

## **A Chronicle of Redemption**

Chapter 11: Depravity and Deliverance

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### **CHAPTER 11: DEPRAVITY AND DELIVERANCE** **Judges 2:10-23**

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Judges 2. Praise God for His salvation. We're going to do things a little different during the rest of our time this morning. The rest of our time in worship, we're going to divide into...into three parts. One, we're going to spend time in this text, and really kind of an abbreviated time in this text. I just want you to see a couple of truths. Then, I want us to spend some time reflecting on this text, letting this text soak in and some time in prayer and Scripture and song. Then, we're going to let that lead us into wherever we started last week, thinking about what God is doing in and through us, as He leads us into India this year.

The picture I want you to see when we come to the book of Judges...first 18 verses are good. Things are going well, the people of God have taken the Promised Land, as He told them to do, but God had told them, "When you go into the Promised Land, remove, destroy all of the idols and false gods and immorality in peoples there in the Promised Land. You're to drive them all out." What we find is around Judges 1:19, the word "but" comes into play.

When God's people had done all that He told them to do and taken the land, but...listen to verse 19. "*The LORD was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron.*" This begins a pattern throughout the end of Judges 1, where it says they did not drive out the people, as God had told them to do.

Look at verse 21. "*The people of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem.*" Verse 27, "*Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and its villages.*" Verse 28, "*When Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not drive them out completely.*" Verse 29, "*Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer.*" Verse 30, "*Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron.*" Verse 31, "*Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco.*" Verse 32, "*The inhabitants of the land, for they did not drive them out.*" Then, verse 33, "*Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh.*"

That's the picture. The people of God did not follow God's commands to drive out the people and their immorality and their idolatrous practices. As a result of compromising on this level, God's people ended up giving in to those idolatrous practices and that immorality, and that's what the book of Judges is about.

I want you to look with me at Judges 2:10, and we're going to read from verse 10 to the end of the chapter, and this right here is a summary of the whole book of Judges...right here in this one passage. Start with me in verse 10.

*And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the*

*Baals. And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the people who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth.*

*So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned and as the LORD had sworn to them, and they were in terrible distress.*

*Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD, and they did not do so. Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.*

*But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he said, "Because this people has transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not." So the LORD left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua.*

These verses sum up the whole book of Judges. It's a story of God's people disobeying God's commands and the results that flow from that. It all started...you saw it back up in verse 11 and 12, when they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, and went after other gods instead. That's why God had told them to rid the land of the Canaanites and those peoples there, because they were polytheistic people who worshipped all kinds of different gods. When they compromised on that level, then destruction flowed. In the book of Judges, what happens is about what happens when you leave the one true God to worship other gods.

## **One God Over Israel**

### **They illustrated man's depravity.**

I want to show you two truths. Very simply what happens when the people of God forsake the one God over Israel in the book of Judges. Number one, they illustrated man's depravity, man's sinfulness, man's wickedness. This book is a low point in Israel's moral life. It is morally taxing just to read through this book, because you see the sinfulness of man on display at every turn. The core of their sin is blatant idolatry. This is the primary problem. Israel's sin problem in the book of Judges that you're going to read about this week...Israel's sin problem is ultimately a worship problem. They turn aside and worship these other gods. The author of Judges is intentional to show us along the way that the

reason they are indulging in such spiraling immorality is because they are worshipping foreign gods.

Judges 10:6 gives us a list of all the different gods that the Israelites are worshipping. That was the core of their sin...blatant idolatry...and the consequence of their sin was rampant immorality. As a result of idolatry, the moral compass of God's people was destroyed, and they delved deeper and deeper and deeper into rampant immorality. You read Judges this week; you will come across some of the most twisted, dark, brutal stories in Scripture. Immorality, even among the judges, we're going to talk about in a second, but you will...you will see stories of idolatry, betrayal, murder, rape. It is...especially near the end of the book, you see pictures of immorality that are, in some senses, inconceivable, and it's grounded in idolatry.

James Montgomery Boyce once said, "No people ever rise above their idea of God. A loss of the sense of God's high and awesome character always involves a loss of a people's moral values, and even what we commonly call humanity." Mark it down. This is not in your notes, but this is huge. People become like the god they worship. People become like the god they worship. Immorality does not happen in a vacuum. Immorality flows from idolatry. That's what we see.

