



Faith2Share Depth Discipleship Consultation 23-26 March 2014, Kathmandu, Nepal

Context



Responding to numerous requests from Faith2Share members and partners globally and with generous support from the Hinchley Charitable Trust and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Württemberg, in 2012 *Faith2Share* initiated a three-year programme of consultations and learning around the issue of “depth” (or “whole-life”) discipleship. The first three consultations took place in North India (October 2012), East Africa (June 2013) and West Africa (November 2013) bringing together over 120 participants from

those three regions. The process met with definite approval from *Faith2Share* members, has the full support of our trustees and generated a lot of interest and enthusiasm from around the wider *Faith2Share* network.

During the very first consultation in North India several participants from Nepal requested that we organise a similar event for Nepali leaders as they saw a real need for such a programme. Initially our response lacked enthusiasm as at that point we did not have any member agencies in Nepal and we were aware of many training programmes conducted by many denominations and church groups across Nepal so there was a danger of duplicating what was already available. However, in April 2013 Tek Prasad Rijal of Vision Network Nepal met with Faith2Share staff in Thailand during our Leadership Consultation and reiterated the importance of focussing attention on discipleship in Nepal, where the growth of the Christian church is still one of the fastest in the world but where people are also starting to see nationalism, problems in Christian families, lack of commitment and other issues. Later in 2013 Rev Vijay Isaac, Faith2Share Asia Coordinator, travelled to Kathmandu to meet with Tek Prasad and several other mission leaders from across Nepal. At this meeting we were given reassurance that our consultation would attract people from all the country (not just Kathmandu valley) and from many denominations and that the local Planning Committee would act as partners with Faith2Share in running this event and any follow-up. After careful consideration the decision was reached to go ahead and plan our fourth Depth Discipleship consultation for late March 2014.

Network Members

Anglican Inland Mission, Antioch Mission, ARDF Australia, AsiaCMS, Asian Outreach International, Church Army Africa, Church of Nigeria Missionary Society, CMS Africa, CMS Australia, CMS, CMS Ireland, Friends Missionary Prayer Band, Global Teams, Indian Evangelical Mission, Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association, Mission Together Africa, Mission Together Inc. (Canada), New Life for India, New Zealand CMS, SAMS Ireland, SAMS USA, SOMA UK, The Sheepfold Ministries

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Participants

The Nepal consultation differed from our previous consultations in that we were mostly dependant on the local Planning Committee to approach key mission leaders and ensure a comprehensive representation of the growing church in Nepal. Faith2Share itself only invited five people from outside Nepal: two leaders from Bhutan and three people from North India (as they already have work with Nepalese Christians). In total, we had 47 participants as residents plus a good number of facilitators who travelled from Kathmandu so the total number was over 50. Unfortunately (just as in North India) we had very few women, this time only 4 women participants. [The full list of participants can be found in Appendix 2 on page 7.](#)



Programme

Following the pattern established at our previous consultations, the programme relied heavily on local resource people and allowed plenty of opportunity for relationship building and mutual learning through discussion and group work. This is not a format usually used by other programme organisers in Nepal when in the majority of cases Nepali leaders expect overseas leaders to come and teach them, often via translation. Apart from a short introductory session by Anton Ponomarev, the rest of the programme (including all plenary sessions, Bible study sessions etc) was conducted in Nepali throughout to ensure that all participants could contribute fully and express themselves fluently. The programme was also adapted to adequately address those issues which are of greatest importance for Nepal. Significant issues raised by participants included character formation for actively transforming communities, leadership formation and mentoring, and how to deal with persistent conflict with the rest of the family when someone becomes Christian.



The first afternoon was devoted to building relationships within the group, most of whom had not met each other before, and clarifying their expectations, and anticipated outcomes, for the next three days of intensive dialogue. In his opening session Anton Ponomarev had pointed to the methods of discipleship adopted by Jesus and later during discussion we were reminded by many that Christ is the master discipler. This prompted us to go back to the Bible for our models and ways to disciple others. The first day also included a Bible Study led by Pastor Tek Dahal focussing on leadership qualities in the Psalms.

Discipleship in the Family, Clan and Tribe

Day 2 focused on how Christian discipleship takes place in the family and what implications it has for relationships within marriage, the upbringing of children, and how we view our extended family and tribal identity.

Pastor Vijay Karmacharya led a Bible Study focussing on how Jesus ministered to women while at the same time women were often mistreated in Roman and Jewish societies in that era. He also elaborated on what it means to be able to grow as a Christian: to belong; our

need to be worthy and our need to feel competent in our daily family life.

Manoj Pradhananga facilitated the session looking at character formation for Christian families and identified the following key values for a Christian family: showing practical love to one another; - having a good balance between ministry and family life; - taking care of the family. Communication is paramount for any family and involves both speaking and listening, listening being a much needed skill for many pastors.

In the afternoon of our day on 'family' Ram Prasad Shrestha, the Director of the National Mission Commission of Nepal (a Faith2Share member) led a session on the resources that are available for discipleship within the family. His main message was that we do not need to wait for outside resources to become available, but that many resources (trained people, programmes and training) are already available in Nepal and in Nepali. This message was very well received as it made people think and start identifying what resources they do have locally.



During the morning participants broke up into groups to look at different topics. The three chosen for specific consideration were (a) Christian marriage; (b) Children and youth; and (c) Family and Tribe. Four regional groups (Kathmandu Valley; East Nepal; West Nepal and Outside Nepal) also spent some time discussing what resources are available for discipleship in family contexts. This discussion was structured in a particular way: first of all, what are resources (and that resources are not just money); secondly, what resources we already have; what resources we need and finally, how can we create these resources by working together.

