

Foundations

by Victor Choudhrie

Victor Choudhrie's sermon 'Foundations' emphasizes the transformative power of prayer and spiritual warfare in ministry and community engagement.

Duration: 34:00

Scripture: Matthew 17:20, Mark 16:17

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Church Planting"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of power encounters and prayer in church planting, highlighting the need for casting out strongholds through prayer at various levels. It shares powerful testimonies of prayer leading to miraculous transformations and the impact of combining the preaching of the word with signs and wonders. The speaker's personal journey from a medical director to a church planter showcases the transformative power of prayer and spiritual warfare in challenging circumstances.

Transcript

We've heard today from Dr. Victor Chowdhury about the whole issue of power encounters and prayer and how 95% of churches being planted are always coupled with both the preaching of the word and power encounters of demons being cast out and of signs and wonders and miracles. And we've also been really challenged with the idea of prayer at both a house level, city level and a regional level of casting out the strongman before the gospel can come in. Wonderful stories of those kind of unnecessary acts.

And this challenges me as I think of our nation, of how we are to cast out the strongman, to identify the strongman, to have a prayer strategy, to walk into those places and to pray until the strongman has left, that the gospel might break through. This challenges me on house levels, on the houses we're ministering in. Are we praying? Are we binding the strongman? Are we seeing the release of God's spirit? Because the terminology that was used is sweet water and bitter water cannot dwell together.

And the bitter water must go before the sweet water can come. A beautiful saying. So a great challenge for prayer, spiritual warfare and this happens at different levels.

A call to fasting, a call to persevering prayer, a call to boldness in prayer. And it's a great challenge. Let's be challenged to pray and bind the strongman.

Amen. Praise the Lord. It's a great privilege for me.

You know, somebody who doesn't like traveling very much for you to come all the way from down under is, I'm really grateful to God and to you for taking this journey. I'm going to start off by giving a little bit of my testimony so you know who I am. I come from not far from here, about 350 kilometers where I grew up as a child.

I have a very medical history. I was born in a medical college in Miraj near Pune, Nasir. And I studied in a medical college down south in Valore which is supposed to be the premier college, medical college of India.

And I became director of the third Christian medical college here in India. So you know, my life revolved very much around medical colleges. And I understood nothing other than hospitals until I was invited to become the director of this medical college in North India, Punjab, which was at that point going through a severe period of hostility.

They were shooting each other, the Hindus and Sikhs were shooting each other. So that's a separatist movement that they were trying to do. And we were the main hospital which was kind of clearing center for all the casualties.

Because the Hindus and Sikhs were fighting. They didn't want to go to any Hindu or a Sikh hospital. They opted to come to a Christian hospital.

So they could be sure that they would get proper care. So this was back in 86 to 92. And all day we would do normal work.

And in the evening, as soon as the sun would set, shooting would start. Bomb blast would start. All kinds of things would happen.

And so all night we were busy taking care of the people who were hurt. I had a huge staff. I had a staff of about two and a half thousand people in the hospital.

And I had about 300 doctors. And I had about 10 operation fields. And we were really busy, you know, all day and all night.

And the system was not organized. So whenever the bomb blast or shooting took place, people would collect people and put them in the back of the car or jeep or trucks. And sometimes a large number of people and they were brought and they were blown up.

And the first thing we had to do is who's living and who's dead. Then we had to sort out whose limb is this one and whose leg is that one. All these things were gruesome.

And in the midst of this hostility, one old pastor came from South India. And he visited Punjab, that state. And he said he met all the mission leaders and bishops and church leaders and so on.

And he asked them, you know, Punjab, the word Punjab means five rivers, the big five rivers there. And he said, but there is a sixth river of blood flowing through this nation just now. So what should be our response to the Prince of Peace, meaning Jesus? So he met the bishops and all those leaders and they said no response.

Because they said we cannot go to the villages and preach the gospel because when we go there they think we are spies, outsiders. So they shoot us. So it was as difficult as that.

So they said we are packing up things and going back wherever we come from. So he came and saw me also. And being a director of a medical school in that situation, you have a very busy schedule from morning onwards.

And somebody comes and knocks on the door and says, in my office there is an old pastor from somewhere who wants to see you. And I said, I mostly see medical people. So I said okay, bring him.

