

Ministry Report From Sherman Driver

March 16, 2009

March 8th – (*This takes up where Sherman left off in his last newsletter.*) We were not able to attend the church service Dineep had planned in the morning. I learned later that there were two new believers who had just been converted from Hindu families and Dineep did not want them to connect what had just taken place in their lives with something that appeared western. I appreciated so much his sensitivity and wisdom – desiring that their faith be founded on the Word of God they had just believed. Daniel and I spent over an hour praying and reading Scripture which brought great joy to our hearts. Later in the afternoon, Dineep had arranged for me to speak to approximately 30 pastors and church planters. Immediately after this meeting we went back to the hotel and packed our bags and ate some dinner at a local restaurant (a place where few of you would dare to eat!) I had been promised by the hotel that some laundry would be finished and back in my room by 5 p.m., which did not happen. Here again I learned some needed negotiating skills with the nationals. By 8:15 p.m. Dineep arrived with a rental car so we could all travel together to Cochi City. If you think driving in India in the day time is hair-raising, try driving at night when some of the trucks and cars do not put their lights on until they see you coming! We had a very close encounter at an intersection that made us realize the Lord's hand was upon us and we were protected from what could have been very serious.

We arrived at Sister Mary's home in Cochi City about 1:30 a.m. What a kind sister in the Lord! She insisted I have the bedroom with an adjoining bathroom (rare in India except with the higher cast). After a quick shower, I was in bed and asleep.

March 9th – An absolute splendid day from beginning to end. Sister Mary started our day with coffee in my room and a full breakfast down stairs. At 9:30 a.m. we went to Pastor Solomon's church just a mile away and were greeted by Lamech. As is the tradition, coffee or tea was served in the pastor's home before starting the service. This was a larger church that could easily seat 200. They asked me to speak for two hours which gave me the opportunity to address lesson 17 on our Personal relationship with Christ followed by the Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture, lesson 31. A scrumptious meal was served afterwards.

Daniel, Dineep, Lamech and I then headed down to a hotel near the ocean for a cup of coffee and a chance to talk together. It gave me the opportunity to express our vision for the CPM in India. There is a warm reception to the ideas and it solicited some helpful suggestions from the brothers. We headed back to Sister Mary's for a brief rest and preparation for the evening service at Dr. Abraham's. I spoke on the value of intimacy with God. The service was followed by a meal and some discussion over the CPM. I sensed some denominational 'pet peeves' that did not produce any tangible or helpful suggestions. During the service and meal, it rained quite hard, a rain that was much needed. Returning to Sister Mary's I went to my room because of the early rise and because the power was out (a nightly occurrence) and I needed to be up at the latest by 4:15 a.m.

March 10th – Daniel, Dineep and I rose at 4 a.m. to head back to Trivandrum. Once again, it was great not to be fighting traffic as we got out of Cochi City. Because this town is along the coast

and the road we took followed the coastline, we stopped at one of the fishing villages and bought some fish to have for lunch at Dineep's. We arrived at Dineep's and spent several hours with him and his family. He and I had about an hour together exploring the possibilities of expanding the use of the CPM in Karala and Orissa. Around 3 p.m. we left for the airport and flight to Hyderabad through Bengaluru. Then we had a long drive out to Mount Opera Hotel near to where the CPM Conference will be held. This place is touted as the largest and best hotel and theme park in the whole area around Hyderabad – yes, sort of a glorified Motel 6!:) Again, I was so thankful for a clean bed and shower, plus a quiet place to meet with the Lord.

March 11th – I had a very good rest in an AC cottage room on the top of Mount Opera. After a walk in the cool morning air and taking some pictures, I went back into my room to order some breakfast. Here is where I discovered that different understanding of words causes major problems in making a simple order! Following the hotel menu, I ordered Eggs, scrambled (with toast and preserves). The eggs scrambled was not the problem, it was the toast. The young man taking the order thought I had ordered extra toast – enough to feed four people! When the Page Boy came back with the bill, I was charged accordingly. Anyway, we got it figured out and the bill reduced and everyone was happy.

It was good to have a morning when things were not so rushed. Pastor Timothy picked me up around 10:45 a.m. and we headed to his facility for physically and mentally challenged children about six miles away. His people care for about twenty five of these children; some are very difficult, yet they are treated with love and tenderness.