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On Monday and Tuesday evening, participants met in a 'story-telling circle' to share with each other encouraging stories of discipleship. As many people do not have this chance to hear of what God is doing in different parts of Nepal, there was great enthusiasm and eagerness to hear as many people's story as possible – in fact, we had to wait until 10 o'clock for the people to finish their stories and our little planning group to have a working meeting! We heard from one pastor who became the first Christian believer from his whole district of Nepal – when studying Hinduism in India! Another pastor is working with Hindu and Muslim communities in a very creative way through school work and also through offering to clean Hindu temples. A partially blind pastor from the southern part of Nepal told his story how two Christian friends started praying for him, how he found peace and became a great witness to others with disabilities and how now he has a fellowship of over 50 people, all with different disabilities. His story was summed up very simply: as Christ loves everyone, so the church is called to love everyone.

Discipleship in the workplace

Day 3 (Tuesday) began with the Bible Study led by Pastor Samuel Karthak who is pastoring the largest church in Nepal. The rest of this day was devoted to considering the nature of Christian discipleship in the work place. Bishop Narayan Sharma joined us to lead our thinking on Character formation for professional life. Bishop Narayan is well known and respected in Nepal due to his preaching and his work for the radio programme "Spiritual journey". Although he could not stay with us for the whole day, his initial impression was so positive that he came back the next day! In his session he used very simple everyday

examples of how people's behaviour and deeds show the strength and maturity of their character as Christians. All his questions and insights were really well placed for the Nepali reality.

In the working groups that followed participants chose to study one of the following three topics: (a) the Christian manager, (b) Business as Mission, or (c) Money and the Kingdom.

Each day after lunch participants met in small prayer groups to pray for each other at a more personal level.

PA Thomas (working with Interserve India) has spent 42 years in Nepal as a missionary in various roles, especially in mentoring Nepali mission leaders. His session presented a long list of Bible characters for whom the work place was a mission field: his examples spanned from Noah and Jacob to Jesus and Paul.

The day ended with the second of our story-telling sessions (see above).

Discipleship in the community and amongst people of other faiths

Day 4 focussed on Christian discipleship in the context of a wider community. Once again we welcomed Bishop Narayan Sharma who focussed on Ecclesiastes 9:4 to start our final day together.

Dr Tirpha Thapa who leads the organisation HDCS Nepal led a session on the factors that influence character in community transformation. His presentation focused on the role of personal belief (religion), the influence of the community, family environment and formal (and informal) education.

Dr Tirpha also helped us lead one of the working groups on community transformation. One working group had an interesting change: a proposed facilitator could not travel on the day, but instead one of the women participants – Parvati Saha – agreed to lead this session on Christians in Politics as she is running political campaigns in her district.

The consultation concluded with a corporate act of worship and commitment, led by a number of pastors and church leaders, as we prepared to return to our own ministry contexts.

Outcomes

In terms of the outcomes, the programme was extremely well received and we had a number of invitations to run a similar event in different parts of Nepal. Our final session started with a number of people giving their feedback on the event, sharing what particularly touched them during our few days together. The record of this session is in Appendix 1 on page 6.

We have also asked all participants to identify one thing that they will do differently (individually, in their family or as part of their church) as a direct result of this consultation and in the area of discipleship. These notes were collated by the local Planning Committee and will be the foundation of doing the follow-up to the event.



Here just three examples of what delegates had to say:

"I was so touched by teaching during the first Bible study that Jesus did not discriminate against women and children in his ministry. It really encouraged me. The whole consultation was so good and encouraging"
Shanta Rijal

“This consultation really touched my heart and encourages me [to realise that] I can do a lot to bring transformation in our families and in our society. I was having so much trouble, I was about to give up my ministry. We are looking forward to such kinds of meetings in the days to come” *Pastor Hari Shanks Mandal*

“One thing that touched my heart was being a disciple in politics and in this matter I was to be practical. Especially I want to serve people and our nation according to biblical foundations, please pray for me”. *Parvati Shah*

Faith2Share is really grateful to VNN (**Vision Network Nepal**) for partnering with us in planning and running this event. Vision Network Nepal - working to promote integral Mission through the churches in Nepal; contact person: Tek Prasad Rijal tekrijal@gmail.com





Appendix 1

Faith2Share Depth Discipleship Consultation: Nepal 2014

Final session

Testimonies:

Ms Parvati Saha: I want to be practical in applying what I have learnt at this event to my political engagements and I will strive to serve people of our nation.

Marcus Subba, Mirik: Two things that were helpful were

- Character formation of work and professional life by Bishop Narayan Sharma
- Character formation for transformation of community by Dr Thirtha B Thapa

Pastor Deepak Karel (West Nepal): Was fruitful, “discipleship is all about multiplication” Witness in family, work place and society. Workshops were an eye opener, active involvement, well prepared facilitators, Bible studies were helpful

Pastor Peter Rosaily (Far West): All sessions/presentations were resourceful and blessing to learn practical insights from group discussions. Devotional sessions were encouraging with best examples. Dr Thirtha’s experience on community transformation was inspirational. Networking with friends from other regions & listening to their ideas/stories helped me, I have decided to share this experience with my fellow workers in my village.

Pastor Vikram Bhahadur (East): Has helped to identify the resources (net) and the need (fishes)



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