And that was Dr. Alex. So Dr. Alex brought this old pastor, a very nice man, fatherly looking man. And he says the same thing to me.

He says Punjab means five rivers but there is a sixth river of blood flowing here. And what should be our response? So I looked at him straight in the eyes and I said we are doing the best we can. We are working day and night and putting them together and taking care of the people who are hurt.

And he said, yeah, that's very good. But he said you are only mending the bodies. That doesn't save souls.

And you know that made me think, so I asked him what can you do? He said, you know, I don't have a solution. But the least we can do is to pray for this nation, to the Prince of Peace, for peace for this nation. And this man was the international director of the Erbil Home Crusade.

And he was the prayer director of that place. And in those days we didn't have computers. So he hand wrote literally hundreds and hundreds of letters to his contacts.

And he had a very wide contact to pray for this nation. During this period I had very close contact with the government, the governor, the chief minister, the police chief. They would all come to my office because there was a shootout and they would come to visit the patients.

So I would go around with them and show them the patients and show them that the police and the terrorists, they are all in the same intensive care ward together where they were shooting outside each other. And I would often ask the governor of the state, what's the solution to all this? And he would just say, you know, there is no solution because these terrorists are not willing to come to a negotiating table. So we can't negotiate.

We cannot talk to them. And the chief minister had a very good relationship. One day he was a Sikh Sardarji, a big fellow with a big turban.

And I said to him, Sardarji, you have a very dangerous job because you're surrounded by a black belt security and all that sort of thing. So I told him, it's a very dangerous job you're doing. So we, as Christians, we pray for you in the church regularly every Sunday.

Oh, he was so pleased, absolutely pleased. At least somebody prays for me, he said. And from there on, wherever I met him, whenever he came, he would publicly hug me and announce, here in this state, everybody wants to shoot me, but here's one man who prays for me.

That was a great testimony of the chief minister of the state saying that to the public over there. And the chief police chief, a tall six foot plus guy, huge fellow. And I asked him, what's the solution? And he had a very short answer.

Shoot them all. That's all. That's what I'm doing, he said.

So, then after this pastor had gone, just two months, within a very short period, suddenly all hostility stopped. No more shooting, no more bomb blasts, nothing. He just stopped, dead.

And I was out of business suddenly, because we had so many patients coming. But my staff had some rest, because they were working day and night. And then I asked the governor what happened.

And he said, I don't know. Absolutely no idea, because we never negotiate peace. It just happened.

Then I asked the police chief, what happened? He said, I shot them all. Then I asked the press people, I said, what happened? He said, there was an X factor was operating, because it has nothing to do with government, it has nothing to do with peace negotiations, it's just there was an X factor that was operating. And they printed that in the newspapers.

But I knew what that X factor was, so I told them, this is not X factor. This is prayer factor. And then I told about this pastor would come and would handwritten all over the world to the network to pray.

And there are thousands, literally, thousands of people who've been praying for this state, point by point, as he was writing. And for the first time I saw the power of prayer in my personal life. Suddenly I stopped on track with the medical work that I was saying, you know, this is different.

And what the old man had come and said to me, yeah, you're mending the bodies, but not the soul. And that sort of hit me. And I resigned my job as the director, the CEO of the medical school.

And they asked me, what are you going to do? I called my wife to my office and told her I'm resigning, and she said, what are you going to do? And she knew I was a surgeon, so I could always go someplace else and work. So I said, I'm going to be church planting. So my wife says, what's that? So I said, I also don't know what that is.

But that's what God is telling me to do, church planting. So it didn't strike me as something very difficult at the time because I thought I'd do a big operation. So this is some minor operation.

I don't know this one. But I can always read up and find out and do it. I didn't think much about it.

So we packed up our things. I resigned. People asked me, my staff asked me, what happened? I said, I've been promoted.

So what do you mean? I mean, I was at the top of the post that you can get to in India as CEO of a medical school. That's as high as you can get. You've been promoted.

Where are you? I said, I'm going in as an evangelist. Oh, is that meant to be a promotion? Because everybody has this picture of a little evangelist out there. So I said, I've been promoted.

