees that say this, but it is often reported back from those from the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of trainees; they say this as well. One of the effects of this is that it instills confidence in many church leaders. As they come to understand more and more of what the Bible says, they are more confident to preach God's Word as well.

I love how the curriculum helps to unleash God's Word in foreign lands. I love how the curriculum is in line with my own philosophy of ministry. As I stand here each week and preach to you, my aim is never to preach my own ideas. Otherwise, I have no more authority than the philosopher down the street. Instead, I work hard to discern God's heart and God's message as revealed in the Bible. And then, I preach it to you.

Usually, I take a text and work through it -- reading it, explaining it, illustrating it, and applying it. But today will be different. Yvonne and I just returned from Nepal where God is doing wonderful things. Our hearts are full. And while our hearts are fresh about the work in Nepal, we want to share what we learned with you. My message this morning is entitled, "Impressions From Nepal".

Here is my first impression of Nepal, ...

### **1. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few (Matthew 9:35-38).**

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 9. In these verses, we see a bird's-eye view of the ministry of Jesus. It doesn't focus upon Jesus encountering an individual. It doesn't focus upon Jesus and the masses.

Matthew 9:35-38

Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

Verse 35 tells us of the ministry of Jesus. He was teaching the people. He was preaching to the people. He was healing the people. In verse 36, Jesus evaluates the people. He saw how many there were. He saw how lost they were. He saw their distress and how down and out they were. He thought them to be like sheep without a shepherd, wandering aimlessly through life without guidance.

This is Nepal! It is a lost nation, filled with many, many people. Nepal is filled with hurting people. Nepal is filled with wandering people -- people without purpose in life. Jesus' assessment of Israel is an accurate assessment of Nepal.

Verse 37 says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." In John 4:35, Jesus says likewise, "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest." Jesus looks at the people and sees them as white for harvest. He sees them as corn or soybeans ready to be picked in the Fall in Illinois. But, alas, there aren't enough workers to bring in the harvest. This is the case in Nepal. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

Let me tell you about M--- and his wife. They were both working with Campus Crusade for Christ, which is on college campuses in Nepal. M--- had never seen himself as a pastor. Yet, in part because of this training, he became increasingly burdened for the church beyond merely college students. So, 15 months ago (January 2011), the two moved to a small village in central Nepal, consisting of about 1500 people, to start pastoring there. In the 15 months there, the church is now more than 50 people -- most of whom are new converts. The harvest is

plentiful. As of right now, they are in a rented facility. But, they have purchased land, and want to build the first church building ever in that village.

Let me tell you about B--- and his wife. Five to ten years ago, they were sent to a new area with very few believers. The church started with five to ten people. Within the first year, there were more than 70 people who were following Christ. Now, there are more than 300 people in a handful of branch churches that have started from their church which B--- oversees.

It's not that they went to this area with a big plan to start this church and other branch churches. It's that the harvest is ready to be picked! And with all of this grain coming in, they have to do something with it, so they start more churches. If you met B---, you would never think of him as a great mover and shaker. He's a very soft and humble man, who is simply dealing with the harvest that is falling into his lap.

That's just how it is in Nepal. It's a time of great harvest, with few workers. In fact, they don't have enough leaders. There is a big need for training and there is a big need to encourage the leaders who are in place. This leads to my next impression, ...

## **2. The Christians in Nepal are eager for training (1 Peter 2).**

Turn with me to 1 Peter 2. We read here of a hunger that all of us ought to have. We ought to hunger for God's Word.

1 Peter 2:1-3

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

The Christians in Nepal are like newborn babies, who long for their mother's milk. We have enough young children here at Rock Valley Bible Church for this to be fresh on the minds of many. A newborn baby thinks of very little, except what he will eat. A newborn will cry and cry and cry until the hunger is satisfied. That's how we ought to be as believers in Christ. We ought to put aside our sin and long for the pure milk of the Word, so that we may grow in respect to salvation.

