
EPILOGUE

Go: Searching for Jesus' Lost Sheep

Go means a change of location.
- Loren Cunningham

TRAVELING aboard the colossal Airbus A330 I felt thrilled to be leading a Mission Adventures team to Nepal. Twenty years had passed since Kelly and I ventured on our first mission to this Hindu kingdom, planting Gospel seeds in remote villages that had never heard of Jesus.

As our plane neared Kathmandu International Airport my mind replayed our previous travels. Kelly and I were so young when leading that adventurous troop of trekking missionaries. For weeks our team had endured laborious hikes to remote villages, our backpacks weighted with Gospel booklets. Today there are roads that access each of those villages. What took us weeks to cover on foot back then, would require our present team only days, traveling by bus and jeep. What wonderful, archaic memories!

When *going* becomes a way of life, one's story fills with epic adventures.

The highlight of Kelly and my journey twenty years ago was the precious sibling pair, David (4) and Jasmine (2) who became indelibly interwoven into our lives. Their aged grandmother had pleaded with our team to take her grandchildren; she presumed that she was dying and thus became desperate to secure their ongoing care. Our trekking guide, John, and his wife, Elizabeth, ran a ministry to orphaned and abandoned children, and readily accepted this dying grandmother's request by receiving these two new ones into their home.

My wife and I had once carried these children upon our shoulders, but now upon my arrival at the Kathmandu airport, I encountered a grown-up David who could easily carry me *and* my own grown son, Isaac, who was with me, on his shoulders! David and Jasmine beamed as my team stepped out from the secure arrival area. They were ecstatic to meet my son, hugging and calling him their "American brother." Kelly and I had supported David and Jasmine over the years as they grew up under the loving care of John and his wife. Now I embraced young adults full of passion, life, and the love of Jesus. They both serve as full-time missionaries: David as a gifted evangelist and Jasmine fulfilling her dream to care for children in need. Those once "rescued" and carried away from their remote mountain village, would now guide our team of eighteen students and adults to their place of origin in the Himalayas.

The Gospel is Great News!

After a session of worship the following morning, David dispatched our team on its first assignment. In groups of three or four, he equipped us each with one of the Nepali nationals as a translator, to go out and get our feet wet sharing the Gospel. Though far from unprepared, nervous faces accompanied these young Americans, as if being sent out as lambs among wolves.

Two hours later they returned, ecstatic and loudly chattering over one another. Bill, one of the youth leaders, took the floor with wide-eyed enthusiasm. "We went out and struck up a conversation with literally the first young man we saw. Libby shared her

testimony and I gave a simple Gospel message. When Justin asked the young man if he wanted to accept the message and follow Jesus, he looked at us surprised and a little confused. Finally, he blurted out, 'Who would *not* want to accept this? This is great news! In fact, this is the best news I have *ever* heard!' We were able to lead the first person we met to the Lord and gave him a Nepali Bible!"

Bible Power

That morning before our assignment, David had received a treasured shipment—an entire pallet of Nepali Bibles. The teens hoisted one case after another up two flights of stairs to David's apartment. Looking at the stacks of Bibles lying there reminded me of hauling those Gospel booklets on our backs during my trip twenty years ago with Kelly. "Okay everyone, load your backpacks with as many Bibles as you think you can carry," I announced. The guys, of course, made it a contest, attempting to outdo each other, ultimately taking more Bibles than a pack could itself contain. Then they attached gear creatively to the outside of their packs to accommodate their sacred freight.

