

ABSOLUTE POVERTY - SPIRITUAL DARKNESS

Scott Clark

Going to Bangladesh was an incredible spiritual experience for me and two of my sons; Clayton and Seth Clark. We were part of a team of 6 who had no other agenda but to be available for Christ to show us how we could be his workmen for the Cross.

It is reported that Bangladesh has the highest concentration of population as compared to any other country in the world. We stayed and mainly ministered in Dhaka, which is the largest city in Bangladesh. The study *Faces of Poverty and Population* reports: "We share our planet with 1,000,000,000 people who live in a condition called Absolute Poverty. Absolute Poverty isn't quite starvation, but it isn't quite subsistence either. Absolute Poverty means earning less than \$1 a day." We, no doubt, had the opportunity to be with many people in this unfortunate category. The vast majorities of these people have only knowledge of the Islamic religion created by Mohammad and live in a spiritual poverty that quickly dwarfs their material poverty.

Bengalis (Bangladeshi people) are kind, gentle, and caring people. We were treated with honor and respect and extended a gracious arm of hospitality from all we came in contact. The inkling of understanding of the spiritual darkness, fear, and completely works based religious culture faced everyday by Bengalis helped us know the incredible riches of the gospel of Christ that the apostle Paul cried out for others to hear. Poverty is hard to understand and is even more difficult to experience, but the spiritual darkness is what hit us the hardest. The gift of Jesus Christ is free to all and just requires those

who will bring the message.

The joy of our journey was to distribute God's Word to 6,500 Bengalis. This is just a drop in the bucket to the 14 million who live in Dhaka. The high point of our journey was when we were in Dhaka University (largest University in Asia, 90,000+ students) where we were able to have an intellectual discussion about the religions of the world in a Muslim dormitory with a 6-8 students. We got to hear how they had serious doubts about being Muslim and the rigors of their religion that just didn't make sense to their understanding of the world around them. It was with these students that we were able to share the truth of God's word, the gospel of Christ Jesus and we were able to pray with them that God would place a burning desire in their heart to search out the truth and turn to His truth. The reward of our journey was to see four Muslim men turn to Christ Jesus, after living a lifetime under Muslim influence and just not knowing His truth.

I am deeply grateful as a father for the opportunity God gave me to experience this mission opportunity with two of my sons. This has enriched our relationship and our lives in many ways. We view and understand the world differently, we pray different, we think different, and hopefully we will live different. I would highly recommend that fathers search out opportunities to bring these experiences to their families. I would cherish the opportunity to return to Bangladesh or wherever God takes us and to be able to have such experiences with my other children.



MIKE COMPTON, founder and executive director of Lightbearers Ministries, received a bachelor's degree in Sociology from Southwest Missouri State College (now Missouri State University) in 1970; a master's degree in History from that institution in 1971; and a doctorate in Higher Education Administration/College Student Personnel from the University of Arkansas in 1980. His career includes professional positions in university administration (University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC; and Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, MO), church staff (University Baptist Church, Fayetteville, AR; and First Baptist Church, Moore, OK), and county government (Washington County, AR). He established Lightbearers, a collegiate residential discipleship ministry, at the University of Oklahoma in May 1995. Lightbearers is an IRS-designated 501 (c) (3) organization. Tax deductible receipts will be issued for all contributions to Lightbearers Ministries.

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LIGHTBEARERS

M I N I S T R I E S

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SPRING BREAK 2007... STUDENTS GONE WILD!

As reported in the April 2007 newsletter, four young men from Bentonville (AR) High School -- Clayton Clark, 11th grade; Seth Clark, 10th grade; A.J. Exner, 11th grade; Matt Prude, 11th grade -- as well as two parents, Scott Clark and Kelley Prude, travelled to Bangladesh over Spring Break.

Last July the Lord keenly burdened the hearts of these students for the orphans in the Children's Home in Bangladesh which Lightbearers had previously come alongside to support. Since then these guys have raised many thousands of dollars for support of the Children's Home and are responsible for raising awareness of need/opportunity and the subsequent sponsorship of dozens of these children.

These are the stories of their experiences in Bangladesh! (For more information about the Bangladesh Children's Home see the Dec 04, Feb 05, Mar 05, May 05, Nov 05, and Jul 06 newsletters at www.lightbearersministries.org)



L to R: Seth Clark, Matt Prude, Clayton Clark, and A.J. Exner With Two Bengali Soldiers

REFLECTIONS OF BEGGARS

Clayton Clark



She delicately, feebly, carefully, beautifully, sorrowfully brought her waning hand to touch her lips. Then her left cheek lifted in an excruciated effort to smile, as if to say, “I’m a person too. I want to laugh, to love, to work, to play—to be happy.” She may have been six years of age.

I responded with, “I am sorry, I have nothing to give. I have nothing to give. My money will do you no good, I have nothing to give.” It was only a whisper that escaped my lips, and I pray that she could see the pain in my face.

With the first words I had spoken too many. The child did not understand my whispers. Maybe, maybe she understood what I longed to say. Maybe she could see in my eyes, “I love you little girl. God made you so beautiful and I pray that someday you will be out of this mess.”

Then I remember her right cheek slowly lifted. It was soon just as high her left cheek, and then they lifted in unison. And suddenly, as if breaking free from an invisible chain, her cheeks burst into the most beautiful smile. A full smile, the most precious smile I have ever seen.