Twelve pastors from the area had gathered for the GCP conference. Most of them are training other men in the basics of Scripture, but not in the principles of church planting. I sense this is a great opportunity to establish a fresh understanding of God's purpose for them as leaders. We started the first session around 11 a.m. and had two one hour sessions back to back on the early church and Paul's missionary journeys. At 1 p.m. we had lunch (some true Indian food with real heat) and another bottle of water. I have been drinking as much as possible for several reasons and I thank the Lord for keeping me healthy thus far.

We gathered again at 3 p.m. for three more sessions and personal study by the men in between. The teaching for the day concluded at 7 p.m. By this time my physical energy tank was just about on empty. But the connection I have made with these men has been wonderful! Though they have Bible training, I see them catching the spirit of Paul's passion of church planting and a much stronger commitment to the authority and sufficiency of God's Word. Some of their questions have to do more with form than Biblical function, but other questions and answers show they are understanding the Biblical principles and wanting to grasp them more fully.

A very sad event happened in the mid-afternoon. Timothy is building a wall around the property where these children are cared for and where he trains pastors. Many of the nearby village people have used the back portion of his land for a "short-cut" to the main road. Realizing that once the wall is complete, they will not have this short-cut available to them, the village people had the local water district turn off the water supply to the property in retaliation. You can imagine the critical need for water in caring for the children and using this facility for training pastors. Timothy immediately left to speak with the district police chief (with some sort of

bribe) hoping that he would have the water turned back on. As of the time I left for the hotel at nearly 10 p.m., the water was still not on.

March 12th – I praise the Lord for another good sleep. Since Kissory (one of the young men who work in this ministry) is not picking me up until 10 a.m., it has given me time to study in preparation for today's sessions and to spend time with the Lord. Another of the men came by around 9 a.m. looking for Timothy because a sister had come to take him to a higher authority regarding the water problem. I had to tell them I had not heard anything from him. By 10:20 a.m., Timothy and one of the young men who drive for him arrived and we headed for the facility. One thing I am learning is "Indian time" which is never by the clock! It is when we feel we are ready to start and everyone is here☺

Our first two sessions: the first was seeing how the church is strengthened in the Book of Acts and through Paul's letters. In the second we helped them understand the three groups of Paul's letters and the purpose for writing each one. It seems that the accumulation of teaching over these two days is having an enormous effect on them. They admit that all the Bible teaching they have received previously has not given them such a comprehensive understanding of the church and the need to establish and strengthen the churches that have been planted. I can see hearts being enlightened by God's Word and a renewed desire to go back to their churches and do things differently. When we broke for lunch, there was an ecstatic moment for me when Timothy (who has been training hundreds of pastors) said that he felt this teaching was desperately needed by every pastor he has taught and he wants to hold a conference for five hundred to one thousand pastors that he knows personally! This will be possible after the revised manual is translated into Telegu and Tamil.

After lunch and some time to rest, we started again just after 3 p.m. For the afternoon we assigned them the lessons on the roles in the church. It was evident that as they had studied each lesson, new insights and understanding in God's Word was capturing their attention. For this we praise God! By 8 p.m. we had only managed to get through half of the lessons, but there was a wonderful learning spirit among them and they were asking very insightful questions that showed they were thinking deeply about the Scriptures assigned in each lesson. A few of the men were linking other Scriptures that were not listed in the lesson, realizing there was continuity throughout Scripture on these subjects.

While Timothy asked me to stay for dinner, I chose to go back to my hotel room since I felt exhausted by the heat and mental concentration. At the hotel, I did have a small dinner and some delicious chocolate ice cream! Then it was off to shower and bed. This time I finally figured out how to use the hot water☺ The previous night had been a cold shower which was acceptable because of the heat, but the hot shower was relaxing and refreshing.

March 13th – Today became rather disjointed by attention being focused on restoring the water supply to the property. They were about an hour late in picking me up since Timothy was seeking to present some legal documents showing that taxes and other government fees had been paid and nothing was outstanding. The first sessions were devoted to giving the men opportunity to finish presenting what they had studied the day before. There was much discussion over the roles of husbands, wives, and men and women in the church. It was evident that God's Word

had raised questions regarding their practices in India and a renewed desire to follow the Biblical model.

