

View from the Frontlines

The excitement of these men to learn and their desire to minister to others was contagious. This was especially gratifying because of what they were living through. This past spring, Migowi was the bullseye of Cyclone Freddy

that left most of them homeless. The high winds and flooding destroyed their mud brick homes. Most homes have not been repaired, and so these pastors and their families are living in school classrooms. On top of that, Malawi is on the verge of famine. When I left, they had not received rain in over two months. The pastors were so grateful to be provided a nutritious meal at lunch during the conference.

Whenever we are there on a Sunday, we are asked to preach in their churches. Since I was there over a Sunday, I was asked to preach in two different churches— both the same morning but different locations. This involved preaching in one then quickly driving to the other. But the joy of preaching to eager listeners is unsurpassed. To each congregation I preached the simple gospel. In Africa, there is little clarity about the Gospel, so like Paul I determined to preach Christ crucified for the sins of the world and the need to respond with repentance and faith. At the first little church, ten responded to receive Christ, and in the second church over twenty did.

India:

I spent the final week of the trip in India. Landing in the city of Kochi in the state of Kerala, it took a five-hour drive to arrive at our destination, the Kerala Baptist Bible College in the village of Mundathanum. My trip paled in comparison to that of the assembled pastors. They arrived by rail from the opposite side of India, from the state of Odisha. This was necessary because of the intense persecution in Odisha. Churches there are regularly burned and pastors beaten. It seemed wise to again bring them to the safer conditions found in Kerala. Safety is also why nothing about India is ever posted online.

It was in India that I was joined by Pastor Jared David. Jared is new to ITEM, and this was an exploratory trip for him to see how ITEM operates. Jared was a great help. He gave a lecture a day and preached at the college's chapel services.

During the week, I presented ITEM's second Conference on Ministry and Preaching (I-COMP). I presented the first, the Institute in the Foundations of Church Leadership (IFCL), when I was there Last October. These pastors, who have had no Biblical training other than this, were literally amazed at the teaching. One after another of the pastors gave testimony about how much the first conference had impacted them and their churches. It is transforming their ministries. All who partner with his ministry can take credit for these glorious results.



The Persecuted Church in India

Recently India has been making headlines. Just two months ago, India surpassed China as the world's most populous country. Additionally, in the last few days, India was named as the world's fastest growing major economy and is on track to become the second biggest economy in the world. While these stories have dominated media headlines, one story the media has been silent on is the increasing persecution of Christians.

Indian Christians are routinely brutalized by mob lynching, honor killings, having body parts severed, houses and places of worship burned down, and many other sadistic tactics. All with the implicit aid of the radical Hindu government. Even when Indian believers are not brutalized physically, they are terrorized financially. One common practice is for landlords to charge exorbitant rent for Christian families. Those who convert from traditional Indian religions to Christianity are known as Dalits which comprise the lowest class in Indian culture.

Recently, Kumar (real name withheld for security concerns) who serves as ITEM's Eastern India Coordinator was attacked and beaten by a radical Hindu mob. Kumar tells us that he was evangelizing in a rural village. The people were responsive to the gospel, and many wanted to hear more. Suddenly, however, a rabid mob consisting of some thirty villagers attacked Kumar charging him not to preach the gospel in their village. They proceeded to mercilessly beat him black and blue. When the beating ceased, Kumar laid beside the road half-dead.

Sometime later, a couple of good Samaritans came to Kumar's aid, helping him to his feet and to walk to a nearby bus stop. After arriving home, Kumar was unable to receive medical attention and was relegated to his bed. Finally, after several weeks of being bedridden, Kumar was able to stand up and walk.

Perhaps what is most remarkable about Kumar's story, however, is his response to persecution. You see, this is not the first time Kumar has experienced hostility, harassment, and mistreatment for the sake of the gospel. In fact, he is regularly persecuted. Nevertheless, Kumar is not moved by his afflictions. In my conversation with him, he praised God who gave Him the strength to get out of his bed and to get back into the harvest fields. He concluded our conversation with a plea, "Pray for me as I am committed to preaching the gospel and planting churches until my last breath."

Kumar is just one of the remarkable leaders we are privileged to work with and support at ITEM. Your giving enables us to train leaders like Kumar who are committed to fulfilling the Great Commission until their dying breath.

Your Partner in the Gospel

Dr. Chris McMillan

ITEM VP

Much work is taking place ...