David had involved himself in the "End Bible Poverty Now" campaign, so our team would be assisting that cause in distributing Bibles to entire villages. Our slogan became "Share the Gospel, give a Bible, pray...repeat." Along the way we would remind ourselves of a scriptural promise:

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isa. 55:10-11)

God's Word Will Accomplish its Purpose

We endured the spine-jarring route to Jomsom--roads that one would think twice about driving with a Jeep, much less a bus. Each time we entered a new village, we would settle into a local trekking lodge, then soon venture out in teams of three or four, sharing the Gospel and handing out Bibles all afternoon. In the

evening we would project the *Jesus* film at a local school or fellowship using a mini-projector, iPod, Bluetooth speaker and fold up screen. We saw dozens of Nepali people respond to the Gospel every day in every village we visited

When Kelly and I had hiked to these same remote, high places twenty years ago we did not encounter a single person who had ever heard of Jesus, nor had any one ever seen a Bible. We couldn't find a single believer, let alone a church or fellowship established this far inland, at over 9,000 feet above sea level. Now, only two decades later, I was amazed to greet believers and identify at least one small fellowship in each of these same villages. God is faithful! The Gospel seeds my wife and I had planted and the prayers of many had taken root and were bearing fruit.

Kingdom Warriors

Arriving in a small village called Kagbeni, we visited the very Buddhist monastery where I had specifically “bound the enemy” so many years prior. Now, the atmosphere felt more like a museum than its former, ominous stronghold of darkness. Interestingly, they were erecting a new temple right beside the old one. We all wondered if this was perhaps because the old one was “broken” along with the enemy’s base of operation within it.

Steps of Obedience

We boarded Jeeps in Kagbeni to climb to the high and holy Muktinath, a city name that translates literally, “salvation,” and serves for many as a Hindu pilgrimage destination. The steps to the sacred temple felt familiar from my previous ascent. As I climbed, I observed laboring Hindu pilgrims struggling with the incline and I considered the irony. They journey to Muktinath to bathe in water flowing from one-hundred bronze calf heads, in hopes that their sins will be washed away. All the while, true forgiveness has been accomplished by Jesus, through his sacrifice as the Lamb of God, available to all who simply turn to him.

Halfway to the temple, I thought I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Marty, I want you to place a Bible in the foundation.” I was surprised by the specific request, not sure how that was even possible. The foundation of this temple was laid hundreds of years

ago, and I wondered how it could be accessed? I told Jesus, "If this prompting is from you, I am willing; I just need you to show me when and where it is to be done."

After taking time to respectfully worship Jesus around the Hindu temple, David and Jasmine began to lead us to the neighboring Buddhist monastery. (In Nepal, many make little distinction between Buddhism and Hinduism; often embracing both religions equally at the same time.) On the way we passed by a looming thirty-foot statue of Buddha, still under construction. Workers busily set stones for the plaza but the cut-stone foundation beneath the enormous Buddha itself had not yet been mortared in. I again felt the prompting of Jesus, *Now is the time, this is the place.*

I whispered to Dave, one of the team members, "Hey, can you quickly grab a Nepali Bible and put it in a Ziploc?" He began to question my appeal but noticed my earnest sincerity. Moments later he returned with the sacred item while our team members milled about. I explained the plan, and we soon had honed in on a particular gap between two foundation stones. When we slipped the sheathed Bible between them it dropped down out of sight, *into the very foundation.* I then called the team together for a time of prayer at that place.

"Guys, I'm not sure why, but Jesus just had Dave and I insert a Bible into the foundation of this monument. We are going to pray now that this will not be a place of deception or a stronghold of the enemy, but rather that this city will become a beacon of light of *true* salvation, based in God's Word and found in Christ alone." We had a powerful time of prayer and then continued our journey.

The Power of the Cross

We hiked the quad-burning descent from Muktinath back to Kagbeni, where I welcomed the time to stretch my legs and enjoy the beautiful landscape of Nepal—white-capped Annapurna peaks jutting skyward in praise from behind barren granite ridges. This day had proven so special for me, each place we visited bearing significance from the past. During my early morning quiet time I had made one special request, "Jesus, I would like you to give me one divine appointment today. Provide a person you have ordained to receive the Gospel in a powerful way." God's Word says, "I am

not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” (Rom. 1:16)

Despite the day’s lineup of rich events, it was now drawing to a close without me encountering my divine appointment. While considering this, from the trail below emerged a Nepali man in his mid-twenties, riding on a horse. At his appearance I knew immediately that he was going to be my divine appointment from my morning prayer. I indicated to David that I wanted to talk to the stranger and David forcefully halted the horse and rider. “Please step down, we have something to tell you.”