We broke for lunch around 2 p.m. My appetite was fading and my stomach started to feel uneasy, so I only ate a small amount. As the afternoon progressed, the feeling increased and I began wondering if I had picked up a bug, or through the food I was eating. I asked the Lord for special strength so I could continue.

After lunch and a short rest, I did a separate teaching on husband, wife and family relationships based on the questions and comments that had been shared earlier. A very interesting fact came up that while the divorce rate in India is about 1%, relationships tend to be “co-existent” rather than mutual love and respect. I sought to draw the parallel between Christ and the Church and our family relationships. This became a very interactive time with many good questions and comments that resulted in a deeper understanding of God’s model and the need to implement these principles in their homes. They also began to see how this would impact other families in the local church. It was very interesting that during this teaching, a government official came to inspect the property and sat through much of the teaching. We had a sense that God was going to use her as an instrument in resolving the water issue.

After the government official left, Timothy and others had to leave for about two hours for another visit to the police chief’s office. This gave me the opportunity to spend time with some of the men individually, answering from Scripture many of their questions. All during this time I was feeling more and more unsettled, wishing I could just go back to my room and lie down. Though Timothy again offered to give me some dinner, I asked to be excused so I could return to the hotel. Kissor kindly took me back by 9 p.m. and I showered and went to bed.

March 14 – Thank the Lord for a very good sleep--- I feel much better this morning. I ordered coffee, toast and omelet for breakfast. I will be checking out in a half hour because tonight I will be staying at OM. I know that the prayers of so many at home are being heard and answered. This is cause for great thanksgiving and a mind to press on to accomplish the work God has for us to do.

Timothy and Kissor picked me up at 10:45 a.m. and drove me back to the facility. We had two sessions back-to-back on the order of the family and its relationship to the church as a family. The emphasis was on the impact of our personal relationship with Christ, our marriage and family relationships in the church. The second session was on God’s call, testing and equipping of the church planter. Both messages were warmly received and seemed to answer many questions that were still in their minds. These sessions were immediately followed by a celebration lunch (in other words, lots of food!) All but one of the pastors had to immediately leave for home via train or bus. Some had come as far away as Chennai which is about 700 Kilometers (435 miles).

It was touching to hear many of them say how the conference had totally changed the way they will do ministry in the future. Most do not have elders in the church who share the responsibility of leadership and shepherding the flock. Based on their study, they want to change this. They began to see the importance of Paul’s instruction to Titus to have older men disciple younger

men and older women disciple younger women. One pastor was very distressed over a situation but after I explained how Paul's instruction would solve the situation and at the same time protect those involved, he was greatly relieved. Over these four days, I have had many conversations that drew us close together and provided a bond that is very special. While the parting was regrettable, I sensed a renewed desire to really live out the principles of God truth in the NT.

I will just add a note or two on other things that might interest you. After the initial shock over the driving and traffic, there was not much else that bothered me. I have placed my life in the Lord hands and that has made the difference. Humanly speaking, the dangers are real and great. We have seen several accidents and they all involve fatalities. Most of those I have driven with drive at break-neck speeds and come within a hairs breath of oncoming vehicles---- It is insane! One might think that these accidents would cause them to slow down and be more careful, but it is a way of life that seems to be part of the culture.

After days of negotiating with local officials and spending hundreds of dollars for water to be tanked in plus payment of 'bribes', Timothy finally got permission to reconnect the water line. The only difference was that the previous line was a 2" pipe and they were being allowed to reconnect with only a 1/2" pipe. This means they will need to manage this resource carefully to keep up with their needs. Timothy also has three children from Orissa whose parents have been killed by the persecution there. In spite of their loss, they are happy and willing servants in helping with the handicap children.

