

Skip Heitzig Interview 2009

by K.P. Yohannan

The sermon highlights the journey of Gospel for Asia, the persecution of Christians in India, and the opportunity to make a spiritual investment in supporting native missionaries.

Duration: 34:21

Scripture: Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Interview"

Description

In this video, the speaker discusses the impact of his books, particularly 'Road to Reality,' which has touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. He emphasizes the importance of simplifying our lives and making decisions in light of eternity, rather than being burdened by worldly concerns. The speaker also shares practical suggestions for embracing a lifestyle focused on serving the Lord and reaching a lost world. He highlights the challenges faced by those who come to Christ in different nations, but encourages investing our lives in serving Jesus and seeing this generation come to Him. Additionally, the speaker mentions the power of prayer and shares a personal story about a missionary who faced difficulties but ultimately planted three churches in the region where he was called to serve.

Transcript

Well, KP, I've known you for many years. In fact, if I recall back in the early 80s, when we first met, I was just starting out Calvary of Albuquerque, and you were relatively new with Gospel for Asia that you had in India and based in Dallas, Texas. So just give us a brief overview of how your ministry began with Gospel for Asia.

Well, yeah, it's an amazing journey. It is like, you know, read the Book of Acts, you know, it's 30 years of history, kind of. When I look back, it's been 30 years for us.

You know, for me, I came to the United States to do some theological studies and then hopefully go back to India, but you know, my coming here, then ending up passing a local church in Dallas, you know, all of a sudden, things began to change on the inside of me that I was now more being Americanized or concerned about life here. And two, three years into that kind of you know, life, the Lord in His mercy intervened and brought deep conviction asking me the question, What are you doing your life and how you're spending it in the light of, you know, 80,000 people every single day die without Jesus in the subcontinent where I come from. And I began to look at my entire life, and that was a huge turning point 30 years ago.

And I said, you know, in store for spending my life to preach to Americans and invest my life here, I need to commit my life to reach the lost people that never had a chance to hear Christ's name. And this was kind of the embryo, the beginning of Gospel for Asia. My wife and I exchanged our land and house and clothes and everything else I can think of and started to send those resources for brothers and sisters on the mission field in Nepal and North India.

And it was a growing process like, you know, in ISIL in Albuquerque, but it's been an incredible journey. You know, when I think about today, you know, we are 11 nations or 14,000 full-time Native missionaries. Some 10 churches being planted every single day among people that never had a church before.

So I can go on and talk about it, but it's been a miracle. Yeah, I remember when you were just starting out, and it was just getting a few missionaries supported, Native missionaries, indigenous workers, and how easy it was for the West to come alongside with relatively a little bit of money as we would consider it, and it would go so far. And I remember, you know, I'd wonder about India, about how is this possible, until I visited and I saw the intensity, I saw how the dollar does go a long way, and not only that, but the quality of individual that you've been able to recruit for church planting and leadership training and broadcast ministry, all of the workers that come alongside of you have a high caliber of integrity and intensity and seriousness about God's work.

Well, you know, Skip, in some ways when you say these things, kind of my mind goes back to that time I saw in Albuquerque, what, nearly 30 years now, and you know, the Lord called you, and you left your medical studies and whatever else in California, and moved to Albuquerque to, you know, do what the Lord called you to do, and for Native missionaries, you know, and I just came back a few days ago from Nepal, meeting a dear brother who actually walked 11 days to get to a mission field where he felt the Lord was calling him to go, and when he got to the mission field, he was telling you the story about no house to stay, and the winter just started, it was snowing, and I mean, I just couldn't imagine that his brother survived, but today he has three churches planted in and around that region where the Lord led him, and he talked about times of going without food and no communication, and all the struggles, and the nights of prayer and fasting, and the people he had to deal with, the demon possessed people, and sick people, and people that never heard Jesus' name now worshiping the Lord in these places, so, you know, without this kind of radical commitment to the Lord for Christ, knowing that following Christ includes forsaking a lot of things and embracing suffering, I don't think we will be able to accomplish the task, just as we did in the life of Paul. So, when we talk about, you know, missionaries, you know, we do have now 54 Bible colleges, and when these young people graduate, Skip, what we tell them, hey, the Lord called you to go to a mission field, this is a one-way ticket. You get to the mission field, and there is a possibility that you may have to lay down your life for His sake on the mission field.