### **They needed God's deliverance.**

They illustrated man's depravity in book of Judges, and as a result, they needed God's deliverance. They needed God's deliverance. So, this is what God would do. He would raise up judges. Now, when we think of judges, we think of people sitting on a bench, but really in the book of Judges, this picture of judges is more like a warrior or a ruler. What would happen is God's people, in their sin, would be disciplined by God, and God would send the Ammonites or the Canaanites or the Philistines to be a demonstration of His judgment upon His people, and they would repent. They would cry out to God, and God would raise up judges, warriors, rulers, who would deliver them from their enemies. That was the whole point, that people of Israel needed someone to rescue them from divine judgment.

God takes sin seriously among His people. God abhors idolatry. He hates it, and He disciplines His people with severity. God's people would experience that discipline all throughout the book of Judges, but 12 different times from Judges 3 to Judges 16, God raises up a judge, not only to deliver them from divine judgment, but they needed someone to show them divine mercy. So, that's what God would do, and through a judge, an imperfect judge at that, God would show them mercy. Then, after God had shown them mercy and delivered them, you know what they would do? They would go right back to their sin. They would go right back to their sin time after time after time after time.

So, that when you get to Judges 16, and you see the final one of these judges raised up, from Judges 17 to Judges 21 in this book, you don't see repentance again. You see, in a sense, God's people given over to their immorality, and the book closes with that deafening verse, Judges 21:25. "*Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*" It's one of the most depressing ends to a Bible book, and it's there for a purpose. This book is intended to show us that God's people in their sin are under divine judgment and in need of divine mercy, and no judge, no matter how great they are, is able to save them from divine judgment and show them ultimate divine mercy.

Sets the stage for kings to come, none of whom will be able to do that either; prophets to come, none of whom will be able to do that. The book of Judges leaves us longing, wanting, waiting for God to send one who is indeed able to rescue us from divine judgment and is indeed able to show us divine mercy. The book of Judges leaves us longing for Jesus, for

God to come Himself and to rescue us and to show us His mercy. So, that's the book of Judges in a nutshell.

## One God Over India

### **They illustrate man's depravity.**

Now, there's not a one-to-one correlation here on a variety of levels, but I do want us to think about the truths that we're going to see in Judges this week that we just talked about, in light of what God is doing in our midst as we go toward India, because the reality is there is one God over Israel in the book of Judges, and there is one God over India today. I want you to think with me about how the people of India are illustrating man's depravity. They worship in India seemingly innumerable gods. Some people call India "the land of a million gods." Some people say there are upwards of 330 million gods and goddesses worshipped in India.

If you go to India, it is gods...gods everywhere. You're walking down the sidewalk, and gods are for sale. You're riding down the streets, and you pass people bowing down in front of trees and shrines. You walk down the alleys of urban slums, and you round a corner to see an altar where impoverished men and women are coming and bowing down and throwing coins to gods made of wood. You ride in the cab, and you see hanging from the mirror or sitting on the dashboard numerous gods. You walk into a small, one room home, and you see all over the walls images of gods and goddesses. There are gods everywhere, objects of worship everywhere. Seemingly innumerable gods, leading to seemingly inconceivable practices; rampant immorality.

William Carey, the father of modern missions, pioneered mission work in India. A couple of months ago when we went, we were in Bengal, which is where he began his ministry and to think of what William Carey would write about when he came to India for the first time and was appalled by some of the practices associated with Hinduism. Practices like "sati," where a Hindu man, upon his death, would have his body burned, but not just his body. His wife, though alive, would need to be burned with him. So, it was the practice, and Carey observed and looked around, literally, hundreds of times, protesting, yelling, but unable to stop this practice, where a bride, alive, many times a child bride, would be strapped down with her dead husband's corpse and burned to death. To hear him talk and write about human sacrifices offered to Hindu gods.

Now, this was at the turn of the 19th century, and some of those practices are not still the same, but immorality is in a sense unchanged. India is known today for feticide, the practice of determining the sex of a fetus in the womb, and if it is a female, making sure to prevent that child from living, whether in the fetus or having the baby and then throwing the baby out in infanticide. The reason being in many contexts because of the dowry price that is offered, must be offered from a family of a daughter to a groom. One advertisement for feticide said, "Better to pay 500 rupees now..." which is Indian currency, rupees, "Better to pay 500 rupees now than 50,000 rupees later in dowry." Some sources estimate that between 35 million and 40 million girls and women are missing from the Indian population due to this practice.