The rider complied and dismounted. We introduced ourselves and learned that this man, Lemcha, had been a Buddhist monk since childhood. He had since abandoned that practice and belief, his life currently out of control in drinking and fighting. “I was just in a fight in that village,” Lemcha braggadociously remarked, “No one can tell *me* what to do.” Noting the abrasions streaking his hands and face, we didn’t doubt it. His bloodshot eyes also testified that he had been drinking.

“We are not going to tell you what to do. We only want to tell you some good news about Jesus,” I assured him. I motioned for Justin to bring over his Evangecube, a small toy-like block that unfolds according to a pattern, presenting the Gospel through seven different color illustrations (<http://www.e3resources.org>). Justin began by showing the first scene portraying our separation from God and continued by unfolding the cube to the second scene revealing a depiction of Jesus hanging from a cross. When he opened to the second scene, something unusual took place. Lemcha recoiled as if he had been struck in the face by an unseen water balloon. Claspng both hands over his eyes he cried, “No. No! Too powerful! Take it away. I can’t look at it.” Lemcha refused to open his eyes until we assured him the image was put away.

His action reminded us of the scripture, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor. 1:18) Had we just witnessed the visceral reaction of the powers of darkness when they encounter the power of the cross?

We continued to share the Gospel with Lemcha as he listened with intention. Though not ready to give his life to Jesus, I pressed the Bible into his hand, looked into his tired eyes and promised, “This book will change your life. I know, because it changed my life. When you read it, pray and ask Jesus to reveal himself to you. That’s what Jesus did for me, and he became my best friend. He wants to be your best friend too.” We gathered around Lemcha and invited Jesus to transform his life through the power of the cross.

He mounted his horse and continued his journey up the trail. “I promise. I will begin reading Bible tonight,” Lemcha called out in parting. Before getting into his rhythm, he paused to ask David’s Nepali friend Sunam, “Is everything that man said true?” “Yes,” Sunam replied confidently. “Jesus is God and will change your life.”

The Power of Media

The next day we descended by bus to Tattopani, checking into the same trekking lodge that Kelly and my team had stayed in twenty years back. The memories of our previous visit flooded my mind. Unlike the dry tundra of Muktinath’s rarified altitude, Tattopani is nestled among thick vegetation and blossoming lemon trees. In this very village, we had met David and Jasmine’s grandmother and continued our journey with two toddlers in tow! Presently, while walking in the beautiful garden, Jasmine approached and pulled me by the hand. “Oh Uncle, come, you must meet my auntie—my actual relative.”

We approached a Nepali woman with friendly eyes, not too much my elder. When Jasmine made the introduction, the woman and I exchanged knowing looks; this auntie and I remembered each other. Time had been gentle, and though we had both aged, we recalled our previous sighting in which her beloved niece and nephew had been, out of necessity, carried away by strangers.

“Look at us, Auntie.” Jasmine implored, “See how good God has been to me and my brother, David. Listen to us as we tell you the story of Jesus. Uncle Marty will show you with his device.”

Before the trip I had downloaded the Jesus Film Media App and preloaded every Nepali Gospel film

(<https://www.jesusfilm.org/strategies-and-tools/resources/the->

[app.html](#)). By contrast, the Spanish *Jesus* movie on 16-millimeter reels—the film that Kelly and I had given to Marlien and Miguel—cost \$1,000 twenty-five years ago! Now I possess every translation of the *Jesus* film ever created, along with scores of other evangelistic films *for free*, right on my iPhone! Additionally, we had purchased a portable video projector and sound system to leave with David, which we had been utilizing for evangelism every night. Each *Jesus* showing produced at least a dozen commitments to follow Christ.

