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Working together with
Karen Clayton
In loving memory of
our beloved brother
RON CLAYTON

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india ink

“IF THE WORLD HATES YOU...”

The title of this article is taken from John 15:18-19. In this passage, Jesus said, *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”* The apostle Paul would state it this way; *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”* (2 Timothy 3:12).

One of the questions that I am often asked about the work in India deals with persecution. Concerned Christians want to know if we are in danger when we visit India, but they also want to know if their Indian brethren are in danger as they endeavor to live for Jesus Christ. In our last newsletter, it was mentioned that our brethren were experiencing some persecution, as Hindus in two different locations were trying to interfere with the work that Christians were engaging in. This persecution was pretty direct, as Hindus tried to stop Christians from being able to worship, & in another place they tried to stop a dear sister from having her after-school program for the children in the leper colony.

Sometimes, however, the persecution seems to be designed to discourage Christians & make them feel as though it simply isn't worth it to follow Jesus. You will see a picture in this newsletter of what looks like a garbage dump, & it is. This garbage dump was created in what was a “Christian cemetery.” Supposedly, leaders in this area felt they needed a place to dump garbage & chose this cemetery as the place. Families were allowed to remove headstones, but the bodies were not exhumed, & now the bodies of loved ones are simply being covered in garbage. We were also given information about local government leaders in another area who are working to shut down churches because of inadequate parking. These are simply efforts to slow down, if not completely stop, the influence that Jesus Christ is having in this country. Please pray.

We should think about the apostles of Christ & their reaction when they were being persecuted. They rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41). If the gospel of Christ were not having an impact, these things would not be happening. Because thousands are responding to the saving message of Jesus, the enemies of Christ feel the need to try & stop it. Our brethren in India are remaining strong, & we also are committed to continuing the work. Paul said, *“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, for not all have faith.”* (II Thess. 3:1,2)

– Steve Snider –

A Life-Changing Moment

I don't know where you were or what you were doing on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, but I will never forget that evening. Many can recall where they were on 9/11, or when JFK was shot. I choose to remember, not a tragedy, but an incredible moment of blessing.

Nalgonda-Kethe Palle, India would not be a place to remember. But that night, I distinctly remember trying to navigate through a field of cow dung as I approached a tiny, little building. It was small by any standard. I would describe it as a building that could accommodate a Volkswagen Beetle, if you had a giant shoehorn.

Once inside the claustrophobic concrete building, I made my way to the front, tiptoeing like a ballerina, to get to the makeshift podium without stepping on any of the gathered crowd. What I remember most about the 31 people sitting there were their beaming smiles. A third of the crowd were children & I was instantly smitten. There were even more brethren outside the door leaning in to hear. The whole scene was like a fire code violation on steroids. One floodlight illuminated the interior of the dusty little room. The humidity inside the cement covered gray box was stifling. Even the mosquitoes seemed to gasp for air before dive-bombing for their evening meal, & I have the scars to prove it.

It was then that my translator informed me that the preacher, who was one of my students at IBS, had paid for the entire church building out of his own pocket. He never asked us for a dime. By the grace of God, he had planted the congregation, paid for the building's construction & taught all its membership.

Please understand when I tell you that this was not a wealthy man. To the contrary, he was a very poor brother in Christ. I don't think we can grasp the depths of his financial poverty. However, I wonder if we will ever know the true depths of his love for God. I want to know, but I'm convicted by my own trust issues. My personal selfishness, as a westerner, has thus far prevented me from reaching the heights of faith that Brother Vijay Raju has displayed. I just cannot go on like before.

I, here & now, repent. Brother Vijay has changed this man called Jay. I want to have that level of love. The same sacrificial love that Jesus showed on the cross is what he desires for us. That is where real faith lives.

Luke 21:3-4; Jesus said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

That kind of sacrifice changes us. It makes us more like HIM, & it changes the world. Lord, help us all to become sacrificial & cheerful givers, who live to have the heart of God. To God be all glory, honor & praise. Please pray for Vijay & for me.

– Jay Justus –

Wise as Serpents, Harmless as Doves

Recently, the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi came to Washington & met with President Donald Trump in the oval office. I wonder if religion & religious freedom in India were even mentioned. Ironically, back in October 2024, I & several of our team were in India in Mr. Modi's home state of Gujarat; home of Mahatma Gandhi. We had no problem teaching & preaching there, but we were aware of the irony of the restrictions on how we must do our work while we are in India. We always remember the charge Jesus gave the apostles in Matthew 10:16. "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents & harmless as doves." The meaning is simple. Carefully do your work, but try to do no harm.

Workers from churches of Christ cannot get a missionary visa to India. We cannot live in India as "missionaries." We know that over 70% of the population is Hindu, & another 13% is Muslim. These two religions dominate the cities, towns & farming villages of the nation. They are not our enemies, but they do strongly object to our winning over large numbers of their members, as they view it, to a "foreign religion". They believe that missionaries always bribe innocent, ignorant, poor people to leave the religion of their family & join a cult. So, in India we are in a similar position to the apostles when Jesus gave them this charge to be wise but harmless. We must be effective but careful.

We go to India on tourist visas, which means by law we must be invited by a citizen before we can speak in gospel meetings, Bible classes & in homes. In Rajasthan in north India, we must be careful to meet inside buildings & homes where passersby along the street don't overhear what we are teaching & report us to the authorities. We avoid using loudspeakers, & we do not put our names & faces on banners, flyers or anything that might be used to falsely claim that we are "doing mission work on a tourist visa." We are obeying all the laws of India in everything we do, however, if we are falsely accused, we are at a great disadvantage. Therefore, we must be wise to avoid the dangers of bringing on unnecessary false accusations.