Other practices abound. The International Justice Mission reports, and I quote, "The trafficking into forced prostitution victimizes more children in India than anywhere else in the world." Massive sex trafficking. In addition, South Asia, which is predominantly Indian, is home to the world's largest population of slaves today.

### **They need God's deliverance.**

Ladies and gentlemen, immorality does not happen in a vacuum. Immorality flows from idolatry. People of India illustrate man's depravity, and they need God's deliverance.

Feel the weight of this. Over 600 million people in Northern India...99.5 percent of them, literally, worshipping millions of false gods. There are masses under divine judgment in their sin. Don't miss this. We sometimes get a picture of people around the world as innocent men and women just waiting to hear the gospel. It's not true. They are guilty...guilty of sin, guilty of rejection...rejecting God. They're rebelling against the authority of God over them, and they are under eternal divine judgment in sin.

Masses under divine judgment in sin, and most are unaware of divine mercy in the gospel. Most of them have never heard that the one true God loves them and desires to bring them salvation. Most of them have never heard that the one true God has taken the judgment for their sin upon Himself and His Son and has made a way to free them from sin and freedom...free them from futile, foolish efforts to earn your way to God. God has made a way to you, and He has redeemed you and reconciled you to Himself, and most of them have never, ever even heard of that. Masses under divine judgment, most unaware of divine mercy. That is the picture in India.

## **One God Over Us**

### **We illustrate man's depravity.**

Obviously, though, we would be amiss if we took this picture of one God over Israel and one God over India and did not apply the same truths to ourselves, for there is one God over us. Ladies and gentlemen in this room, we illustrate man's depravity. It seems so blatant when you go into an Indian home, or you walk along Indian streets, and you see these gods everywhere and just say, "Look at this idolatry." However, in the process, you realize we are often blind to our own idolatry.

Ladies and gentlemen, why do we think our materialism is any different? Why would we think that bowing down to gods of money and success and fame and recognition and sex and sports and worldly pleasure and worldly entertainment is any different than these things? We give our affections to all of these things in the world. At best, our affections are divided between them and God, and that is the essence of idolatry; giving affection to anyone or anything that is not worthy of affection. There is only one God who is worthy of affection and worship. We're blind to our own idolatry.

To pick back up where Boyce left off, the result is immorality. He said,

We are startled by the disregard for human life that has overtaken large segments of the Western world. But what do we expect when countries like ours openly turn their back upon God? We deplore the breakdown of moral standards, but what do we expect when we have focused our worship services on ourselves and our own often trivial needs, rather than on God?

Our view of God affects what we are and do, but we don't want to see it.

So, not only are we blind to our own idolatry, but we pass the blame for our own immorality. This is the name of the game in our culture. You are not responsible for your sin. Someone did something to you; something happened to you. This is why this is the

case. It is not the problem in culture, certainly not me. It is the other factors at work, and in the process, we miss the point.

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't want to, in any way, underestimate the effects of other sins on our lives, but the reality is we are responsible for our sin. It is not something outside of us. It is something inside of us, and we can point the finger all day long at feticide in India, but the reality is over the last 40 years, we have aborted nearly 50 million babies because they were not convenient for us. We have fed a multi-billion dollar pornographic industry, fed by what some estimate is up to 50 percent of men in the church.

### **We need God's deliverance.**

We illustrate man's depravity, and we need God's deliverance. Praise God we're not at the middle of the judges or the kings or the prophets. Praise God we're reading this on this side of the cross, and we know Jesus has saved our lives from divine judgment. Think of it: Christ has taken all of your filth and my filth, all of your evil, wicked thoughts and my evil, wicked thoughts...He has taken every single one of them, and He has put them on His Son instead of us. Jesus has taken the punishment due every single one of our sins upon Himself. He has delivered us from divine judgment, and not only that, not only has He forgiven us, but He has freed us. We don't have to go back to our sin, like we see over and over again in the book of Judges. We're free from sin, free to walk in victory over sin, not to go back to that which we have been saved from.

