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

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india ink

Surviving Life on Earth

On the afternoon of June 12, in the northwestern state of Gujarat, India, Air India Flight 171 crashed, shortly after takeoff. Of the 242 passengers & crew onboard, there was only 1 survivor. His name is Viswash Kumar Ramesh. Among those who lost their lives was his brother & a former chief minister of Gujarat. Was it luck? Karma? A miracle? He was in an exit row seat & the door broke open, so he jumped out & limped to safety.

Which seat on an airplane is the safest? Some say the front of the plane because on takeoff sometimes the rear can drag the runway & cause the plane to crash. Others say the middle seat in the middle of the plane is safer because if there is a crash there is more distance between your seat & all the rest of the seats on the plane. Many suggest that the rear of the plane is safer, if it were to crash during landing. The reasoning is that the front & middle of the plane would take the brunt of the impact, & by the time the seats in the back hit the ground they would be moving more slowly & have less of a shock. Which seat may actually be safer depends on the cause of the crash & many other complicated factors.

While air travel is still the safest means of transportation, on every flight the crew makes sure every passenger is given instructions on what to do & not do in the event of a crash or other emergency. They know that in life the unexpected can happen at any time. That is why everyone must be prepared to do the right thing at that moment.

Is Ramesh a Christian? News sources say he, like most people in India, is a Hindu. We pray that he, like the many misguided souls of India & the world, will be among those who find the way which leads to eternal life. "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate & broad is the way that leads to destruction, & there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate & difficult is the way which leads to life, & there are few who find it." (Matthew 7:13-14).

Thank you for helping us teach Christ & His Word to the hungry, honest-hearted souls of India who must believe in the true God & make the right move at the right time to be saved.

So, what is the safest seat on an airliner? If you are a faithful Christian, then any seat is safest. Whether one survives a plane crash or not, they are safe in the arms of Jesus, who will travel with them through the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4).

– Ben Renegar –

india notes

A GOOD QUESTION

Recently, while visiting a congregation to update them about the work in India, a dear sister in Christ asked me a question that I thought was important & worth sharing with other donors. She said she makes a monthly donation for a specific work we do in India & always gets a thank you letter. However, she said the thank you note does not specify where her funds were going to be used, & she was concerned that her donation might not be going where she desired. I thought that was a good question, so I want to try & explain how the process works.

We genuinely appreciate every single donation that is made for this work. Every month a different team member will write a thank you note that will be sent to all donors for that month. This is obviously a generic thank you letter. We sincerely want donors to know how much we appreciate their support, but it would be a monumental task to send individual notes to each donor. Because of the nature of the letter, it is not possible to state in the letter what the donation will be used for.

However (this is important), we do have categories for each work or project we are involved in & all the funds given will be earmarked to be used exclusively for whatever category the donor desires. For example, we have categories for Bibles, bicycles, widows, children, church buildings, benevolence, etc. Many simply make donations & tell us to use them where it is most needed. But, if your donation is to be used in a certain area, we will use the funds for that purpose.

I hope this explanation helps. We want all of you to feel good about your donations & to feel confident that the funds are being used properly. If at any time you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. As we always say, we could not do what we are doing in India without your support. While you may not be able to physically go to India, you are very much a part of the work, & because of that we want you to be informed. God bless you in everything you do in the service of our Lord.

– Steve Snider –

A LOOK AT INDIA

A Home Run for India

Billy Beane was a first-round pick for the New York Mets in 1984. The potential star flamed out after bouncing around with 4 teams in 5 years. He ended his career with only three home runs, 29 RBIs & a sad lifetime batting average of .220. Any baseball fan would consider that a very weak showing in the major leagues. However, we should never allow anyone to define us by our failures.

Billy Beane hung up his cleats after only 5 years to become a baseball scout, & after the 1997 season was made the general manager of the Oakland Athletics. He developed a new way to evaluate baseball players & changed the entire Major League with his unique findings. His statistical analysis of the game (sabermetrics) changed the sport & was the basis for the hit movie Moneyball. I love baseball & I love that story of redemption.

Never allow anyone to define you by your failures, because “sin no longer has mastery over us” (Rom. 6:14). We are children of God which means, we win, & I love how God changes us in the process.

I love India Missions for the same reason. A couple of years ago we changed the way we do business in India. We still work from dawn till “dark:30” to see that the Gospel of Jesus is proclaimed throughout the nation of India. What has changed is that we are more experienced & much wiser. Brother Clayton did not have access to the new technology available today. We have learned a lot & are better stewards today than we were just 4 years ago, when Brother Ron passed away.

It is amazing what can be measured. I'm proud to say that we now have an amazing data base that tracks almost everything we do in India. We get monthly reports from our preachers & the churches with which they work that are verified by GPS photos. Our team leaders document their monthly classes with the same GPS precision. Everything from Bible studies, to baptisms, to widows needs gets plugged into our data base every month. We have auditors that can check on the heartbeat of each congregation with one simple visit. Those real numbers allow us to have accountability & transparency like never before.

