

*THE BHOJPURI
STORY OF
DAWID L.
WATSON!*

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*A FRESH NEW CONCEPT ABOUT
CONGREGATION!
(PART 1)*

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PROLOGUE

This pamphlet is part 1 of a fresh new concept about congregation. Clearly, what we have is not bad, but neither is it effective enough in fulfilling the great commission. What we have in congregation life is not the problem, but rather that which is lacking! The problem does not exist in the existence of the problem, but in the absence of light. Darkness only has a right to exist in the absence of light. We have to consider the question of congregation proactively and not reactively. It is unproductive to be critical of what we have, for the new always grows out of the old or former model. We are looking for solutions, and not hunting for problems or guilty parties!

We also have to understand that a mere change in congregation model will bring no solution in principle. New congregation models have no inherent life. Life is a Person and no congregation model can create life! Congregation structures can only house, accommodate and give room for reproduction, or it can accomplish the exact opposite by suffocating life. Although we are discussing congregation models, it is not our focus, for the model and even the congregation are only the means to an end. We cannot exist or live for the congregation, only for the Lord and His kingdom. We are to let His kingdom come in such a way that we and our models diminish and disappear in the process. That in itself is a lot said!

The media overpowers us with negative stories in such a way that it is almost unthinkable that good things are still happening on earth. As introduction to the series, I would like to tell the story of David en Jan Watson and what happened to them in India, in short. I have known of David for many years, although I have never had the privilege of meeting him until March 2009. One knows when a spiritual

general stands in front of you and when you meet a new paradigm. The past few years, I have been bitterly disappointed with the effectiveness of congregation life and have seriously looked for answers. I am not criticizing other congregations, for I consider my own congregation as foremost in the row that warrants judgment.

My narration is correct as far as I could discover the truth in books and from the mouth of David. However, it might be in need of some correction, for some of the figures are an estimate. This church planting in India was one of the fastest growing plantings that have yet taken place in modern society. Whether you agree with that is your own decision, but I believe it deserves to be respected and analyzed carefully. It definitely contains something that is to the benefit of all. Remember, you only have to do that which the Father convinces you of personally. Do not copy models!

Of David I wish to say that he is definitely not one of the arrogant Americans with strong beliefs in prosperity. He is a short, stocky person with an excellent spirit of humbleness. He carries the numerous marks of prosecution on his body. He refuses to write books or to promote himself, for he constantly emphasizes that we should not be in God's way or steal His glory in any way! He is a man of relationship, wisdom, humbleness and a commitment to the body of Christ. He is also a congregation consultant and often advises mega congregations. I have discerned a great love for the whole body and especially the unbelievers in him. He has absolutely no reaction against any system. I have not once heard him say anything negative about any congregation or leader. Solutions are born from love and not critic!

THE BHOJPURI STORY

David Watson was an engineer, but later studied theology at the Southern Baptists. The Southern Baptists are a very strong, Bible based church group, very conservative, but very mission orientated. After his studies, he was sent out and successfully planted congregations in various eastern countries such as India, China, Malaysia and Singapore. Right from the start, he was known as a very successful church planter.

One day they phoned him from America and informed him that they have found the perfect place for him to plant a congregation. On his application forms he wrote that he is prepared to go where no other person will go! The place they have found was known as “the missionary graveyard”! Since he appreciates a challenge, he immediately accepted the invitation.

The north of India consists of two provinces, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, where by 1990, 90 million people lived that spoke the Bhojpuri language. This is a huge amount of people considering the 52 million people in South Africa that are spread out over a much larger terrain. This north eastern part of India borders Pakistan, a Muslim country. The Muslims invaded India in these parts, but the Bhojpuris have driven them back and kept them in check to this day. These people are very radical and do not tolerate any nonsense from outsiders. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are die heartland of Hindu nationalism en vehemently opposes any foreign mission activities. More than 85% of the Bhojpuris are Hindu and the rest are Moslem en Animists. The Bhojpuris are spread out in more than 170 000 towns or ‘villages’. The population includes all four castes with most people illiterate and living in poverty. Only a small minority controls the entire area’s riches and resources.