If that happens, don't worry, heaven is a much better place than the mission field that you are called to. You wait in heaven for us, and we will come and see you later. I mean, there's a lot of tears and emotions, but, thank God, a great majority of these young brothers and sisters get to the mission field, like in Bhutan today and Nepal, other nations, are seeing tens of thousands of people respond to the gospel, and truly it has to do with their determination to follow Christ, and to embrace the cross in the ministry that the Lord called them to.

You just mentioned Nepal, and I want to just make it clear to our listeners, when we talk about Gospel for Asia, and K.P. Yohannan and his ministry, we're not just talking about India. You're involved in several countries. How many countries are you guys involved in? Well, today we are involving 11 nations, and the

last one, we started the work last year, 2008, was in Pakistan, and it's an amazing thing.

In seven months' time, we saw some six churches planted, and obviously we cannot talk in details about where and all that, but even hard Muslim communities, people are hungry for the gospel, and God is working. And of course, you know, we are dreaming about, you know, doing more among the Muslim communities in the days to come, because that is one of the most difficult people to reach, over a billion people in our generation that are hungry for the gospel. Well, let's talk about India for a moment, and the crises that are going on there.

We're used to seeing just a little snippet, like recently on the news with the hotel that was burned in Mumbai, but recently there's been a crisis in Orissa state. Persecution has broken out. Tell us a little bit about what's going on.

Well, you know, Skip, I think people remember about ten years ago, it was Australian missionary Stain and his two young boys that burned to death in the state of Orissa, northeast of India, and this is where, by the way, they have the law in effect called anti-conversion bill. That means if you convert a Hindu or untouchable or somebody to Christian faith or any other faith, one can be put in prison for several years and a heavy fine. But a year ago, just a huge amount of killing and brutality began to take place against Christians, and dozens of our missionaries were beaten and abused.

Houses were destroyed. But just three months ago, the worst persecution broke out in the history of India toward Christians in that state. Our own church members, over 1,000 houses of Christian believers were completely destroyed within days.

29 churches that belonged to our people were destroyed. Of course, any mission group in Orissa suffered a huge amount of persecution. Over 500 Christians were brutally murdered, all because of their faith.

But three days ago, before coming back, I met with one of these dear missionaries from Orissa state, and he was telling me the story. Some years ago, when he gave his life to Christ, from Hindu upper-caste family, his own people threw him out, saying that we have no more son like you. You are dead.

And he walked away with the clothes on his back. He ended up at one of the Gospels of Asia Bible College, finished his studies, went to this particular region in Orissa to plant a church, and he baptized a few dozens of people, and a small church began. Meanwhile, a young girl who went to our Girls Bible College finished her studies, and they were able to get married, and she was almost nine months pregnant, when all of a sudden, in the community they were in, these anti-Christian radicals came, beating up Christians, burning down their houses, and killing pastors, and literally, over 30,000 Christians fled into the jungles and forests.

Now, here's a story. This brother, looking at his young wife, who is almost nine months pregnant, said, My wife, you must go. I cannot run.

You leave these believers into the jungles, and be with them. And the last thing he said, if they find me, and they kill me, which I am targeted, all I want you to do, if the Lord allows you to have our baby born, raise that child to serve the Lord. If I don't see you again, we will meet in heaven.

After all, we came here with a one-way ticket, because, you know, she fled with a bunch of people into the jungles, and he had to hide and try to protect his life. Many weeks went by. One young man came to him and said, Pastor, I am one of the two people assigned to kill you, assassinate you, but something

happened in my heart.

I don't want to kill you. Follow me. I will rescue you.

And he followed him into the jungles, and he saved his life. Of course, you know, weeks and weeks later, he found out his wife delivered a baby in the jungles. And when he was telling me these stories, I said, what went through your head during this time of persecution? He said, you know, I am blessed that I'm alive, but thousands of Christians were persecuted, hundreds died.