Jasmine, Auntie and I sat on a bench in the garden huddled around my iPhone taking in the fifteen-minute Nepali presentation, *Who is Jesus?* At the conclusion, Jasmine summarized the Gospel, then pleaded with Auntie, “Won’t you also follow Jesus? Will you also believe in him?”

Auntie had seemed so open to the Gospel, but also genuinely conflicted as she declined the request. Finally she added, “Someday I will follow Jesus, but not today.”

“Oh, do you promise, Auntie?” Jasmine inquired. “Do you promise that someday you will follow Jesus?”

“Yes, I promise.”

After meeting a second and a third relative of David and Jasmine and encountering a similar response, I decided to ask David, “With so many people all around us coming to faith, why is it that none of your relatives will commit to following Jesus?”

“They are waiting for Grandmother to die,” came his immediate response. “You know, she is still alive. She must be a hundred years old by now. She is the oldest person in this region. My relatives feel it would be disrespectful to choose to follow Jesus since Grandmother is matriarch of the family.”

“Can we meet Grandmother on this trip?” I inquired. “Can we share the Gospel with her?”

“Yes, definitely we should do that. We will go see Grandmother tomorrow,” David committed. “We will share the Gospel with her.”

In Search of One Lost Sheep

See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. (Matt. 18:10-14)

The next day we managed the steep and slippery trail that rose to Grandmother's village. As we hiked through hot sticky air I missed the cool arid climate of the Upper Himalaya. We arrived at a small church nestled in the hillside, where the pastor and his wife welcomed us with lemonade and biscuits. The pastor, a simple man, had come to faith a decade earlier, and moved by the call of Christ, had built a small church on his own property to invite villagers into worship of the one true God.

After recovering from the depleting morning ascent, we were split into teams to canvas the area, share the Gospel, hand out Bibles and offer invitations to our showing of the *Jesus* film that night. My son, Isaac, and I, along with a few others, joined David and Jasmine's team. We already knew our special assignment.

Our small team had shared the Gospel with several persons along the short walk to Grandmother's house. When we eventually arrived at her home, we were disappointed to find no one present. A padlock even secured the door. Where might a hundred-year-old woman have gone? David inquired with one of the nearby neighbors and learned, "She has gone up the mountain, along with her goats."

There was no questioning that we had to find her, but how? Looking up at the thickly vegetated mountainside, it seemed that Grandmother could be anywhere! "Dad, we can track the goats," Isaac suggested. *Not a bad idea*. Isaac has been hunting with me since childhood and has proven to be a proficient tracker. We

started up the steep trail, and at frequent intervals found telltale evidence of the goats' direction.

After several hours traversing the lofty terrain we grew increasingly uncertain that we would zero in on Grandmother and her elusive goats. The ground leveled slightly and we perceived that we were nearing some type of summit. Although all goat sign pointed toward a trail to the left, Holy Spirit nudged each of us to veer right. We couldn't explain it. How would we ever find Grandmother if we lost the goat tracks?

We had only traveled a short distance down the chosen path when we approached a small stone home, its inhabitants running out at us yelling, "Jai Masi," a greeting used only by Nepali believers. Jesus had led us directly to a home of believers, and somehow we all shared a strong confirmation that this was exactly where Jesus wanted us in that very moment.

We asked if the family needed prayer and began to pray for their needs, one-by-one. Their fifteen-year-old son had terrible stomach pains and complained of some deformity in his back, the nature of which we were uncertain. We began praying for the boy, believing for his complete healing. We repeatedly stopped to check, "How about now...do you feel any better?" and would commence praying when he indicated that pain was still present. After praying the fourth time, there was no need to inquire. The boy's head jolted up and his wide eyes asked, "What just happened?" We all knew he had encountered the power of God. "My stomach is fine and there is no longer pain in my back," the boy announced, "Jesus has just healed me!"