(Continued at Indian Spice)

WORDS from the WIVES - Diane Evans

NOTE: Due to Sister Karen's health decline, she is no longer able to write her beloved Karen's Korner. However, in the same spirit, we hope you enjoy this new section of the India Newsletter. (Look in the pictures below to see a photo of Diane's friend.)

A few years back, Joe & I embarked on an adventure to a part of India that was completely new to us. We knew we needed someone local to help us navigate the language barrier & build connections with the community.

This region was home to a few small congregations that had been meeting for years, thanks to the efforts of past missionaries. Joe was eager to check in on these brethren & see what resources they might need, such as Bibles, songbooks & teaching materials.

To facilitate our journey, Joe reached out to a brother named T. Victor, who was well acquainted with the area & could serve as our translator. He thought it would also be great to have T. Victor's wife join us. She initially was reluctant, feeling overwhelmed with household chores & her responsibilities of teaching young women how to sew. However, even though her enthusiasm was far from evident eventually she decided to come along.

With her limited English, our attempts at communication were often a source of laughter & amusement. Over the next few days, we found ways to connect through gestures, smiles & shared moments of joy. As she grew more comfortable, she would often reach for my hand, & we formed a bond that transcended language. Despite the few words we exchanged, we became close friends during that amazing trip.

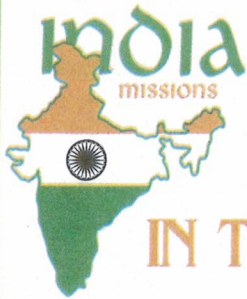
How does this happen? Honestly, I'm not quite sure. But I believe it's because we both share a profound connection through our faith. We have a Heavenly Father who has brought us together, & that common bond is what made our friendship so special. To this day, whenever I see Rama, we greet each other with hugs & laughter, as if we've known each other forever.

I cherish my relationship with Rama, & she's not alone in that regard. I have another friendship in India just like hers, but that is a story for another time. It is remarkable how these two women, who don't speak very much English, have become some of my dearest friends. It is friendships like these that keep drawing me back to India time & time again.



(TOP L-R) Rama (see WORDS from the WIVES), A preacher class in progress (375 locations monthly), Brethren praying as the church assembles for worship, Large Gospel meeting in a village, attended by above 200. (BOTTOM L-R) Jaipaul baptizing a young man (hundreds are baptized every day in India), VP Daniel at preacher's funeral, VP Daniel with Ron Clayton about 30 years earlier, Unfinished church building being attacked by Hindu radicals, using a backhoe to tear off the cross & knock down walls.

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Gospel is Powerful

In my article, The Same Gospel – The Same India, that appeared in our Jan–Feb newsletter, I reflected on the fact that little has changed in India over the last 30 years; except for technology such as mobile phones. I was surprised how many people were driving motorcycles while using their mobile phones.

One thing that will never change is the Gospel of Christ. I never cease to be amazed at the power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). The Gospel has the power to change the hearts & minds of those who are willing to hear it. The power of God’s Word was proven over & over during my trip to India in February.

I had two main goals for that trip. 1) Attempt to determine how many of the preachers trained in our preacher training school in Gajapathinagaram were still faithful. While it was impossible to find all of the preachers we trained, I was able to speak to many. In fact, I met three preachers who were trained in the very first class of trainees. I was so pleased to see that these men continue to be faithful Gospel preachers.

2) To bring as many as possible to Christ. The most effective way I found was to conduct as many denominational preachers’ meetings as possible, while working in the area where many of our trained gospel preachers are working. This was very successful with a total of 327 brought to Christ in one month. Of the 327 who were baptized, 248 were denomination preachers. Think of the impact of bringing 248 preachers to Christ. They preached for churches, where if they only averaged 10 members, that would mean 2,480 people that still need to be taught the truth. That’s a conservative estimate, which explains the burden that we bear to make certain that everyone is taught & obeys the truth. This burden is based on the great commission to **Go, Teach & Baptize; then teach them to keep Christ’s commandments** (Matthew 28:19-20).

We are simply unable to fulfil the Lord’s Commission without your help. We are in desperate need of your prayers as well as your financial assistance. Thank you for being a partner with us in the Lord’s Gospel work in India.

– Burley Stinnett –

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INDIAN SPICE

(Continued from A Look at India)

Laws created to track terrorist funding (*Foreign Currency Regulatory Act*) have worked in our favor. Through FCRA accounts, we are now able to electronically send monthly stipends to our preachers, teachers & students. On my first trip to India in the fall of 2023, we used cash to do the business of India Missions. Believe me, you don’t want to carry large amounts of cash, especially in India. Now with the click of a button, we can safely send needed funds directly to Indian accounts, all with a transparent paper trail. Transparency like that is vital now that we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Electronic banking has allowed us to eliminate exorbitant ATM fees while plummeting our personal stress levels. In effect we have cut out the middleman & saved thousands of dollars in the process.

We are now a lean, mean, fighting machine for the Lord. As they say, “Garbage in, garbage out,” & we have eliminated any hint of garbage. We have upped our game & made “trust but verify” our new motto. And if I may be so bold, I think it’s a home run!

– Jay Justus –