My father had been watching her wrench my heart. He passed ten taka (15 cents) to the front of the van, for me to give. I eagerly shoved the taka out of the window to the little girl. She still stood there waiting, shirtless, dirty and malnourished. I don’t think she had really wanted money.

Traffic started moving again and we continued to the airport. She would be the last beggar of our trip.

This is my most vivid image of Bangladesh. It makes me cry every time I think about it. But it is coupled with a realization. A realization that people from every tribe, tongue, and nation die damned each day. And many, such as this little girl, live their whole life with no hope—as physical and spiritual beggars—in places where the name of Christ is only that of a prophet or is unknown.

This realization seems to evoke two sincere responses: a powerful, soul-felt, God-centered sorrow or a shaking of one’s faith. Within my narrow, 17-year-old emotions I can see no other sincere responses. Please enlighten me if I am wrong.

Yet the response which appears most common (and that has been a picture of most of my life) is to dam the realization from our hearts. To not allow the rivers of those painful realities to flow into our hearts, but to make them pool up in reservoirs that are only pretty little silver speckles on the horizon. To ignore it.

We were told before we left, “Doing nothing is not an option.” Now I understand the urgency of the nations. The need and want for truth. I understand what a child is who has no home. I understand the need to do. I understand with sorrow is motivation, not a loss of hope. I understand that doing nothing cannot be an option.

I realize that my essay is probably written for the wrong audience. A writer is supposed to write for his readers, and if you’re reading Mike’s newsletter you are probably a sender or a prayer—and a global-church-minded Christ-follower. I thank you for your support. But this is the most sincere I can be of our trip.

The reality is that a beggar-pimp probably ripped the taka from the hands of the beautiful beggar girl. But God is bigger than all of that. He is so much bigger than all of that.



SPIRITUAL GOALS

Kelley Prude

As the father of four children, I have had two primary spiritual goals for them. One, is that they marry a Christian spouse someday. Someone who will encourage them on their journey, and draw them closer to Christ. The second goal is that they have a faith they can call their own. Matthew and I had the opportunity to travel to the other side of the world, and I experienced his “own faith” first hand. In just one short week, Matthew and the other young men had the opportunity to hand out over 6,000 bibles to men, women, and children who may have never even heard the name of Christ. They each had the chance to share their faith, through an interpreter, and witness a Muslim seeker come to Christ. I encourage every father to find an opportunity to take a mission trip with your children.



Scott Clark With Children

“LET NO MAN LOOK DOWN ON YOUR YOUTH”

A.J. Exner

(1 TIM 4:12)

Bangladesh was an incredible experience. Period. But if that would have been all I got out of that trip, then all the flying and fundraising would have been a big waste of time, and I might as well have gone to Antarctica for Spring Break. But it was a chance to see what God had in store not only for me and to help with my development, but also to help with the development of a cause greater than myself; as well as, incidentally, to help out people who need encouragement way more than I did.

After all was said and done, I realized one big thing...that youth is very powerful and highly under-rated. Don’t get me wrong, older people are wise and powerful, but youth is a very powerful weapon; and youth need more help to be molded like Jesus. In the Bengali society, people are afraid of God and have learned that from day one. I realized that I wanted to assist in molding the youth of today, and to use what I have to help them to become the complete person they can be. This would give me an opportunity to help create more soldiers for Christ, which would give me a responsibility of helping, but also to help them in possibly doing the same in the future.

The opportunity to help our missionary host-family was a blessing and I was honored and privileged to help them. But I also learned what kids could truly do. The two oldest kids were 9 and 10 and both had been through a move halfway around the world to help share the love of Christ. That right there was truly convicting to me and I realized that youth could do a lot more than what most people give them credit for. Also, a Bengali believer named M_____, hardly over the age of 20, seems to be almost single-handedly converting Bangladesh to Christianity, all while getting a doctorate from the major university in the country. He hardly sleeps and we hardly saw him eat, but day in and day out he was there, translating and dealing with our in-country foreign travel is-

sues. This young man is doing things for Christ that many of us can only dream of, and with his youth and the Spirit in his heart, he is accomplishing much.

So in the end, youth is an incredible thing, and the only problem with it is that it doesn’t stay. But I realized that while I still have it, that I should use every ounce of that to help glorify God and help with the Great Commission.

DEPRAVITY OF TRUTH

Matt Prude

Spiritually on this trip God showed me world, Bangladeshi, hurt. It’s hard to write this now because it brings back memories of destruction. A whole culture captured in legalism, unsure of everything! God showed me the depravity of truth. He showed this by all the unanswered questions everyone had and has. Today I can get the answer to almost anything with unrestricted resources. Over there, Bible vendors and distributors are shut down, despised, and ridiculed. Physically the people are malnourished and starving. Poverty is everywhere. The people have extreme instability in the workplace, living day-to-day unsure of their next meal. The parallelism in this is that this is the picture we’re given of them spiritually. Allah is too big to help them; he is too big to care about them. Not caring gives them no purpose except somehow to beat a measuring scale of good and bad. God showed me hurt, but he also showed me light. The light in the children’s faces when they saw that we were interested in them will never leave me. The yearning for attention, for love, was mind boggling. Trying to get them to understand the love Jesus has for them...what an impact. The ultimate love by the ultimate Lover. We need to show this love, show this stability, and show the difference that Christ is as a personal savior, not some statue that rewards nothing, that cares nothing of our salvation, our eternity.