So, what shall we do, then? Shall we sit back with that news...Jesus has saved our lives from divine judgment? Shall we sit back with that news and just soak it in while we turn a deaf ear to millions upon millions of people who have never heard that? Absolutely not. We are not saved to just soak it in. We are saved to spend our lives proclaiming divine mercy. That is what we do. We give ourselves; we give our lives; we give our family; we give our time; we give our money. We give everything we have, our very lives, making this mercy known to the ends of the earth. That is the only response to the one true God.

## **Panel Discussion**

Now, the stage is properly set for us to think together about what God is leading us to do in India this year. I want to invite a few folks to join me out here. I mentioned last week that we would dive in this week into more specifics of what The Radical Experiment and its effects will look like in India. So, I want you to have an opportunity to hear from Jonathan, our Global Disciple-Making Pastor, a couple members of our church that are involved in various ministries that we're working with in India, whether it's Ronnie Brock and Compassion or Spencer Sutton and Neverthirst, and then a couple of members of our staff who are involved in translation work that we're doing or short-term mission work that we're doing, and along the way, I want you to hear from a couple of our brothers in India via Skype as well, as we think about what this whole picture looks like. So, Jonathan, turn it over to you.

*Jonathan:* Thanks. You know, it's an incredible privilege to be a part of a faith family that's sacrificing our resources here for the sake of urgent physical and spiritual needs in a place like India. How are we doing that? What does that look like? How are we involved in serving the people of India?

Let's talk first about for the sake of the lost. For the sake of the lost, we share the Word. How are we sharing the Word in India through Radical Experiment? First of all, we have to

realize that there are millions of people in India that still do not have access to the Word of God in their own language. This is further complicated by illiteracy. Even people that do have access to the Word of the God in their own language can't just open up the Bible and read it.

So, how are we doing this? I've asked Angelia to come. She's our Media Director here at Brook Hills, and she also oversees the translation and distribution of cross-cultural resources around the world. So, Angelia, could you explain to us and share a little bit about how we are addressing the need of access to the Word of God in our partnerships in Northern India?

*Angelia:* Sure, absolutely. 18 percent of the world is illiterate. Two-thirds of that 18 percent live in eight countries. India is one of those countries. 39 percent of the folks in India are illiterate. In other words, they cannot read or write, and it's imperative that we get the gospel to them in an auditory way. We've identified a language group in India called the Karuk, and they need the gospel. They need desperately to hear God's Word, so that they could have hope and life. There's about two million of them that live in the area where we will be focusing our attention, and we are going to help get the gospel in an auditory way to them, because that's the way they learn. They learn by hearing, and then they repeat it. So, we want to get that language to them, and we're going to partner with two different partnerships in order to make that happen in India.

*Jonathan:* Great. Could you tell us a little bit about those partnerships and the impact that that is having on people's lives and their access to the Word of God?

*Angela:* Absolutely. The two partnerships we're going to work with, one, the Seed Company, which is sponsored by Wycliffe, and what Wycliffe discovered is the best way to accelerate the translation of God's Word is by starting with stories. So, what they do is they send a team into India, and they work with people of peace there, and they begin to translate 20 to 30 stories chronologically throughout the Bible. They work with teams, their locals, to get that done, and they employ those people to do that. Then, they take these stories, and they go into villages, and they begin listening groups, story groups. People begin to hear the Word of God for the first time, and of course when that happens, that generates incredible interest. Then, they take it from there, and they continue to work with the people learning the language, and they translate it into the book of Luke and then into the New Testament.

Now, one of the things that Wycliffe discovered is you can translate the Bible, and of course, if you can't read it, that's not very helpful. So, they partnered with Faith Comes by Hearing, and Faith Comes by Hearing is going to be our second partnership in India that we're going to work with. Faith Comes By Hearing takes the auditory recordings, and they put them into what they call a "proclaimer," and we're going to demonstrate that for you with my lovely assistant here this morning.

The proclaimer is a digital recording. It's encased in this recorder, and it operates several ways. It's solar powered, and it also has a hand crank, and then of course it has an adapter. They can use that as well. It holds about 75 hours worth of charge, and even if it doesn't have any battery at all, if you pop that solar panel up, it can operate off of solar power. It is really designed for as large a group as 300 people to hear the Word of God, and we're going to demonstrate that for you this morning, so you guys can hear exactly what that sounds like. So, give me just a minute. I'm going to press the button here, and we'll get it started. I'm going to crank it up as loud as it goes so you can hear what this...