And he said, all I was thinking about, I have nothing to lose. I have no house, no car, no motorbike, no bank account. All I have is my wife and a little baby that I haven't seen.

I will see them someday, and what a blessing to serve him. And you know, Skip, this is not an exception. This kind of suffering is so real right now for lots of people in Orissa and many parts of the country in India.

So KP, you go back and forth from the United States to India, and you're the leader God has raised up for this organization. You personally must have experienced a lot of spiritual warfare, as well as personal attacks, haven't you? Well, you know, it's interesting you're asking me the question, but the truth of the matter is I don't think I have experienced anything as intense tension and spiritual attack discouragement as I have faced during these last maybe three years. And I know it has all to do with the way in which people are coming to Christ in these nations, and we are targeted by the enemy.

But in all these things, I'm convinced. You know, it is like the country western song, you know, it says, I wish I were 16 again. Looked like I was 16 yesterday, and today I'm 58, and time goes by so fast, and I realize that it's worth investing our life to serve Jesus and see this generation come to Christ, because we are destined to be with Him forever.

KP, I remember years ago, you mentioned how your mother prayed for you, and you were raised in a Christian home down in the jungles of Kerala, southern India, and I was able to meet your dear mother, and just the countenance she had, and the love she had for visitors, and the love she had for you. Tell us about your mother's prayer life, and your conversion and entrance into the ministry because of that. Yeah, thank you for asking that.

You know, I grew up in this tiny village in the southern part of India, a rural community, and when I was eight years old, my mother, who knew the Lord intimately, was instrumental in leading me to the Lord. And as a young boy growing up, you know, I heard so many times my mother repeating this statement again and again, Psalm 73 verse 25, that verse says, Whom have I in heaven but you, and on earth I deserve no one beside you. And you know, I had no clue what on earth she's talking about until I grew up and realized it is in the Bible.

And early morning, I remember, she would wake up about four in the morning or earlier, and would spend two hours on her knees praying before she would wake up the entire family for what we call a family prayer time. And you know, I never saw her reading anything else in her life, except the only thing she read was her Bible. And you know, one of her prayer was that of the six boys, you know, the Lord gave her, I'm the youngest in the family, by the way, that Jesus would call at least one to become a missionary.

But one by one, they all went to business and farming and all those things. And when I was born and growing up skinny and timid and shy and withdrawn, you know, she kind of gave up her hope. Then she decided she would fast every Friday, complete fast, asking the Lord to answer her prayer, to call one to

serve Him.

And for three and a half years, she fasted and prayed every Friday for this. And when I finished my high school, I remember telling my parents, you know, if you both allow me, I'd like to go and serve the Lord. And before I could finish that statement, my mother, who was sitting on a bench, just jumped up and said, go! I thought I was in an accident or, you know, she didn't like me or whatever.

But, you know, keep in mind, I had no knowledge she was praying and fasting for one of her sons to go to mission work. None of us knew. But after two years of my life in North India, serving God, and then went back home to see my mother.

That's when she told me all this story. But, you know, in 1980, you know, my mother, at the age of 84, had a heart problem and, you know, went to be with the Lord. And I remember all of us brothers, we thought our mother left a lot of money in the bank because we all gave her whatever she wanted.

But we never saw her spending any money. So what do you do if you don't spend the money? It must be somewhere being saved up. But then in the end, we realized she left not a penny behind.

She was sending all that money, month after month, to support native missionaries, Bible school students, helping in God's work in many parts of the country. And the last thing she left with us went like this. When I'm dead and gone, the only thing I will leave behind is the earrings I have, the wedding ring my husband gave me, and the gold chain that he gave me when he married me at the age of 19.

I wanted to sell these items and give the money to preach the gospel. Among people that never heard Jesus' name, I want to meet those people also in heaven. And, you know, I mean, I'm so blessed just to hear that, you know, one of those trips, early trips he made to India, he met my mother.

And I'm sure, you know, path of escape, my mother now with Jesus, she has no regret for spending her money and life to reach the lost world. K.P., I want to talk a little bit about the difference of life from India and the United States. And you've already talked on some of that.

