Chowk Bazaar

Stand At The Crossroads

Bill Williamson
Bill Williamson led this team of eight YWAM DTS students, and through his many pages of journaling at the time, has brought the story to life in the pages of Chowk Bazaar.

The story of this team’s journey to India and Bhutan is full of adventure, drama, and hardship.

Bill and the team encounter attack and robbery on a dark Calcutta train. After the loss of airline tickets, passports, and all of their $3000 outreach cash, they are left with one option, trust God to provide for the rest of their sixty days in India and Bhutan.

Read how they cross into Bhutan without any legal documents at all, but trust God for entry into the country, and return to India.

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Written by: Bill Williamson
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Chapter 1

Chowk Bazaar

With a deliberate stride Judith crossed the expansive lobby of her hotel in Bangkok, Thailand, her eyes fixed on the East Indian man sitting on the large sofa. Judith had always been drawn to East Indians and she made a beeline for him. She introduced herself and asked if he was from India. He replied that he was and explained that he was currently bicycling around the world for God. Judith’s desire to go to India came out, and he said, ‘If you ever get to India, you must go to Darjeeling, to Chowk Bazaar,’ and he gave her an address.

Upon hearing the familiar address, Judith excused herself and ran up the stairs to her room. She returned with a previous address that had been tucked away in her Bible. She shared the address with the man and said she had been given the other address while in Kona, Hawaii at her Crossroads Discipleship Training School, (CDTS), which is part of the Christian curriculum at Youth With A Mission, (YWAM), on the University of The Nations campus.

She went on to explain to him that she was having a discussion with other students and staff about her childhood dream of going to India, when a person spoke up and said, ‘If you ever get to India, go to the city of Darjeeling in West Bengal.’ The person gave her an address in Chowk Bazaar area. Judith pondered what the person had said and placed the address in her bible for later reference.

The man in the lobby said, ‘These are two different addresses, but the two buildings are very close to each other. One is a Bible Book Store, and the other is a mission house where you can stay when you do go.

Needless to say, Judith was very excited.

About two years later Judith met me in Lakeside, Montana. She was now part of the staff at YWAM Montana, and I had come as a DTS, (Discipleship Training School), student for the fall school. We became close in the course of the school and determined we would be married when the DTS was completed.

We did marry and as time went on, Judith showed me the two addresses in Darjeeling and told me how much she longed to go to India. I quickly screwed my face into a look of distaste and exclaimed that I had no desire to go to India. To me it was a place of death and dying and that would be the last place I would want to go. Judith was visibly upset, and I went on to explain that if Father God wanted me to go, I would willingly go even though it was not high on my list of things to do. She felt better, and I know that from that time on she prayed for me much concerning India.

Judith explained that when she was a little girl in Santa Rosa, California she found a brass bell in the weeds of an empty lot. The brass bell was ornate and had ‘India’ inscribed on the inside. She picked up the bell and kept it for many years, often studying the bell and the inscription. Her interest in India only grew deeper as time went on.

I wonder now, had God been putting this all together from that day, or before? Looking back I can see that God had a plan and the little girl playing in the empty lot near Santa Rosa was a big part of it.

As the years went by, we often talked and prayed about India and even visited libraries to
research the state of West Bengal. We found that Darjeeling was a city in the District of Darjeeling. We discovered too, that the city of Kalimpong was a few hours away, and at a much lower elevation, a more suitable place to live. We began to feel that one day we would go visit Darjeeling and likely settle in Kalimpong. Judith was very excited as we made our plans.

It was fall in Montana, and we had been married six years. We determined that we would begin to step out toward India in faith believing now was the time. We would enroll in a YWAM School of Biblical Studies, (SBS), and after much prayer, we chose the Fiji school. We were delighted to find that 40 percent of the population of Fiji was East Indian. We figured that as we attended the nine-month bible school, we would get acquainted with East Indian ways, and even make contacts that would be helpful for our final destination of Darjeeling District.

Several months later in the month of February, as we were packing and moving things to storage, Judith seemed less than energetic, and subsequent evaluation produced a diagnosis of lung cancer with only six months to live.

Plane tickets had been purchased to Fiji, and we were to leave in a few short weeks. The plane tickets had to be canceled and treatment sought for Judith. She struggled back to good health in the next few months using diet and homeopathic methods.

By June Judith determined that she was not going to just sit around and die. We prayed together and decided to again try for an SBS, this time in Kona, Hawaii.

As we sold things, and began to travel to visit family before leaving, we heard of the ‘Great Commission Bible School’ in McMinnville, Oregon. After considerable prayer we set aside our thoughts of Kona and submitted our applications. We were accepted and began the school that September. We graduated the following June, and again set our hearts toward India.

It had now been two full years since our original decision to start for India. And now we set our plans to leave again in September. With our plane tickets purchased, we began again to travel and say goodbye to friends. We had placed the air fare cost on our Visa card and had only to sell our van to cover the cost before flying.

We traveled to Great Falls, Montana to visit friends there. One of the mornings of our visit our friend had a verse for us from the Lord. It was from Jeremiah 6:16, which reads, ‘This is what the LORD says, “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”’

Also, our friend gave us this verse from Isaiah 43:18-19, ‘Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.’

We recorded the verses, but had no idea what the meaning behind them were. Before the mid-day hour came we received a phone call from another friend in Great Falls. The friend stated that there was a man in town we must meet. He was a native of Sikkim, India.

The man had been expelled from Sikkim for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. He now lived in Great Falls, but every year he went back to Sikkim to evangelize. We visited him that very night and we advised him of our plans to go in September.

He shared much information with us, but asked that we not mention his name once we were in the area. He said he was a wanted man in Sikkim, and would be in grave danger if the government knew he was there. Attempts had been made on his life because of his work for Christ in the region, and he asked that we not look for him, he would find us when he came.

The man had planted more than thirty underground churches in the neighboring country of Bhutan even though preaching the gospel was also very dangerous there.
We were grateful for our encounter with this man, (I withhold his name for his safety). Just before we would leave him, Judith asked if he knew the meaning of Chowk Bazaar, and explained we did not know if it were a village, a street, or what! He said it was a street in the city of Darjeeling, near a busy marketplace. Judith asked what the name meant.

He replied to our surprise, ‘Bazaar is a marketplace, and Chowk means, crossroads.’

Both our mouths must have dropped open. The word we had received from God’s Word that very morning was that we were to go to the crossroads and seek the ancient paths! We knew God was up to something good. We left the man with great peace that God was in control.

September drew very near and the van did not sell and there was no money to pay for the travel to India. Twenty-four hours prior to flight time, I finally called and canceled our flight. We were disappointed and did not understand what was happening.

That coming winter, Judith would suffer much and be near death for nine days. She recovered in late winter and began to again feel good. The cancer seemed to be in remission. Judith had declined Chemotherapy and Radiation treatments in favor of organic food and homeopathic medicine. Through the spring and summer Judith dreamed of going on to India, but by fall, she began to have a lot of pain, and experience breathing difficulty. She began to grow weary and was finally giving up on ever going to India.

Judith’s daughter wrote a letter on her mother’s behalf as an appeal to send her mom to India before death overcame her. Nearly five thousand dollars came in, but by then Judith was too sick to get far from the couch. We had explained that the money would be used for medical expenses if Judith was unable to go.

I moved Judith back to Gold Beach, Oregon, her home where much of her family still lived. She died there on May 20. We had been married ten years.

I stayed on in Gold Beach for three weeks after her death, walking on the beach daily during that time, seeking God for my future direction. In my heart, Judith’s India vision had died with her. As I walked the beach, I felt the Lord tell me to begin to do what was set before me and that he would direct me as I acted. I volunteered to do Mexico outreaches with friends and made two trips with them taking church groups south of the border on short term mission outreaches.

Back up with me to the second year of our marriage, I was looking through the Go Manual, (a catalog of YWAM schools), and spotted schools at a YWAM base in Trinidad, Colorado. I noticed a recruitment notice for someone skilled in Roadway Engineering. That was my background and I got excited. I talked to Judith about going to Trinidad. We prayed and she did not have a peace about it. I gave the thought to the Lord, never expecting to go to Trinidad to be part of YWAM.

But now Judith was gone, and upon one of the return trips from Mexico we passed through Trinidad and my interest was again sparked. After a few contacts with the base at Mission Village at Ponderosa, I came and began doing maintenance work as a Mission Builder in November.

It was now Christmas, and Randy Thomas, DTS Director, asked me to pray about co-leading the upcoming DTS. I had no personal desire to lead any DTS, but I prayed and felt Father say that was the reason he brought me here.

I told Randy yes.

He immediately asked me to pray about leading the school on outreach as well, and to pray where Father would have us go. He said the globe was open to us, anywhere the Father said to go.

A YWAM DTS typically consists of twelve weeks of lecture phase at the YWAM Base. That is followed by eight weeks of outreach to some part of the world. The leader of the DTS did not
always lead the outreach.

I fasted and prayed for three days and felt strongly that I was to lead the outreach. I specifically felt the Lord also said to come to Bhutan and Sikkim. The word later seemed more direct, ‘Come to Kalimpong, and I will lead you into Bhutan.’ I remembered then, that while at the ‘Go YWAM Conference’ in Estes Park, Colorado in early November, just prior to coming to Trinidad, I was in one class where the class leader asked us to ask God for a country, or people group. I did as instructed and heard the Lord say, ‘Bhutan.’ It didn’t mean much to me at the time, but I accepted it as something from Father God.

One YWAM friend told me when she found out that we were going to Darjeeling District as a DTS outreach location, she had felt for years through Judith’s suffering, that it was all for me. That I would be the one to go to India. Well, it is happening just that way.

I can now see the pieces more clearly. God had been putting this outreach together for more than twelve years, maybe forty years. Since Judith was a little girl and God began to place India on her heart, a place she would never go, her purpose had been to prepare me to go.

My purpose was to prepare eight DTS students from Canada, India, South Africa, Colorado, Minnesota, and California, for a journey to the Himalaya region of Northeast India and Bhutan.

What great purpose does Father God have for this team? What individual, or individuals, does he want to touch, that they will touch his heart and complete this plan of his?

There is no doubt that there is great purpose in this outreach. God will complete his work in the nine of us going. But, will we pick up his purpose for the future in this remote and forbidden region? Will we be willing to be used by God to open this region that he may bring life to its inhabitants?

What is God going to do at, ‘Chowk Bazaar?’ Will we meet him at the crossroads?
Chapter 2

Arrival in Calcutta

I had heard about the sprawling Denver airport and now I was getting a close up view of the many concourses, and the train shuttles required to travel between them.

Our team had left the Ponderosa, the YWAM base at Weston, Colorado, and after a three-hour ride in the DTS van, we arrived at the Colorado Springs airport. We boarded our short flight to Denver where we would wait six hours for our connecting flight to Los Angeles, and then on to Seoul, Bangkok, Bombay, and eventually Calcutta, our final air destination.

It had been three hard months of preparation for this two-month outreach that was destined for the India states of West Bengal and Sikkim, and the country of Bhutan. Prayer and intercession had confirmed these destinations.

Our purpose was to intercede for God’s will in these nations, engage in spiritual warfare, and to worship our God, all in places we would be led to by the Holy Spirit as we sought Father God’s advice and leading daily.

Eight students had applied for, and were accepted, for this DTS, from four different countries. The students are listed below, with a current statement in their own words why they applied for the DTS:

**Bubba,** (David), 19, from Colorado Springs, Colorado
He writes; ‘I originally attended my DTS in Trinidad, CO because after growing up in a ministry household, I had a strong desire to experience God for myself. After graduating high school I found myself hurting and needing God's touch. I had created a lifestyle that was destructive to me and hurtful to my family. I had begun to feel the call of God on my life and was ready to take the next step to develop a true relationship with God.’

**Jenny,** 20, from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
She writes; ‘My Reasons for going to DTS....I did the Crossroads DTS with my family in Kona in 1990 and really enjoyed my time there. I felt I wanted to have a missions experience on my own and I already knew what YWAM was about. I think after my time in Kona, (as a 12 year old), I knew that when I was old enough I would come back to YWAM somewhere, somehow.’

**Maddy,** (Madalein), 18, from Pretoria, South Africa
(Unable to contact Maddy for an update)

**Marla,** 18, from Ontario, Canada
She writes; ‘Two reasons. One, I always have had a heart for the poor. Two, I was at a place in my life when I was at a crossroads. I had two paths before me, one led to a really dark place of continuing to run from God, and the other was to run directly to Him. That's why I ditched everything and everyone to go on a DTS. I had made a decision to take that path.’
Nate, (Nathan), 20, from Denver, Colorado
He writes; ‘I was a full-blown drug addict and alcoholic, my parents suggested that I go and do a YWAM DTS, and it was the best thing I ever did!’

Nicole, 24, from Fresno, California
She writes; ‘I joined DTS because I wanted to strengthen my own relationship with God and have a better understanding in my faith. I was not raised in the church, so I had a lot of misconceptions about religion, God, faith, etc. I also just wanted to help people in need.’

Preety, 18, from San Jose, California
She writes; ‘I came to DTS because I was on fire for the Lord and wanted to share his message with others.’

Sandy, 28, from Grand Marais, Minnesota
(Unable to contact Sandy for an update)

Kathy Lee, and I, would co-lead the three-month long lecture phase of the DTS, and Steve Martin would assist us as staff person. I would lead the two-month long outreach phase that was to begin immediately after completion of the lecture phase. Sandy graciously agreed to be a student leader during the outreach to help with daily outreach details. Randy and Edie were the DTS directors for the Mission Village YWAM Base at Ponderosa and were my leaders.

And now we were only hours away from a flight that would carry us to a destination that can be reached as quickly going west as it can from going east from Colorado. Halfway around the world there waited an adventure for us serving God.

What would it be like within that region where Chowk Bazaar lies, a spot on the globe that wrought so much prayer from Judith and me over the years? Also within that region was Sikkim, heavily restricted to travel by Westerners, especially Christians.

Visible from Sikkim, and even Darjeeling where Chowk Bazaar was located, was Bhutan, a country closed to the Gospel, even waging serious opposition to the gospel. A country that is known for persecution of those natives who proclaim to be believers. The only Christian church that exists there is underground.

Our travel would total sixty hours before resting in Calcutta for a couple days to regain strength and get over any jet lag we may encounter. We would then board a train for Siliguri, West Bengal, our rail destination, from where we would travel by road to Gangtok, the capital city of Sikkim. Our permits, acquired at the Indian Consulate in San Francisco, were to be good for only fifteen days and must be confirmed in Sikkim.

Air travel to India went well as we found ourselves finally in Mumbai, (Bombay), at the International Terminal. Bombay had undergone a name change recently which was a little confusing to us all.

In India’s major airports, International and Domestic flights were conducted from different air fields and the next course of action was to get the team to Mumbai’s Domestic Terminal a few miles away, as our morning flight to Calcutta would utilize domestic airlines. We were scheduled for a twelve-hour layover in the Domestic Terminal before catching our flight. There was a free shuttle to get us there, but the question was, when did it run?

The bus schedule posted outside the International Terminal stated that the shuttle would run
hourly so we figured we could be no longer than an hour away from the next bus. Wrong! We were finding out about scheduling and order in India already. We waited for more than two hours before the next shuttle pulled to the curb.

Meanwhile, most of the other bus drivers stopped to entice us onto their bus even though it did not go to the Domestic Terminal at all. We held firm, even when they assured us there would be no other shuttles that night.

Our patience was rewarded as the proper shuttle finally arrived.

Once in the Domestic Terminal, part of the team was able to sleep on the floor. I stayed awake watching after our pile of backpacks, especially the day pack where I carried our team valuables, including our team cash of more than US $3000, passports, and airline tickets.

Morning finally came after a long sleepless night. We boarded our least accommodating air leg to our destination, Calcutta. The flight was packed to the brim and the Air India plane had obviously seen many passengers with overwhelming baggage. I had never seen such wear and tear on any aircraft. Fortunately it was a short flight and we arrived in short order.

The Calcutta area appeared quite nice from the air on this beautiful day with sunshine highlighting the green fields, banana trees, and coconut palms that were prevalent everywhere. Once on the ground, our plane parked quite a distance from the terminal and that meant we had to be bused to the crowded terminal.

Surprisingly our luggage, which consisted wholly of backpacks to facilitate our anticipated mobile schedule ahead, was made available to us very quickly and we soon had them on our backs, relieved that all of them had made the trip in one piece. We formed a line as we began our wandering journey through the Calcutta Domestic Airport to find our contact, Nabo.

All the stories we had heard about thieves, beggars, and cons had us alert to any distraction that might draw our attention away while someone quickly slit an opening in a backpack with a razor blade and made off with some valuable item. Our plan included watching each others pack as we moved along. I constantly looked over my shoulder and spoke the words, ‘Keep it close, stay together.’ This looking over my shoulder and counting eight heads would become something I would do hundreds, maybe thousands of times before leaving India.

When we approached the front entrance of the terminal, I asked the team to wait while I went outside to see if Nabo was there. I was troubled that he had not been inside to meet us, I wondered if he had come at all.

Nabo’s name had been provided by YWAM Calcutta during my early inquiries with them for help upon arrival. He wasn’t much more than a name to me at this point.

Communication between Nabo and myself prior to leaving the states had been poor at best. I had received only one e-mail from him, and gave him one quick e-mail response before my failed computer hard drive caused me to lose his much valued e-mail address. It had been weeks since my last contact with him. I had sent other e-mail messages to his headquarters but had gotten no reply.

I stepped out of the terminal into the warmth of the Indian sunshine and found a mob of Indians waiting. There was an iron rail that kept them separated from the people departing the terminal, but Indians were tightly pressed together straining to reach across the railing. This sea of faces was trying to get my attention, and all offering some kind of service, mostly taxis, for this white skinned foreigner.

Over the next two months I would find that there are thousands more taxis’ in Calcutta than people who need one of them. There is constant pressure to use an Ambassador auto taxi, or an auto rickshaw that is simply a three-wheel motorcycle with a passenger body attached to keep sunlight
and rain off the passengers. Many bicycle-rickshaws, and hand-pulled-rickshaws also provide that there is never a lack of transportation offered.

I peered into the faces and saw none that seemed to be asking, ‘Are you, Bill?’ My fear that Nabo had not come was mounting.

I slowly walked down the walkway in the midst of outstretched Indian arms, searching for a face I did not know, until I reached the end of the railing where I would have to step out into the mob of people if I continued on.

Suddenly, from the crowd behind me, I heard those wonderful words, ‘Are you Bill?’

I turned, hopeful, and saw a tall handsome Indian looking my way. He carried a wonderful huge smile upon his face and he possessed something the others lacked, he was at peace, happy, not needing anything from me.

My face formed a smile that could not be held back and I responded, ‘Yes I am, are you Nabo?’

‘Yes,’ he replied.

I reached through the people that stood between us and shook his hand. I was very happy to see him. He had come!

Nabo began arranging a prepaid taxi for us, and I went to get the rest of the team. Minutes later we were standing with Nabo and several taxi drivers that were bidding for our business. There seemed to be some confusion, and even argument, over the price. I came to know that this was common occurrence, everything seemed to require a negotiation in India lest you pay far too much. The price was always high for westerners, and Nabo would sometimes have us stand out of sight so that those he negotiated with would not know he was representing tourists, as we were thought to be.

Soon we were racing along with a sea of Ambassador automobiles through the city of Calcutta in what seemed like impossible traffic conditions. The Ambassador was the only auto made in India from the 1930's until recently. At every moment we were about to be hit, or were about to hit someone else. It was a thrilling ride and I was surprised after a week of darting and lurching in and out of small openings in the traffic that it seemed so commonplace.

Nabo took us to the YWCA hotel near Park Street where we had made arrangements to stay. The rate seemed good at 2350 rupees, a mere US $78 per day for a team of nine. That included meals and room. We were to find out in the following week that cheaper accommodations were available in many of the local hotels. The ‘Y’ was a nice place though, well maintained and a safe place. Great for us in our first days in a city like Calcutta.

I paired the students two for each room, and I had a room to myself. We all settled into a rest period. The sixty-hour trip had made a mark on us that would only be erased by sleep.

It was now 11:00 A.M. and we were informed that lunch would be at 12:30, and dinner at 6:00. I asked that the team all meet at 7:00 P.M. after dinner for a short meeting, and made my way to my room, as did all the others. I lay down on my bed and closed my eyes, noticing the loud traffic noise on the street three floors below.

My body ached with tiredness and every fiber of my body seemed to be crying for rest. I sighed, let myself relax and instantly drifted off into my thoughts.

I opened my eyes and was aware that it was very quiet. Where was the street noise? I was groggy and just wanted to close my eyes and continue with the rest I needed so desperately. I peered through eyes that surely were bloodshot, to see what the hour was. To my horror I saw that it was just after midnight, I had slept twelve hours.
I am the one who always insisted that the team be on time for every function and meeting, and I had slept through lunch, dinner, and even the seven o’clock meeting I had set up. What would the team think?

I scrambled off the hard, narrow bunk, which was made of some type of straw matting, that was to be my resting place for the next eight days, and dashed for the common area just down the hall from our rooms. The area was deserted, and no one was there. Of course not! It was after midnight. I walked back to my less than desirable bed, undressed and fell immediately into another deep sleep.

I had declared the next day a free day for rest and recuperation for all of us, and was happy now that I had done so. That day is pretty much a blur to me, but there was rest in it.

Our ground plan began to crumble. The two days we had planned to be in Calcutta would not be a reality. I was to secure train passage to Siliguri so that we could depart by April 3, but it was impossible to get train tickets before April 8, a date that would go into our memories forever.

Sandy, Nicole, and Preety had originally planned to stay in India for two extra weeks, coming back to the states later and they had booked their flights accordingly. Sandy and Nicole were to travel to Cashmere, and Preety was to travel to Delhi to be with her family for that same period. They would rejoin and fly home together.

But, because of news of fighting and turmoil in Cashmere where westerners seemed to be in danger, Sandy and Nicole decided not to take the risk and wanted to fly home with the rest of the team. Preety also changed her mind to avoid traveling the sixty hours home alone.

Like everything in India, changing those three airline tickets to match the rest of the team was not an easy task. Permission had to be obtained from the issuing travel office, which in this case was in Honolulu. Although our agent was in Salem, Oregon, he had obtained our tickets from the Honolulu office because of the efficiency in doing so. They issued tickets the same day they were ordered. This cut days off the processing time required by other offices.

But, for some reason the Honolulu office was not responding to the faxes sent by the Korean Airways office in Calcutta. They could do nothing until permission was received from Honolulu. As it happened, April 8 came and still no ticket change, but it was understood that Korean Airways would continue to work on the changes and we could pick up the new tickets when we returned to Calcutta near the end of May.

