

October 24, 2009

Kathamandu, Nepal - Trip report #1

Greetings from Kathmandu, Nepal. This comes to you a little prematurely as we arrived just 24 hours ago. We really have not done much or seen too many people. The next two weeks will take me into some hazardous areas and I covet your prayers for not only safety, but effectiveness in developing partnerships that will have a major impact in years to come.

This trip seemed to come about rather quickly. I am traveling for part of the journey with a former board member of Partners International Canada, Paul Uptigrove. Paul is a skilled business consultant and will be working with one of our ministry partners in North East India. The ministry has grown so quickly that they are straining the organization and need help as they develop capacity for even more growth.

This trip will take me along the 'Himalayan run', Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan as well as northeast India near Assam.

I have let my beard grow these past weeks to allow me to fit in when I visit the villages in the mountains in Pakistan. You can call me Phil Bin Dempster.

We flew to Dubai on the huge new Airbus, A380. Anti climatic in that once you are inside...They have the same claustrophobic coach class seats for my business class gluteous maximus. Even after 12 ½ hours, only one part of me was impressed.

After all these years, it is still disorienting to stop in four countries in 24 hours. The first stop, via Dubai, Delhi, India is Kathmandu, Nepal.

PI's ministry involves an ambitious training of leaders and establishing groups of believers all across the country, 75 districts. Sounds like an easy job, but there has been over 250 years of missionary activity with few results in this Hindu kingdom.

Infrastructure does not translate into Nepalese.

There are few roads. Real mountains up to 29,000 feet, of course. One of the preaching points has 175 river crossings in a 3 day hike to a town 52 km as the crow flies from Kathamandu.

In the last few years, something unusual is happening. The small organization we assist, Good Friends of Nepal, have seen a terrific response to the Good News of Jesus Christ. 'Signs and wonders' either precede or accompany these movements.



My theology, weak as it is, has undergone some adjustments over the years as I visit these places.

Most people have limited or no access to medical care. Many subsistent farmers barely raise enough food to cover 6- 8 months living in a 12 month year! The standard of living in Nepal would equate to about \$2.00 per day cash income. When people become ill they have no alternative but to call on higher powers to help them. Nepali Christians come and pray with the sick and they have seen the Lord heal in unusual ways. People recognize the love and power of God through Jesus and respond. Church communities grow and entire communities are transformed. There are more than 100 of these Good Friends of Nepal centres after a just a few years. They are multiplying rapidly.

I read the book “3 Cups of Tea” recently. It is a great read but the results and transformation were disappointing to me. Groups of transformed Christian believers provide the greatest long term way of



seeing change move to a permanent and beneficial trajectory. Believers initiate schooling; kids are given hope; micro enterprise springs from leaders concern for kids and future; agricultural projects are begun to help the village meet the needs of its people. All these things become long-lived when people are changed on a personal level.

We are staying in the The Himalaya Hotel in Kathmandu. A large group of Christian leaders from around Asia have a conference underway. The organization sponsoring this is Transform World, founded by Louis

Bush, a friend and formerly co-worker at PI in the USA. We enjoyed talking with these choice men and women. This type of networking is the lifeblood of PI and energizing to meet so many people passionate in their work.

Today we visit the orphanage, my favourite part of the trip. Great to hug and be hugged by kids who have been through so much

Phil Bin Dempster

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