But, you know, we don't know much about that country. And here we are, most of us listening to this in our car, which is air-conditioned and heated, or our homes, etc. And recently, about the only thing people know of India is a movie that came out called Slumdog Millionaire, which won all sorts of Grammys or Oscar awards, I should say.

But I want to put the focus back for people in this country on the work of God in that country. So kind of tell us the difference between Christians in the West and what Christians go through from where you're from. Well, think about it.

You know, we are now, you know, on the radio, people can hear us in their car, in their home, in the kitchen, even in the shower or wherever. Now take 1.2 billion people in India today. Imagine there's not one Christian radio station in the entire nation.

It is not allowed. How blessed we are. I mean, Dallas, you can, you know, listen to over 14 Christian radio stations, every kind of music teaching we want.

So think about the blessings we have. And I have run into thousands of Christians, brand new first generation Christians in Bhutan, in India, and many places like that, that they came to know Jesus through

some means, some missionary, but they don't own a Bible to their name, nor even a Bible to the entire family. You know, and of course, you know, here for someone to receive Christ, you know, we are telling them, okay, now you come by faith to receive Christ and your life will be blessed and all these things.

But, you know, Pastor Skip, many times in India, in difficult places like Chhattisgarh, where just recently 11 of our missionaries were arrested and put in prison for preaching the gospel, and many places when hundreds of these people come to Christ, we tell them, there is a price you have to pay if you're going to be baptized publicly. And many of them know that they may lose their job, their kids may get kicked out of the school, and there'll be persecution. And knowing the suffering, they still will follow Jesus.

And that, you know, I mean, this is, you know, kind of thing that you can imagine. I mean, how many times I run into young people who are studying God's Word in Bible schools, and you ask them, well, now we have one month break. Are you going home? And they look at you with big eyes, and they tear up.

And then you realize, they cannot go home. There's no home. They've been rejected, kicked out, and they have lost everything.

And then you ask them, are you sorry that you lost everything because of Jesus? They say, no, if I must do it over again, I will still choose Jesus over anything else. And so these are things sometimes we don't understand how, I mean, yeah, economic problems and, you know, difficulties are there. People talk about unemployment, but my goodness, the worst circumstances we have here is luxury compared to the reality of these multitudes that do not know the Lord and the people that are giving their lives to Christ and the price they must pay.

And I can attest to that, having been there and seen that and seen what Gospel for Asia is doing. So now I want to talk about opportunity, because with that kind of lifestyle in that part of the world, and we have so much in the West, even with an economic downturn, I've discovered that dollar for dollar to invest spiritually in the work God is doing there is magnified. I mean, in comparison to any other endeavor we've ever done, tell us in the West about what opportunities we have to make a spiritual investment into that eternal work.

Well, here's it. You take, you know, the scripture in Romans 10, how will they hear the Gospel without a preacher, and how will they go except they descend? So we do have literally thousands of brothers and sisters who are willing and who are being trained and already trained to go to the mission fields to preach the Gospel and plant churches. And what we are given the privilege now is to be a sender, although an American believer cannot go to Orissa or India or Bhutan, what they can do, they say, you know, I can give them \$30 a month, just \$1 a day, which meet the basic essentials, and they get to the mission field, and they are able to plant a church usually within a year or two, and then they are able to be self-supporting.

So here's the thing, you know, to send an American missionary, even if we can send them to one of these countries, it's going to take \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000 or more a year, but with that money we can have 40, 50 missionaries preaching the Gospel, seeing so much more response. Now, I'm not saying American missionaries should not go. Wherever the Lord calls them to go, they must go.

But for the dollar we spend to support these native missionaries to preach the Gospel, I must tell you, the return is unbelievable in the light of eternity and the people that are coming to Christ. I was in Tripura just a couple of weeks ago, northeast of India. In 12 years time, 140,000 people have come to Christ from 16

tribes, all warring tribes.

Now they have heard the Gospel, and there's a huge move of the Holy Spirit taking place. It all began with one native missionary that we were able to help 12 years ago, who started the first church with 35 people. And this is amazing.