This isn't a burdensome command. No, it's a natural command. It is only natural to want to grow. And as we get more of the Word, we will grow. So, we long for the Word, because we long to grow. This command is also a command of delight. Verse 3 says, "If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord". In other words, "If you have experienced the grace of God in saving you, you will want more of that grace."

And this is what we see in the Nepali church. There is a great eagerness for training. For instance, take B---. When B--- came back from training, he gathered around the leaders of his church and the branch churches and trained them in what he learned. When his wife realized what was happening, she insisted that she be able to sit in on the training as well, even though the training is really focused on training preachers. But she has a hunger for any training that she might receive.

Or, take R---. When R--- returned home from training, he gathered the church leaders in his sphere of influence and began to teach about finding the Big Idea of a passage, and understanding about the context of a passage. His wife, was in charge of preparing food for the trainees. She was fine with this, but hearing these ideas made her curious and she expressed a great desire to learn about these things as well. Unfortunately, I don't know the rest of the story. So, I don't know whether she began to take the training as well, or whether she merely gleaned from her husband later. But, the point is clear: they are eager for training.

Many, many believers in Nepal have this desire. In some sense, it comes because of how young the Nepali church is. They are like newborns. There were no believers in Nepal until 1950. Not until 1990 has the church exploded. The majority of believers in Nepal are first generation believers. First generation believers are often eager for training.

During our first week of training, it worked out like this. We had 14 men (and their wives) planning to come to Pokhara for training. The training was scheduled to begin on a Sunday. However, due to the political instability of the country, a political group declared a Bunde (a travel strike) for Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. This meant that nobody would be able to travel on those days.

So, for many of the men and wives, this meant that they would need to travel on Saturday to arrive in Pokhara in time. But, the Nepali church worships on Saturday, so many of them left their homes Saturday afternoon or evening after worshiping. Probably half of them took the overnight bus to arrive before the strike began on Sunday. They traveled through the night for ten, twelve, possibly fifteen hours on a very crowded, uncomfortable bus in order to get to the training on time. We Americans wouldn't last fifteen minutes on a bus like this. It would be too crowded or too bumpy or too noisy or too stinky for us. But, they went through the night. Nobody missed the training. Such is their hunger for training.

But, nobody makes a deeper commitment than R---. It takes him four days to arrive at the training. He lives in a remote mountain village. It takes him two days to walk to the bus stop, and two more days on the bus to arrive. It takes me less time to travel to Nepal from America than it does for him to travel from home to the training. He told all of us this time that he almost didn't come. He has so many responsibilities and much is coming down on him right now. Because of this, he was thinking about staying home. But, he said that the training is always so rich and he was eager to come.

In fact, the second generation training in his area is producing so much fruit, that others are crying for this "TNT Training". People in his mountain region don't really know what "TNT Training" is, but many people are talking about it. And so, everyone wants this "TNT Training", even though they don't know what it is. They only know that it's producing good fruit. That's how eager the people of Nepal are for training of any kind. It flows from their zeal to know and love God (verse 2). It flows from the grace of God in their salvation (verse 3).

The big question here is obvious: do you long for training? Do you long for the milk of the word? Or, are you too saturated here in America

that you have lost your desire?

My third impression, ...

### **3. Darkness to light (Matthew 4).**

When Jesus came to earth, He brought light to the world. He, Himself, said, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12). Nepal is a dark place. There are idols and demons and superstition all around. There is wickedness and immorality and injustice all around. Yet, the Christians bring light and hope to many. Poverty and despair is rampant. Christians offer the hope of the Gospel. We read in Matthew 4:16, ...

Matthew 4:16

The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light,  
and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death,  
upon them a light dawned."

Before the days of Jesus, the land of Israel was in darkness, just as Isaiah had prophesied (Is 9:1). The Israelites weren't walking in the truth. They lived without hope. And then, King Jesus stepped onto the scene. He changed everything. He brought hope to the world.