*[Audio Playing]*

Okay. That's Bengali. You're listening to Bengali. What they do is they take these proclaimers into villages and set them up, and they begin listening groups there. What that leads to, of course, is people hearing the gospel, becoming followers of Christ. That grows into church plants, and then they can use the Scriptures that are on the proclaimers over and over for discipleship. So, that is how we're going to meet the great need of God's Word in the lost in India.

*Jonathan:* Isn't it exciting, church, how our giving here, we can partner to share the Word in India? What about for the sake of the poor? For the sake of the poor, we need to show the Word. We need to tangibly demonstrate the gospel, just as we read about and studied through Luke this past Fall. How are we doing that in India? How are we partnering together with our resources to show the Word to the people in Northern India?

I'd like to introduce you to Ronnie Brock. Ronnie is a member here at Brook Hills, and Ronnie is also a Regional Director for Church Engagement with Compassion International. Compassion's mission is to release children from poverty in Jesus' name. As many of you know, we've been partnering with Compassion to sponsor 21 Child Survival Programs across India, and Ronnie, could you tell us a little bit about how those Child Survival Programs are addressing the needs of the poor, especially mothers and children in India?

*Ronnie:* Sure. As Jonathan said, we are involved with Compassion. We partner with over 400 churches in India, several of whom have the Child Survival Programs that he mentioned. Then, we are involved with 21 of those.

The stated vision for our Child Survival Programs is that we want to be the leader in addressing the mortality rate or saving mothers and babies from dying in the areas of poverty. We do this in four areas. First of all is the physical area. We have programs that identify the needs of the mothers and the babies and we address those; immunization, shot records, education as far as how to take care of the children and their nutrition.

There's also a cognitive program, and it is for literacy for the mothers. It is for teaching them, again, about the developmental stages of a child. There's also the spiritual elements that we have in our programming. Everything that we do will happen at the local church level, and just about everything will be happening, basically, at the feet of the pastors and the church leaders. I know that over the last three months, we've had 23 mothers that have placed faith in Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and that is the third element.

The fourth element is social-economic. We have income generating programs that we work along with the mothers so that they may contribute to the overall health and well being of the family by being providers of income and things such as that, but those are the four areas that we're mainly working.

*Jonathan:* Ronnie, could you tell me a little bit about the impact that this is having on the lives of the mothers and the children and those communities?

*Ronnie:* Yes. In some of the areas that we work with, I know specifically one area, per thousand births, there are 68 deaths of the infants. That would be the average for that area. For the same rate for the mothers in the Child Survival Program, per thousand births, there are eight deaths. So, you see bringing that number down from 68 to eight is truly having an impact.

The last report I saw for our 21 CSP's, it was exciting. The first thing we are happy to report is that there were no mother or child deaths in the last three months. I remember reading

that and thinking, "You know, in my culture, that's not even newsworthy, but it is the first thing that they wanted to share." So, just know that we have a part of that.

*Jonathan:* Thanks, thanks. Again, this is where through our giving, we are partnering with local churches to minister to the poor, especially mothers and children. Another one of the really difficult and devastating needs in Northern India is access to clean water. 386,000 Indian children die before the age of five due to waterborne disease. Catch that number. 386,000 children before the age of five. I want to introduce Spencer Sutton. Spencer is also a member here at Brook Hills. He also runs an organization called Neverthirst, and they provide access to clean water through the local church, and they've been working in India since 2008. Spencer, would you tell us and explain a little bit about how you all are addressing the need for clean water, specifically across India.

*Spencer:* Sure. It is as bad as Jonathan says. In the villages that we travel in, there's almost 130 million people without access to clean water in India today. So, the way we work is pretty simple. Here in the States, we raise awareness; we're advocates for the thirsty and for the poor. We raise awareness, and we raise funds. When we receive those funds, we give 100 percent through to projects on the ground. So, we don't keep any of it for administrative purposes. Even The Radical Experiment funds, 100 percent go specifically to projects on the ground.