Our several days of waiting for our train departure were spent walking Calcutta’s streets praying for the city. We visited the Kali Temple, where live animal sacrifices were performed, and prayed against the deception that gripped the people. We did other prayer walks pairing up two by two, fanning out in different directions from the YWCA. We went to Mother Teresa’s Home for the Destitute and Dying, and were given a tour through the facility and had opportunity to pray there as well.

There was also a little time for shopping. The team purchased local Indian outerwear and was happy to be seen proudly trying to blend in with the locals. Of course, they did not, with their light skin and even blonde hair on some, it wasn’t difficult to see we were foreigners from a block away. The newness of the clothing soon wore off and the team was once again in their casual wear they had brought for the occasion.

The days ebbed on toward April 8, and our train ride to Siliguri.
Our day of departure from Calcutta finally arrived and we were ready to start our train trip to the northernmost part of West Bengal. Most of us were excited to be leaving this city behind. The noise, the beggars, the pollution, the heat and humidity, the smells, the poverty, all pushed us to a quick decision that we did not like just hanging out in Calcutta and wanted out as soon as possible.

However, a few of the students, near the end of our first week, began to declare they liked Calcutta and they were actually looking forward to our return to the city. I wasn’t with them in my heart. I had only wanted to spend the two days originally planned and found nothing here that I wanted more of. But, I have to say, I found Calcutta to be less offensive than I thought before my arrival. Perhaps God doesn’t want us to think of any place he sends us as offensive.

Still, I longed for the mountains of the Himalayas where the air was reported as purer, the temperatures were lower, and rivers flowed cleaner. The mountain region, in addition, was supposed to operate at a different pace, more laid back. I was a country boy and Calcutta, of all cities, was not appealing to me.

Beggars were reported as almost nonexistent in the villages of the mountains compared to the large cities of India. Millions of Indians come to the largest cities to find work and a way of life, only to find more poverty than the villages they had left in search of prosperity. And once in the city they can find no means to leave and resort to begging to stay alive.

The food of the villages had to be better than that which we received as part of our room and board at the YWCA. The food, for the most part was terrible. At first it seemed tolerable, but as the week wore on it became almost unbearable. Most of the students quit coming for meals and went to the streets with their own money and found other food sources, but not without a price to some. Diarrhea moved through our group and did not miss many as the outreach wore on.

The dinner utensils at the YWCA were always in a state of filth. Evidence of prior meals could be seen wedged into the crevices of the silverware and dishes. Running a folded napkin between the fork’s tines would always yield a black mark upon the napkin. Food particles and smears from the previous meal, or even previous day, could usually be found stuck on the tablecloth that obviously had not been wiped.

I, and most of the team were happy that this day had finally arrived. Leaving Calcutta and the YWCA behind would not be difficult, nor heartfelt.

It was April 8. Our train was the ‘Darjeeling Mail’ and was due to depart at dusk. Nabo, who had been our constant companion for the entire week, came to the YWCA to help us to the train station early to avoid problems in making our departure time. He thought we should be there three hours ahead to be ready. Nabo’s knew his country of India and his advice was always good, so we followed it faithfully.

Nabo was a kind and helpful man who loved the Lord a great deal. He had given up a life of drugs and related activity some eight years earlier. He had been introduced to YWAM in Calcutta and his life was changed as he gave his heart and commitment to Jesus Christ. He had also made a commitment to YWAM working as staff with them for the entire eight years. He was one of the
team leaders within YWAM Calcutta and served on their council.

Nabo and a small YWAM team of men stayed together in a house on the outskirts of Calcutta and operated a ‘Jesus Film’ ministry. They used mobile equipment to take the film to the streets and play the movie for the passerby’s who always gathered out of curiosity. The team was able to lead many to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Nabo had committed himself to our service and it was a welcome service as we learned to negotiate the subway underneath Calcutta, locally known as the ‘Metro.’ He guided us to Mother Teresa’s Home for the Destitute and Dying, to the Kali Temple, to Victoria Park, and many other places during our eight-day stay. He was also instrumental in acquiring our rail tickets.

And now here we were, huddled around our mountain of backpacks on the rail platform at Sealdah Train Station. Our plan was to keep three people remaining at our pile of packs at all times. As westerners, our team stood out like a sore thumb and many beggars, con artists, and simply curious, clustered around us watching our every move. We were sure that if we took our eyes off our luggage for a moment, something would be gone.

By now we had grown accustomed to the habit the Indians have of staring at westerners, or anybody for that matter, especially our ladies. Some say they believe that ladies from the west are very free and that sexual exploits can be had with them very easily. This comes from the only view most Indians get of westerners, TV! Many of them believe that TV and movies display honestly a country’s characteristics. This could have been true of India. Until recent years India would not show a male and female kiss in a movie or TV show. That has changed much in the past few years, probably due to western influence.

So, it was usual to have men stop and simply stare at our young ladies, whom were all very nice to look at. My response was generally one of protection. I felt as though these men could be looking lustfully at one of my two daughters. I would stare back at them, right into their eyes with a look of, ‘What are you staring at?’ Sometimes I would even comment with the look I gave. They would generally look away briefly before returning a gaze. Often they would choose to move on, probably wondering why I was getting so huffy.

Finally the ‘Darjeeling Mail’ pulled alongside the platform. Nabo instructed us to quickly move to our railcar and be ready to board as soon as it was possible. By doing so we could avoid the crowded aisles of the train, thereby reducing risk of stolen goods. We would learn later that the ‘Sealdah’ station was notorious for theft.

We moved in a single file through the throngs of people along the long platform. Thousands of people were wanting to board, some with tickets and some without. Venders were stationed along the crowded platform selling items to the would-be passengers from carts carrying a variety of food, drinks, and trinkets.

Everything went smoothly and we soon arrived alongside our designated rail coach, S7. Darkness was falling upon Calcutta as we reached the steps and climbed up and into our coach. I was surprised to find the coach very dark inside as the team disappeared into the darkness ahead of me. I was bringing up the rear and knew that everyone was on board, and Nabo was leading the way to our compartment area, that turned out to be at the far end of the railcar.

The coach was arranged so that all the compartments were on the right side, and a row of passenger seats were situated along the left side for open seating. Our seating was in the compartments.

I instructed the team to keep a close watch on their bags, it was an ongoing rule. As we all began to bunch up in the aisle at the far end of the coach, confusion began to reign. Nabo found the
proper compartment and the team began filing in and stowing their bags. Nabo was helping to stow backpacks under the seats and also some onto the overhead bunk.

Each compartment held six people with their luggage. Two bench seats sat opposing each other, they doubled for night beds. There were other bench seats just above those, half way up the wall of the compartment, and another set higher up yet, making for a total of six bunks for sleeping. There were nine of us, so we needed three other seats in another compartment.

The team was having trouble getting out of the aisle because of the stowing of packs, resulting in the aisle blocked so that I could not get ahead and help.

I had the only paper ticket and could not read it because of the darkness. Nathan had gone ahead to the next compartment to check seating there, and it was difficult to tell if we had additional seating in that one or not. I borrowed a flashlight from Bubba as mine was still in my day pack. I removed the backpack from my back and sat it between the two aisle seats opposite the compartment we were occupying. I placed my smaller day-pack on the corner seat behind me and wedged it into the corner with my body, hoping to provide a barrier against anyone wanting to put their hands on it. I was very aware of my need to protect that particular pack and the valuables inside.

I began reading the seat assignments with the aid of the flashlight and calling out seat numbers loudly, hoping to alleviate the confusion.

Suddenly, shadowy figures appeared in the aisle adjacent to me. Strangers were pushing into our group. I yelled at the team, ‘Watch your bags!’ The words were not far from my lips when the four or five men who had crowded into our section of aisle began pushing me.

Our entire team was able to step into the compartment out of the way. I was not, and was immediately swept down the aisle as they pushed me into a small space between two seats. I began clawing, pushing, yelling, and fighting, all in an attempt to break loose and get back up the aisle to my original position.

As quickly as it all began, the aisle was suddenly empty. I jumped to my feet and rushed back up the aisle and put my hand into the darkness where my day-pack had been. It was gone!

My heart sank, and I shot a question loudly into the darkness for the entire team to hear, ‘Where’s my bag?’

I feared the answer that never came. I asked again, ‘Did anyone pick up my day-pack?’

There was a sickening silence as I frantically began flashing the light under the seats, and around the area.

‘My day-pack is gone!’ I exclaimed. ‘It’s gone!’

My worst fears had been, at that moment, realized. Several of the students began to look around. I spoke and said, ‘They’ve stolen my day-pack.’

That pack had everything important to our team in it, and all of us knew it.

Bubba and Nathan didn’t wait for a team meeting, or conference, to decide what to do, they broke from the coach at a run to the platform and disappeared in the crowd in search of the assailants. Given the character of these two young men, I would expect nothing less. Both were very capable and could easily handle a thief or two. But the thieves had a jump on them, and would not likely be seen again.

A quick search inside the railcar by the team proved that it was nowhere inside the coach. I spoke more softly now as I recounted aloud the contents of the bag, ‘All our passports, all our airline tickets, and all our team money, US $3000, gone.’

I had a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. Everything we saw as our security was gone, it
was lost. Some of my personal belongings were lost as well, bible, camera, and wallet, but only the passports, tickets, and cash seemed important right now.

‘What tragedy was this Lord? Where was our protection?’ Thoughts were racing through my mind. ‘Had I even heard the Lord about this outreach? Now what?’

Our train was only moments away from departing the platform when Nabo and I departed the train and went directly to a railroad policeman on the platform. It seemed an eternity explaining in a way he could grasp what had happened to us. I knew the thieves were long gone from the railway station and we would not see the bag again. It was painful to stand and go through the formality of explaining, and bringing the policeman to the railcar.

‘What could be done there,’ I thought?

As we arrived back at our compartment inside our coach, the team was seated in a circle with joined hands and were praying fervently. My eyes caught the movement of tears as they flowed from dear Jenny’s eyes of her bowed head. The tears were falling onto her pant leg of her jeans and making a wet spot. My heart broke as I viewed this scene. Fear and pain were so evident in this picture.

The officer said we would have to go report the incident at the police station, and that he would alert other officers who would be searching for the thief. It became apparent to us that a decision was needed immediately. What were we to do now?

The train was to pull out of the station in about five minutes. We still had our rail tickets, which was really one single ticket, and I held it in my hand. We had no money for hotels. We had no passports, which are required to obtain hotels and train tickets.

I suggested the team stay on the train and travel to Siliguri where a YWAM staff person from Gangtok, Sikkim was to meet us early the next morning as the train arrived. The team wasn’t too sure about us splitting up. I wasn’t either.

I had determined early on in this DTS that this team would not be split up for any reason. It was a small team and splitting would not be necessary as it is on larger outreach teams. Now it was evident it would be necessary. What would I do with the team if we all got off the train now?

Nabo suggested that the team do as I said, and that I would stay behind with him to begin replacement processes for our passports.

I asked Sandy if she was OK with that. Sandy had agreed to become an assistant to me as a student leader. That role would give her more responsibility than the other students and she would help with administrative details, help in determining team activities, and provide some limited guidance to the team at times. My current request to take the team on alone was clearly beyond the scope of what I had ever planned.

Sandy was visible nervous about the idea. However, she moved her head up and down and spoke, ‘I think so.’ The team then all agreed.

Marla came and hugged me, and the team said they had prayed that I not receive condemnation or guilt about the loss. I was pleased to see that tender side of the team, it meant a great deal to me. I needed Marla’s hug too, maybe more than she realized.

The signal came and it was time for the train to pull out. Nabo and I stepped off onto the platform and moved along the railcar to the compartment window where our team was and peered in. The team was again grasping hands and praying. When they saw us, they crowded to the window that had no glass but was clad only with bars. I clasped the hand of Marla as she extended it out through the rustic bars of the window.

I could hear ‘I love you,’ comments coming from inside the coach. The train began to move
away. I stood in the dim light of the platform with Nabo at my side and watched the train pull away into the darkness with faces of my team peering out of the window. I stared after the ‘Darjeeling Mail’ as it became very small in the distance.

Nabo and I turned and strode along the platform toward the police station. I felt so empty and at a loss to understand what had just happened. The sound of the train faded into the darkened distance.

As we walked briskly along the platform toward the Railroad Police Station, Nabo finally spoke, ‘This is not the end, Bill, it is the beginning!’

At that moment peace began to flow over me. I should have been feeling terrible, responsible, distraught, guilty, ashamed, and any number of other emotions that can result from the loss of all our security being upon my shoulders. The parents of these students had put their trust in me to protect this team, and ensure that nothing like this would happen. I had failed to do that.

But, the peace of God was obviously upon me, and I remember thinking, and even commenting to Nabo. ‘I know God intends to bring something good out of all this chaos. That’s the kind of God we serve.’
Chapter 4

The Police Report

The police station was dim-lit, very dirty and littered. There were two desks dating back to the British occupation of India sitting side by side in the center of the room. I think it is safe to say that they had not been thoroughly cleaned since that occupation. Both were very dusty and cluttered with paperwork stacked high. Across the room from the desks there was a large dusty and cluttered table with a few chairs on opposite sides.

Two sets of barred doors stood across two large openings in the wall opposite the two desks. It was evident these bars separated the outer office from the cells beyond.

A man, unkept and unclean, wearing garments that may have been white at some point in their life but were now dingy dirt brown, sat on the men’s cell floor behind the bars. He pulled long on a cigarette and let the smoke out slowly. He leaned against the bars and peered between them toward Nabo and me.

It was likely one barred area was for men and the other for women. That’s only a guess as no one was present at the second opening.

There were tall, dark stained, wooden storage cabinets along another wall of the office with piles of old police files stacked on top of them extending nearly to the twelve or thirteen-foot high ceiling of the room. Doors etched with decades of handling concealed what lay on the shelves inside the cabinets.

Two large fans from the same occupation vintage hung from the blackened ceiling and turned slowly in an unsuccessful attempt to move the hot humid air. Light tried to escape the blackened light fixtures on the high ceiling, and failed to reach the floor below in any degree of intensity. Black dust from years of vehicle emissions and polluted air from the streets, had accumulated on the old files and every piece of furniture in the place.

Looking past the two desks and beyond the bars, it was evident there was much more to this facility. People were moving through the dark, narrow corridors leading to cells where the prisoners were held.

Several officers were present in the room. One sat at one of the two desks and looked past the pile of papers and looked at us with a nod of his head as if to say, ‘What do you want?’ He was in charge. The others were standing in a corner opposite the bars.

Nabo began to explain our case to the seated officer. From the very start he seemed disinterested, almost irritated that we were there, as if we just represented another task that would need his attention when what he really wanted was to get out of there.

The officer finally indicated that a report would have to be filled out and explained to Nabo in a mixture of broken English and Bengali that I was to write out, in some detail, what had happened, what was stolen, and to report all the passport numbers. I could not understand a word the man said. His English was unintelligible. This frustrated him all the more because he seemed to think he was doing a good job of communicating.

Fortunately I had written all but one passport number on a separate piece of paper before the robbery. I had those with me. Nathan’s I did not have. And the entire team, except Nathan and me,
had photo copies of their passports, and was thought to be helpful in replacing the stolen ones. They were virtually worthless in the end, other than getting numbers from, and that information was quickly available on the computers of the various embassies.

I quickly documented all that was required and handed it to the officer. He attempted to read it aloud but was either having trouble reading English, or having a hard time making out my handwriting. Nabo offered assistance on several occasions, but he became upset at that.

At one point he stopped reading and asked, ‘Would you welcome me to America?’ He laughed out loud.

I wasn’t sure what was so funny, but replied, ‘Yes, I would.’

He asked, ‘How could I get to America?’

I said, ‘Just like I got to India, apply for a Visa.’

His expression told me he didn’t like that answer.

He fired back at me, ‘Can you help me get a visa?’

‘I’m sorry,’ I said, ‘I can do nothing to help you.’

I had the feeling that we were going to get little help from anyone in this station, and finally we were told we were free to go and that an investigation would begin. Nabo and I walked out of the police station into the dark night air somehow knowing we had accomplished very little in the several hours we were there.

It was another warm night, like most of our nights in Calcutta had been. I was wearing only a tee shirt, light cotton pants, and my hikers I had worn since arrival. Many of the students were wearing sandals in the heat, but I wanted protection from the filth of the streets and gutters that were filled with everything imaginable.

Small children sometimes hung their little fannies over the curb of the sidewalk and left their deposit in the gutter. They usually wore no underclothing, or no clothing at all. Toilet paper was not generally used by most of the low class in India, even in indoor toilets. The left hand was used for this purpose, and water was usually available for hand washing. The left hand was not used for food, nor was it extended to anyone in greeting. A custom we most often failed to remember, as we did extend, and eat with, our left hand. However, we managed to used toilet paper most of the time. We carried a considerable quantity of it with us from Colorado. Toilet paper was available for purchase in India, but it was expensive and not a very desirable grade.

The station was still teeming with people, even at this late hour. It had been nearly three hours now since the ‘Darjeeling Mail’ had pulled out of the station. I wondered what thoughts were going through the minds of the team as they sped northward in the darkness of West Bengal.

We walked to the outskirts of the station area in search of transportation. We were too late in the evening to use the ‘Metro’ and we reached a taxi stand, and hailed one. The taxi raced through the streets toward Nabo’s quarters. Soon we arrived at a small concrete building that Nabo called home, as did the rest of his team.

He and John brought in a spare bunk and made space available to me in their room. John was one of Nabo’s leadership team. They scrounged up mosquito netting to protect me from the heavy infestation of mosquitoes. There would be no sleep without the netting.

Before I retired for the night, I ventured out onto the street to find a STD, (a pay telephone service available throughout India), and called Mission Village back in Colorado. I had lost all my phone numbers in the stolen bag, but there were two numbers I remembered, Tyler Johnston’s, Ponderosa’s base director, and Ponderosa DTS office phone. Tyler had told me before leaving Colorado that if I ever needed anything, call him. He didn’t care what time day or night, call him.
It must have been Father’s will, because I remembered a phone number that I had never dialed.

Tyler answered and agreed to call my credit card companies and report the stolen cards. He then called Randy Thomas to have him call me back at the STD. Randy did call back right away and gave me much reassurance and said they would begin seeking replacement dollars for our continued outreach.

But in Calcutta, sleep would be slow to come on such an eventful night. In the morning, the process of securing replacement of our lost valuables would begin.

Morning came and I awoke early full of enthusiasm and ready to tackle the seemingly enormous task of replacing nine passports, airline tickets, and somehow coming up with adequate financing to continue the outreach. I was obviously benefitting from the team’s prayer that I not feel any condemnation from the loss of my day-pack and the most valuable items we carried with us.

Somewhere along the line Nabo and John had put their heads together and decided to extend me a loan of five thousand rupees, about US $125.00. It wasn’t much, but it turned out to be enough until more would arrive several days later. I hoped it was enough to cover my passport replacement, and enough to purchase rail tickets for the entire team that would be required soon.

My first task was to get my passport replaced and my attempt to get something accomplished at the US Embassy left me disappointed. I could get nowhere with the Indian lady at the window where I had to talk through a tiny slot at the bottom of a protective glass between her and me. After several attempts to get information, it seemed I could do nothing of real consequence.

I left the embassy after filling out an application for a replacement passport. I was told to go to a designated passport photo vender to obtain photos and to return with them. As we were in process of doing just that, I explained to Nabo the difficulty I was having with the lady. He said that I should not talk to her, but insist upon talking to the American Consulate.

Why didn’t I know that? I didn’t know the answer to that question, but was grateful for Nabo’s advice.

When I returned with the passport photo, I gave them to the same lady. I began to quiz her about our foreign students, and other pertinent questions I had. She again seemed indifferent to my requests and at this point I became a little ticked off and spoke directly and sternly to her.

I looked her straight in the eyes, and said, ‘I want to talk to my American Consulate personally.’

At this she asked why I wanted to talk to him.

With somewhat more emphasis I stated, ‘I am an US citizen and I have a right to speak to my American Consulate.’

She stopped, stared at me and said, ‘Just a moment.’

In a few minutes a handsome man, probably in his thirties came through the far door behind the glass. He strode to the window and introduced himself as the American Consulate, and asked how he could help me. He cheerfully answered all my questions, even offering advice I needed but did not know to ask for. He then asked me to return in one hour and my new passport would be ready. I thanked him, and then thanked Father for his intervention. It was clear that he had expedited my replacement.

I returned in one hour and my passport was ready. The Consulate, this time, left the area behind the glass and moved around to the small waiting room where I was. He shook my hand and handed me the new passport. I felt as though my need was important and was glad I had heeded Nabo’s advice to speak directly to him.

It took a bit more than two hours for replacement of my passport, and I was one who had no
photo copy of my passport. All that was needed was my name and birth date to plug into the computer, and the passport photo.

I was impressed with my American Consulate.

One of the questions I had asked the American Consulate was, ‘Can I start replacement procedures for the rest of the Americans on the team?’

The answer was no. I would have to get all of them back to the Embassy to submit individual applications in person for their own passports.

This presented another problem. I now needed to travel north to Siliguri to bring the team back. I had been calling to Gangtok in Sikkim daily talking to Wilfred, who was in daily contact with the team. The team was in the capable hands of one of Wilfred’s YWAM staff.

I talked to Sandy in Siliguri on one occasion to find out that they had been split into two groups, the guys staying in one location and the girls in another. Hotels had been a problem because of no passports. However, accommodations had been obtained.

I pondered what my next move would be.

I had come to trust Nabo and I shared most of my concerns with him. He spent days with me traveling about Calcutta to the train station, the US Embassy, the British High Commission Office, the Foreign Tourist Office, the Indian Passport Office, and the many other necessary stops. Nabo became my dear friend, and a true friend to our team. He was totally dedicated to our service.

Nabo and I had been at the Police Station gathering the Police Report that would become so important for me to have on hand, and were strolling back into the center of Calcutta. There in front of us was a man! He was laying on his back in the midmorning sunshine, and he was stark naked. His hair was extremely matted and obviously had not been groomed for a very long time. His dark body was dirty, and had a cloudy grey look to it. He was unconscious, with no movement apparent.

I stopped in my tracks. I had never seen anything like this. People were moving around both sides of him and ignoring him. I didn’t understand why someone wasn’t helping the man, why someone wasn’t covering his private parts at least.

I glanced at Nabo, and he saw disbelief displayed on my face and offered a quick statement, ‘Just leave him.’ He was apparently drugged in some way. This wasn’t unheard of in this large city of such hardship and misfortune. Drugs were commonly on the scene.

The streets are filled with people begging just to get a little food to help them and their children stay alive. I saw one such family many times on the sidewalk. The father and mother were dressed with barely enough to cover their private parts, and the several children had no clothes or shoes at all. They simply sat on the concrete sidewalk with hands extended to the thousands who passed by on the busy streets.