Such has happened in Nepal. Nepal was a closed country until 1950. For thousands of years, no light had shown on Nepal. The message of Christ was nowhere to be heard. But, since then, slowly but surely, the light has come. Jesus is now shining in Nepal. He is changing peoples' lives.

Take, for instance, S--- and his wife. Their marriage was an arranged marriage. In fact, half of the marriages of the people we trained were arranged marriages. S--- didn't want to marry her. But, the culture demanded that he would. So he did. But, he protested against it. He didn't speak to his wife for the first year after they married. And then, he did only briefly. It was not until the light shined in his heart that things changed. He was converted. And she was converted. And things got better between them. But still, things weren't good until TNT Training came along. The training has stirred in him so deeply that now he desires to dig deep into God's word and actually share with his wife what he plans to preach on. The light has shown in their lives.

And yet, the darkness is so great that more light must shine. We, in America, are blessed with a fundamental belief in the equality of every human being. Now, we don't always live it out. But, most in America would agree that all men are created equal. Nepal, on the other hand, is not so fortunate. Ingrained into the Hindu culture is the caste system that believes that some are created superior to others. Men are superior to women. A wife's god is her husband. So, there is much marital abuse in the home. The wife is the husband's slave. It is awful. This oppression carries over into the lives of many Christians, simply because they have no Biblical role models. They are first generation believers. So pray for more light.

My third impression of Nepal is the, ...

### **4. Zeal for evangelism (Romans 10).**

The religious situation here in America is so different than in Nepal. Here, there are churches all around. In Rockford alone, hundreds of churches exist. Many have been exposed to the gospel. This is not so in Nepal. In Nepal, there are many who have no exposure to the gospel at all. This has given those in Nepal an incredible zeal for evangelism.

Romans 10:9-15

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "Whoever will call on the name of the LORD will be saved." How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news of good things!"

This is the good news that we preach in verse 9. There is such satisfaction and joy in Jesus that, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed" (verse 11). And yet, there are many in Nepal who have never heard the name of Jesus. Those in the Nepali church know this and have an incredible burden to make Him known (verse 14) -- even to the neglect of their marriages.

I was greatly encouraged by the story of S--- and his wife. Yvonne and I had lunch with them one day. S--- was telling us of how their church has an outreach every Friday. They often travel to a village, and the youth sing some songs and put on a drama and dance. Then someone preaches the gospel. They often see fruit as a direct result of their efforts. On one particular occasion, they came into a village and met with opposition. Some Hindus were made aware of what they were doing and attempted to stop them. They formed a mob and told the Christians to stop. They even attempted to hurt them, coming at them with sticks. But S--- said that the Lord protected them, keeping them from serious harm. At a later date, people in the village apologized when they realized that they would need to come into S---'s area to get food and things. And yet, the humble response of S--- and their zeal for the truth gave the Christians favor in the eyes of several in that village who have now come to faith in Christ. They have now started branch churches in that village.

They have a zeal for evangelism. In many ways, I believe that their zeal comes because so many of the people they speak with believe. When they hear, they believe (verse 14). So, the Nepali Christians make great efforts to go out to spread the good news, because they know people will believe.

Take A---. He has been in the ministry since 1990, some 20 years. He planted his church and 14 other daughter churches. His church today has about 90 people. This sort of fruitfulness happens with such regularity that every pastor in Nepal is expected to be out planting churches. It is so different for our culture. One pastor asked me, "How many churches do you pastor?" I said, "One." Then, I tried to explain to him how different it is in America, but I'm not sure he quite understood.

I told A--- how fortunate he was to live in a place where people are coming to Christ. I told him how hard we must work to see someone come to faith in Christ. People are so skeptical here. People are self-sufficient and see no need for Christ. But, in Nepal, they go out and speak with people, and often they come to faith in Jesus. Then, I was told of how things are changing in Nepal. Things have really slowed down over the past five years. People are still being saved, but not at the same crazy rate as before. I asked, "What has happened?" A--- said that Nepal has been going through a political transition. No longer are they a Hindu kingdom. Instead, they are a democracy. Under the rule of the Hindu kingdom, Nepalis were told to worship the gods, but now they have freedom. With the freedom comes more apathy. When they were told to worship the gods, many were eager for the freedom that Christianity brought. But now, many have the freedom, and they don't care. Perhaps this helps to explain our situation in America a bit.