The way we work on the ground is through partnerships. We couldn't do it without partnerships. So, we have carefully screened and expert water partners on the ground, who then are connected with local churches in communities. These local churches either have a presence in the community, there is a church, or they have been preaching the gospel and are aiming to plant a church in this community. So, what happens is when the water comes, where there is none, it makes a huge impact on the health of the kids, and also in the receptivity of the community to a pastor or to a local church.

*Jonathan:* Now, we're helping sponsor about 100 wells in India. Can you tell me some of the impact that putting those wells in India is having on people's lives and on the church in those communities?

*Spencer:* Sure, absolutely. I mean, the impact is immediate, and it's hard for us to think about, because every single morning when we wake up, we have water wherever we go. It's easy for us, and it's not for them. Every morning, you have mothers and children who wake up, and the first thing they think about is, "How am I going to get water today?" That's the main concern, and because they have a lack of access to water, they end up traveling for miles every day to collect dirty, contaminated water, which often makes their children sick, and there's a possibility that they could die from that water.

So, the impact is immediate. When clean water comes, it comes along with sanitation and hygiene training, and the children's health is immediately improved; skin disease is gone and, because they're washing with clean water, they can actually eat more meals a day because they have water. If they only have five gallons of water for washing and cooking and drinking, then they're limited even to how much they can eat.

A great example real quick is a village I visited in September and then again in November. I was there in September with some friends, and it was a depressing, depressing scene; no smiles on the kids, skin disease. They took us to where they get water, from buckets, just big open wells. In one of the wells there were frogs, and the other one, just covered with algae, and this is where they get their water.

So, in the weeks following, clean water was brought through the local church, and I was back in November, and it had completely changed. I mean, it was amazing. I didn't think I was in the same village, but it was. I even interviewed the pastor and asked him about the change, and he said, "Before the water," he said, "They used to threaten me and tell me not to come in the village to preach the gospel." He said, "But now that we have clean water," he said, "They call me Uncle," which is a term of endearment. So to us, that's the key, to see the health and the poverty improve, and also the gospel have an impact in their lives.

*Jonathan:* Again, this is how our giving is sharing the Word and showing the Word in India. What about the sake of the church? For the sake of the church, we have to teach the Word. How are we teaching the Word? What is the state of the church in Northern India? *Operation World* says that poor discipling and lack of teaching have made nominalism, syncretism and losses to Hinduism rampant in India. So, there's a huge need for training.

Now, we've got to think about what our primary mission is. Our primary mission is to glorify God by making disciples of all nations. Do you know that there are still 325 people groups in India where there are no known believers, and they're not being engaged with the gospel? Our primary partner for church planting among unreached people groups is the International Mission Board.

I have the privilege to introduce you to Sanford. Sanford is a church-planting trainer with the International Mission Board and works in Northern India. He's a Hindu background believer himself. He wasn't born into a Christian family and didn't know the gospel. He came to know the gospel, and for the last couple of decades, he has been planting churches and training others to plant churches. This week I was able to have a Skype conversation with him and talk a little bit about our partnership with them, to train church planters and church leaders. Let's turn and look at the screens and listen to what he had to say. Thanks.

*[Video begins]*

*Jonathan:* How would you describe the needs in India?

*Sanford:* First of all, people are living in the darkness. They need to be seeing the light of Jesus. Second, they need to be rescued by the gospel. To do that, the main needs are we need to train local churches and leaders to reach out to the unreached people groups that are living in the darkness.

*Jonathan:* How are you training the church in India to make disciples?

*Sanford:* We are training people in two different ways: training leaders to give the leadership and training local Christians to learn how they will fulfill the Great Commandment. The name of the course is Tree of Life. Tree of Life is church-planting training, and through that training, we are trying to prepare leaders to teach other leaders and prepare them. At the same time, we are also training local church members to take the responsibility by themselves to reach out to lost souls and lost people. We are training them not to be hearers only, but become a doer.

Secondly, we are training them not to be a believer only, but become a disciple. We are expecting that 100 percent of the existing members of the churches will engage following Jesus. As, for example, the first level of Tree of Life is, "I will make you fishers of men if you follow me." When we talk about that, we just reverse a question out of that verse. We say, "If you are following Jesus, it means that you are fishing. If you are not fishing, are you following Jesus?" That's why we are trying to engage people in existing churches and

training them to become disciples, not become believers, because the Great Commission doesn't say, "Go and make believers." It says, "Go and make disciples." So, we want to make disciples, rather than make believers. We commission them to go and teach, continue teaching the way we have learned from 2 Timothy 2:2. So, they go back, and they start teaching the same way.