In the southern states, we can be more free, but we try to avoid bringing unwanted attention to our activities. In fact, workers on other teams, who have worked in India have recently been turned away from entering India & might not be able to enter the country in the future. Often, all it takes is just an accusation & the work is hindered.

It would not be wise to be careless about our work for the Lord in India. We always feel safe with our Indian brothers in Christ traveling with us everywhere, because they steer us away from many potentially dangerous situations.

Ron Clayton was careful to train us to do this work in a way that is effective & under the radar of those who would oppose us. We all try to be both wise & harmless.

– Ben Renegar –

KAREN'S KORNER

Sister Karen is spending most of her time with her son, Jeff. Sadly, she is unable to continue writing her regular articles for the newsletter. Please pray for her. Hopefully in the future she will be able to write an occasional article.

This month we will once again offer some helpful thoughts from various writers.



“Don’t bother to give God instructions; just report for duty.” - Corrie Ten Boom

“The gospel frees us from demanding our own way, because nothing we desire to obtain is worth sinning against such love & kindness.” - Elyse Fitzpatrick

“We humans must confess, ‘I am because he is.’ Only God can say, ‘I AM WHO I AM’.” - Jen Wilkin

“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” - C.S. Lewis

“The heart cannot love what the mind does not know.” - Jen Wilkin

“God’s love isn’t based on me. It’s simply placed on me. And it’s the place from which I should live...” - Lysa TerKeurst

“The man who would truly know God must give time to Him.” - A.W. Tozer

“Aim at heaven & you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.” - C.S. Lewis

“Being in a hurry. Getting to the next thing without fully entering the thing in front of me. I cannot think of a single advantage I’ve ever gained from being in a hurry. But a thousand broken & missed things, tens of thousands, lie in the wake of all the rushing.... Through all that haste I thought I was making up time. It turns out I was throwing it away.” - Ann Voskamp

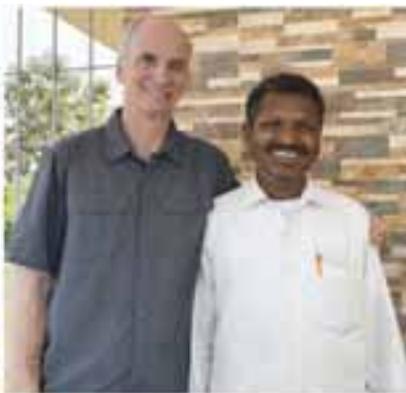
“...Sometimes the happiest ending isn’t the one you keep longing for, but something you absolutely cannot see from where you are.” - Shauna Niequist

“We must not confuse the command to love with the disease to please.” - Lysa TerKeurst

“The best & most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.” Helen Keller

“Your talent is God’s gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God.” - Leo Buscaglia

“Kindness is a language the blind can see & the deaf can hear.” - Mark Twain



Garbage dump over Christian cemetery. Jay Justus with brother Vijay & the meeting in the church building he built.



India Bible Camp. 3 days of group discussions & Bible classes, along with lots of games & fellowship. We expect to do several sessions through the Summer. VBS has started with more than 130 programs scheduled & more to come.

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CHURCH OF CHRIST
INDIA MISSIONS
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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Dangerous Support

Americans are probably the most generous people on earth. And Christian Americans are the cream of the crop. We tend to try & help anyone we can. This is especially true when it involves evangelistic efforts.

Unfortunately, there are some very unscrupulous people who take advantage of that generosity. There are a large number of these people living in India, who target American brethren, to ask for support. They often begin simply by telling their story & asking for prayers. They will then beg their target to come to India & visit their work. When it is explained that they cannot come to India, that's when the requests for financial assistance begin. It will likely start out with requests for Bibles & a small work fund. When help is given, then the requests will likely get much larger. Sometimes these Indians are indeed brethren, but often they are not even members of the church. They might not even believe in Jesus. They are scam artists!

Please do not misunderstand me. There are many thousands of faithful, godly brethren in India who are doing the work the right way. There is nothing wrong with them asking for help. But shouldn't there always be accountability with how the Lord's money is used? That is why we discourage all our Indian brethren from directly contacting people in the USA, asking for support.

We advise you generous, wonderful brethren that if you are contacted by someone in India, please do not send funds directly. Rather, send through a trusted person or mission team, who can go and verify that the person is truly what they claim to be. That being done, you can confidently give.

– Robert Hall –

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INDIAN SPICE

India Bible Camp

Many of us have precious memories of attending a Bible camp or Christian retreat in our youth. For me, those moments provided me with lifelong friendships & a unique environment to develop a deepening faith.

India Missions has dreamed of having such a place for churches to gather their youth in India. A place was needed where young people can grow in their faith, build leadership skills, self-confidence & character.

On April 17 of this year, we started using our preacher training facility at Pangulur to fulfil such a dream. This campus in Pangulur, located in Andhra Pradesh state, in addition to ongoing preacher training, now serves as a gathering place for teens from different cities & villages to spend a few days together to develop their passion to serve God & one another. Each summer we are planning to have several sessions to help develop these precious young people. We are very thankful to God for providing us an opportunity to develop a lasting impact on India's youth.

– Joe Evans –