>> Fall 2023 Banquet Prep is in full swing

>> We have added 6 new associate trainers to the ITEM team in 2023

>> Sandee is planning another trip to Africa to continue to grow the women's ministry program with Dorcas

OUR MISSION:
Transforming churches, one pastor at a time.

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STEVES ARTICLE

Meet ITEM's Newest Associate Trainer - Milton Harding

Milton Harding is an ordained pastor, missionary and founder of **Agapai Solutions, Ministries** (discipleship ministry) and consultant as Special Assistant for Prayer and Care (**SBC of Virginia**), a ministry to pastors and congregations across Virginia and abroad). Biblical discipleship for the body of Christ is the core of Pastor Milton's heart and ministry while serving over 30 + years with a focus on pastors, men, the marriage relationship, and the family unit. Pastor Milton also spent several years as a chaplain for the Washington Redskins, now Washington Commanders football team and alumni, as well as coaching youth sports. Milton is passionate about sharing the word of God in practical ways to effect change in the lives of all people regardless of denomination, ethnicity, gender, culture, or economic lines. Pastor Milton enjoys writing God-honoring songs, playing inspirational music on the keyboard and saxophone, Internet Speed chess, bass fishing, sports, and writing inspirational poetry in his spare time. Recently, Pastor Milton authored several books including **"Men Wanted, Apply Within"** (5-Day devotional for men) and **"Unconditional Love"** (31-Day Devotional Vol. 1,2,3) and an audio CD **"Adam, Where Are You?"** (CD for Men - www.agapaisolutions.com)



ITEM currently ministers to 15 African countries across central Africa – Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, and Madagascar. In each of these countries, the Christian religion has flourished but biblical knowledge and pastoral training has lagged far behind. 95% of pastors in the majority world have not received any kind of formal Bible training and are in need of ITEM.

The Travels of an ITEM Trainer

Dr. Dan Packer

As I write this, I just returned from my month-long trip in June to Rwanda, Malawi, and India. I want to share with you the great blessings of this trip. But how do I even begin to convey what it was like? I could tell you of the breath-taking landscapes, the harrowing adventures, the grueling hardships of travel in third world countries, the grinding poverty of the people, or . . . or, I could describe the amazing fruit only God could produce from a trip like this. And this trip was glorious beyond description.

Rwanda:

The first week of June was spent in Rwanda where I taught two conferences in two locations. The first conference was held in the capital of Kigali, covering the topic of the *The Biblical Family*. There is a great lack of knowledge in Africa about what the Bible teaches especially concerning the family. For instance, promiscuity is rampant within the teen population (the prevalence of A.I.D.s in Africa testifies to that fact). A young girl does not gain worth and become a candidate for marriage until she has given birth to a child. Then, however, the new husband does not want the baby which isn't his, and therefore the child is never loved. Also, both physical and verbal abuse of wives is rampant.



When we attempt to teach Biblical principles which confront their culture, we are accused of trying to make their culture a Western culture. "NO!" we emphatically shout. Our Western culture is not something to emulate, especially regarding the family. We are trying to change both of cultures into Biblical cultures. This conference was very well received. It was as if they had never heard this kind of teaching before. The pastors were eager to go back to their churches and teach their congregations this material.

The second conference was held in Rwanda's Eastern District of Nyagatare in the village of Mbare, a five-hour drive from the capital. I taught the assembled pastors the seminar, "How to Build and Deliver an Expository Sermon." Expository preaching is almost nonexistent in Africa.

Preaching in Africa is a haphazard thing. Usually, the pastor reads a verse of Scripture then talks about whatever spiritual thoughts come to mind since he has done little preparation. Rarely if ever does he revisit the verse he read or explain it in context. The louder he can yell and jump around, the better the sermon, whether what he is preaching is accurate or not. ITEM, on the other hand, teaches expository preaching using the example of Ezra in Nehemiah 8:8, where Ezra read distinctly from the Word, explained it, and taught the meaning (How to apply it). Those pastors who adopt this method of preaching see great changes in the lives of their people.

Malawi:

From Rwanda I traveled on to Malawi where I spent the second full week of June. This was my first trip to Malawi, and what a glorious and fruitful time. From the airport, it took a seven-hour drive south to reach our conference site in the small village of Migowi. I spent the week teaching the ITEM Team how to use our ITEM Mentoring curriculum and explaining how to organize mentoring groups.



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