I never got used to the idea of such poverty all around me.

Another scene that amazed me was the ‘sacred’ cow that has such a reverence from the people. A cow could lay on the street lazily and the entire street full of traffic would detour around the animal. Sometimes there would be a whole herd of them scattered on the street and median. People would take food from their meager amounts for their own family and lay it before the cattle. Often the animals would eat without even standing to their feet. They were spoiled to the hilt, pampered and they didn’t mind at all.

For the Hindu, it is considered a perpetual sin to sell cows for butchering. Any Hindu connected with such antireligious activities is not considered a real Hindu. They are taught that saving a cow is more important than saving their own soul. What rubbish!

Is it any wonder the streets are full of pampered, ‘sacred,’ cows?
I was concerned about the team and how I was going to get them back to Calcutta. At one point Nabo suggested that I consider letting the team come back to Calcutta alone by bus. Train fare could not be purchased without passports, and money really wasn’t available for that anyway.

I talked again with Sandy and asked if she was comfortable bringing the team back to Calcutta alone by bus. She was, and said that they had enough personal money amongst the team to purchase the bus tickets themselves. They would arrive back in Calcutta Saturday morning, April 11.

I agreed. It was set.

They would call Nabo’s pager once in Calcutta and we would come to the bus stand and pick them up in taxis’.

It was a sunny and hot Saturday morning as Nabo and I made our way to one of the Western Union offices to pick up US $1000.00 that had arrived from Colorado. The money came just as the five-thousand rupees’ Nabo had given me was about to run out. God’s timing was awesome. Nabo’s pager rang, and the team had arrived and was waiting at the bus stand.

We rushed to the bus stand and found a team beat down from a horrendous bus ride. Their faces were black from the diesel smoke that flowed in through the open windows of the bus. The buses had no air conditioning and the windows had to remain open to make the trip bearable in the heat. Most vehicles in Calcutta had a diesel engine, and black smoke would pour heavily from the trucks and buses mufflers.

Their black faces were worn and tired. Several ran to us and gave hugs and warm greetings. I was happy to see them and appreciated the embraces. Some of the others simply stood in the heat and looked to be wilting.

I felt for them and wanted to get them into quarters and showers. Nabo’s team had agreed to move out of one of their rooms and make room for the six girls. The two guys were to move into a small room on the roof. This, however, never worked out. Bubba and Nathan spent the next ten nights sleeping in the space that was used as the common area. Every morning they would gather up their belongings and move them to the room I shared with John and Nabo, stowing them for the day. Because this space had been opened up to us, we would have greatly reduced overhead the next ten days.

Nabo’s team fed and housed us at no cost to us. We were blessed. They had exhibited Christian love to us in several ways.

The team rested all that Saturday, and the following day was Easter Sunday. At a team meeting it was unanimously agreed that we should hold our own church service in the girl’s room. We cleared an area and sat on the concrete floor. We sang worship songs, praising Jesus for all his goodness to us, and gave personal testimonies about his goodness to us as individuals. We purposely came to God in thankfulness. We wanted to continuously maintain an attitude of gratefulness. We each shared something important to us from this experience, some with scripture and others in different ways.

Sandy and I had agreed to ask Nathan and Bubba to lead us in Communion this special Sunday morning. They agreed and it was marvelous. We felt our Lord’s wonderful presence as we sat before him. I thought, as we sat on the hard concrete floor, ‘This must have been what the early first century church was like, a small band of people in primitive surroundings simply wanting to honor our king.’ We will not likely forget this Easter, and it may be one of the most remembered.

Monday morning early, April 13, the entire team converged on the passport photo shop to obtain the remaining passport photos, including our foreign students. We were only to return again nearly two hours later, as they had given us the wrong size photos and we were instructed by the US
Embassy to return for new ones.

Although we suffered a delay, we were soon back at the Embassy with the new photos that would be added to the passport applications we left on the earlier trip. We were told that the remaining five US passports would be ready the next day.

The following day we picked up the US Passports and made our way back to the Indian Foreign Tourist Office to register for our new India Visa’s. I had already registered for mine and was told that I could not get one before April 28. The other five Americans could expect no better than that, and that turned out to be the case. We were actually illegally in India until we had registered for new visas’.

The American Consulate had explained to me that our non-US citizen team members would have to go to Delhi for passport replacement. There was no Canadian, nor South African Embassy in Calcutta. Also, our Indian student would have to go back to the city where her passport had been issued to get her replacement. That was Delhi, to the Indian Passport Office, an ordeal that would prove to be the biggest test and struggle of all.

So now, our path would take us on a long train ride to Delhi, a location we previously had no intention of visiting. It was obvious by now that this outreach would be quite different from what we had envisioned. And it was also obvious that we would become much more familiar with the India train system than we planned.

The India train system was run and controlled by the Indian Government. The British were instrumental in getting the rail system up and running in the mid 1800's. The system has had its ups and downs over the years, but has grown to more than 50,000 miles of rails currently.

Nabo and I went to the train station and made a plea to purchase tickets for the team. With no passports it would be difficult. I had my new one and I also had the ticket for the ‘Darjeeling Mail,’ indicating that the team had all had passports just a few days earlier. I also had a police report that was required for every transaction we carried out in our administrative task, and a list of our stolen passport numbers, except Nathan’s. I was surprised when they actually approved tickets for us to Delhi for April 19, on the evening train. All our seats were stamped, ‘Confirmed,’ which was supposed to mean guaranteed, but the reality in India was, nothing is guaranteed.

I decided while the atmosphere was good for purchasing tickets, that we might as well purchase our tickets from Delhi to the Jalpaiguri train station in Siliguri. We did so, however confirmations were not issued. We were ensured they would be before we traveled on the 26th. We seemed to be set.

We would have four days in Delhi to take care of three passports; one Canadian, one South African, one Indian; two India visas, and three US visas. The six US passports had been obtained so quickly we had hopes that four days in Delhi would be adequate to get the rest replaced. We did not know the trial that lie ahead of us in Delhi.

We had been invited by Wilfred Selvaraj, the YWAM director in Gangtok, Sikkim, to be his guests at a large YWAM conference being held just outside Delhi. It was to be a regional conference for all of that part of Asia, including Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and India. We were excited to go. We volunteered our services to the conference. We told Wilfred that we would be willing to serve in any way that we could while there. We only had to involve a few of us in the replacement of the non-US passports. The rest could be very active at the conference. We would also have a place to stay, and at a cost of US $20.00 for each of the nine of us for the entire week, including room and meals. A good deal for us it seemed.
Chapter 5

Trials in Delhi

Nabo’s team had left two days earlier for Delhi. Our desire was to ride the train to Delhi with the YWAM team members from Calcutta, but tickets just weren’t available the day they were to travel. Our train would put us in Delhi on Monday evening, April 20. The conference was to begin with registration on Sunday. We would be late.

Our two days alone at Nabo’s YWAM quarters were good, although very quiet. We were a bit anxious about another night train ride, as our last had proved to be more adventure than we were prepared for. I had tried to get us a morning boarding and departure this time, but was unable to do so. We would go to a different rail station this time and I wasn’t sure where it was located, and there was some apprehension about that as well. We would take taxis’ and they could not always be trusted.

Nabo had spent so much time guiding us that we had not even had to negotiate taxis’ on our own since arrival in India. But this day we would.

The first taxi I approached wanted one hundred fifty rupees, but John had said that seventy rupees should get us to the train station. I told the taxi driver we would find someone else. He got angry!

It was hard to stand in the heat of the day and wait for another taxi to come along. It was Sunday and there was no assurance that one would come along. Besides the first taxi that had wanted to charge too much, there had been a second there all along that we had not seen, and he finally approached us and said he would take us for the seventy rupees. I thanked him and said yes, if he could wait until a second came along as we could not all fit into one taxi. He agreed, and soon we were loaded and on our way. The Sunday afternoon streets were not crowded and we traveled without a hitch to the railway station.

A few hours later we were rushing along India’s rail tracks through the darkness of the night en route to Delhi. The wait on the platform and the boarding had all gone very well.

Michael Jha, the YWAM Director for all of Calcutta had sent a man to us before we left Nabo’s to tell us he would be traveling with us and would meet us at the train station. He said there was one catch. He had to travel as our guide because we were traveling under Tourist Quota and he could not unless he was our guide. I agreed quickly and said we would love to have him with us.

I had leaned far out of the train coach’s door looking for Michael up and down the platform. But, as the train pulled out, there was no sign of Michael. We would learn later that he had become very ill and could not go until the next day.

Our twenty-four-hour train ride went well although we lacked one seat to provide one for every member of the team. This would be the norm in India for us it seemed. This was not a particular problem when traveling daylight hours with all of us sitting up, but when it was time for bunks down, someone was out of luck.

We did enjoy the train ride through the Indian countryside. The miles of rice paddies being tended by workers were pleasant to the eyes compared to the unattractive streets of Calcutta. Water buffalos were frequent on the scene and were used to help in the fields.
There was hardly a hill in sight as our train roared across the plains of a great expanse. Few people lived outside the larger cities of India, at least in this region. There was a conspicuous absence of villages and cities for many miles. But there were times we pulled into small villages along the tracks and the train would stop briefly, and locals would board the train to sell us a variety of things, including the Chai Tea we had come to like a great deal. We were not inclined to purchase food products from these vendors however, as we did not know where the preparation was done and where the water came from.

Soon we were pulling into Delhi station and as the train slowed I hoped that someone would be meeting us. Several people had indicated that they would do so.

We off loaded onto the platform and stowed our gear again in a large pile with team members stationed around it to protect our bags from the thousands along the platform. The train robbery at Platform #7 was still fresh in our minds.

It was 8:00 P.M. and it was apparent that no one was on the platform to meet us. I took Bubba with me, and left the rest of the team on the platform to wait for anyone who might show up, and went to find a phone booth.

Our train had brought us into the Old Delhi Station. We were unable to get tickets to the New Delhi Station, which was much closer to the conference.

We had to first climb stairs to a network of catwalks’ overhead. The catwalks were constructed of a see-through metal mesh that provided a view of all that was taking place below. It was strange traversing along high above the hoards of people on the platforms below. It was quite an ingenious way to provide quick access to the main station and the other platforms. We followed signs to the general station area and soon descended stairs again to a large common area filled with many people. We saw no westerners.

Our search for a phone took us to a STD outside the train station about a block away. It was an extremely primitive phone setup with six booths that were in different stages of deterioration. Some with glass broke out, others with only wires hanging out of the wall where the phone should be, and some had phones but no service. People were lined up at every booth.

I waited in line at various booths only to find the phones did not work before I finally made it into a booth with a working phone. I could not get through to the mobile phone numbers I had for the conference leaders, and after reaching several people with other numbers, they could be of little or no help. They would simply give me numbers of others who could not help.

In desperation I called back to Calcutta to talk to Michael Jha. He had already left on another train, but his wife gave me a number to call in Delhi. It turned out that I had already tried that one. After our second attempt at the phones, I sent Bubba back to the team a second time to see if anyone had come. I was at a loss at what to do.

Within a few minutes, Bubba came running back to where I was. The way he was smiling and running, I knew it was good news. He spoke with a big grin, ‘Nabo’s here!’

‘That figures,’ I thought. Nabo was like an angel the Lord had assigned to us. He had mentioned, in passing before leaving Calcutta, that he would make sure someone came to the Delhi station for us. I had told him that it was all set up and not to worry about it. I thought it had been set up. ‘Thank you, Lord, for Nabo.’

Nabo had brought an Indian YWAM friend with him and we all boarded into two separate Ambassador taxis’ after stowing our backpacks in the trunks and racks on top.

We had not eaten and decided to do so before beginning the two-hour taxi ride to the conference. The team was delighted that we were going to Pizza Hut for dinner, a definite treat for
all of us. We had seen nothing this western, nor this presentable, in Calcutta. We had seen no fast
food places in Calcutta for that matter, except the small Indian carts on the street. And they
certainly were not western.

We pretty much had our fill of pizza and soda before hitting the streets to find another pair
of taxis’ to the conference.

This was to be another test.

It was now about 10:30 P.M. and fewer taxis’ were on the streets. Also, it turns out that the
conference was actually across a state line where taxis’ were generally prohibited from ferrying
clients. The conference was only a short way across the state line, but this left us in poor negotiating
position, particularly this late at night.

Nabo talked to many drivers and finally came up with one who said, ‘Maybe.’ Then the
debate about cost in rupees began. He wanted eleven hundred rupees, (about US $27). Nabo
thought it was far too much and fought hard to bring the price down. We finally got two taxis’ for
nine hundred rupees, about $23.

I learned the next day that we had gotten a very good deal. The norm was eleven hundred
rupees during the day, no wonder the driver was so angry at Nabo. We had left the two drivers’
yelling at us as we left them in the street and sought out someone to open the conference grounds
gates, a sizeable task at 2:00 A.M.

Nabo was successful and we were eventually escorted to a place to bed down. There were no
beds and we would sleep on the floor this first night, the girls in one building, and the four of us men
in another.

After we deposited our backpacks, we made a long hike across the compound to an area
designated for showers. I use the term ‘showers’ loosely. We dropped a bucket into an open cistern,
pulled up a fresh pail of cold water, and after stripping in the warm night air with no building around
us and only the darkness of night to conceal us, washed down our bodies from the pail. It seemed
less than adequate, but nonetheless, did feel good. I was left wondering what this would feel like
in the light of day with no protection from the eyes of the thousand or so attendees of the
conference.

The night would turn out to be a preview of the coming week, and was quite a nightmare. We
made our way back to the men’s dorm from the bucket bath, and went inside. We groped in the
darkness to find a space on the floor. But all the choice spaces had been taken. By choice I mean,
near a fan.

It was extremely hot and there was no air movement. It took only minutes to decide this
wasn’t a good idea. One of the guys commented about the veranda we had crossed to enter this
sauna like room. We decided right there to sleep outside on the veranda.

It was cooler, but little did we know that we would become mosquito bait throughout the
night. I cannot remember having so many bites in my life. Not even in the infestation periods of
Montana in the Rockies, had I been so chewed on by mosquitoes. My body ached from the hard tile
floor under my body that had started to become skin and bone since arriving in India.

The mosquitos swarmed all body parts left out in the night air. I zipped my sleeping bag up
to my chin leaving only my face exposed, but they came at my face with a fury. I ducked my head
inside the bag and avoided them, however, the heat was intense inside the bag.

I did finally sleep but opened my bag sometime in the night to get air, and a price was paid
for that maneuver. I woke to welts all over my body where skin had been exposed.

Sleeping inside the building was no better because of the lack of glass at the window
openings. There were large ceiling fans that did help a little to battle the heat. No one really ever looked forward to sleeping that entire week.

When my eyes opened to our first day at the conference, I rose from my concrete and tile bed and slipped from the veranda quietly leaving Nate, Bubba and Nabo asleep. I walked aimlessly around looking for someone in authority who could help me decide what the team would be doing this week.

Wilfred Selvaraj, the YWAM leader from Sikkim was at the conference somewhere, but where? I knew that my work to replace passports would be very difficult from the conference location so many miles from New Delhi and suspected I would have to take the three students, Preety, Madalein, and Jenny, into Delhi to stay. Our money was short and I did not know how we could make ends meet staying in the city. But, it was clear we could not conduct business so far from the city.

The New Delhi nightmare continued with our first meal. The conditions were terrible, and nothing was clean. The food was served buffet style, placed before us to pick up off the counter. I wondered how long since hot soapy water had touched the counter. Our breakfast was white bread with butter and jam, a very common Indian breakfast that we had eaten many times while traveling.

The clean up area for dishes after the meal was the worst. There was no dish soap. Dishes were rinsed, washed, whatever term could be used, under a number of water faucets. The water, we knew, would not be safe to drink. There was no hot water available, so there sat our dishes ready for the next meal, swimming in contaminated water where bacteria were feasting.

I was to leave before another meal would be served and that was one of my happier thoughts as I look back.

The team told me that eating conditions only got worse throughout the week. The mosquitoes did not relent and the temperature continued to rise to more than a hundred degrees. The meals of rice and dahl were hard for the team to eat, and most quit eating them altogether. Nicole, who had been having trouble with the Indian food since our arrival in India, simply stopped eating, and was afraid to drink even the bottled water. The reduced fluid intake and refusal to eat had us all concerned about her condition. She was trying her best to keep her intake of food and water up, but it seemed she wasn’t doing an adequate job of it.

After breakfast, and again, I use the term breakfast loosely, I stopped by one of the conference workshops in session. I had the opportunity to hear Floyd McClung speak to a chapel so full of attendees that I could only stand at the doorway. It was clear that Floyd was a much loved figure here in India as he is in many parts of the world. Danny Lehman stood talking to Sam Durham, the conference leader, just a few feet away from me as I prepared to leave for Delhi. I could see that this conference would have wonderful input from the caliber speakers on hand.

I restarted my search for someone to help with our team dilemma. I approached Sam and asked for advice. He was also head over all YWAM in India. He was a large, gentle, and helpful man and was very sympathetic to our cause. Once he heard our financial state, he offered immediately to reduce the conference fee to half for us, because of our lack of funds, and we would not have to pay right away. He eventually reduced our fees to absolutely nothing, an unexpected blessing.

I told him of my need to get the three students into the city. He immediately assigned a westerner named David to me and instructed him to get a taxi for us. David did just that and offered me the exact amount of payment for it.

Our taxi would leave in fifteen minutes and once again I would leave the team in the care of
Sandy. I encouraged her as best I could. Sandy had stepped up and taken on a lot of responsibility. Without her effort, leaving India early would have to be an option, that is if we had our passports and airfare. The team would be separated again for four days. Sam had said there was nothing for the team to do at the moment, but Sandy would hold prayer meetings with the team, worship, and do their best to keep their focus on Jesus.

It seemed simply existing was a clear objective for our team given the severe conditions at this conference. Even the Indians, who are accustomed to the harsh conditions of their own country, were complaining about the heat and living conditions. All were glad when the conference was over.

It was once again hard to say goodbye to the rest of our team. I would have to do this on numerous other occasions before the outreach was over. We all gathered in the mess hall, (well named), and met for the last time together for the week. We prayed and the four of us left for our taxi, leaving the others standing in a group behind us.

So much of this following period seems a blur to me now. Two hours in a taxi heading into a city we knew little of kept my head spinning with ideas for solving our list of problems. Preety had grown up in this city and was a help to us, but she had not lived here since she was fifteen and now was eighteen years old. She came from a rather affluent family that had not experienced the hard side of India. In fact her very own words explained that she had seen more of the hard sides of India on this outreach than she had in her previous fifteen years living here.

We arrived in Delhi and traveled directly to the Canadian Embassy to see what we could do about Jenny’s passport. We had carried our backpacks with all our belongings with us and the four of us went to the Embassy gate. We were allowed to stow our backpacks inside the gate house and we went inside the embassy.

The Canadian Embassy was extremely efficient and helpful. We always welcomed visits to any foreign embassy because of the conditioned air and clean, well-furnished surroundings, always a contrast to the norm outside the embassies. Jenny’s application was filled out quickly and submitted with the passport photos we had obtained in Calcutta. Jenny’s passport replacement would not be a problem and replacement would be quick.

We then traveled to the South African Embassy to apply for Madalein’s new passport. Finger prints were required, and submitted with her application. The only embassy to require finger prints, and her application approval would have to be made in South Africa, not at this embassy. This would prove to be the catch. Could her passport be replaced before our days in Delhi ran out? That was our question.

We had asked at the Canadian Embassy for advice about places to stay in Delhi that would go easy on our meager budget. They suggested the market area near the Old Delhi train station where many low budget foreigners stayed. We hailed a taxi and headed for the market area.

The market area was a busy place with many hotel options. Most hotels posted sales people on the street to convince people to check out their hotel. We stepped into one of the many Foreigners’ Office to ask about hotels. They quickly provided us with a tourist guide to take us around the market in search of a hotel. The hotel chosen was responsible to pay a fee to the tourist guide.

Soon an acceptable hotel was found and negotiations began. We hassled and argued until the hotel manager finally dropped his price to what was affordable to us. We went up to our room as
the man from the tourist office and the hotel manager argued loudly. I suspect the tourist office had lost its commission because the price had been dropped so much, and the two were in each other’s faces to determine who would absorb the loss.

The single room was adequate, and was furnished with two standard size beds. Each bed had two narrow foam mattresses side by side, which meant four mattresses.

‘Wait a minute,’ you must be saying to yourself. ‘How does that look, you, a male, and three girls staying in the same room?’

I was keenly aware of what it must have looked like. But it was a dire necessity. Separate rooms were out of the question for a couple of reasons. First, I was not about to put the three girls in a room in this suspect hotel alone. I wanted those watching to know that there was an adult male with the girls, hoping it would give them reason for second thought of causing any problem. And second, we just couldn’t pay for two rooms.

Dressing was always done in the bathroom, or when I was out of the room. Each night I removed one of the single mattresses from one of the beds and placed it on the floor at bedtime. I slept there on the floor, while the girls slept on the beds. The privacy issue worked out well enough.

The room had only one small window that opened to an interior shaft that contained duct work for the fresh air supply. Noise from other rooms would often travel up and down through the duct space.

The bathroom was small, but did have a shower. Of course there was only cold water, which was really not cold during the day time. The water was the coldest during the early morning, as the water tank that was located on the roof would cool during the night. Often several showers a day were not enough to combat the sweat induced by the heat and humidity, not to mention the accumulation of combustion particles from the prevalent exhaust fumes everywhere in Delhi.

One thing in favor of this hotel was the delivery of meals into our room. The hotel had a kitchen and the prices for the rather simple offerings were not high at all. Our meals were no more than bread and jam, tea, and maybe some noodles. Ours was a rather meager diet. Our big treat would be a lamb burger, or veggie burger with fries from Wimpy’s downtown. Wimpy’s being like a typical fast food place in the states where you would go to a counter with many cash registers and order. You could then go pick a place to sit and eat from the two separate floor levels with a scattering of tables. It was a rare treat and didn’t happen often.

We had only been in our room a short while when Preety called her uncle, Sandeep, who worked for the ‘Statesman’ newspaper. The Statesman was India’s largest and most circulated English language newspaper. It was the country’s only India wide newspaper. Sandeep worked in the paste room. He was at work when Preety called him and he was surprised to hear Preety was in Delhi and left work immediately and came to the hotel. He was quite excited to see that Preety was now in town. Sandeep was a nice man whom I liked a lot.

Sandeep carried himself with a spring in his step and a manner of evident pride. He was a believer in Jesus, like all of Preety’s family we met in Delhi. He was outraged to hear of our passports being stolen. His step grew more determined as we walked up the market street together toward the taxi stand where we would catch a bus. He said he would enlist the help of the newspaper staff to help us. He had an air about him that seemed to say ‘You have messed with the wrong guy’s daughter!’ Sandeep considered Preety his daughter even though she was actually his niece.

