

India: God Answers

‘The poor and needy search for water but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst, but I the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them...’ (IS 41:17)

It was a good sign. As I greeted my Thai colleague Sue and team at the Kolkata Airport, I looked behind her in line and saw a dozen Missionaries of Charity (St. Teresa’s team) gleaming in white robes, their eyes bright with Jesus as they awaited baggage check and a fresh advance in another region. We walk the path of blessed pioneers.

As Abbey and I motored our way up a dusty mountain to our destination of Shillong in the upper north of India—a finger of land surrounded by Bhutan, Myanmar, China, Nepal, and Bangladesh—I noticed roadside dust and clamor growing green as we ascended a mile high up the hills. Teeming with life, the city beckoned to us; after 40 hours of travel, we felt that strange blend of exhaustion and exhilaration and decided to walk to our first meeting.

What a reunion! Our hostess/leader Bobby is a dynamic, faith-filled wife and mother who simply believes God for the needs of persons in her city: she has started citywide outreaches to the poor, an orphanage she still runs, and now wants to ensure that the deep and often shame-shrouded needs of fellow Christians are met in a safe, merciful and effective way. Living Waters! She travelled twice to Thailand and once to The Philippines in order to raise up a team, and there they sat in front of us now, waiting to pray for our advance: beautiful, humble men and women who were growing whole together, now primed to release healing to others.

Bobby recalled: ‘I was unsure if India was ready for Living Waters. We are an honor, family-based culture: we don’t talk about sexual matters or family wounds—these might dishonor loved ones. But when I returned from Thailand and told friends what I heard, they all started sharing deep, hard things. I realized that whether we like it or not, we need Living Waters!’

Before our first gathering, two fun things happened. Bobby gathered a group of pastors with whom we dined and discussed these issues. Their leader, Pastor Hamlet, reminded me of John Wimber—both wise and merciful men whom God blessed as founder/leaders of thriving denominations yet who only wanted to build up the whole body of Christ with the healing power of Jesus. Like Wimber, Hamlet prefers the Kingdom over church government. I love him.

Soon after our lunch I went for a long run up and down the narrow streets of Shillong and noticed an array of Catholic and Protestant institutions. I then discovered that Catholics had invested huge amounts of energy over the last several hundred years to bring the Gospel to these people—the Khati—and have left an array of schools and educational offerings for them. Further, Welsh missionaries landed there in the early 20th century, burning with the flames of revival ignited in Wales a decade earlier. This city is ready for Living Waters. I was so excited that I started running

with a group of Indian soldiers and raced them to their barracks, tying for first with a man one-third my age.

Our conference was full of Jesus, tender and powerful in mercy to meet people in profound areas of need. We preached the truth of our own being-healed lives through the power of the Cross; signs and wonders followed. Like Ezekiel in the temple, the water levels kept rising. Because family is so crucial here, sons and daughters who were already receiving healing from Bobby and team brought parents who began to confess their wounds and failures. Families were being healed before our eyes.

I called up all persons who wanted to help release Living Waters in India; nearly everyone arose. Immediately I thought of Isaiah 41 where the prophet voices God's commitment to answer the stifled cries of His people: 'I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs' (IS. 41: 18). As I shouted out these verses, I wept for I realized in a small way we were fulfilling God's promise to the poor and needy. I saw waters cascading down the green heights of Shillong, throughout the thirsty byways of India.

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