K.P., talk about how easy it is to support a missionary. It's not just writing a check. You get letters back, pictures, prayer needs, updates.

So talk about that partnership. Well, you know, like my wife and I began to support four native missionaries from four different mission fields like we are talking about, and we were giving \$30 a month. We still do.

And these brothers get to the mission field, or sisters get to the mission field, and start preaching the Gospel. And several times a year, we are able to hear from these missionaries what they are doing, and how many people came to Christ, what their prayer requests are. This is actually kind of, they become part of the family.

We have their photographs, their testimony, the whole thing given to us. It is on the wall by the dining table. So when we sit there, we watch the faces of these missionaries.

So an American family who says, you know, Pastor Skip or Brother K.P., you know, I like to partner with one of these native missionaries. When they call us or send the information, we actually send them the real photograph, testimony, all the details of that missionary, all the missionaries they will support. And every month, they send in, you know, \$30 a piece, and every penny they send actually goes to the mission field to support these missionaries.

You know, here in Dallas, we got 160, some staff people here. Everybody raised their own support. So we don't take out the money that belongs to the missionaries to pay light bills and staff support and things like that.

And it's a family affair. And my dream is someday when these families get to heaven, they are going to meet so many people that came into Christ from these nations where they've never been to themselves. But now they are going there through prayer and supporting these native missionaries.

And giving them a little financial help so they can start the work. K.P., I remember a book that you wrote years ago, and it's still very popular. In fact, I run into people whose lives and perspective gets changed by the road to reality that you wrote as you gave a perspective on missions that was very freeing to us in the West.

And you've written a lot of books since. What, maybe touch on that book and then tell us what your latest book is. Well, you know, the first book, as you know, I wrote was Revolution World Mission, which is now, by the way, almost three million copies in print.

But Road to Reality definitely was a book that the Lord used to really touch the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. It talks about, you know, simplifying our life and living and making decisions in the light of eternity. And I say often, you know, life is so beautiful with Jesus and don't make it so complicated with the things of the world and worry and care and live every day knowing that eternity is the real thing.

And the book actually gives practical suggestions as to how they can embrace a lifestyle without all these burdens and live for the Lord and touch a lost world and see people come to Christ. And lots and lots of churches are using that after Sunday school study material. And of course, you know, I'm, you know, I'm happy for that book, but, you know, the latest book which I think the Lord is using so significantly is simply called Touching Godliness.

And it took me four years to do this during a week of fasting and prayer. Significantly, the Lord impressed upon my heart to, you know, to live with this burden and took me four years to do that. And I think they right now from all over the world or literally many, many nations, people are writing and saying that, you know, the pastor wrote 30 years he'd been serving God, but having read this book, his life completely changed.

Now understanding, you know, the seriousness of intimacy with Christ and how to experience a life like that. And so that is the newest book just was released a few months ago. And you know, I'm blessed about that book.

When you think back to that first book that you wrote, The Revolution and World Missions, it was controversial when that was put out. A lot of people kind of chafed against the message in that. Why was that? Well, you know, the book was actually--that book came out of you know, my conviction that if we must reach the two billion people that are still waiting, we cannot do it by colonial missions or traditional approach of sending missionaries from America.

But, you know, so I argued so strong with stories and illustrations and everything, but why the book became so controversial? People really believed that I was against Western missionaries going to these nations, which was not true at all. And so in some ways, you know, of course, you know, the book now being revised several times, it's more balanced in some ways in that way, but people simply could not accept the fact that in China, India, Bhutan, and Muslim nations, there are brothers and sisters born and raised there that God can use if only we can become partners with them in praying and helping them. And a lot of people took issues.

And meanwhile, today, I must tell you, Mission World generally recognizes the most significant revolution took place in missions' understanding of partnership. It's not either-or, but priority missions in nations where we cannot go. KP, talk about a plan you call Push to the Pedal.