In the Indian culture family terms were applied to non family according to age brackets. Older
men like me most often would be referred to as ‘Uncle’ by those younger. Someone of your own age would often be called brothers, and someone younger like Preety, ‘Daughter.’

Resting was something we had little time for on this outreach, and tonight would be no different. We were on our way to the Statesman newspaper office and it was after 10:00 P.M. We boarded a bus for our first city bus ride.

The bus system was thought to be complicated and extremely crowded. Preety said that she and her mother never used the bus while they lived in Delhi. At times you could see buses go by totally packed inside with people clinging onto the exterior side rail and others hanging out of the doorway.

But, Sandeep knew the system well and when with him we often used the buses. We never seemed to be on a crowded one either. ‘Did he know something?’

Sandeep’s help, and connections would prove very helpful indeed.
Chapter 6

The Statesman Story

We had been to the Statesman building earlier in the day to see Sandeep, but had no success in finding him. We had learned only that he still worked the night shift and had not come in yet. So, when we arrived this second time with Sandeep himself, it was a little familiar to us. The building was very tall and was under reconstruction with makeshift scaffolding everywhere.

Once through the security gate we worked our way around the construction debris and into the building, we turned left down the long corridor that was separated by room dividers that combined to form cubicle offices. We stopped at one of the offices and Sandeep spoke to a young reporter. He talked to several others also, and at one point stuck his head into a room that obviously held a high level meeting. He was asked to wait outside. It was easy to see he thought Preety’s story was more important than that meeting was. Those in the meeting didn’t seem to agree.

We spoke briefly with the newspaper’s editor. He gave us the Deputy Police Commissioner’s card, whom he said would help us. We left the building and traveled by auto rickshaw back to the hotel.

The next day we rose early, and after a bread and jelly breakfast, made a plan for the day. Madalein was sick and it would not be wise for her to go out into the city and we all agreed that Jenny, who was older and very responsible, would remain with Madalein in the Hotel room while Sandeep, Preety, and I went to the Indian Passport Office.

The Passport Office, it turns out, would only be processing new passports for two hours, and we were not able to get in to submit an application due to the large number of people forming the long lines.

We were greatly discouraged as we saw another one of our precious days vanish before our eyes without any accomplishment on Preety’s passport. We wondered what the following days would hold.

We were able to go to the Canadian Embassy and pick up Jenny’s completed passport in her stead. We found everything in order. The Canadian Embassy was to be commended on their response to Jenny’s need, and the quick service. Way to go, Canada!

The next day was Wednesday and we split into two groups with Preety, Sandeep, and me again going to the Indian Passport Office. Madalein was feeling much better, and she and Jenny were to go to the Foreign Tourist Registration Office. They would attempt to get Jenny’s India Visa restored.

I thought long and hard about this choice because it meant putting two of our girls out on the Delhi streets alone. Prayer convinced me that it would be okay. Both Jenny and Madalein were especially responsible with a degree of wisdom. I told myself it would be all right.

We all traveled by taxi to the Tourist Office where Sandeep guided Jenny and Madalein to the proper office. Sandeep then led Preety and me to the nearby Police Station where we would attempt to talk to the Deputy Commissioner we had been referred to.

No help was found at the Police Station and we headed for the Passport Office. The office was packed to the maximum with hundreds of people trying to get attention for their passport needs.
I was the only foreigner in the place that I could see. It was a massive room with ceilings nearing twenty feet in height. There were a dozen or more counters with window openings where government workers were addressing needs. Each of these positions entertained long lines of people waiting hours to be seen. The room was so packed that simply moving about was a task requiring patience. We were only able to pick up an application for Preety today. Two days required to simply obtain the application form. Our fears mounted. It was clear that getting her passport during this four-day period would be difficult, if possible at all.

We had agreed to meet Jenny and Madalein at the Canadian Bank in the city center around noon. The three of us arrived at one o’clock. Jenny and Madalein were nowhere to be seen and no one inquired of recalled seeing them.

We waited. Two o’clock came, three, and four! I began to worry immensely. I thought of two very western girls of eighteen and nineteen in Delhi alone. Not a good picture in my mind and I began to regret the decision I had made to allow them to come from the Tourist Office alone by taxi. We waited until five o’clock, all the while Sandeep too was very worried. And he knew Delhi well enough to be worried. He was concerned for their safety.

We had called the Canadian Embassy, and the South African Embassy, to see if they had been there. They had not. Sandeep and Preety had gone to the Tourist Office to see if they were still there, while I stayed at the bank. I called the hotel at intervals to see if they were there. They were not to be found.

At 5:30 P.M. we headed for the hotel while my mind was leaping into all sorts of scenarios that could have enveloped Jenny and Madalein.

We entered the room, and there they were! Relief does not adequately describe what the three of us felt when we saw the two of them. The hotel desk had said they were not in their room, but they certainly were.

It turns out they had gone to the bank about noon and had not found us. So, they went shopping for the afternoon, finally coming back to the hotel about five o’clock.

They had called another YWAM number in town, as we had agreed in an earlier plan. But, that plan had been abandoned for the new one of meeting at the bank. I was relieved to say the least, too relieved to scold them for resorting to the abandoned plan. I thanked God that, none of the things I had thought possible, had happened to them.

Jenny had obtained her India Visa. She now was the only one of the outreach team to have all her papers in order. Jenny had proven to be an awesome negotiator and unafraid of, or intimidated by, the sometimes gruff Indian officials.

In the remaining two days we were to be in Delhi, there was much to do. Jenny’s paper work was now done, and Madalein’s was well into process. The South African Embassy had given us hope that Madalein’s passport would be made available Thursday. But Preety’s application for passport duplication was not yet submitted. It would surely take a miracle to get everything done before we were to board the Siliguri bound train Saturday morning.

An affidavit was needed to accompany Preety’s passport application and we had encountered dubious help from an Indian man named Vicky outside the Passport Office. We gave him one hundred rupees of the required five hundred as partial payment. We later in the day found that we could get the affidavit for only eighty rupees, which we did. The affidavit attested to Preety’s loss of the passport by theft. The hundred rupees to Vicky could only be chalked up to experience.

It was normal for us in India to make last minute runs, and often late at night, to get some spur of the moment document required by some official, in this case the Passport Office. It was hard to
get to a place where we had the right amount of documented data to see the process finished.

In the meantime, we found on Thursday that Madalein’s passport would not be ready because approval still had not come from South Africa. They were still running the finger print check. We were now running out of time to finish Madalein’s paperwork prior to Saturday. Doubt began to work into our hearts, but we continued declaring that God was more than able to accomplish all this and more.

Friday came. It was our last day to be in Delhi before our train would depart for Siliguri.

There was so much to do today, how could we do it? It didn’t seem possible, but we reminded ourselves, ‘Nothing is impossible for God.’

Our day began with our scant breakfast and prayer for all that needed accomplished. The first half of the day was spent in the Passport Office. Preety and I had gone early to stand in line for two hours prior to the office opening. We were about twelfth in line at the gate to the compound.

At 10:30 A.M. the gates were opened and the huge crowd broke into a run and it was a fight to reach the doorway that was about 150 feet ahead of us. Preety and I walked until we realized that we would be another hour getting into the door if we did not hasten our steps. We began to run with the rest. It was a dash to see who could get through the door first. People were shoving, bumping, and doing their best to win that race. Preety and I made up ground and slipped through the doorway and headed for the counter we knew was ours. We were eighth in line for that position with our hearts pounding. We had seen fifty or more people get into the doorway ahead of us.

We waited about thirty minutes and finally were able to see the person who was supposed to solve our problem for us. Not to be! He simply gave us approval to go to another office to talk to someone else. This process was duplicated in that office, and then we were to see a superintendent within the Passport Office. He was somewhat helpful and assured us that we could leave on Saturday if we had an affidavit that gave Sandeep authority to speak on Preety’s behalf. We would have to get the affidavit into Sandeep’s hands before we could leave. It was the ‘Affidavit thing’ again. We left in search of another piece of paper.

In the meantime, I received word that Madalein’s passport was ready to be picked up. In Jenny’s case, I had been able to pick her passport up for her. Assuming this was the case, Preety and I headed for the South African Embassy. We arrived at three o’clock, plenty of time to retrieve her passport and still get back to obtaining the affidavit for Preety. Our turn came to be seen and the embassy staff person quickly informed us that I could not pick it up for Madalein. Her signature was required before the final lamination of the passport could be completed.

My heart sank at those words. Madalein was in New Delhi and we were in Old Delhi. There was more than an hour worth of heavy traffic to get through just to get to her, and our task was to retrieve her and bring her back to the embassy. I pleaded with the staff at the embassy, but to no avail. We simply had to get Madalein back to the embassy before five o’clock. There was no time for calls, and every minute must be spent getting to New Delhi. This would be a good time for a miracle of God. We prayed to that end.

We were on the run again. Why was everything on this outreach done at a billion miles per hour?

Outside Preety and I hailed a taxi. I asked Preety to translate to the driver the importance of haste and said if he got us to Madalein in time I would use him to get us back to the embassy. This was real incentive because of the abundance of available taxis’ in Delhi. Sometimes a taxi could go all day without any fare at all. He wanted the return fare and accepted the challenge.

We sped off into the heavy traffic through the diesel smoke-filled air. He wove in and out of
the traffic, taking risk after risk to gain a moment of time. It seemed to take forever to get anywhere at all. I began to doubt that we could make it in time. Even if we did, would Madalein be there? We had not notified her we were coming. I constantly glanced at my watch.

Forty minutes into the trip I began to see familiar places and realized that we were in the neighborhood of our destination. We would make it to Madalein. Preety and I had the address but didn’t know exactly where the building was, and neither did the taxi driver. He had to stop and ask directions twice. I looked at my watch, and time was disappearing. But soon we rolled up in front of the building with the proper number.

I ran in and yelled at Madalein, ‘Maddy, let’s go, we’ve got less than an hour to get you to the embassy before they close. Just come as you are!’

Madalein jumped to her feet, grabbed a couple of things, and was ready to go. She had been at the bedside of Nicole.

I grabbed the opportunity to step to the bedside. I had not seen Nicole in a week and did not realize how sick she had become. In my absence, Sandy had enlisted the advice of Floyd McClung and the decision had been made to fly her home as soon as possible. Sandy was working at this very moment to get her papers in order that she may fly.

I looked down at Nicole and was shocked. My heart broke as I saw the hundreds of mosquito and bug bites on her face and body. She had suffered severe weight loss and she showed no strength or life. I was afraid for her. I told her I loved her, kissed her on the forehead and turned to go. My heart was aching for Nicole, but knew I had to get Madalein across the city now.

We ran to the waiting taxi, jumped in and slammed the doors. I asked Preety to tell the driver if he got us to the embassy before five o’clock there was extra money in it for him. This spoke volumes to him. He drove with a fury and a determination that required all his many years of driving in this crazy traffic that was now worse than an hour earlier. It was four o’clock and we were heavily into the dense afternoon traffic.

Our driver was probably forty years old and had likely been driving here since a teenager. His skill showed as he swerved, honked his horn insistently, and changed position constantly to make some seconds difference. He maneuvered across lanes when there didn’t seem to be a way to do it, gaining what seemed like inches.

I could hardly believe my watch when he pulled up in front of the embassy at 4:45 P.M. I gave him his fare, padded with the extra tip I had promised, one hundred rupees. He smiled hugely with satisfaction written in his eyes. He had served us well. Thank you for this man, Lord.

We ran up the sidewalk, into the embassy and past the security station. We were supposed to stop at security, but I figured the guard probably recognized us, and stopping would only waste precious time.

As we ran by, the head security guard yelled, ‘There’s no one there!’

I ignored him and ran down the long corridor with Madalein and Preety right on my heels. We barged into the empty waiting room and burst across it to the windows where business was conducted. My heart once again sank, the windows were closed and the blinds behind them were drawn. No light was coming from behind them. They had closed early and left. I used both my fists to bang on the bullet proof glass and yelled, ‘Is anyone in there?’

There was no response, just silence. I turned and ran the length of the corridor back to the security station. I stopped, breathing hard, and looked across at the lead guard. As I opened my mouth to make my plea, he stopped me by saying, ‘Someone is coming to help you, go back to the waiting room.’
Hope returned as I breathed a ‘Thank you, Lord’ and started back up the corridor. The three of us took seats in the waiting room and noticed lights coming on behind the covered windows. The door opened and we were beckoned in. Madalein and I went in and took seats. Madalein put her signature in the proper place on the passport, and the staff began the lamination process.

Success was at hand. Madalein and I smiled at each other. This had been quite an adventure getting her passport at the last hour. Now she would be ready to board the train tomorrow morning. At that moment the lights in the ceiling far above us flickered and went out.

‘Not now!’ I’m sure I said out loud. ‘What lousy timing!’

This was so common in India, and even Delhi, but here it was, one last hurdle to endure. We sat in the small room with light from one tiny window high on a distant wall coming in allowing us to see a little of what was happening. In the other room, flashlights were being used to complete the lamination. Moments later Madalein’s passport was handed to her as the lights came back on. We thanked the embassy staff for their last minute effort and willingness to work beyond closing time to help us. The South African Embassy had done us well.

It was 5:30 P.M. as we walked back down the long corridor to the outside door. Once back in the bright sunlight, we hailed an auto rickshaw and made our way to the legal district where the courts were located. We still had to acquire that affidavit for Preety’s designation of Sandeep as her Power of Attorney. Would the offices be open? Not likely.

Disappointment was to become an every hour occurrence in Delhi it seemed. As we stopped in front of the courts, the place appeared deserted. A quick look around inside confirmed that they were in fact empty. We exited the building.

There was a lone figure still on the grounds in the distance. We hurried to where he was and Preety asked if there was anyone left who could help us. He said probably not but there may be someone at the booths around back. We hoped someone was still there. I was so thankful for Preety’s language ability in her native tongue. We would have been stopped long ago without it.

In the back of the Courthouse we found several small booths where affidavits were done throughout the day. It was never clear to me how legal these booths and the occupants were. We had used a similar one earlier for the previous affidavit Preety had needed. We were greatly encouraged when we saw occupants still in one of the booths. After discussion and agreement of cost, we strolled back across the now increasingly dark courthouse compound with the affidavit in hand. It was close to seven o’clock.

One other document was required for Preety to enable her to leave the following morning, another affidavit. A high official had to sign a document to attest to all that we were doing. That it had merit and was necessary. Where would we find that high official? We were only hours away from our train departure in the morning. Time was running out.

We met Sandeep at the newspaper office. We greeted him and showed him the affidavit. He began to step out with that now familiar determined spring in his step beckoning us to follow him. I didn’t understand what was taking place until half an hour later as we sat in the living room of yet another uncle of Preety’s.

This family, also believers in Jesus Christ, had prepared a wonderful dinner meal for us and were so excited to see Preety and also to have us in their home. As we sat on the sofa in the simple apartment, Preety explained to Madalein and me that this uncle was a high official and his affidavit would be accepted at the Passport Office. I breathed a huge sigh of relief and finally began to relax.

We enjoyed a wonderful Indian meal far superior to the meals we had eaten in public restaurants. Preety was clearly enjoying spending this time with her family. My attention was
drawn to the time Preety told me in Colorado that she was praying that she would get to come to Delhi and visit family. I remember thinking that the Lord would likely not honor that prayer because we had no purpose to go to Delhi. That didn’t say much for my insight into what God may or may not do.

After the meal, Preety’s uncle got out his official stamp and ink pad and quickly documented the necessary words and placed his stamp and signature of approval on the document. This document would give Sandeep all the authority needed to see Preety’s passport application through completion.

It was now 9:30 P.M. We were set to leave tomorrow morning. We were all tired and a long way from the rest of the team. Our four days were gone and the Lord had allowed us to accomplish all that was needed for the entire team to leave. We were still short the India Visa for Madalein and had no passport for Preety, but everything was in process. We could move onto the next phase of this quite unusual outreach. Jenny would be the only one of the team that would be traveling legally with an Indian Visa stamp in her passport.

One other event that would prove to be valuable to us was the publishing of our story in the Statesman newspaper. On Thursday night late, we had met yet another reporter. She was a young woman who took great interest in the attack on the train and our stolen goods and wanted to hear the details. She took notes as I related the events of that night. She said that the story would appear in the Friday edition. We were excited and hoped it was from the Lord. We did not want to draw attention to YWAM who was under scrutiny in India and did not need publicity, but, I felt somehow this was of the Lord and that it would be helpful.

On Friday evening when we had met Sandeep after leaving the South African embassy, he provided ten copies of the newspaper to us so that each member of our team could have a remembrance copy. Details of the article were not totally factual, but the story did prove helpful many times before the outreach would end.

This had been an intense week with much accomplished in the midst of much frustration and doubt. Thank you, Lord, for your great care.
With the feeling, mission accomplished, we hailed an auto rickshaw and made our way across Delhi to where the rest of the team was located. As we pulled up to the apartment, I noticed it was near midnight.

Stepping inside the apartment, I was surprised to find part of the team gone. We were to travel to Siliguri and then on to Gangtok, Sikkim with Wilfred Selvaraj and his team on the morning train just hours from now. Sandy and Jenny had remained behind with Nicole waiting for us to rejoin them. Nate, Bubba, and Marla had gone to the train station with Nabo and Wilfred’s team. They would sleep there and be ready to go at six o’clock the next morning.

Sandy had ordered a taxi for 1:00 A.M. giving us just one hour to shower and prepare for the trip to Siliguri. Our backpacks had been brought to the apartment from our downtown hotel room earlier in the day by Jenny and Madalein. After a quick bucket shower, it was time to depart.

With everything packed and ready for the taxi, I once again stepped into the bedroom where Nicole lay. Her eyes were closed as I approached the bed. I bent down and kissed her once again on the forehead. I said, ‘Goodbye Sweetheart.’

She opened her eyes without the strength to raise her head and managed a weak smile. I leaned closer and whispered, ‘I’m so happy you are flying home, Nicole.’

Her eyes closed and I tiptoed out of the room and made my way to the waiting taxi. India had been hard, but harder for Nicole than for the rest of us. However, she had completed her outreach. She had done all that the Lord had called her to do. This outreach would not be measured in total number of days completed, but would be measured in heart and motive. Had each individual done the thing God had called them to do. Nicole had done all, and more than that required of her. She had given and sacrificed greatly. Her outreach would be as complete as any other member of this DTS team. She had endured to the end of that required of her.

Our taxi moved into the darkness of Delhi that night toward the Old Delhi train station along the dim lit streets, which were almost empty at this hour. Our train departure was only hours away.

Within a short time of arriving at the train station we had located the rest of the team. They were sleeping soundly. No one awoke except Nate who talked with me briefly, and Nabo who looked my way before closing eyes and dropping into sleep again. The room where they slept was stuffy and hot, and no other beds were available.

I returned to where the girls waited. Sandy, Jenny, Preety, Madalein, and I all decided that we would rather wait out the remaining four hours on the train platform. So, with that consensus we started our hike for platform seven where the Mahanada Express would depart at 6:40 A.M.

We found our way to our departure point on the platform and selected a place where we could group together and rest while keeping an eye on our belongings. We arranged our backpacks against a wall where we could sit on the floor with our backs against the packs. We seemed to be in the midst of hundreds of Indians with the same idea. Except they seemed much more casual than we. Some were sleeping, others were playing cards, and some just chatted.

Two hours passed and I glanced across the tracks separating platform seven from five and
noticed the hands on the large round clock read 3:55 A.M. We sat on the dirty floor of the platform and sleep would not come to me. It always seemed to be this way, whether on a train platform or on the floor of an air terminal. I could only watch out for the safety of the team as they catnapped. Every movement would catch my eye and a determination would have to be made if it would affect the team.

I watched as individuals would drop from the platform to the tracks to relieve their bowels or bladders. I watched as one middle-aged lady opened the fire hydrant to give herself a bath and then return to her children on the platform. She appeared to be living on the platform. The platform was crowded with people and with shipment goods that would be loaded onto the next train.

Six o’clock was approaching fast and I needed to go to another building to confirm our seating. The office where I would confirm them did not open until six. This made me nervous because nothing happened quickly in India and that was within forty minutes of our departure time. I made my way to the office. A line had already formed.

I established myself in the line and waited. Fifteen minutes passed before the window opened and then I waited as the line moved at a snail’s pace. I nervously checked the clock in the office and saw the minutes ebbing away. At 6:15 A.M., I reached the window. I asked the attendant about our confirmations and showed him our ticket. He shrugged his shoulders and blurted out that our train was to leave any minute.

I said, ‘Yes I know, do you have my confirmations?’
He said, ‘You only have only five seats confirmed.’

There were nine of us counting Nabo. We were booked two per seat, and our few seats were in two different coaches.

I slipped from the line and ran the short distance back to the station. I bounded up the flight of metal stairs to the catwalks high overhead scanning the platform signs. I sped under the one reading ‘7-9’ and descended the stairs two steps at a time. I spied our team as one looked toward me and said, ‘Here he comes!’

I shouted instructions over the noise of the now incredibly crowded platform. I knew we had only minutes to find our coaches. I asked if there was any sign of our other three team members and Wilfred’s group. They had not seen them. The team quickly fitted their backpacks and began following me tightly, single-file through the mob of people. We hastily filed down the platform alongside the coaches. I expected to see the train begin to roll at any moment. The customary coach numbers pasted in large writing on the side of the coaches were absent and I had to stop at the seating list posted on the side of each coach and peer over the shoulders and heads of dozens of others trying to read the same list to determine what the coach number was.

As we drew near the train’s engine, I realized we had gone the wrong direction on the platform. I looked back in the other direction. It was now a solid sea of people on the platform. I knew time was important. With my watch being broken the previous day, I could only guess that there were precious few moments left.

I yelled at the four girls with me to keep it close and move quickly. We turned and began carving our way through the mass of people. Movement was impossible at certain moments and I would force openings to keep us moving. Separation would begin to occur between the team members, and I would shout and wave for them to close the gap. The struggle became worse as we intersected a column of workers carrying huge burlap bags of grain on their heads, themselves trying to weave through the crowd.

I was beginning to think we may not make our coaches before the train began to roll, and still
there was still no sign of Wilfred and the rest of our team.

I pushed, shoved, shouted and had a growing concern that part of our team may either be on
the train already, or had overslept and had not yet arrived. I pushed on, coach three finally! We
needed to reach coaches seven and nine. I yelled back to the girls to try harder keeping close and
moving. They all had worried faces.

Coach five!
Then six!
Then coach F-1! What was this? Where was seven?
I pushed on. Finally there it was, coach seven! I told the girls to board and shouted the three
seat numbers we had on this coach. They began to do so.