*Jonathan:* How have you seen God at work through this training?

*Sanford:* Over the last four years, we started seeing that 18,000 people were baptized over the last four years through this training, and 4,000 house churches have been planted within the last four years. In that way, we see that the local people are the biggest part of reaching out to unreached and planting new house churches.

*[Video ends]*

*Jonathan:* As you can see, the local church is key to accomplishing the mission that we've been given in the Great Commission. What we want to see is healthy churches that are engaging their communities, both demonstrating and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and seeing those communities transformed.

I have the opportunity now to introduce you to another one of our partners in Northern India. His name is Ramesh, and he's the Executive Director of Cooperative Outreach of India, based in Delhi. We've been partnering with Ramesh for a few years now, sending short-term teams and being involved in their ministry. We were able to have a Skype conversation with him as well this week and just talk a little bit more about how we are partnering with them and partnering with the local church in northwestern India. So, I'd like you guys to turn and focus again on the screens and hear what our brother Ramesh had to say.

*[Video begins]*

*Jonathan:* How would you describe the needs in India?

*Ramesh:* It has been a kind of spiritual emptiness in our country. The reason is people are very religious; they are searching God, and they are searching God in everything. For that reason, there are more than 33 million gods and goddesses, and people worship anything and everything. They worship trees and plants and reptiles and animals. Anything they see, they start worshipping, and that's how they've been searching God in different places. So, there has been a kind of spiritual hollowness, emptiness in the minds of people. The need is great here, and in that backdrop, we have been serving the communities, going into villages, equipping the people and training those people and releasing them into the ministry, so they continue to plant the churches in unreached areas. This is how the ministry has been basically going on right now.

*Jonathan:* How are you training the church in India to make disciples?

*Ramesh:* We have different kind of trainings. Like, I've been going on in northern part of India. We have been having a small, formal Bible school where we train people for three months, and then it's residential classes, and after that they get into the communities, the villages, and they...they have to plant the churches. They work there, and again, they come back for three months, and again, they are trained, and then they are sent again to the communities. So, this is how the process goes, and we expect that when these leaders are prepared, they will have prepared at least two leaders with them in the first year time. So,

this is a task they are given, and they need to identify those leaders, and they need to train and take those leaders along with them.

*Jonathan:* What is your process for sending out church planters?

*Ramesh:* Each church planter, basically, has been given responsibility to reach out. We give them about five to seven villages. That's where they can travel. So, like these 30 new church planters like they have come in and these 30 church planters, they will go, and they will multiply those villages. So, that's how they would be able to, basically, cover over 150 to 200 villages they'll be covering, and each village consists of people about 700 to 1,000 people.

*Jonathan:* What impact are these church plants having in the villages?

*Ramesh:* Because the church is meeting their social needs, churches meeting their spiritual needs, villages are responding to the gospel, and they've been coming in droves to the Lord. Brook Hills has come in in order to partner and provide that much needed support at very right time, at the time when we need it to help our people grow in leadership and discipleship, and encourage women and youth, and that is a very right assistance we have got from Brook Hills, and we are so grateful to the Lord for this partnership. In the days to come, we will be imparting this leadership training to the men folk from the villages and leadership training to the women folk in the villages. We will be continuing to train the youth and children as well, and this is how we've been trying to impact the whole community in northern part of India.

*[Video ends]*

*Jonathan:* Church, this is how we are serving the people of India. Through your sacrificial giving to the church budget, we are able to partner to share the Word, show the Word and teach the Word, and therefore serve the world, serve the people, specifically, of Northern India. However, we know that our giving isn't enough. We also must go. We must give, and we must go.

I want to introduce you to Jim Foxworthy, aka "Fox." Fox is a member of our faith family, and he also owns his own consulting firm. He works part-time with the Global Disciple-Making team, helping facilitate short-term mission teams and businesses mission. Fox, can you tell us a little bit about how we can do effective short-term mission teams, and how we are building that in our partnerships in India?