What is that all about? You know, this has to do with, you know, here having a car is a very normal thing for people, but for many of these nations, a bicycle is a luxury, especially in rural communities. So what we found out, we are able to get a native missionary become 10-15 times more effective if we can provide them with a bicycle and we buy them 1,000-2,000 bicycles at a time and give it to missionaries on the mission field. So what we told people here, hey, you know, your children can save pennies and they can do all kinds of little things and maybe give up their personal bicycle money to get a bicycle for a missionary.

It cost about \$110 to buy a bicycle in India or any of these places. So we simply say, you know, with giving up chewing gum or you know, a bike-a-thon or whatever you do, you can raise money to get a bicycle for one of these missionaries. And we have so many stories of young boys and girls, Sunday school children collecting coins and pennies.

And one mother wrote me and said, you know, we were going to buy a bicycle for our son for him to go to school and he came and said that he's willing to walk to school and if we would use that money to get a bicycle for a missionary with Gospel for Asia. And so this project actually enables families to get their children involved, to get the missionaries two wheels so they can get to more places to preach the gospel. And I've seen these bicycles.

You know, we hear \$110 for a bicycle. That's unheard of. It's so inexpensive.

It's so cheap, but these are well-made bicycles and men and wives and children will all ride on it at the same time. It's like a family station wagon. Exactly.

Basically, it's amazing. It's unbelievable that you have a man riding the bicycle on the front bar, his wife is sitting on the back, you know, his son is sitting and sometime on the pedal you have a little child sitting. I mean, it's unbelievable.

They are made for transportation. Unlike here, you know, often bicycles are for exercise and you know, things like that. So yeah, this is one of the many, many things we do to assist the missionaries to do the job more effectively.

You know, we get them, you know, bullhorns so they can do open air preaching and print huge amount of literature, New Testament, Bibles and Gospels and flip charts. Of course, you know, we have over 200 units where, you know, life of Jesus is being shown in all the native languages. I mean, so many little things that make the life of a missionary so effective to see people come to Christ, and this is one of those small projects.

How many bicycles do you need, KP? You know, right now easily we could use about 2,000 plus bicycles, I'm told, because we are graduating over 2,000 young people from all these Bible colleges who are going to the mission field and one other thing we try to do is get them a bicycle, you know, for them to be effective in the ministry. Well, there's a challenge for our audience, anybody listening, only 2,000 bicycles. I bet we could do that and I pray that happens.

Well, KP, in about a week or so, we're going to be together in India and I'm really excited about being there and I'm going to visit a couple of your schools. Tell us a little bit about the training centers, schools, universities that are there that you've started. Well, you know, again, I do not know how many of your people all over the nation know about this, but every time you went to India or Nepal, these nations, you know this.

The Lord used you so significantly because the way you teach God's Word and we are so excited and grateful to God that you will do this. You're trying to do that. Of course, you know, these couple of Bible colleges, you'll visit the first one in North India, where I think we have over 200 young people, you know, having, you know, made the decision with a one-way ticket, so to say, to serve the Lord and you'll be teaching.

I don't know how many hours each day, as much energy you have to stand on your feet and this will be a time you'll be teaching on what it means to serve God, to be a pastor and to be a father and a counselor and all around because these are young people who are going to the field to plant churches and develop the body of Christ. And this you have done before and I think maybe a little more hectic at this time. Of course, then the other place we'll be going actually the seminary.

It's a university affiliated the largest seminary in the subcontinent with over 600 people from 31 different evangelical denominations and not only we train our leaders, but many denominations send their people for leadership training and that is an English medium course, you know, you'll be lecturing there to the whole community, the professors and the student body and also the people we invite from the community to come and hear you and it's going to be very significant. And you train all in all. Give us an estimate with your training centers.

How many do you train every year to go out? We have more than 7,000 young people in all our Bible colleges in all the 11 nations but over 2,000 graduates each year to go to the mission field. Oh my. Who would have thought? This is exciting.

KP, it's been great being with you today. I can't wait to see you next week in India. God bless you, my friend.

Blessings on you. We love you and appreciate you. Thank you so much.

Thank you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/23/SID23125.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/kp-yohannan/skip-heitzig-interview-2009/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net