I pushed on toward coach nine alone to find the others. Alone I found nine faster. I boarded
and started down the narrow darkened aisle. Remembrance of the robbery in Calcutta flooded my
mind. The aisle was so full that movement was worse than the platform. I traveled the length of
the coach to find none of our team. I didn’t know Wilfred and his team, so I had no hopes of
recognizing them.

I fought my way back down the train aisle hoping to see Bubba, Nate, or Marla. At one point
I felt someone grab hold of my backpack and I could not move or turn. I was stuck! I thought of
the new airline tickets that were in the pack. I jerked hard and yelled as loud as I could, ‘What’s
going on? Let go of my pack!’

I felt freedom. I slipped my arms from the backpack and moved it to my front. I examined
the zippers and looked for cuts. They were none. With relief I pushed back to the coach entrance
and stepped onto the platform once again a bit bewildered.

Where was the rest of the team?

I moved back toward coach seven, knowing time must be short. I dashed as quickly as I could
through the crowd. I reached coach seven and began peering in each window as I moved along. The
windows were all open with only bars to keep intruders out. As I neared the far end of the coach,
there was no sign of our team.

Someone grabbed my arm. I looked and a young Indian pointed to the last compartment I had
passed. I forced my way back and peered in. Nothing! Someone else touched me speaking in
Hindi, pointing to the next compartment. As I backed up one more window, Indians inside were
pointing toward the inside aisle of the coach. They were trying to help me.

I spotted Madalein and yelled to her, ‘Have you seen any of the rest, Bubba, Nate, or Marla?’
She responded with a loud ‘No,’ shaking her head side to side.
Sandy appeared at the window and yelled she felt they were on the train somewhere.
I yelled back. ‘We can’t leave without knowing for sure.’

I said I was going to continue looking. I started back toward coach nine and as I neared it,
someone once again grabbed my arm. Another young Indian. Only this one spoke English. He
asked if I was Bill as he clung to my arm.

I yelled, ‘Yes, I am!’ He helped pull me through the mob of people and onto coach nine. I
was midway through the coach when I saw Nate’s smiling face. What joy! I was so happy that we
were now all on board this nightmare train.

There was only room to stand and movement continued to be difficult. After ensuring our
three were on board, I left them to inform Sandy that we were all on the train. I fought my way back
to number seven along the platform, and to my amazement there were all the girls, now off the train
again.
They stood behind great piles of grain in burlap bags some distance from the train on the opposite side of the platform. I shouted across the crowd, ‘You have to get back on!’

Jenny began shaking her head side to side indicating ‘No,’ saying, ‘Please don’t ask us to get back on that train.’ Tears began to stream from her eyes.

My heart was breaking at that moment, but I knew we must board again. I spoke to her, ‘Trust our Lord right now, his grace will make it possible. Depend on Jesus’ strength. You must board again.’

She began bobbing her head up and down, indicating she would board. This was Jenny, she always submitted to my leadership even when she felt she could not. She blessed me every time with this attitude. I glanced over to Sandy and she was wiping tears from her own eyes.

We find ourselves truly in the midst of a nightmare. I began to move them toward the entrance to coach seven. After they had all boarded, I fought my way back to coach nine. I boarded and moved down the aisle in a sea of people, praying that grace would cover Sandy, Jenny, Madalein and Preety in coach seven.

The train jerked into motion and began rolling along the tracks. Delhi station was passing by the barred windows. Standing in this mass of humanity, I had a peace that could only come from one source, Father God Himself. I said, ‘Thank you, Lord.’

The train ride was very hard, lasting thirty-eight hours. The crowded conditions were nearly unbearable for us. Wilfred, himself Indian, said it was the worst train condition he had ever encountered. This was another extremely hard situation where Father God can get the glory for getting us through the night.

Finally after a dozen hours, people began to get off and space began to be available. Through the night I had sat on the floor trying to get sleep. It was impossible. Wilfred had skillfully moved Indians from our sleeper compartment that was open to the aisle. People continued to come in and occupy our compartment throughout the night. We had to be very forceful to keep it for ourselves. It was impossible for me to sort out our seats. They were over run by Indians. Wilfred and I managed to move some of his men to coach seven and move the girls up to number nine with us.

The following day things got complicated in coach nine when the power failed and our fans did not work. The temperatures were more than one hundred and the humidity was likely in the nineties. The coach was unbearably hot. The nightmare continued with conditions difficult to describe.

In the late afternoon of the second day we were suddenly caught in a fierce thunder storm. Black clouds rolled across the prairie and rain began to beat upon the coaches. Part of our team went to the coach’s door and hung out into the falling rain. They were all smiles and soaked through as they lavished in the coolness of the heaven-sent rain. Jenny was one of them.

The train now was only about half full as so many had gotten off the train. Darkness again engulfed the train as it raced on across India toward our destination. At 9:00 P.M. the train pulled into Siliguri.

Light rain was falling as nineteen of us climbed aboard bicycle rickshaws, (two in each rickshaw), moving into the city in search of a suitable hotel. We had nine rickshaws lined out as we traveled through the cool, dark, night air. I shared a rickshaw with Wilfred and his wife, Carolina. Carolina was in her fourth month of pregnancy and had lost four kilos, (8 pounds), at the week-long-conference in Delhi, that had ended with this nightmare train ride.

We had finally arrived in Siliguri and we welcomed the beds in the rooms that lacked any cleanliness. Again we were to shower with buckets, but by now this was getting to be normal
instead of the exception for us. The hotel manager was Nepali and let us have the rooms for 65 rupees each, (US $1.65 per room).

We had noodles mixed with chicken and vegetables hot off the grill for dinner, still one of my fondest food memories from India.

We had no trouble falling asleep this late night.

Tomorrow we seek out permits for Sikkim.
Chapter 8

Near the Himalayas

It is April 27, nearly a month since we left the Denver airport. We had left Colorado with our passports, permits for Sikkim, and India Visas, all in order. We simply needed to arrive in Calcutta and take a train to Siliguri and then jeeps to Gangtok in the mountains. A month has passed and nothing has been that easy. We have finally arrived here in Siliguri near the mountains, but we have no permits to enter Sikkim, and no Indian Visa to legally be, or travel, in India.

After sleeping well I awoke at six o’clock thinking about all that lie ahead of us today.

Part of the team: Sandy, Marla, Bubba, Nate, and I, had permission from the Foreign Tourist Office in Calcutta to travel into Sikkim and remain for two weeks. We too, had received a stamp in our new passports indicating we had been seen by the Tourist Office for their Visa, implying it would be issued someday.

However, Madalein and Jenny did not have a permit for Sikkim, nor did Madalein have a stamp indicating she had seen the Tourist Office. The truth was, she had not seen the Tourist Office yet. That was one task ahead of us today. We must show them that we legitimately lost our documents and convince them to issue the stamp needed to stay and travel in India. This would be necessary before any permit for Sikkim would be issued.

I would remain behind with Madalein and Jenny, while the rest of the team traveled to the north into Sikkim, and the capital city of Gangtok, with Wilfred and his group. The three of us would catch up after we acquired the necessary papers here in Siliguri.

Nabo, our trusted friend, offered to stay behind with us to help with our language need. He was quite capable in the Nepali and Bengali languages. Nepali is one of the main languages spoken in this mountain region of India, and of course Bengali is the main language spoken in all of West Bengal. We helped those leaving for Gangtok to load onto jeeps for the trip north. We watched as they pulled away leaving us standing in the mob of natives offering assistance for remuneration.

Our task today was to travel back to the Foreign Tourist Office at the Jalpaiguri Train Station where we had arrived the night before and seek the necessary stamp on Madalein’s passport. Our trip back to Jalpaiguri station was pleasant and the pressure seemed to be off us. We had plenty of time and surely nothing would go wrong at this point.

Upon arrival at the station we were told that the Tourist Office would not open until two o’clock. That was about two hours away. We used the extra time to simply relax on the train platform as it was cool and not crowded. We casually strolled along the platform looking at the vendor’s goods. We sat upon a bench and chatted and watched the few people off loading the arriving train. What a difference there was between Jalpaiguri station, and the Delhi and Calcutta stations.

At one point a family of westerners off loaded from a train and gathered with a Nepalese woman. The gentleman left the family with the Nepalese lady and left the platform. I watched, wondering who they were. I wondered if they were missionaries, as some westerners in this part of the world are.

Nabo, who had been away from us down the platform, returned and noticing the westerners,
quickly advanced to them. At that point they began picking up their hand bags. Nabo offered to help and came to tell us he would return shortly. Nabo was gone for only moments, and he returned and said he had helped the family of Ben Rex, and the woman was Heather Rex.

I exclaimed, ‘Nabo! That’s my contact for Kalimpong! Have they left the station yet?’

Nabo thought not, so we dashed off the platform and went to where they had been loading their auto. Heather was there with the children. I talked to her at some length and explained our plans to go to Gangtok prior to coming to Kalimpong. We exchanged farewells and Nabo and I returned to the platform.

This was a miracle of God, because we had been unable to keep the schedule we had originally planned to come to Kalimpong. Contacting Rex was high on my list of priorities. We were now set with our contact upon arrival in Kalimpong in ten days or so. Thank you, Lord.

Kalimpong is in West Bengal, just as Siliguri is, and was located about two hours to the north. We would actually travel close to Kalimpong on our way to Gangtok in Sikkim. Both were located in these mountains, the foothills of the Himalayas.

An hour and a half had passed and we began to wonder if the Tourist Office would really open at two o’clock. It seemed you couldn’t count on anything that structured here in India. There was a book shop near the Tourist Office, and out of curiosity Nabo and I ventured in and asked the clerk if the Tourist Office would surely open at two.

He replied, ‘No, it will not open at all today.’

We walked down the platform to another office that looked very official, but I had no idea what the office was. The man in charge seemed to agree with the book store clerk, the Tourist Office would not open today at all. He suggested that we travel into the city’s center to the West Bengal Foreign Tourist Office and conduct our business there.

We took an auto rickshaw into the heart of Siliguri and quickly found the West Bengal Foreign Tourist Office. It took no time to find out we could not get an Indian Visa here. We would have to travel to Delhi.

That was not the answer we were looking for. We had just arrived by a thirty-eight-hour nightmare train from Delhi. We had no desire to redo that scenario again. I asked if we could get a permit to Sikkim for Madalein without an Indian Visa by using all the documentation we had with us concerning the robbery of our papers, IE; a newspaper article, copies of the stolen passport, stolen visa, and stolen Sikkim permit, a letter from the South African Embassy in Delhi, and the Calcutta police report.

The lady who waited on us kindly called the permit office located right there in Siliguri and talked the situation over with them. It was determined that I should bring Madalein and all the documents to their office for review.

Minutes later we were standing in their office. After looking at all our documentation, especially the Statesman newspaper article, they stated that we could soon have our permits.

Jenny’s permit was issued quickly earlier in the day, and only Madalein’s needed to be issued. After some photo copying of our documents, and the permit in hand, we were off by jeep to Gangtok at four o’clock. We would soon be reunited with our team in Gangtok, one of the places we had felt God had spoken for us to travel to in India. Finally! It had taken one full month to get started on this last leg to Gangtok!

We left the plains of India and soon our jeep was traveling through lush forests of subtropical vegetation. It was cooler and the mountains began to appear and soon we seemed to be swallowed up by them. We followed the Teesta River into the mountains up the steep, rough canyons. There
were banana trees and bamboo throughout the steep hillsides. Monkeys were abundant. I had not pictured an India that looked like this. It was quite beautiful.

We drove along this primitive highway that is thought by some to be the future gateway to Tibet and China. Tibet and China lie just beyond this small mountain state of Sikkim, which is India’s smallest state.

Sikkim is also the most restricted state. Permits are required by all westerners to enter, and duration cannot exceed fifteen days. A one week extension is available in some cases and can only be applied for at the end of the original permit period.

The highway wound its way through deep ravines and around sharp ridges. These mountains surrounding us reached up to 15,000 feet elevation. And these are only the foothills of the Himalaya’s which lie beyond to the north.

Our destination of Gangtok, Sikkim was a five-hour jeep ride from Siliguri. We arrived just after dark. The view of Gangtok spread over the steep mountain side was something to behold. It looked like a carpet of lights covering the rugged mountain. We were in awe of the scene as we crept up the steep, winding section of highway leading into the city.

Our reunion with the rest of the team was good. It was always such a joy to regroup the entire team. We had believed in the beginning while still in Colorado that there would never be any need to separate this small team. Separation had become a byword with us. We were apart more than we were together. What’s your purpose in all this, Lord, I wondered?

It was a new morning and I was up before the sun. I sat looking across the deep valley that lie below Gangtok and into the high and forbidding mountains to the West. What peoples lie within those mountains, Lord? Do they know you?

Little did I know, that in the days ahead we would be hiking right into those mountains.

Sunshine began to fill the dark recesses of the valleys. Thank you for the sunshine, Lord, and the coolness of the air too. The mountains were so peaceful, and were slowly erasing the memory of hectic days of the past month.

As the day progressed, we visited the Foreign Tourist Office to make our presence in Gangtok known and establish the opening of our permits. It went smoothly and our lack of Indian Visa’s posed no problem for us.

We felt we were ready to minister according to the plan of our God who had brought us halfway around the world to this remote mountain region. We were presented with amazing views at every turn as we explored this capital city of Sikkim situated on top of this high mountain ridge, flowing over the sides and down onto the steep slopes below.

Sandy and I joined Wilfred and his leadership staff for a brief meeting, and then Wilfred and I went into Gangtok’s city center for money exchange for our team, and some business needs of Wilfred’s.

Wilfred, or Willie, as he was called by friends and family, took me to a Tibetan restaurant for Mo-Mo’s, a minced-meat wrapped in bread dough, and could be deep fried or steamed. Willie had his steamed and I took mine deep fried. It was a delightful treat.

Later the entire team met at Willie’s house for a special dinner meal Carolina had prepared for us. We had mashed potatoes and minced beef, with a small chocolate cake for dessert. It was wonderful to sit around a table with new friends.

This was too nice a day. No emergency or crisis. This was not the norm for our team. But the Lord was preparing a small team of individuals that would be equipped to handle adversity through all these trials.
But . . . our trials were not over.

I was lying in bed at half past midnight when I heard a light knock on the men’s dorm where I slept, and someone calling my name quietly.

It was Sandy, and for Sandy to come to the men’s dorm after midnight, it must be serious. It was!

Sandy informed me that Preety had received a call from Sandeep at 11:30 P.M. saying that she was required back in Delhi for residence verification by the Delhi Police no later than Saturday. We prayed together and decided to let God speak to us for a decision at early morning.

I arose early and prayed, and felt God was saying to fly her back today, or send her on the express train, air conditioned. I am puzzled at all the team separation we suffer through, Lord. I pray you are working through it all.

Rain was beginning to fall and it was a cold morning. I miss my fleece jacket and rain coat that were both stolen during the train robbery in Calcutta.

On this 29th day of April I am scheduled to travel to Siliguri and the airport at Baghdogra, to pick up Kathy L, my DTS co-leader who is flying in to spend ten days with us. It will be so good to see her and get reports and finances from the states. Preety would go with me to make a travel connection to Delhi.

Preety and I traveled the four and half hours to Siliguri in the early part of the day. We went directly to the train station and found that no express tickets were available for her trip to Delhi. That decided it, she would fly to Delhi. We went right away to the airport to get her tickets, only to learn that we did not have enough Indian currency to purchase the ticket.

Arrangements were made for Preety to stay overnight with Charlie and Jennifer Wambart in Siliguri. They would assist her to the airport for a Jet Air connection to Delhi the next day so she could join her uncle until the residence verification was satisfied.

Ango, an Indian YWAMER had joined us and the three of us met Kathy at one o’clock at the Baghdogra Airport. It was a sweet reunion.

Kathy had brought only US $671. That was far less than was needed for us to complete the outreach. I also received $100 personally in the mail she brought, and I quickly placed that with the other team funds, making the total $771. I gave Preety $300 for her round trip flight and we were left with $471, not much for all our need. But, we serve a big God who had no plan of leaving us without provision. He had brought us this far and had a plan. He was not about to abandon us here in these mountains of India. He would carry out his plan.

Kathy had also brought various amounts of money for the students.

All of the students had given some amount from the small amount of personal money they had after the great train robbery to help the team until more money came. Well, now that more money had come, we could see clearly that it was not enough for expenses, much less pay anyone back.

The students rose to the occasion once again and continued to be somewhat selfless in their giving. Not only did every team member cancel the debt owed them, but several gave of their own money again. Sandy gave all that she received by Kathy’s hand. Madalein gave a large amount, Jenny had contributed a large amount earlier and now refused repayment, and others gave as the need arose. This team was a blessing to itself. Thank you, Lord.

Leaving Preety behind with the Wambart’s, I hired a taxi minivan to take Kathy and me to Gangtok. We began our trip late in the day and rain was falling. Traveling late was not recommended into the mountains, especially during rain fall because of the propensity for land slides in this mountainous region. After a couple hours of travel in heavy rain, it was apparent that
trouble would be encountered in Sikkim through the long infamous landslide area that had to be
crossed. This crossing was tough during daylight hours without rain. It was now very dark and
raining very hard.

As we approached the Sikkim border and processed Kathy’s papers with the border officials,
the power was out and the paperwork was done by candlelight. I asked the border official if the
slide area was open to travel.

His answer was very matter of fact, ‘Oh, yes!’

We returned to our taxi and proceeded up the winding highway into the darkness. We had
gained only about a mile before we encountered many stopped vehicles lining each side of the road.
There were three taxi drivers debating about using an alternate route because the slide had closed
the road ahead. Most were spending the night there and waiting for daylight. Our taxi driver was
one who wanted to continue on using the alternate route.

After much debate, the decision was made, we would go for it and try to work our way around
the landslide. Our taxi was chosen to take the lead. Our driver drove fearlessly, leading three other
taxis through the night storm. We encountered large quantities of water flowing over the road
surface in many places. At times it seemed our small van would tip over because of the severe side
slope in the roadway.

The alternate route was very narrow and the gravel road surface disappeared totally and did
not exist in places, leaving only mud beneath our tires. Old slides had caused large humps in the
road and they were barely passable. It was a night of adventure as we crept through the driving rain
and watched as our headlights fell into utter darkness at each turn where the roaring Teesta River
could be heard hundreds of feet below. Our windshield fogged on the inside, and heavy rain
battered the outside. The windshield wiper swipes didn’t seem to make any difference in what
could be seen out into the terrible blackness and unknown, but our driver pressed on.

Kathy sat upright gripping the driver’s seat in front of her. This first night in Sikkim for her
was frightful. She did not like night driving, heights, and narrow mountain roads. She had all these
in a strange land with a driver that could not speak English. She prayed! We prayed!

We did finally arrive in Gangtok safely at midnight. We were two additional hours on the
road due to the alternate route, but we had made it.

April 30, the last day of this month had arrived, and that morning our team’s financial
situation looked bleak to me. I was struggling trusting God for our remaining provision. After
anticipating more money from Kathy’s arrival to fill all our need the day before, and seeing the little
that was provided, and then using nearly half of it to fly Preety to Delhi, I felt sure it meant an early
end to the outreach. Although tomorrow is uncertain, every day has been uncertain on this outreach
and we have, out of necessity, had to look to God for each day’s instruction, blessing, and provision.

Why should it be different now?

Our cash on hand would meet less than one quarter of our need through May. But, has our
Lord run out of ability to provide? Certainly not! I had thought that we could not continue this
outreach to its fullest without more money. How foolish. This outreach could only be completed
to the fullest if it were conducted in a way that would bring God the most glory. He would do it
according to his plan. We would simply walk it out with his grace, mercy, and love carrying us
along. Peace returned to me when I began to get proper perspective again. Thank you, Lord.

Bubba came to me and gave me four-hundred rupees, US $10, for my personal use and
instructed me not to put it into team money. I was blessed. Ten dollars is a lot of money in this part
of the world, and I had not had personal money since that fateful day of the train robbery in Calcutta.
Bubba was fully aware of that fact, and was attentive to my need.

I met with Kathy and Sandy, and we prayed, interceding for a lengthy period of time. God spoke clearly to us about the next few days.

We were to stay only two more days in Gangtok, leaving six days earlier than planned. We were to go to Chowk Bazaar in Darjeeling, West Bengal and pray at the crossroads according to Jeremiah 6:16, just like it had been told me and Judith in Great Falls, Montana. After praying at the crossroads we are to travel to Kalimpong, West Bengal, where God would instruct us with plans to Bhutan.

May 1 came, and the entire team, except Preety who was still in Delhi, hiked to Rumtek Monastery high on the mountain side overlooking the Teesta River Valley. Gangtok could be seen off in the distance to the east. These were the mountains I had studied from the veranda of our lodging just days earlier.

Our ascent was steep by a narrow dirt trail that had been used for centuries by the local population of Indians, Tibetans, and Nepalese. The hike was exhausting, taking three hours and twenty minutes to complete. We had climbed vertically more than a mile and a half, and covered several kilometers in distance.

Once at the top, we moved inside the walls of the Monastery compound and began to march and pray. After a time in the courtyard, we wondered around the ancient stone buildings that obviously had been there for centuries.

Nate and Bubba were making contact with a small boy, maybe a nine-year-old. Nate said the boy wanted to take us to the Temple area. The Temple was an area that we were very interested in, and we would intercede there given the opportunity. However, the Temple was not on the routine public path.

The boy was dressed in the traditional garb common for the males who inhabited the monastery. His head was shaven and he looked like the many others who occupied the site.

But, this one was different. I’m not sure why, but he was intent on getting us to a place where no one else was allowed to go. We followed, with Bubba and Nate very close on his heels, being curious of his intent. We kept silent and followed down a corridor and around corners until we were standing before a pair of large wooden doors.

The boy slipped in and beckoned us to follow.

We did, and we were in the Temple Room.

There in front of us was a large room with ceilings that seemed to go up forever. The room was ornate, with a huge throne sitting in the back half. In front of the throne were two rows of smaller chairs facing each other extending out from the throne.

The large throne was obviously for the High Llama, and the other seats were for the priests that served under him. What kind of ritual meetings had been done here over the centuries?

I moved across the room to the large throne. We were standing in the Monastery Temple area, and I knew that we were not supposed to be here. What motive did the young boy have for bringing us here? We would not know the answer to this question.

I had a hand written florescent yellow card with the first half of Malachi 1:11 written on it. It read, ‘From the rising of the sun, even to it’s going down, my name shall be great among the gentiles.’

As I stood next to the throne of the High Llama, I slipped the card under the large cushion that covered the seat of the throne, that was easily three feet wide. I pushed it far back underneath so that it would not be noticed for some time. I prayed that each time the High Llama sat on this throne
before his priests and sat upon this portion of scripture, God’s name would be great in this nation, and even in this Monastery. I prayed too, that this nation would become a nation that would serve the Risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

As quick as we had gotten into the Temple Room, we were out and the boy disappeared. God had wanted us in that room to pray, and he used this boy to get us there. Sometimes we wonder when angels may appear, and what form they may take.