After pictures and many goodbyes, we left to return to Hyderabad and OM. The last pastor remaining asked that we stop at a shop on the way back to purchase a sari for his wife. He had been convicted by the teaching on the Biblical relationship between husband and wife that he wanted to make this purchase as a token of his change of heart☺ We gladly made the stop at a little village that is known for its cotton and silk saris. Since I was waiting to make my purchases for home until later in the trip when I have given away more of the CPM's, I sat in the car and watched Indian life play out before me. Most of these people struggle to make enough income just to survive. It seems in their nature to run high strung. There was a small shop across the street with two hospital crosses on it. It didn't look any more like a hospital than a small variety shop. Suddenly an auto-auto drove up with a young man in it who had somehow been poisoned. Within seconds there was a crowd of nearly a hundred people around the auto-auto expressing a wailing that I have never heard before. My heart went out to them as people with no hope and without the true God. I had a desire in my heart that in some way I could speak comfort to them, but of course could not. As I prayed, Kissor (our driver) sized up the situation and went over suggesting they transfer the young man to a jeep-type vehicle, give the young man some oxygen and get on their way to a hospital in Hyderabad. This suggestion must have won their confidence and within minutes they carried out the suggestion. But the crowd did not disperse. They moved down the street to a Hindu temple where the wailing and commotion gathered volume. I realized through this incident the importance of the gospel being lived out and proclaimed by the indigenous people and not by a foreigner. God's wisdom in Kissor did more for the moment than I could have done with learning the language and ten thousand words.

We then proceeded back to highway and got on our way to Hyderabad. A city of millions of people knows grid-lock like I have never seen. Timothy wanted me to have dinner at his home before going to OM for the night. I was supposed to be at OM at 8 p.m., but we did not reach his home until 8:15. He lives on the third floor of an apartment complex. I had met his wife Lilly at the airport but now I was able to meet his daughter Grace. Lilly had been busy during the day and was not able to prepare a meal, so she suggested we go to a Chinese restaurant instead. While it was very delicious, the food was decidedly Indian in flavor! We reached OM at 10:30 and a young man knew I was coming and showed me to my room.

March 15 – The night was reasonably good even without A/C. I had been told by Timothy that I would be speaking at the church service held at OM this morning. Not knowing who or when someone would come and get me in the morning, I got up early and spent time in preparation for a message. I heard that the service began at 9 a.m., so by 8:50 I decided to go outside and noticed dozens of students and medical workers walking toward the auditorium. So off I went in that direction hoping that someone might be looking for me. I went into the auditorium which may be able to seat four or five hundred and found a seat on the side near the front. Somehow the message about me preaching got mixed up and it turned out that a brother from Portland, OR was preaching! That was fine with me. I had been speaking for four days straight and appreciated the rest.

There are hundreds of students here at various levels of Bible and Theology study as well as medical students and those who come for short stints to work in the OM hospital. It was wonderful to see so many young people together in worship (all in English), and very much with a western flavor. After the service I met people from the States and England. We were served a cup of tea which promoted conversation outside around the auditorium. Then Pastor Paothang Haokip took me to his office where we had a good conversation about the CPM and my purpose for the meeting tomorrow. We then went to the cafeteria for lunch where everyone eats together. Paothang had meetings in the afternoon which gave me the opportunity to get caught up on rest and writing.

I met many of the students later in the afternoon and some of those who are working in the hospital. A few have come from GA, CA, Singapore and many parts of India. At dinner I got talking to Pastor Paothang's wife and discovered she comes from Mizoram (where I'll be going at the end of my trip.) She asked me many questions about our ministry and why I had come by myself. She did not hide her concern about my traveling alone from Aizawl to Lunglei, so she was relieved that someone was meeting me at the Aizawl Airport and traveling with me to Lunglei. I did not realize in our conversation how deeply this meant so much to her until we walked outside and she poured her heart out in tears. She wanted to know what caused my condition (CP) which brought another flood of tears – touched by a simple willingness to serve the Lord in spite of what she saw. She promised to pray for me and I did the same for her. These are moments we experience that prove the depth of relationship we have in Christ which cannot be understood by the world. Would that we saw this depth of concern for one another being lived out more deeply everywhere, and especially in the US!

Prayer and Praise:

- Sherman began having flashes of light in one eye, which is most likely a small retina tear (this happened to him also about a year ago.) PTL---after two days, the flashes stopped, but left him with floaters. Pray that no damage has been done to the retina.
- He has only had one incident with feeling unsettled in the stomach, which is a huge praise! Pray that he continues to be healthy.
- Pray for his safety on the roads. Praise that in that one incident they were saved from what could have been a nasty accident.
- Continue to pray for his stamina---spiritual, physical, emotional. He called to say that the next two days (17th and 18th) will be all day meetings and a graduation on the evening of the 18th at which he is the speaker!
- Pray for all those who are being ministered to---that God would continue to open their hearts to His Word in a way that they've never experienced before.
- Praise for the way these wonderful people have been ministering to Sherman!