*Fox:* Sure, Jonathan. The first thing that we all need to be doing is be in prayer. We need to be in prayer and asking God to show us where He might want us to serve in another context. Secondly, it's very important to have trained leaders, and we provide the training for leaders that lead your short-term trips, and if anybody would like to be a leader and hasn't been trained, just see us, and we'll let you know how that can be accomplished.

The third thing is really looking at preparation, and preparation is done in three ways. We expect each team leader to prepare the team spiritually, and we expect them to prepare the team in a cultural setting, and also logistically and what needs to happen to make sure that you get there and get home. The third thing is to go with an attitude, and it's an attitude of showing up and seeing what God has in store for you. Too many times we go, "Well, what are we going to do?" or go with our agenda, and if that's our agenda, then it's about us, and it's not about our partners on the ground or about doing God's work where we are going,

and a lot of times that does more harm than good. So, we need to not forget that the real purpose of our going out is to be the light of Christ and to be the hands and feet of Christ.

Then, in speaking of India, how that might look in India, we're going to be looking at opportunities to do surveys for where water wells may go, and we may be involved in Compassion sites or seeing Compassion's sites, working in slum ministry, working in a battered women's home and an orphanage there, and also doing some teaching of pastors. So, there are a number of different things. That's just to name a few, but a number of different things that I know are outlined to do. Again, it's really about just being flexible, and being flexible and trusting God that He will use us in the way He wants us to be used in that context, so that we can make a difference in His name.

*Jonathan:* Fox, can you also tell us a little bit about how we can follow through on our two percent commitment...our commitment to spend two percent of this year in another context around the world. What does that process look like?

*Fox:* Sure. Well, we have 31 trips posted right now, and we have seven of those 31 to India. We can only schedule or put trips on the schedule where we have really good partnerships and where we know we can live up to that commitment, because if we don't live up to that commitment, we are hurting our partners. When we promise them that are going to bring a team, and they go to the expense and to the effort to arrange for that, and if we have to cancel those, that harms them. However, with that, if people have looked on the calendar and don't see a date that works for you and your small group wants to go, or if you have at least five people that are truly committed to going, let us know, and we'll try to contact one of our partners and see if there's a possibility of creating a trip for you.

*Jonathan:* Thanks, Fox. So, this is how we're serving the world around the world. Specifically today, we're talking about India. This is how we show the Word, share the Word, teach the Word, and thus serve the world. We've talked about doing this for the sake of the lost, for the sake of the poor, for the sake of the church, but ultimately, it's for the sake of Christ. We've talked about how we can give and how our giving is being used in this way. We've talked about how to go, but we haven't talked about how we can also be praying. Prayer is something we can do anytime, anywhere...we can do right here. I want us to take a few minutes this morning, and I want us to be in prayer...intentional prayer...for the partnerships that we've talked about, for the work that God is doing in India through this faith family, through you. So, we're going to spend the next few minutes in an intentional time of prayer. Let's pray together as a faith family.

Father, we praise you for your great grace and mercy toward us. We praise you that we have been born into a context where we have heard the gospel. We know that we have nothing to do with where we were born. We praise you that we've been born into a context where we have not had to worry about water, because it has been available to us. We know that you have given us this great grace and mercy, not so that we might sit back and soak it in, but so that we might spend ourselves making your grace and mercy known to the ends of the earth.

So, we pray this morning that you would use us for that purpose. We confess, Lord God, that you alone are God. You alone are worthy of worship in this room, and you alone are worthy of worship in India. None of those millions of gods or goddesses are worthy of glory and honor and devotion. You alone are worthy.

Hence, we pray that you would use us to make your great name known. We pray that in the process, God, you would help people who are starving or thirsty to live, to survive, to thrive.

We pray that you would do it in a way that your gospel is front and center every step. We pray that you would use us to serve our brothers and sisters in churches in India well.

God, help us to serve them in a way that empowers, strengthens, enables, equips them to do just as Sanford said, to make disciples of all nations. We pray for these unreached people groups, that this year will hear the gospel proclaimed for the first time in these villages. God, we pray that people would come to Christ. We pray that Jesus is Lord would be spoken in the Karuk's language, and we pray, knowing that there's coming a day when the Karuk's language will be singing your praises, for your salvation. We praise you for the privilege you've given us of being a part of making that a reality, and so we pray, God, that you would spend us for your sake in Birmingham and India and everywhere in between. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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