After an hour or so in the Rumtek Monastery, said to be the largest in Asia, we began walking the descent along the highway to the river bottom near Randapo. Rain began to fall as we hurriedly made our way downward. The sound of an approaching truck caused part of the team to turn and quickly put their thumbs out trying to hitch a ride. The transport truck pulled over and the driver motioned for us to pile on.

The rain was now pounding us as the truck swerved around the curves getting us off the mountain and we were soaked to the skin before reaching the bottom. At the bottom the truck stopped and we jumped off and made our way to a nearby bus stop along the Teesta River.

In moments we were on a bus back to Gangtok. The open windows of the bus, with no option to close them, caused us to be even wetter, and colder, before arriving at the center of the city.

Once back at our lodging, the Gangtok YWAM facility, I had to search through my dirty laundry to find my cleanest dirty trousers to get out of the wet ones. With no hot showers, it was some time getting the chill out of our bodies.

Dinner came, and Carolina presented, Kathy, Sandy, and me with paintings as gifts. We were blessed as we saw the excellently done paintings on cloth of Native Tribesmen. Mine was a beautiful black and white of a Bhutia Inoman, what a precious gift. Thank you, Lord. Protect this painting from travel damage please. (*A representation of it was used on the cover of this book.*)

Individual gifts were also presented to the rest of the students.

The next day we spent the day in the city of Gangtok. We had opportunity to visit government buildings to pray. We began early in the day visiting the Sikkim State Assembly Buildings, where the Parliament met. Baskaran, our YWAM assistant for the day, led our group as we hiked across the steep hill city to the Parliament site.

Once we were there, Baskaran explained that we would not be able to go inside the parliament building, as no western tourists were allowed inside the building under no circumstances. He said we could go just inside the compound wall through the gate and pray quietly in front of the building. Because there was a guard at the gate, I asked Baskaran if he should go check to see if it were necessary for our group to register before entering the gate. He misunderstood and thought I had asked him to check and see if we could gain access into the parliament building itself. He disappeared inside the gate.

We were not yet aware of the misunderstanding. As a team, we decided to circle and pray that God would even grant us access into the parliament building instead of just inside the compound. We prayed exactly that.

A moment later Baskaran returned, and I noticed a man in a business suit standing at the steps of the parliament building. Baskaran motioned to us and began explaining that the man we saw was Secretary of Parliament and he had given us approval to enter the Parliament Chamber for a period of ten minutes.

We were so thrilled the way God had set this up and then answered our prayer.

We were then guided by the Secretary personally inside where we had freedom to move about as we desired. Kathy carried on a conversation with the Secretary and this allowed us more freedom
to pray throughout the chamber. There was a section where the Ruling Party sat, and another where the Opposition Party sat. There was a large desk at the center of the room where the President of Parliament presided over meetings.

The team members spread out and we were able to pray at each seat, and then Madalein and I stood immediately next to the President’s seat and prayed, and praised the name of Jesus in that place. At one point the Secretary was only about sixteen inches from us and Madalein raised her hands in praise to Jesus, praising him in low tones. Across the chamber, I noticed Marla with her hands raised high over her head praising the name of Jesus. This chamber was filled with the praises of Jesus.

Thanks to Kathy for the distraction!

We then ventured to the State Education Building where the State’s computer center was located. It was not much compared to what we would find in the US, but there were about nine personal computers. We were guided through this department and I was invited to return later and use the computers for sending e-mails home to the states.

I did return later in the day and took advantage of this opportunity. I was guarded as to what I said, because I had a curious audience as I typed.

I was told by Baskaran later that they were impressed at the speed at which I could type. And I had thought they were concerned at the content of what I typed!
Chapter 9

Stand at the Crossroads

May 3, our last morning in Gangtok had come. I found time in our busy schedule to talk by phone to a discouraged Preety in Delhi. She had seen no progress from the Police on behalf of her passport renewal. The police were to show up the day before to do the residence verification and they failed to do so. She waits.

We packed our backpacks, said our farewells to Wilfred’s team, and loaded into one jeep for the several-hour trip to Darjeeling, West Bengal.

How do you put the whole team in a jeep you are probably asking? The jeep taxi has an extended bed which increases the capacity, and they carry nine people comfortably. I counted fifteen on one occasion as we traveled to Rumtek.

Our jeep made its way over the mountain ridges, making connections to roads we had not yet traveled. Our trip was pleasant and we had the jeep to ourselves for the most part, except for an extra person or two for short distances along the way.

We wound our way up, and up some more, into the steep countryside of Darjeeling District. The hillsides as far as you could see, were terraced into tea plantations, and was beautiful to behold. The area is famous for the Darjeeling Black Tea that is shipped all over the world.

I had anticipated coming to Darjeeling for nearly a dozen years, although in the beginning I had no desire to even come to India. Judith had died without ever having the opportunity to go to Darjeeling. But now, here I am about to drive square into the middle of Darjeeling, to the ‘Crossroads.’

God had brought our team of young intercessors to Darjeeling to carry out the very purpose he had developed since before the foundations of the earth. It had been a gigantic struggle to get this far, but God had made a way at every turn where it seemed we were blocked. It had been like an unfolding drama. Now, what lies ahead around the bend in Darjeeling, at the Crossroads?

Suddenly we were there.

But, why was I so disappointed at our arrival? I felt no emotion, except tiredness, and a longing to get this done and move on.

This was not the Darjeeling I had pictured in my mind for all those years. I had seen pictures and yet it was not what I expected. There was even argument on how we should determine where the crossroads was within the team. Where’s the peace, Lord?

I expected a quiet mountain village with a moderate marketplace along Chowk Bazaar. I thought this would be a clear-cut crossroads easily identified and obvious to the passerby. The streets are filled with tourists from India, Nepal, Tibet, and other western nations. It is a definite tourist trap. I must say though, an interesting one.

I struggled to refocus on why God had brought us here and regain enthusiasm. God ignited a spark within me and I began to look forward to the challenge of locating the crossroads. But, I experienced a strange absence of emotion thinking of Judith and Darjeeling. I somehow felt I now knew why Judith was not allowed to come. How would she have handled all of this, and with her cancer? Thank you, Lord, for always knowing what is best.
We took hotel rooms and bedded down for the night, I slept pretty well throughout the night, which was rare for me. Maybe it was the cool and clean mountain air, and the realization that we had made it to Darjeeling in spite of all the obstacles.

I awoke to our first morning in Darjeeling, and this was the day we were to locate the crossroads so long anticipated. As I sat in the concrete hotel room that seemed so cold and unfriendly, I listened to the noise so typical of India coming from the streets outside, and I missed home.

I was tired of constantly instructing, guiding, and correcting some of the students. I know I must continue, and I will, but, I long to walk alone, or with someone close to me, without counting heads to see if someone has wandered off or lagged behind in the crowds of people. And this did happen from time to time. I always felt such a responsibility to the parents who let me take their children away from them and bring them to such a place as this.

If it were not for the certainty that God is working in every life, and accomplishing some great purpose by this outreach with each of these young Christians, I would conclude the outreach today.

I thank you, Lord, that it is not my wisdom, knowledge, or strength that has led this group this far and maintained the attitude, ‘We will go on.’ It has been you, Lord. Thank you for your grace that helps us to continue. Work in us all today. Rekindle zeal in me, Lord, to accomplish your will with this team.

‘Lead us to the ‘Crossroads,’ Father!’

Father God did lead us to the Crossroads. We soon determined that Chowk Bazaar was a street and it was a figure eight street with no beginning and no end. There was a crossroads and it was a very relaxed ‘cross.’

Days ago Kathy had seen a picture of an ‘X’ such as this during intercession. She could only say that it was a very angled ‘X,’ or cross. We now see what Father was showing Kathy that day. That same day of intercession, Sandy received the word ‘Crossroad.’ We were instructed later to go to Darjeeling on May 3. Father God was in charge for sure and had a purpose.

Upon finding the crossroads within Chowk Bazaar, the team gathered in a circle and began to pray and intercede according to God’s instruction. One of the students was carrying a Precious Moments Bible, and so that we could all clasp hands in prayer, she laid the bible on the ground in the center of the circle we formed while holding hands. We prayed for twenty minutes or so.

Many people were in the crowded marketplace and people passing by would stop and look over our shoulders into the circle to see what we circled about. There laying on the ground was a little blue bible, nothing more. I wonder what they thought. Some just stood by the entire time we prayed. Others hurried by seeming to not notice at all. We knew though that God had arranged this time many years ago and that we were carrying out something important and vital to the work of the Kingdom of God. We would not see the fruit of what we were doing, but we could and did believe that something great was being accomplished in the ‘unseen realm.’ Thank you for the privilege we have to carry this out Lord.

We left Darjeeling immediately after the prayer time. Our work there was done.

We had originally planned to remain for several days to recreate and rest. We would see the captive Snow Leopards in Darjeeling. We would take the bus to Tiger Hill for a look from the vista there at Mt. Everest in the distance.

But, we had none of this! It was unanimous. We were to leave, and ‘now.’ We weren’t so sure why the rush, but something in the Spirit was speaking to all of us, saying, leave. So we did.

We rented another jeep from the jeep stand and gave instructions to take us to Kalimpong.
In a flash we were loaded and racing down the windy road through the tea plantations in the direction of Kalimpong, the place where our next adventure would begin.
May 4, late in the day and the road ahead disappears under our rented jeep and Darjeeling is several hours behind us, and Kalimpong lies somewhere ahead in the distance.

We had much anticipation about Kalimpong because the Lord had told us, ‘Come to Kalimpong and I will lead you to Bhutan!’

Our driver maneuvered our jeep skillfully along the narrow roads that traversed the steep hillsides and soon we could see a village ahead. It was Kalimpong.

We arrived at a busy jeep stand, which is simply a place where jeeps can be rented, near the center of the city. The city, like most in this mountain region lay over the top of a steep ridge and much of the city was accessed by steep, narrow, winding streets. It was beautiful though, and there was a peace about it, quite different from Darjeeling. Judith and I had planned right, this would have been the place to live.

I found a phone quickly, while the team waited near the jeep stand, and called Ben Rex to inform him we were in Kalimpong a day early. He graciously dropped what he was doing and came to guide us to a suitable hotel. There were many to choose from. Ben led us to one that was great. None of our lodging we had stayed in, compared to this one. There was a respectable lobby, well-defined access hallways with carpet, and rooms that were in order and clean. We still had to bathe with a bucket, but that was becoming quite acceptable.

We declared the next day a time of rest for the team. We hadn’t had many rest days up to this point in the outreach, and in fact, it was not a day off for me. This was the day that I must travel to Siliguri once again to meet Preety at the airport in Baghdogra. Preety had finally made a connection with the Delhi Police and completed the residence verification that was required.

I was soon on a bus for Siliguri. The route from the mountains to Siliguri was getting to be quite familiar to me, and as beautiful as it was, it was long and the hours ticked away slowly as I viewed the familiar scenes along the highway. Resting on the bus was really not an option due to the many curves in the winding road and the swaying of the bus.

I arrived in Siliguri early enough to take a bicycle rickshaw to Mrs. Maubart’s school to exchange rupees for the US $300.00 she had held for Preety’s travel. She had been gracious and extended Rupees to Preety while only holding our US dollars. She insisted I have tea and biscuits with two of her guests and a local pastor prior to going to the State Bank of India for the exchange. Once at the bank, I sent the Rupees back to the school with a worker named Leroy, who had accompanied me for that very purpose. I hailed an auto rickshaw and was on my way to the airport just seven miles away in Baghdogra.

Preety was very excited to be back with the team and she gave me a full report of how her address verification had been done, and how her uncle had been accepted by affidavit as her power of attorney. Preety’s passport replacement was promised to be ready in about a week.

I negotiated a small Suzuki Murati taxi to get us back to Kalimpong.

Preety was disappointed that she had missed the trip to Darjeeling, but was happy to catch us before we traveled to Bhutan. She had been excited about going into Bhutan since learning about
it in Colorado. We chatted about the upcoming venture, wondering how God was going to get us into the country without any of the proper papers. We agreed it was time for another miracle of God.

The Murati taxi could hold only three people other than the driver. And the third in our taxi today was a pastor from Kalimpong who was returning from a school board meeting in Delhi. Thank you, Lord, for visits with two pastors in this one day, in a land of few Christians.

We were well on our way when suddenly our small Murati developed engine trouble and chugged to the side of the road. The driver was quick to get out, lift the hood and begin making every attempt to get it going again, to no avail.

Finally, with our bags sitting on the side of the road, we thumbed a ride with a Sikkim jeep driver who agreed to go the hour out of his way for a fee of 350 Rupees. The pastor split the fee with us. India is the land of adjustments, some of them at the last moment. They can be sudden and frequent.

Kalimpong appeared in the distance just before dark and soon Preety’s things were in her room and we met the team for dinner.

May 6, our day to proceed to Bhutan, as determined through prayer, and I got up early and walked the short distance to the jeep stand to negotiate another jeep rental. Everything was done by negotiation in India, it was part of the price settlement and you were expected to do it. I had come to understand the system and it took no time to agree to the right amount.

It was a cloudy day with light rain falling. This was a routine start of a day here high in the mountains. Fog often lay around the mountain tops and partially down the steep slopes. The sun would eventually burn off the fog and make way for a beautiful day. That was the case today as well.

Before seven o’clock I had acquired a jeep driver that was willing to take us to Jaigaon, West Bengal. Jaigaon was on the India/Bhutan border and was about five and half hours away by jeep. The price for the jeep was 1600 Rupees, about US $40. The normal price was 2200 Rupees, so it seemed a good deal and I was happy about that.

There was a bus, a rugged rough riding one, and wasn’t much more comfortable than the jeep. It had already been filled and no seats were available until the next day. God had said today was the day to go to Bhutan, so today it was, by jeep!

With our bags stowed, and the team on board, our jeep took us out of the mountains, traveling downstream along the Teesta River to the plains. Once on the plains we turned east and skirted the foothills for another two and half hours. We then turned back to the north toward the mountains and after an hour we arrived in the dirty, and noisy, little border town of Jaigaon.

Jaigaon was very small in size and very simple. The main street was dirt and the sidewalks were wood planks. Tiny shops lined both sides of the one main street that went right up to the border crossing into Bhutan.

We walked along the board walk, our eyes feasting on all within our sight. Everything in India was new to us and we hadn’t lost the sense of wonder with each new place we visited. We passed one door of a small office with a sign that said, ‘Immigration.’ Odd, I thought, for such a small town, but then we were at a national border crossing.

It was only a few blocks from the jeep stand to the border crossing and we were soon standing at a great Bogota style golden archway that projected fifty feet into the air over the street that led into Bhutan. The gateway was huge and very ornate with figurines and art work on the six massive gate posts and the two layered arches.
Bhutanese soldiers were posted as guards at both sides, all in their sharp blue military uniforms. They were there to watch over those passing in and out of the country. No Indian guards were evident anywhere in the vicinity.

Here we were, standing at the gates of Bhutan! The Lord had in fact brought us right to this point, like he said he would, but what was the plan now. We had no plan of our own beyond getting to the border. The Lord spoke to us about coming to Kalimpong and we knew he would get us into Bhutan. He had gotten us here, but what was the next step? Were we to simply walk across the border without proper papers? We not only didn’t have papers to go into Bhutan, we didn’t even have proper papers to be in India, much less leave India and then come back into the country.

It was time to pray and ask Father God what the next step was to be. We circled in our customary fashion, standing on the street just outside the gate to Bhutan. We didn’t mind who noticed. We were seeking our God and we didn’t care who knew it.

After a few minutes seeking God’s wisdom and direction, we felt we were to back track to the Indian Immigration Office we had seen beforehand, and tell them our story and ask for permission to leave India and then return without legal papers. This seemed unlikely to happen because the Indian establishment did not particularly like westerners, especially Americans. More often than not they would choose to make it harder for westerners than easier.

And, think about it, we were in Jaigaon without proper papers, and we were going to ask Immigration officials if we could, not only be there, but could we go into Bhutan and then return to Jaigaon, again without proper paperwork. The reality was, we might get thrown into jail.

But, we felt God was saying, this is the way and we desired to be obedient in every way to his direction. We walked back along the street that was sparsely populated until we reached the Immigration Office. The office had no clue that it was anything official, much less an Immigration Office. It was simply a small door with a small inconspicuous sign stating that it was the Immigration Office.

I asked the team to wait outside and pray while I went inside to talk to the officials. I took our newspaper article, my passport, (that had no India Visa stamp in it), and my Sikkim permit, into the office.

The room was small and without any character worth describing. The floor was wood and dirty. The walls very plain and without hangings. There was one official in uniform at a small desk just to the right inside the door. The desk sat in front of a doorway that led into another office.

After a short wait I was able to present our circumstances and desire to go to Bhutan. It was clear we were at the mercy of the Indian authorities. But, they were in the hands of the Lord, because he had already determined he wanted us in Bhutan this particular day. He had a purpose for this team in Bhutan, even though we had no idea what it was.

I had difficulty communicating anything at all. The officer at the desk didn’t speak a word of English and of course, I spoke nothing but English. Soon the officer beckoned another officer from a back room that could speak some English.

After reading the newspaper article the second official summoned his supervisor, and they began to discuss our situation in their native tongue, which sounded like Bengali. It was only minutes before the supervisor began asking me a lot of questions about the events contained in the article. He abruptly gave his approval to go into Bhutan and return by the next day. Even though it was illegal, he consented. He cautioned however, that it might be wise to return this same day to India and stay the night in Jaigaon, instead of Phuensholing, Bhutan. At this point I thought it wise to take the advice of the authorities.
The supervisor required further, that I send in each team member one at a time, so that they could be interrogated. I was not allowed to stay for that interrogation, I’m sure they wanted to see if all our stories coincided. And they did. The entire team received the verbal approval to leave India and return. I want to emphasize, ‘Verbal.’ We still had no paperwork.

The newspaper article of our loss again seemed to be our ticket. Thank you, Lord, for the article that was serving as passport and visa for our team.

Now that we had verbal approval to re-enter India once we crossed into Bhutan, we only had to see if the Bhutanese soldiers would let us cross over without papers. It seemed best to just start across as if we knew what we were doing. If they stopped us, we would simply explain our story to them also, and trust the Lord to clear the way.

I instructed the team to file in behind me, and as it was, we walked across the border with me in the lead, and I simply made eye contact with the soldier and nodded, and of course, smiled as we passed. He met my eye contact with not so much as a blink. Nothing was said and in seconds we were all standing on Bhutan soil.

God had done it! He said, ‘Come to Kalimpong and I will lead you to Bhutan,’ and he did just that. We had just entered one of the most closed countries on the globe, without papers, and weren’t even asked a question. We serve the one true God.

So now we were in Bhutan, now what?
We walked up the street for a short distance and circled up in our customary fashion and prayed again, giving thanks to God for what he had done. We then determined to just walk and pray and see what God wanted to do. We walked a short distance before coming to a fork in the street, where we had to go right or left. I felt we were to go left and I instructed the team in that way.

The road circled around to the left and up the hill. Just up the street sat two of the small Murati vehicles with drivers. One of the drivers came toward us as we approached. He asked, in very good English, ‘Do you want a taxi?’

I looked straight at him and asked, ‘Is there a high place nearby where we can get a good view?’ We had felt we were to seek out a high place and intercede for this nation. That had been the thrust of what God had instructed us we must do on this outreach.

He replied, ‘There is a high place just five kilometers away at the Monastery and the view is very good.’ He then added, ‘We will take you up to the high place and wait for thirty minutes and then bring you back for eighty Rupees, (about two dollars).’

I asked him, ‘Are there any check points between here and the high-place?’ I was hoping I would not have to explain at a checkpoint why we had no papers.

He said there were no checkpoints. I agreed to his terms and we loaded into the two taxis.

The view from the high place was indeed good, and beautiful. The hills rolled out ahead of our gaze and were carpeted with dark green vegetation as far as the eye could see. We prayed as we walked around the monastery grounds and looked deep into Bhutan from this vantage point. We could also look in the opposite direction to the south and see a great distance back into India and far out onto the plains toward Calcutta.

We interceded for both countries, and prayed around the monastery grounds before going inside. The monastery was very small indeed compared to the one we had seen at Rumtek. After a brief prayer time inside, our thirty minutes were up and we loaded back into the taxis’ and returned to where we were picked up.

We all felt that our task was done. It didn’t seem like much was accomplished for all the work of getting into Bhutan. We could only trust and believe we had accomplished what the Lord
brought us into Bhutan to do. We know that prayer can move mountains, according to the word of God.

We walked toward the border feeling a real sense of purpose because our God had shown his awesome power to accomplish what he had said he would do.

Who were we to expect two different governments to just roll over and let us come and go without proper papers? We were no one, and that is the truth. Only because God caused this to happen were we able to accomplish it. We were blessed and knew it.

As we neared the border, it occurred to us that we had not eaten and it was near the dinner hour. Kathy was still with us and was not scheduled to fly back to the states for a few days yet. She pointed out a rather nice looking hotel adjacent to the border crossing and wondered if they had a restaurant open for business. It seemed deserted, but we decided to check it out.

The place was fine in appearance. But then all of Bhutan since crossing the border appeared that way. It was peaceful, clean, and quieter than India just a short distance away. We entered the empty looking hotel and found no one inside. There had been no cars in the parking lot, no one on the ground floor, and no one behind the registration counter.

I noticed a small sign hanging on the wall above the stairs going up to another level. The sign was printed in English and said, ‘Restaurant,’ with an arrow pointing up the stairs. We climbed the stairs to the second floor and entered the restaurant. There were several waiters, but no customers were to be seen. The place was otherwise deserted.

We asked one of the waiters if they were open for business and he replied, ‘Yes.’ Again in good English.

Our waiter was dressed in a black tuxedo style garment, and even carried a white towel over his folded arm as he guided us to our table. The other similarly dressed waiters awaited instruction.

A glance at the menu showed that it was a little expensive compared to what we were used to eating on since arrival in India, but still not bad for a posh place such as this. Kathy, Sandy, and I talked about our finances and decided to spend the extra money and treat the team to a really nice meal.

The table was long and set in an elegant fashion with fine linen and dinnerware, and could easily seat our entire team without shuffling tables around. The table was highly decorated as if for a banquet.

We were provided with linen napkins and crystal classes, and attended by several waiters. We were being treated like royalty. It was a real treat.

We could not believe the contents of the menu. There was an American Food section that included, meatloaf, country fried chicken, and many other favorite dishes. Some members of the team wanted good old American food, and others of us wanted traditional Bhutanese food.

