

‘Gandhi Man’ Overcame Debilitating Fears to Preach the Gospel of Christ in India

I got my first rebuff when I applied to the mission's headquarters in Trivandrum. Because I was underage, the mission's directors at first refused to let me join the teams going north.

But I was permitted to attend the annual training conference to be held in Bangalore, Karnataka. At the conference I first heard missionary statesman George Verwer, who challenged me as never before to commit myself to a life of breathtaking, radical discipleship.

Modern-Day Moses

Alone that night in my bed, I argued with both God and my own conscience. By 2 o'clock in the morning, my pillow wet with sweat and tears, I shook with fear. What if God asked me to preach in the streets? How would I ever be able to stand up in public and speak? What if I were stoned and beaten?

I knew myself only too well. I could hardly bear to look a friend in the eye during a conversation, let alone speak publicly to hostile crowds on behalf of God. As I spoke the words, I realized that I was behaving as Moses did when he was called.

Suddenly, I felt that I was not alone in the room. A great sense of love and of my being loved filled the place. I felt the presence of God and fell on my knees beside the bed.

"Lord God," I gasped in surrender to His presence and will, "I'll give myself to speak for You – but help me to know that You're with me."

Burden of Love

In the morning, I awoke to a world and people suddenly different. As I walked outside, the Indian street scenes looked the same as before: children ran between the legs of people and cows, pigs and chickens wandered about, vendors carried baskets of bright fruit and flowers on their heads. But I loved them all with a supernatural, unconditional love I'd never felt before. It was as if God had removed my eyes and replaced them with His so I could see people as the heavenly Father sees them – needy and longing for hope but with potential to glorify and reflect Him.

I walked to the bus station. My eyes filled with tears of love. I knew that these people were all heading toward eternity without Christ – and I knew God did not want that. Suddenly I had such a burden for these masses that I had to stop and lean against a wall just to keep my balance. This was it; I knew I was feeling the burden of love God feels for the hurting and needy. His loving heart was pounding within mine, and I could hardly breathe. The tension was great. I paced back and forth restlessly to keep my knees from knocking in fright.

“Lord!” I cried. “If You want me to do something, say it, and give me courage.”

Looking up from my prayer, I saw a huge stone. I knew immediately I had to climb that stone and preach to the crowds in the bus station. Scrambling up, I felt a force like 10,000 volts of electricity shooting through my body.

Letting God Speak

I began by singing a simple children's chorus. It was all I knew. By the time I finished, a crowd stood at the foot of the rock. I had not prepared myself to speak, but all at once God took over and filled my mouth with words of His love. I preached the good news to the poor as Jesus commanded His

disciples to do. As the authority and power of God flowed through me, I had superhuman boldness. Words came out I never knew I had – and with a power clearly from above.

Others from the ministry teams stopped to listen. The question of my age and calling never came up again. That was 1966, and I continued moving with mobile evangelistic teams for the next seven years. We traveled all over North India, never staying very long in any one village. Everywhere we went, I preached in the streets while others distributed books and tracts. Occasionally, in smaller villages, we witnessed from house to house.

My urgent, overpowering love for the village people of India and the poor masses grew with the years. People even began to nickname me “Gandhi Man” after the father of modern India, Mahatma Gandhi. Like him, I realized without being told that if the village people of India were ever to be won, it would have to be by brown-skinned nationals who loved them.

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