Immediately I sensed a strong, yet unusual prompting, and had to speak it out. "Isaac, Jesus wants you to speak a prophetic word to this young man and it will come to you as soon as you start talking." Isaac stared at me in shock, but my intense expression told him that I was serious. He took the step of faith. After a few "Um..." false starts, he began by saying, "The Lord wants you to know..." and then words began to flow. Isaac shared a powerful encouraging word that this young man was like the young Samuel of the Bible—that God would call him from a humble beginning to cause a mighty impact in his nation. Everyone present felt a strong sense of Jesus' presence, and our team knew that the Shepherd had

directed our steps specifically to encourage this mountaintop family of fellow believers.

Within a short time the mother had prepared sweet black tea and each of us enjoyed our cup as we explained the purpose of our journey up the mountain. "So," David continued, "we are looking for my grandmother. We were told she brought her goats with her and we wish to find her and share the Gospel with her."

"Oh," came the mother's immediate reply, "we know exactly where she is. Follow our son. He will show you the way."

If we needed any further evidence of the boy's healing, we had it, as he sprung into motion and none of us could keep up. We struggled to follow him over a faint trail rising through foliage and into an open field where corn had been planted. David then exclaimed, "Look, on the other side of the field, the old woman with a sickle; that is my Grandmother!"

Reaching Grandmother with the boy's help set off quite a joyful reunion. We were doubly shocked to find that the very Auntie who had promised to someday follow Jesus back in Tatopani was there, and now stood alongside Grandmother waiting to greet us. I'm still not sure how she managed to beat us to the top of that mountain!

I had purchased a lovely purple shawl in the hope that I would be able to meet Grandmother. I removed it from my daypack as we all moved to sit on the crumbling steps of the small stone building and presented it to her. "Grandmother, I want you to know that David and Jasmine are just like family to my wife and me. I consider you my relative and honor you with this gift." I was taken aback at her heartfelt embraces. We also remembered one another from twenty years ago. Translated through David, Grandmother exclaimed, "Look, my son from America has remembered me and has brought me this beautiful gift."

"Grandmother, look, this is my own son, Isaac."

"Oh, I have a grandchild from America!" she exclaimed while cupping his face in her hands.

Then came Isaac's turn to share the Gospel using the simple illustrations on the Evangecube. Both David and I shared key points from the message, urging Grandmother to come to faith in Jesus.

The Lord put a particular scripture on my heart and I began to share it with Grandmother, point by point from memory.

If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Rom. 10:9-10)

“Grandmother, I want you to believe the truth that Jesus loves you. He died for you and is raised to life so that you can be saved. Will you confess now that Jesus is Lord?” I waited and silently prayed.

An unforgettable moment then transpired: Grandmother bowed her head as David led her in a simple prayer, acknowledging Jesus as Savior and Lord. You could almost hear the celebration in heaven from atop that peak! This one lost sheep had just found her way home.

When the Gospel is living in our hearts we will be Father’s ambassadors wherever we go. Jesus is calling you. Will you go? Will you take the greatest news to those who have never heard?

Jesus, if you can use me, I am willing to go. Whether you send me across the street or across the ocean, I want to know the joy of being used by you to reach your lost sheep. Here I am God, send me. Amen.

Accomplish It!

- You are already “going.” Whether you go across the ocean or across the street, how can you combine your going with kingdom-minded purposes?
- What examples were given in this chapter of the power of the Gospel multiplied over time? What implications might this have for your own life?
- How could Gospel-sharing tools such as the Jesus Film Media App assist your going?
- Begin preparing now to go on a short-term mission trip. You could even be the catalyst to mobilize a team from your church.
- Prayerfully consider dedicating your life to going as a long-term field worker among the unreached.