But, the Christians in Nepal have a heart to see people come to faith. One man said, "We need more persecution." Because under the persecution, the church flourishes. They would rather have life be difficult than life be easy, because under difficulty, they church flourishes. But, when there is freedom, the growth of the church is slowed down.

My fifth impression from Nepal is their, ...

#### **5. Zeal for prayer (Psalms 142).**

One of the things that I love about the Nepali church is their zeal to pray. In some regard, I believe that it comes because they are so needy. In Psalm 142, we see David "in the cave." He's hiding from Saul, who is trying to kill him. Listen to the desperation and passion in his voice.

Psalms 142

I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD;  
I make supplication with my voice to the LORD.  
I pour out my complaint before Him;  
I declare my trouble before Him.  
When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,  
You knew my path.  
In the way where I walk  
They have hidden a trap for me.  
Look to the right and see;  
For there is no one who regards me;  
There is no escape for me;  
No one cares for my soul.

I cried out to You, O LORD;  
I said, "You are my refuge,  
My portion in the land of the living.  
"Give heed to my cry,  
For I am brought very low;  
Deliver me from my persecutors,  
For they are too strong for me.  
"Bring my soul out of prison,  
So that I may give thanks to Your name;  
The righteous will surround me,  
For You will deal bountifully with me."

Do you see David's desperation? In verse 1, he is crying aloud. In verse 2, he is declaring his trouble. In verse 3, he feels there is no escape. No one cares for his soul, except for God (verse 5). He says that God is, "my refuge". And he pleads, "Give heed to my cry" (verse 6).

This is where the Nepalis live. They live a constant state of desperation. And so, it is only natural for them to pray. They have no other choice. It has been said that you don't need to teach a hungry man how to beg. Nor do you need to teach a desperate man to pray. And when they pray, they pray with passion. In fact, in their worship services, when the pastor says that it is time to pray, it is not just him who prays at the pulpit. The whole congregation shouts their prayers aloud to God. It is wonderful.

They also pray in every circumstance. Y--- had me over for breakfast one morning. I was able to go where no tourist has ever been. That was neat. He brought me to his church building and had me pray. He brought me to where they want to build a new church building, and had me pray. He brought me to his house, and into the room where they have weekly fellowships, and he had me pray. Can you imagine? You have someone over to your house, and you take him to various places and ask him to pray for you? Such is their desperation.

My sixth impression from Nepal is this.

#### **6. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:32-35).**

We were blessed to be able to give away so many gifts. I'm thankful to God for you all at Rock Valley Bible Church for beings so generous. The gifts were well received. It is my aim to encourage us all to be givers. Give to missions. Give to the poor. Give to others. Give your life.

In March 2006 when I was in Nepal, I took a photo of a man who was living in Nepal from Germany, who worked with the International Nepal Fellowship. He spoke at one of the church services. You could tell that he had a heart to help the Nepali people. In the church service I attended, he sat among them. His name was Tim Frank.

This time when I went to Nepal, I went into a pastor's office, and saw a sign that said, ...

Tim Frank

February 29, 1971 to July 7, 2006

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness." Jeremiah 31:3

Totally unexpectedly, we have lost our beloved husband and Dad. Following a severe motorcycle accident, he died on July 7th, 2006 in Kathmandu. We will miss him very much. Grieving deeply and still in shock,

- The Frank family & friends

This was only a few months after I saw him in Nepal. Tim Frank gave his life for the kingdom. So give you life to the service of God. You don't have to go and die somewhere. But, give so that others may go. And so, I encourage you to give to help others.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 29, 2012 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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