Many years ago the Jesuit missionaries drew approximately 1% of the 'Untouchables' into the Roman Catholic church. By 1947 the Baptists claimed that they have 28 very small congregations in the area that showed no growth before 1990! By 1990 only a few old buildings containing a few elderly members were left of the Baptist congregations. In 1990, David and Jan Watson were sent there and spent their first year studying the language and adapting to the local culture. They launched an aggressive plan of evangelization, preaching and church planting, which in general progressed very well in other parts of India. In the first two years they made six disciples with whom they planned to plant six congregations the following year. However, their disciples were murdered brutally and they were put out of the country. There was no mercy for anyone who made proselytes amongst these people. In the last 19 years of the movement's existence another 17 believers would be murdered.

David was very disheartened and licked his wounds for six months in Singapore. As far as he was concerned, he was finished and ready to return to America. However, the Lord would not release him and that led to renewed studies in the Word. The Lord challenged him not to plant congregations in a typical Western style, but as He would teach him from the Word. He then returned to try the 'Lord's way'.

By 1992 they once more had 8 disciples with which they planted 8 congregations in 1993. These congregations do not necessarily resemble house churches as we know them in the West, but are found everywhere in the market place. Together with the existing 28 congregations, they now had 36 congregations! For the first time in four decades there was growth in these parts. At this stage David implemented a training program that could quickly produce

more church planters. By the next year, 1994, there were already 78 congregations! By 1995 they had multiplied to 220, by 1997 to approximately 1000 and by 1998 to almost 2000 congregations. For the first four years the Bible was not even available in the Bhojpuri language. Most people were also unable to read because of the high levels of illiteracy. They taped the Bible on audio cassette and thus played it for the people!

By 2000 the Southern Baptists sent a team of enquiry to India to investigate the movement. Their survey showed that there were approximately 4300 - 5400 churches with a total of between 300 000 – 375 000 people involved in the congregations! The average congregation consisted of between 67 and 85 members. It is interesting to note that the average congregation in the world, irrespective of the model used, has 67 members! The team of enquiry also found that the average congregation leader in the church planting movement were more skilled in the Word and ministry than 75% of the theological students that was trained by the seminary of the Southern Baptists. It should also be seen in light of the fact that none of them had any official, theological training in a classroom. The cost of planting an average congregation was approximately 4 American dollars!

David Watson and his wife left India in 2000 and the movement has been solely dependent on itself after that. It was estimated by 2009 that there were already 85 000 congregations with approximately 6,5 million people involved. Considering the general population of 190 million people, it might not be much, but it remains the fastest growing church planting movement in modern times. Six and a half million is a lot of people in terms of congregation statistics, but compared to the numbers of the population we are making better progress, but still not discipling the nations. At the moment David Watson does training across

the globe in church planting, with a strong focus on the Muslim world.

An old pastor of the old Free Baptist churches said that for 20 years he preached in the area with very little results, but now, if 10 Hindu's hear the gospel, 7 would accept it! Much of what I will write about in the following studies has been stimulated by this report. Of course we are not in the same country, but at least there are basic principles we can take and apply as we find it in the Word. Remember, you are under no obligation to believe what I have written. You have to sort it out with the Lord and modify it for your own situation.

The big question everyone asks is thus: "What did David do differently the second time he returned?" I know the answer will not only interest you, but continue to challenge your own paradigm concerning congregation for revision. Change has never been easy, but will also not happen overnight! I advise you not to make any outward changes during the reading of the studies, until you experience the change inside of you! Move slowly, but steadily. Outward change should flow from inner change!

Thank you that you are prepared to accompany me on this most interesting journey! Send it on to anyone who are truly interested, but remember to also send them the rest of the series. I plan approximately 20 studies that will come out twice per week.

Blessings in Christ
Arno Claassen

SUMMARY

- 1) The analyzing of the problem is not the solution to the problem.
- 2) The solution is a Person = Jesus Christ!
- 3) Church is never the purpose, but only the means to the end.
- 4) Mere change in church models brings no life!
- 5) God is looking for humble people who will not steal his honour and glory!
- 6) If we work with the Lord, we should build as He wants us to build!
- 7) The Father's secrets are only for the diligent seekers!
- 8) We have nothing to lose except that which is false in our lives when we are open for what is new from the Lord.
- 9) He who does not do the new thing that the Father reveals to him, will never know if it is not perhaps the new, revolutionary paradigm!
- 10) No area is too dead for the Lord!
- 11) Congregations can grow exponentially.
- 12) The larger the group, the slower the growth!
- 13) Solutions are born from love and not critic!