The food was excellent and one of the team ordered country-fried chicken, which came with mashed potatoes and white gravy. It was as though we were in Alabama, rather than Bhutan. How was this possible?

No one entered the entire time we were there. It was as though the Lord had this banquet planned as a reward for our obedience to simply come to Bhutan because he said to do so. We were honored. This was one of the highlights of our outreach for sure, at least for me.

I wonder, ‘Could this hotel and restaurant have really been closed, and these waiters have been angels? Hmm!’

After our dinner, upon spying a phone booth, I made a quick call to Colorado and left a message on the answering machine informing Randy Thomas, DTS Director, that I was calling from
Bhutan. I was sure they would be as impressed with that fact as I was. I was never to know if that was true or not.

We then walked back across the border, again making eye contact with one of the soldiers, into India’s noise and dirt. Our hotel for the night was a cut-rate joint with mosquitoes and bedbugs gnawing on us all night. Another sleepless night added to the ‘many’ in India.

Back to Kalimpong in the morning.

The team was up early and by seven o’clock we were seated on our bus ready for the eight o’clock departure. We boarded early to ensure seating. India buses can fill to overflowing and more still get on. This ride back to Kalimpong was to take no less that seven hours and all of us wanted to be seated for that. This was by no means a luxury bus. It was equipped to travel mountain roads and to get across areas where high clearance is needed. It was a mountain bus for sure.

We were not sorry to be leaving Jaigaon. There was little appeal to this dirty little Indian border town. As we sat in our bus waiting for departure, feeling a sense of accomplishment, we all agreed to group on one side of the bus peering out of the windows so that Madalein could exit the bus and take a picture of us and the bus. As we prepared for the photo, Nate noticed an Indian reaching onto the luggage rack above Madalein and Preety’s seat. Nate told Preety to watch their day packs.

After the picture was taken, Madalein entered the bus and quickly noticed that her fanny pack was missing from the top rack. The thief had come onto the bus and stolen it right from under our noses. The fanny pack contained Madalein’s photo copies of her original passport, US Visa, India Visa, and her original Sikkim permit. Most of these things were only copies and while not useful as legal documents, would be helpful reestablishing the originals once back in Calcutta.

It’s as though the Lord wanted to once again strip us of any means to accomplish the restoration of her papers ourselves. He would restore them without any worldly help. Thank you, Lord, for your ways that are so much higher than ours. Thank you too, for your faithfulness to help us in all the circumstances and situations we have faced on this trip.

We arrived back in Kalimpong early in the afternoon. We were tired, crumpled, and weary enough for a nap before the evening meal.

I slept for two uninterrupted hours before a knock came on my door and jarred me from my deep sleep. It was the hotel manager trying to get a message across to me. He was very excited, but I was having difficulty understanding his message.

I quickly freshened up and went up one flight of stairs to the lobby. Our hotel hung over a steep hillside, like everything in this region did, and you could access rooms by going up, or down, from the lobby.

As I began to piece together the hotel manager’s concern, it appeared that the local police chief wanted to see me. He was upset that we were in Kalimpong without legal papers and that we had registered at the Munal Guest House without India Visa numbers. The hotel manager was fearful of trouble from the police himself for allowing us to stay without even one Visa. He was insistent that I go immediately to the police station and explain to them the situation with our Visas.

I found my way to the Kalimpong Police Station and informed the desk officer who I was.

He disappeared into the back room and came out with a man claiming to be the head inspector. He questioned me for nearly twenty minutes with few attempts to understand our situation. He simply kept repeating that we were in Kalimpong illegally and would have to return to Calcutta to get proper Visas. I explained over and over that the authorities in Calcutta had given us a stamp in our passports indicating that they had seen us, and we had their verbal approval to
travel in India while waiting for the final Visa to be approved in Calcutta.

It was time for the newspaper article once again. I pulled the newspaper from my hip pocket and handed it to him. He slowly read the entire article. It had a calming effect on him and he began to simmer down.

It appeared to me that he had felt as though his authority had been ignored, because he had not been informed. Once he established that he was in charge in Kalimpong, he relaxed and loosened up a bit. Within minutes he was shaking my hand and welcoming us to stay as long as we desired.

Once again the newspaper article telling our story had been a game changer. This incident was evidence that our Lord was surely blessing us by giving us free travel in India, and Bhutan. We may have been taking that too lightly. Thank you, Lord.
May 8 marked the day Kathy would leave us and head back to Colorado. She had provided much needed input into our praying for guidance and direction. She was instrumental in the ministry in Sikkim, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Bhutan. We would miss her during the remainder of the outreach.

After breakfast with the team, Kathy and I boarded another bus in Kalimpong and headed for the plains below. Once again we were racing along the Teesta River to Siliguri, and then on to the airport at Baghdogra where Kathy’s plane awaited.

The team was left in the capable hands of Sandy who always came up with meaningful things for the team to do in my absence.

Meanwhile Kathy and I, riding in one of the nicest buses I had seen in all of India, encountered a major vehicle tie up along an especially windy and narrow stretch of highway with traffic backed up for miles in either direction. Our two and a half hour trip expanded to four hours, putting us at the airport at 1:15 P.M. We were late according to our schedule, but we had allowed sufficient time for delays and there was time for lunch before her boarding time.

The Baghdogra Airport restaurant seemed one of the better places to order food fare. I tried to manage a meal there whenever I was required to pick someone up, or drop them off.

Kathy and I enjoyed some good discussion about the outreach, the team, and her time with us before it was time for her to board the plane. Once I saw her disappear into the plane I made my exit from the terminal to find transportation back to Kalimpong.

Traveling in India is always an adventure and the seemingly simple task of getting a taxi back to Kalimpong from the area’s only available airport would be no exception. As usual there were a number of vehicles outside the terminal to give rides for hire most anywhere someone may want to go.

I looked first for a share jeep directly to Kalimpong, which would be the least expensive for sure. In fact there were no jeeps at all, only mini van taxis’, all of which had drivers trying to get my business.

Finally I agreed to the proposal of two young local men. They said they would get me to Kalimpong for 250 Rupees without sharing the vehicle. I thought that was great. That was less than half the going rate for a non share ride. The idea was that they would drop me at a jeep stand in Siliguri where one of the young men had a brother that would complete the trip to Kalimpong.

This turned out to be a non truth, in other words an outright lie. I began to suspect when they pulled into one jeep stand, had a few words with the drivers there and then quickly pulled off to another. I began to quiz them about what was happening and they began to get impatient with my questions. I had not paid them yet, and I simply opened the door and got out stating that I would find my own ride to Kalimpong. They were apologetic and insisted they could get me a jeep for that price. I gave them one more try.

They drove to another jeep stand and in fact did get me a jeep ride the rest of the way. However, it was not a solo jeep, but a share jeep. I was the first passenger and I would have to wait
for it to fill, nine more passengers! I let the two men know my displeasure, but decided to pay them and learn from the experience. The whole experience cost me about 100 Rupees more than it should have, about US $2.50.

I sat in the front seat of the jeep waiting for the other passengers and finally the driver came and sat with me. He said that he would ensure that I had a good front seat. We began to chat and I found that his name was Joseph. When Joseph learned I was a YWAMER, he said he knew a lot of YWAMER’s. As I quizzed him, I found he knew Mark Tidwell, an acquaintance of mine from Colorado. He also had met Judy Russell, another dear friend of mine from Bible School days in McMinnville, Oregon who is now with YWAM in Colorado. Joseph told me story after story of God’s goodness in saving him from a life headed for destruction. I was blessed to have had opportunity to share with him. I would meet him time and time again before we left Kalimpong for good.

After we had talked for a while Joseph disappeared for a few minutes and then returned and suggested that I take another Jeep that was prepared to leave. He had talked to the driver and made room for me in the front seat, a very desirable place to ride in the crowded jeeps. Joseph said he may be hours getting the rest of his passengers. I thanked him and was off for Kalimpong. The jeep made record time up the river, arriving in Kalimpong in only one hour and fifty minutes. Some forty minutes faster than any other ride I had taken.

There was a lesson in all this. God had a divine appointment for me with Joseph, and had I fought the circumstances I found myself in, I could have missed that appointment all together. God always brings something good out of our inconveniences and hard times.

When I arrived back at the Munal Guest House where we were staying, I found the team all happy. They had spent time in Intercession in my absence and believed God was saying that we were to return to Calcutta on Monday. The thought of going back to Calcutta somewhat witnessed with my spirit, but I informed Sandy that I wanted to pray it through before making a decision.

Sandy said that the team also felt we were to go back to the states early.

That did not witness to my spirit but I was willing to pray about it. I welcomed prayerful input from the team, but knew ultimately that Sandy and I must pray and make the final decision.

She said she had advised the team not to count on going home early.

I said, ‘Good advice.’

May 9 was the forty-second day of this outreach and I began the day sitting on a veranda with a marvelous view of a portion of Kalimpong. The veranda was that of the Munal Guest House and I came to this spot early each day that my schedule permitted.

Today would be my first full rest day since leaving Colorado. I was happy about that, but had a restlessness within my spirit to be about God’s work. This DTS was so different from those I’ve seen or even heard of, that it was hard to measure accomplishment. At times it feels like we have done nothing of significance.

Please open our eyes, Lord, to see the accomplishment in our lives, and in the spirit realm that God has wrought through our willingness to come, and even suffer so many stressful events, on this outreach.

Even though leaving on Monday, didn’t initially register full-on with me, as I prayed about it this morning on the veranda I began to think that it may be the Lord’s will. And only time would prove how really necessary it was to depart Kalimpong early and have more time in Calcutta to take care of the essentials of procuring our India Visas, and last but not least, Preety’s passport.

May 10, Monday, arrived and we had our last breakfast at Gumpu’s restaurant, a place we had
come to enjoy during our days in Kalimpong. Gumpu’s was clean and the fare was tasty. Add the
good food to the better quality quarters we had enjoyed, and Kalimpong had been a pleasant
experience. I would miss it.

We also had another ‘last.’ We boarded the bus that would take us down the Teesta River for
the last time.

The ride to Siliguri was fast as the driver sped down the winding mountain road at such a
speed that two different Indian nationals were victims of motion sickness, and one of them was
running repeatedly to the open bus door to hang out into the fresh air, passing whatever he had
consumed for breakfast.

The driver was swerving at excessive speed and that made everyone uncomfortable. Marla,
who was subject to motion sickness herself felt somewhat sickly too, but thankfully did not get as
sick as the two Indians. We were all glad when the bus pulled to a stop in Siliguri.

None of us were looking forward to the overnight bus to Calcutta, another of the infamous
travel opportunities in India, and what a miserable trip it was. The bus appeared to have no
suspension and the seats were very hard without any obvious cushion. I could only sit for about five
minutes before having to shift my weight somewhere else. Of course, the loss of nearly thirty
pounds since the beginning of this outreach hadn’t helped my own posterior cushioning any. Most
of the padding was gone from my bottom side.

As much as I disliked Calcutta during our first visit, there seemed to be almost a homecoming
feeling about arriving back in the city. The team felt the same. Most were glad to be back. Prior
to this DTS, I had heard it referred to as, ‘The armpit of the world,’ but Calcutta had begun to grow
on us. In our original plan we intended to spend only two days in Calcutta, but in reality we spent
thirty days in the city, half our outreach. What’s the purpose for that Lord? I’m sure there is a
purpose and one day it may be clear to us.

We got off the bus, off loaded our back packs from the top of the bus, and walked the quarter
mile distance to the now familiar Sudder Street and Hotel Maria, and checked in. Bubba, Nate and
I were in one room and all the girls in another. The rooms were small and the girls room was wall
to wall beds.

This hotel wasn’t much, but it did offer something we had desired since coming to India,
showers! Each room had one. Another benefit of the Hotel Maria was the location. It was near the
Foreign Tourist Office, the US Embassy, the new South African Embassy, and close to the
underground Metro, (the subway). We would frequent these often in the next ten days.

The Blue Sky Café was another welcome sight and was located only two blocks from our
hotel. We made our way there for lunch. We would spend many hours in this particular café during
the next ten days before our departure back to the US. The Blue Sky Café was a hang out for
western tourist and the food fare catered to their delight. Our delight closely matched that of the
other westerners as a choice over typical Indian food. We could get French Fries, Milk Shakes,
Grilled Cheese Sandwiches, and other western delights. And the meal prices were within our 40-50
Rupee, US $1.00, per person, per meal budget.

I finished my meal quickly, and strolled along Sudder Street the short distance back to the
Hotel Maria. I had given the team the rest of the day off to rest in order to shake off the lack of
sleep on the overnight bus ride. I purchased a local map of the city of Calcutta from the desk clerk
and returned to my room. I looked the map over and found we were about a thirty minute walk from
the Foreign Tourist Office. I decided to make the walk and check on the processing of the Indian
Visas of our American team members. The visas were supposed to be ready by April 28, and it was
now May 11. Barring any further complications they should be waiting.

I was in the Tourist Office only ten minutes before returning to the street with my Indian Visa stamped into my passport. Never had I seen anything go that smoothly in an Indian government office since arriving in India. Thank you, Lord.

I returned to my room for a much needed nap and prayer about our departure date back to the states.

As I prayed, I felt more and more peace about going home early and having our debriefing and graduation in Colorado. There were two good reasons. One, Nicole could join us for debriefing and graduation. She was entitled to be there and this would be reason enough. Number two, our money was very limited and leaving a week early would help our finances. We still needed further provision to stay the shortened time. We were needing help financially no matter what date we left for the US.

I decided to send Randy an e-mail requesting his wisdom and thoughts about coming home on the May 21 instead of the 27th. I also informed him of our financial situation and requested US $745.00 be sent to us if possible.

After a full night sleep I awoke early for what would be a full day of activity and accomplishment. Our first task was to take the other four Americans to the Foreign Tourist Office and pick up their Indian Visas. This went very quickly and soon all were restored.

A short time later, Sandy accompanied the team in ministry opportunities while Madalein and I headed for the US Embassy to see about getting her US Visa restored. It was required that she have that stamp in her passport before boarding a plane for the United States.

It was Tuesday and as we talked to the clerk at the application window in the embassy, we were told that we could not expect her Visa before Thursday. We had paid the fee and supplied the necessary photos and were happy that Thursday would complete the deal. The clerk returned to the window after a short absence and asked us to sit down and wait for a moment.

At this point I didn’t really understand why we were asked to wait, but we did so in obedience to his request. About ten minutes passed and to our surprise Tom, the US Consulate General, walked through the waiting room door to where we were seated. He extended his hand to Madalein. In his hand was her passport. He spoke and said, ‘Your visa is completed.’ What a shock, it was two full days early! And we hadn’t received any documents early in India.

Tom informed us that no one was present to laminate the visa into her passport, so he had done it himself. We were so blessed and considered this a miracle. God had spoken to his heart and he had responded. We both shook his hand and expressed our gratitude. This would begin a friendship between Tom and me that would benefit our cause for our remaining time in Calcutta. It became possible for me to dial directly into Tom’s office anytime I had a question or need. This was such a blessing, and speeded processes up immensely.

We rushed back to the Hotel Maria barely containing our excitement and shared with the team. We had asked them to pray for God’s help with her visa. Their prayer was certainly answered in fine fashion.

We had learned too, while at the embassy, that a new South African Embassy had opened just this week in Calcutta. It was not officially opened, but we were given a phone number to call. We did call and found that the office was open unofficially. We took directions and went to see if they could help get the much needed India entry data from Bombay for Madalein. The entry data was necessary to have an Indian Visa restored. We had been told that none of us could leave India without the Indian Visa in hand as an Exit Visa. The American data from Bombay had taken about
two weeks. We knew that time was running out for Madalein.

Also it was running out for Preety who still did not have a passport, or US Visa. We were told by Tom that an US Visa was merely a formality for Preety because she had her Green Card that was as good as a Visa. That was reassuring but the Green Card could not substitute for her Indian Passport. I was anxious about these two things that needed to be accomplished quickly.

We found a very friendly and helpful officer in the new South African Embassy. He assured us that he would fax to their office in Bombay and acquire the needed data. He thought he could have it the next day. This thrilled us greatly.

But all his enthusiasm did not net us anything at all. He drew a blank from his Bombay office and was told that Madalein may have to travel directly back to South Africa rather than return to the US.

This was very disturbing to Madalein, and totally unacceptable to me.

First of all, I had no intention of leaving a student anywhere while the rest of us returned to the states. I fully intended to stay in India myself if either Madalein or Preety could not leave. I was committed to that. Sandy could see the team home easily. But, my prayer and that of the entire team, was that all of us would return together.

The South African Embassy Consulate did say that it could be possible for Madalein to leave the country without an Indian Visa. She may be subject to heavy fines if she was found not to have one while trying to board a plane. While we may just attempt such a maneuver if the Lord should direct, I preferred to have all the proper documents in hand, to better glorify God. After all, He had spoken to me on the Sealda Train Station platform the night of the robbery and said that he would restore everything. And I believed him. I did not buy into the idea that we would have to resort to trickery to leave this country.

That night before retiring I ventured onto the streets to walk the short distance to the tiny office I had become accustomed to using for e-mails and phone calls. I checked for a message from Randy and it was there. He said that coming on the May 21 would work, although things would be very hectic around Ponderosa that week. If we didn’t mind the lack of attention, we were welcome. He said too, that he would see what they could do about the finance request. At this point I calculated that we had three days lodging and food money left, and we had ten more days in India.

I informed Randy in a return e-mail message that we would be leaving Calcutta on May 21 and arrive in Colorado Springs on May 22. I also informed him that our money would run out in three days and when it did, I would simply move the team to the airport and we would sleep on the floor of the terminal until our flight time.

I prayed that the money had been raised and would be forwarded to us within the next two days. We needed the Lord’s help desperately. We had come to realize through the course of this outreach that we have nothing without our Lord to aid us. We had come to trust in his provision and he had never failed us. There had been times when I was down to the last few Rupees jingling in my pocket when the Lord would miraculously provide more. It has never been late, and it will not be this time. Thank you, Lord.

May 13, Wednesday, rolled around. We had a short time of meeting and praying before our daily trip to Blue Sky Café for breakfast. I informed the team of Randy’s approval of coming home a week early and gave the date of our departure, of course dependent upon confirmation of new airline tickets.

The team was less than excited at the news. They had prayed about and wanted this early departure, but they seemed depressed. Even Sandy was caught in the depression. I exhorted and
encouraged them to not let the enemy steal their joy, or rob us of opportunity to accomplish everything the Lord wanted to do in these remaining seven days in Calcutta.

Part of my prayer that day, ‘Father, please replenish the spirits of these tired workers and students of yours.’

After breakfast I made the short journey to the Park Street Travel office and asked for airline ticket changes reflecting May 21 as a departure date. One phone call and our changes were verbally confirmed, and written confirmation would follow. Thank you, Lord for this quick response.

Throughout this time we were back in Calcutta, the team would pray daily about what the Lord would have them do for a ministry. Nathan developed a real desire to visit a local orphanage, and a particular young boy specifically. He prayed for the boy’s healing several times.

There were ministries in the park and some went to Mother Teresa’s Home for the Destitute and Dying.

Marla was one in particular who had a burden for Mother Teresa’s home. One day she asked if she could go, that she felt the Lord was asking her to go. I agreed, but asked that she take someone with her. Marla went on two different occasions after this.

On one trip she had an experience that will impact her for the rest of her life assuredly. She ventured to the home alone, and found the home was locked up. She wanted to help with the work going on inside in some way. She knocked on the door repeatedly until a nun came to the door. She was told there was little that she could do to help. But Marla persisted until the nun pushed the door open and invited her in.

Marla was given the task of using a cloth and water to cleanse open wounds on a certain woman. She preferred to do this with rubber gloves on, but none were available. She consented however, and continued the cleansing. As she worked with the woman, one nun passed by her and commented, ‘That one has leprosy.’ This startled Marla, but she finished the task.

There is another piece of information that makes this story special.

While in Colorado, during the lecture phase of this DTS, I held a special meeting in my cabin with the team. We gathered enough chairs to form a circle and we sat facing each other across the circle.

I asked a question of each of the students to be answered personally. I know only that God wanted me to ask the question, and I did so in obedience. I was uncertain why the question needed to be asked.

This was the question. ‘Would you touch a leper for Jesus?’

I made my way around the circle making eye contact with each student and asking the question. One at a time, some with more thought than others, commented, ‘Yes, I believe I would.’ Finally my eyes fell on Marla. She looked at me and said, ‘I don’t know, I don’t think so.’

It was clear to me that Marla’s afternoon of washing the leper was by God’s design. What great thing has he done within her here in Calcutta? I thank you for her obedience to go to the home at your instruction that day, Lord.

The next three days, May 14-16, were tough ones for me personally. I had gotten sick, and I was too sick to write, eat much, or be effective at anything. I had enjoyed freedom from sickness all this time, while each member of the team had undergone one sickness or another as the outreach went on.

Those three days seemed so unproductive, and hope of finances seemed to be diminishing as no response came from Randy. I was down to the last 100 Rupee note in my pocket, US $2.50. I had sent three e-mails and one direct call to Randy before money finally arrived, US $745.00. This
was exactly what we needed to finish the outreach.  
God was just in time again.
Preety’s passport progress had reversed itself. Officials in Delhi were now demanding her return to Delhi to finish her work in person. We have now paid for two air fares to Delhi for her, and our recent financial calculations, and money received, did not include another airfare to Delhi.

I purchased a one way ticket to Delhi for Preety and asked if her uncle, Sandeep, could finance her return trip to Calcutta. He had offered previously to help with finances. He had offered Preety cash in that amount as she left Delhi the last time to return to Kalimpong to rejoin us and we had not yet taken him up on his offer. He really wanted to help Preety, and now seemed a good time for it.

The tears in Preety’s eyes made it obvious that she was very disappointed as she began to consider that she may have to stay behind when the team left for the states. I know too, that she considered the idea that she may not see some of us ever again. Sandy and I took her to the airport encouraging her in the Lord, and his faithfulness, while assuring her God had plenty of time and resources to get her passport restored. Sandy and I rode quietly back to the Hotel Maria.

Sandy had felt it necessary to take a couple days off from leadership and team involvement the past two days. She had taken on much as a student leader and had carried much more responsibility than any of us bargained for on this outreach. She was given a much needed break. She returned from her break and her renewed assistance was greatly appreciated.

I arose on our last Sunday in Calcutta, and India for that matter, to the sound of the large black birds that gather in the huge trees just outside our bathroom window. They reminded me of Crows back home. Their noise can get quite annoying, but gives way to the street noise that peaks about mid morning.

It was a cloudy day and we were so grateful for it. The intense heat experienced this time of year in India can be overwhelming. The clouds caused the temperature to drop dramatically, and while still hot, it would be much more tolerable.

Our departure day, Thursday, seemed to be racing upon us as we waited to hear from Preety with some good news about her passport. But none came. Each call I made resulted in some other excuse why the officials just couldn’t issue the passport.

We all attended the Mark Buntain Assembly of God Church Sunday morning service. The service lacked excitement and I looked around at the team and found them apparently bored with it all. I felt the same.

It occurred to me that this is what will happen to this team in the states. They have lived an adventure here in India for two months and returning to regular church life at home will seem very sedate to them. I made a note for the abbreviated debriefing we would conduct here before leaving Calcutta. I took note of the Indians during the sermon. They were attentive and were enjoying the message. I saw then, that the message was right on for the native population attending. Thank you, Lord, for this glimpse, the message was not meant for us, but for them.

That evening, Sandy, Madalein and I went for a walk in the cooler evening air. We had only walked perhaps three blocks when we passed by a Wesleyan Church building where a service was
being held. We stopped to look in, and the sounds of worship coming from the large, and double doors at the entrance drew us a little closer. A friendly Indian man beckoned us to come in. I asked the others if they wanted to do so and they motioned yes. We entered and stayed for the entire service. We were the only whites in the building and the service was wonderful. We worshiped and listened as God was presented in many different ways, testimonies, individual songs, group songs, and corporate worship. We were introduced and welcomed. It was a time of blessing for us. I had longed to attend an all Indian service before leaving the country, but we had not had the opportunity until now. Thank you, Lord.

May 19, Tuesday, and there were just two more days for Preety to complete the passport work before our departure. She had received word yesterday that she may be issued an emergency passport this very day.

Nabo came for a visit and spent much of the afternoon with us. We invited him to join us for Jenny’s birthday celebration on Wednesday. Sandy, Madalein, and I had been organizing a special lunch for the team, celebrating completion of the outreach. And after the lunch we planned for cake and sodas to celebrate the birthday.

No team money was available to have a lunch that exceeded the 40 Rupees per person limit allowed for lunch. However, Dave Brodie, a YWAMER who was leaving Calcutta, met me on the street outside the Blue Sky Café this morning and held out his hand to me. As I took his hand, he released two twenty-dollar bills into my hand. He said he wanted us to use it for food. He had been observing our meager meals for days at the Blue Sky Café. He did not know we were planning a special meal today without funds to pay for it.

Thank you, Lord, for the money that came straight from your hand we know. Forty US dollars are about 1600 Rupees, almost the exact amount of the lunch we hoped to have.

Today was also time for us to try to get Madalein’s India Visa. She had none of the required data from Bombay, but we were going to the Foreign Tourist Office and present the newspaper article and our story, and trust that Father would help us. As we boarded the subway, we notice the lady who was the clerk at the Foreign Tourist Office was in our same car. What are the odds of this in India with thousands on the subway each day? She left the subway just ahead of us. As Sandy, Madalein and I walked the few blocks from the subway to the Tourist Office, the clerk was just ahead of us with a friend.

We were joyful and full of laughter as we walked along, and the clerk often turned to glance at us. I spoke to her, and each time she turned I smiled at her. We entered the Tourist Office just behind her and after signing in, moved to the counter where she was ready to begin work. I explained why we were there and she asked for Madalein’s passport. She then stamped it, wrote in it, and presented it to another man for his signature.

That was it? After all the hoop-lah about requirements, that was it? Thank you, Lord. You are awesome! It takes only your hand to get things done, against all odds.

I received word late today from Preety that she could not be issued an emergency passport before 5:00 P.M. tomorrow, Wednesday, May 20. Issuing it that late hardly left enough time to make the only flight to Calcutta before we leave the following morning. She would have to take a taxi across Delhi to the airport and make the 6:40 P.M. last flight of the day. We were all disappointed but hung onto hope. We knew Father God had said he would restore everything and I could not imagine him telling me that and then restoring ‘Almost’ everything. We continued to pray.

May 20, Wednesday, and it was 6:55 A.M. I sat atop the Hotel Maria, beads of sweat forming
on the back of my hands as I sat there meditating and praying. The sky was again cloudy, but the heat, intense. The birds were noisy again.

I remembered back one year ago at this very hour as Judith gave up her breath here on earth. I reached for the wedding band she had given me and pulled it from my finger. I had covenanted to leave it on for one year, and a year was over on this day. It was with some sadness that I took it off. It almost seemed at this point that I fully realized that she was truly gone. I didn’t know this specific morning that this realization would hit me hard the next few months.

Lunchtime came and it was celebration time. We entered the air-conditioned lobby of the International Four Seasons Hotel and it was elaborate in every way. The floors were marble and shined like a calm lake on a clear day. The ceiling was tall and ornate matching the walls. The lunch buffet was spread out in the enormous lobby and was beyond anything we could imagine and food items we had not even seen in the past two months were displayed before us.

I enjoyed watching the team load up their plates with the fine food fare in disbelief. Dave Brodie did not know what a blessing he had been to this team when he passed me the forty dollars. We were all laughing and so enjoying ourselves. We hadn’t had any moments like this, and the hardships of the many weeks here in India seemed to just drift away as we celebrated.

Jenny seemed pleased with the surprise of her birthday attention. The meal would have been enough, but to have cake and birthday wishes too . . . a wonderful day.

It was now five o’clock, Wednesday, and the last day to obtain Preety’s passport was coming to a close! Did she have her passport? I wouldn’t know until after 9:30 P.M., her scheduled arrival time in Calcutta.

Encouragement came though as seven and eight o’clock came and went, and no word from her. If she had not gotten her passport, and did not make the flight, she was to call from Sandeep’s home to let me know she did not make it. That surely would have happened by eight o’clock. As the hour of nine approached I was confident that she would call from the airport in Calcutta even though there was no assurance she did get her passport. The Indian officials had promised and not delivered so many times in the past month. Why would they deliver this time?

I finished packing my few things into my backpack that was never really unpacked for the entire outreach. I simply lived out of it, so packing was always a snap. When nine o’clock came, I descended the two flights of stairs to the hotel lobby and sat waiting for the phone on the reception desk to ring.

At 9:30 the phone rang and I sprang to my feet. The clerk looked over at me and I dashed across the lobby to the desk.

It was Preety and she said the sweetest words I had heard the entire outreach, ‘I’m in Calcutta!’ That could mean only one thing. If she said nothing else, I could have hung up and headed for the airport. She had her passport in hand.

I told her I was on my way.

I had prearranged a taxi that was waiting for me. I ran the stairs back up to my room and informed the others that Preety was at the airport and dashed back down the stairs to my waiting taxi. Our plan was that I would meet Preety at the airport and because of the late hour, we would simply stay at the airport while the rest of the team would depart the hotel at 6:00 A.M. the next morning and meet us at the airport. Our flight was to leave at 8:30 A.M.

I saw Preety across the terminal and part of me still could not believe she was actually standing in Calcutta with her passport in hand. We greeted each other, knowing there was no more need to say goodbye, at least until we were back at Ponderosa in Colorado. We talked until after
midnight before she curled up on one of the padded benches and fell asleep.

This had been a life changing event where God had shown his faithfulness to her. He had allowed the situation to go to a point where there was no earthly way for us to accomplish anything ourselves so that he would get full glory for the passport being restored. God had done what he had told me he would do. He restored everything.

I thought of Sandeep as I sat there looking at Preety now resting peacefully. Bless him, Lord, for all his help. Yes, Preety was his relative, but he had something deeper driving him to help us in this situation. She was his sister in the Lord, and I was his brother in the Lord. In fact, every member of the team was a brother or sister to him. He was simply acting out the love of Christ that was within him.

I again spent another sleepless night, longing for the hour to come when the airport restaurant would open so that I could get a cup of coffee, or Chai tea. The hour did eventually come and the Chai was good. Coffee had not really been an option in India and I missed it.

Sandy had gathered the team together for the final taxi ride in Calcutta and India. They arrived at the airport and we began processing through customs.

Every member of the team had been waiting for this hour to come. We moved through customs quickly except for a slight delay for Madalein regarding her papers, and that had us all anxious for a few minutes. But there was no problem.

The plane’s engines roared as the pilot did the customary runup, and then the brake was released and the plane started down the runway and increased speed rapidly.

I expected there would be a roar of gratitude as the wheels of this India Air flight lifted off the runway. But there was none. The roar was contained inside each of us. There was no sadness in leaving India, just relief. The outreach had been a hard one, but surely a life changing one. No one would ever know the depth of suffering, sacrificing, and exhaustion experienced by each team member, but the Lord had chosen to bring something to India and Bhutan through every one of them. And God had chosen to put something needed inside each of us, proof of his love and faithfulness.

Thank you for the assignment, Lord.

The thrill we felt lifting off the runway in Calcutta was only enhanced each time we landed and lifted off again a little closer to home, first in Bangkok, Thailand, then Seoul, Korea, then Los Angeles, then Denver where we passed through customs and immigration, and finally Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Nicole was waiting for us in Colorado Springs at the airport. We were so happy to see her smiling face. She looked wonderful and we all gave her a long hug. She was still an important part of our team. Nicole had recovered nicely from her own ordeal.

We were all a little rummy, I know, as we boarded the DTS van that would deliver us back to Ponderosa, some two hours away. It was a comfortable van ride that seemed like paradise compared to crisscrossing India in nightmare scenarios.

It was good to be on US soil.
Chapter 13

Back at Ponderosa

We were back at Ponderosa YWAM base in Weston, Colorado. Our outreach to India and Bhutan was over. My responsibility for the team had been fulfilled and now was a time to rest for a few days. My inner clock was so turned around from residing in a location half way around the world for two months, not to mention so many days on end without rest and relaxation, that for days I routinely awoke at one o’clock in the morning and could not seem to rise during daylight hours. I slept for twelve to fifteen hours at a time, and when I was awake, I felt numb with a groggy sense of lethargy. Nothing seemed to matter, other than more rest.

I had no idea what the team was doing at this point. They were effectively released from the DTS and could do whatever they desired, they had no daily requirements other than wait for debriefing and graduation. I assumed they were doing much the same thing that I was, resting.

Debriefing and Graduation was a typical closing to any DTS. It usually took place the entire last week of the DTS. Ours was to be different though. The base was involved with the special event Randy had told me of, and we were kind of in the way of that event. It was just as Randy had warned me when I requested permission to come home early from India. I had accepted that possibility.

I thought ‘debriefing’ was important, and even spent a few hours with the team while still in India doing so. After such a fast paced and adventuresome two months, returning to normal life back here in the states could be difficult. I would learn that first hand myself.

This team had stepped out of life in the norm, and came to DTS in Weston, Colorado. They had received twelve weeks of radical training from some of the best speakers in the world on ‘Knowing God, and Making Him Known.’ They had boarded numerous airplanes and settled in India for two months of extreme hardship and survival while following the instructions of the Living God. Few people on the planet have undergone what this team had been through. Being home would be so radically different from our weeks abroad, that each one of us needed a debriefing to know how to cope back at home.

There was minimal debriefing, but no graduation! After two months of perseverance, and a dedication to serving God and seeking to accomplish his will on this outreach, it all ends with each of us going our own way without formal recognition in front of the rest of YWAM at Ponderosa. We were OK with that, this little bump in the road was nothing to a team who had traversed India with hardship at every turn. It was taken only as another small bump to contend with.

This was by no means a perfect team, but I was proud of the entire team in the overall accomplishment of what God had sent us to do. Each one had stood up to be counted day in and day out in a hostile environment. And by that I mean, an environment where every conceivable event seemed stacked against us, an opposition to the very instruction we had received from God Himself.

On what would have been our graduation day, we gathered at Monument Lake, a short distance from the base, for a farewell lunch and a final goodbye. Randy joined us with a few parting words. I especially enjoyed the chocolate cake Jenny made for my birthday and was shared at our
brief meeting.

I had opportunity to say a few words to each student and staff that sunny afternoon in Southern Colorado. And I thank you, Lord, for the heartfelt words and the tears you provided. I love this team, and I thank you for the opportunity to serve them, and you, in Colorado, India, and Bhutan.

I drove away from Monument Lake in the warmth of the afternoon Colorado sun and turned west toward Oregon. As I began the three-day journey, I asked Father God to help me better process all that had occurred over the past five months of this DTS. The spiritual, mental, and physical high I had been on at the beginning of the DTS in January, was now gone. I now felt spiritually, mentally, and physically depleted. My weight of 165 pounds of a year earlier was now reduced to 133 pounds.

Please provide for my total restoration, Lord, and that of each team member, just as you provided for restoration of everything our team lost on April 8, on that dark Calcutta train.
Chapter 14

Fifteen Years Later

More than fifteen years have passed since our team returned to Colorado from India and Bhutan, and the events of that outreach seem just months ago to me. Like time has stood still, but the evidence all around me is overwhelming that time has surely passed.

It is interesting to me looking back after all these years, how much opposition there was to this team’s mission to travel to high places in India and Bhutan to intercede and pray that God would bring change to these countries. That God would be elevated to a rightful place in the minds and hearts of the people in that region of the globe.

It is as though Satan put hurdles at every turn to try and discourage, or stop, the carrying out of the instructions God spoke to a man who stood in a snow-covered pine thicket in Colorado on a cold January day.

Few believed that God had spoken the words, even less believed that it would be possible to carry out that mission. But, the man whom God gave the assignment to, and the DTS students that followed him to the foothills of the Himalayas, all believed.

So what was so special about this mission? What was accomplished by obeying God and going? What was the greatest accomplishment?

Easy questions to ask, not always so easy to answer but here is my stab at it.

This I know. The mission was special because God spoke it into existence. He whispered it into my ear one cold winter day to see if I would respond with a hearty, ‘Yes, Lord.’ And I did just that. I believed God and therefore had to do all I could to see his instruction carried out.

And this team of young believers who signed onto the mission also believed. I saw very little doubt or complaint about what we were doing from them, even through all the hardest of things we had to endure, including poor lodging, poor food, horrible train rides, and even the loss of so much, including their opportunity to experience special sights and events in India.

The mission was special to the team, and to me, because we knew it had been formulated by God from before the foundations of the earth, just for us. We, (I hope it is truly, ‘We,’ and not just, I), never questioned that fact.

Regarding, what was accomplished, only God knows that. But again, this I know. Much was accomplished in my heart, and in my thinking, about just what this God of ours can do. He met every challenge we put before him in prayer for two months. Our cries were loud and often, but never were they cries that were unheard, or unanswered.

I also believe there were great things done in heavenly places as we climbed to mountain top monasteries and prayed and interceded on God’s behalf for those nations.

I know too, that God forged deep foundational truths in a team of young believers who were willing to be ‘Compassed about with songs of deliverance,’ like Psalm 32:7 says. Believers that saw God deliver us from every setback and attempt to stop us. Knowledge of God’s faithfulness was being embedded within each of us through cold hard experience, and would not be shaken loose in the years to come.

Well, what about the, ‘Crossroads?’ What was that all about?

I have come to see that the most significant crossroad encountered in India and Bhutan, was
the one each of us personally faced in our own lives. Every life required a major turn that would change us forever.

The ‘Crossroad’ was within each of us and the question was, which road would we take into our future?

What about the lives of those who traversed India, and entered Bhutan, in an adventure such as you’ve just read all those years ago. Where are they, and what are they doing? What have they done with their lives?

Initially I kept contact with the team, but that soon dwindled away until I lost contact with all of the team. Facebook technology helped me to regain that contact just recently and this is what I know about the team members at this point.

**Bubba, (David),** knew that God was calling him to missions and sought God for direction immediately after completion of this India outreach. He was led to a Basic Leadership School with YWAM in Chico, California. The outreach for this school took Bubba back to India, and although it was a hard thing to enter into, he says it was one of the greatest experiences of his life.

He has lived in Bakersfield, California for the past eight years, with his wife of thirteen years, Alyssa, and their two children, ages four and two. He met Alyssa while at Chico, she was also in YWAM. He currently works with Chevron North America as a Lease Operator.

He and his wife served with YWAM for four years at Chico, California, a commitment to Christ on the mission field full time. They helped develop a school titled, School of Ministry and Personal Development, that focuses on personal development and applying what was learned in DTS and applying it to real life. The school also helps a person determine what God has for them in ‘Their’ mission field.

They served in missions in India, Fiji, and Guatemala in their four years at YWAM. They left to pursue dreams God had placed on their hearts. Bubba’s own words, *I am also currently pursuing my passion and God given dream of helping people change and better their lives through nutritional counseling and personal training.*

They are actively involved in their church, The Garden Community Church.

**Jenny, and her husband, Adam, live in Vancouver, BC, Canada.** I had met Adam in India while our team was there. He was also on outreach, but with another team. They have two daughters, ages six and three, and Jenny says, *Our daughters are our greatest blessings.*

Jenny and Adam began dating upon returning from their respective YWAM experiences and married two years later in 2000 in Vancouver.

They both finished school in 2003 and went to Japan and taught English for one year. Jenny is currently working as a licensed Real Estate Agent.

Jenny writes, *We still attend University Chapel in Vancouver, the church where Adam and I actually met when we were fourteen! We were involved in leading worship there until we went to Japan.*

Jenny loves music and describes it this way, *Music is my passion . . . I look forward to starting to sing and play again more regularly.*

**Maddy, (Madalein),** was from South Africa prior to the DTS and returned there to be married afterwards. (Still searching for Maddy)
**Marla** and her husband, Brent, live in Burlington, Ontario, Canada where they have lived for nine years. She has been married those nine years and has three young children, ages five, three, and one year old.

Marla moved back and forth between the US and Canada for several years before she married and settled in Canada. She attended University in Redding, California. She is the Leadership Development Program Director for Young Life of Canada, working in ministries with teens and young adults for more than nine years with her husband. A statement from her own lips, ‘The irony of that is never lost on me! God can do anything!’

Young Life is a full time mission, and Marla says her highest interest priorities are: ‘Jesus Christ, my family, mentor-ship and leadership development.’

**Nate** (Nathan), popped up on Facebook one day just as quickly as he had disappeared years ago. My heart leapt at the first sight of his name. Could it be, I wondered? Soon we were corresponding back and forth catching up on old times. It was a short leap then to reach most of the rest of the team.

Nate and Valerie married eight years ago and they have one son, two years of age. They live in Denver, Colorado where Nate owns one of the largest Seamless Gutter companies in Colorado, Pinnacle Gutters.

He returned to India with his church on a mission outreach in 2007. Then he and his wife went on a three-week mission trip to Rwanda in 2009, and Nate returned for another three weeks in 2010 on a building project. Nate says, ‘I pray that once we are finished having children God will provide us with a permanent place in Rwanda.’

**Nicole**, lives in Hudson, Wisconsin and works across the border in Stillwater, Minnesota. After DTS, and some healing, she decided to go back to college finishing her Bachelor's in Linguistics at the University of Iowa. She later moved to California and completed her Master's in Linguistics at Cal State Northridge while living in Los Angeles.

Nicole finished Grad school in 2005 and met someone, and began her next chapter. In 2007 her first son was born. She says, ‘That changed my world forever!’ The most amazing thing that could've ever happened to me, and I hadn't even planned on having kids! He was my world, (still is). Then a year and a half later her second son came along; ‘Completely different experience, but just as amazing,’ she says.

She remained in LA for the next five years working and taking care of her boys. In Nicole’s own words, ‘I finally regained my own strength and moved myself and my boys and started over, and eventually came back to the Midwest closer to family. I think I needed it for me, and I also wanted the boys to know their family and have a better quality of life.’

Nicole shared, ‘I did not really keep up with the things I learned in DTS, but I NEVER lost my faith . . . I do pray about what's best for the boys.’

She goes on, regarding the DTS experience, ‘I've never forgotten it, and wouldn't change anything about it. I believe we went through what we did for a very important reason.’

**Preety**, resides in Pasadena, California with her husband where she has been happily married for six years. They have no children, by choice.

Her major jobs include a Residential Counselor at juvenile sex offender group homes, and the same position for a drug and alcohol group homes.
She co-led a mission team back to India with her church, and trained other mission teams for the mission field.

She is currently pursuing a Master degree in the School of Theology in Christian Ethics, at Fuller Theological Seminary, with plans to pursue a PHD in Religion, or Inter-cultural Studies, in the future.

Preety is also the Vice President for Diversity on the All-Seminary Council student government at Fuller.

In her own words, ‘My interests are: serving to fight for injustices in the world, teaching and professorship, traveling with my husband, and writing one day when I’m done with school.’

**Sandy,** Student/staff leader, stayed on at Ponderosa YWAM base in Weston, Colorado for a period of time after the DTS before returning to her home state. (Still searching for Sandy)

(I want to acknowledge the impact of being a Student/Leader. Like Sandy, I had agreed to take on that same dual role while I was in Bible School. I was a student, but I was also a staff leader. I happily performed in both roles, but gained understanding of the sacrifice required. I was not free to simply be a ‘student.’ I always had the responsibility for another part of the Bible School and that would weigh heavily at times. So it was with Sandy, her sacrifice was great for the good of the outreach. I’m forever grateful for her willingness to do so. Thank you, Sandy, for the sacrifice.)

**Bill Williamson,** DTS leader/author, struggled with re-entry over a long summer upon return from India before refocusing on the path God had for him. He began that refocus by volunteering six months to a new store front church work in Boulder City, Nevada, before traveling to Israel for nine months. He married South African writer/missionary, Maureen Woods in Bethlehem and they resided in Jerusalem.

Bill and Maureen returned to Boulder City and the store front church before moving to the Middle East again, this time the island nation of Cyprus. They operated a hospitality house there for Christian workers who needed required Visa breaks from Israel, which was only one hundred miles away. They returned to the states to activate Maureen’s official US Permanent Residency and lived in Arcadia, Florida where they co-authored their book, ‘Authentic Love - Requires Circumcision of the Heart.’

They also created and published a monthly church magazine for the Assembly of God church in Arcadia, ‘No Compromise,’ before moving to Payson, Arizona. In Payson they led a home bible study and served as Mission Coordinators at the Four Square Church with emphasis on outreaches to Mexico. Maureen attained her US citizenship while there.

They now write for their website [www.books-4him-free.com](http://www.books-4him-free.com), which they created in 2013. They attend Expedition Church in Payson.

That’s the last fifteen years in a nutshell for the team. Of course there is much more to every life than space allows to be told here.

I remember standing in a grove of Lodgepole Pine in Weston, Colorado one cold winter day before this DTS began and praying to God this prayer:

‘Please Lord, don’t let this be a ‘milk toast outreach,’ but let it be a radical one that will change our lives.’
I believe God answered that prayer.

My prayer now is, ‘Please Lord, don’t let the rest of our lives be ‘milk toast lives,’ but let us hear your gentle voice instructing on to other ‘crossroads’ in our lives to touch people around us for Jesus Christ.’

And, may you be glorified, Lord.