So there were some mixed reactions over there, including in my own family. My children couldn't sort of, not all of them could absorb that dad was now not going to be up there. He says he wants to be an evangelist.

And some people are really angry with me. You have all those skills. Evangelism, anybody can do that.

But what skills you have, you should be using it for something else. Anyway, I resigned and came back. When I came back, I resigned.

I had no job now. I had no money in the bank because I spent all my money educating my children. And they became my assets.

I had no pension because I never worked long enough in a place to qualify for pension. So I had no pension. And I had no house of my own and not an inch of land that I owned.

This is how I left. And not a worry. Not a worry.

It didn't occur to me that you should be thinking of at least having it. I was 59, bordering on 60 at that point and didn't have a house. So I came back to my parents' house.

We unloaded the stuff. And I was holding a conference on missions in Lucknow. So I needed to know what missions is about.

I couldn't even spell it because I was so used to medical terms. So we didn't unpack. We just dumped the stuff.

And we took a train three days later. And we were in Lucknow. And the first time I came to know what missions are all about.

That was my introduction. And they kept using these abbreviations, IMA, FNPB, GFA, which I didn't understand because I was only used to medical abbreviations. And I would say, What's that? And my wife would say, Everybody knows.

You are the only ignorant one. So then from there we started. What I did was, before I had gone to medical school, in this little village which is 200 kilometers from here, north from here, it's a tribal village.

So when I went there, my history was that I qualified from the medical college. Then I worked in a mission hospital. Where Don McGowan comes from, not far from there.

And from there, my wife and I went to England. And I was in England for eight years, studying surgery. But I knew I was going to work in a small mission hospital.

So I wrote it through so many different branches, from head to foot. So when I came back, I had some competency in just about everything, from making bar holes in the head, to eye surgery, to head surgery, to heart surgery, to everything in between, from toe to head. And for 18 years we toiled there.

And I probably ended up doing more surgery than most surgeons ever get to do in their lifetime, simply because there was no other surgeon in sight for 100 miles. And so when I was there, when we came back from England after eight years in 1969, the thing that struck me coming from England was poverty of the people. Extreme poverty.

And they needed surgery. They couldn't pay for it. In fact, we had to feed them.

And you had to give them money for transport. Otherwise they would stay there. And there was a British doctor there, Dr. Clement Moss, a very broad-minded man.

And together we really clicked together very well. And I had come from England, from London, so I had some very big ideas, which are not replicable in a small village. And so I would ask for some peculiar equipment that nobody thought of, which I was used to in England.

But he never said no. He would always say, let's find out if we can get it. So we built up a big hospital, cancer unit, and we got cobalt units and teratron, because there was so much cancer in this village.

And not in this village, hundreds of villages. And so we did. And I discovered this poverty, then I visited some villages.

And there, there was extreme poverty. I see a mother, three or four children, one baby sitting there, about this, with a little bowl, aluminum bowl of some rice, watery rice, flies all over the place, completely malnourished. And, you know, I'm an Indian, but I had cultural shock because I had been so far away from India.

So we kept saying, so I said to this mother, you know, we'll take this child to a hospital, you come with them, we'll give you free treatment, we'll take care of. And she would say no. And we'd say, you know, this child might die.

So if he dies, he dies. I've got three other kids. If I go to a hospital, who's going to look after them? And if my husband stays home to look after the kids, then who earns a living? We'll all die.

It was as brutal as that, the response would be. Nobody was willing to come to the hospital. Then it occurred to me that, you know, if they won't come to the hospital, then we have to go and serve them over there.

So all day I would work in the hospital doing surgery, but every now and then in the evenings I'd go to the villages and see and see how we can do it. I didn't have any money or food to give it to them. So we'd start off by saying, now, what local resources do they have? And so I started a fishery program, poultry program, tree planting program, and a whole lot of activities in the village itself.

So they had fish to eat, and they had soybean and started soybean. All these were started by me, the fishery, poultry, et cetera, et cetera. Cross-breeding of animals.

Very interesting time I had. And in between we'd go and do medical camps, and sometimes very high-level, advanced-level medical camps, cancer detection programs, and so on. And we'd even do heart surgery camps.

There were so much heart problems. So it was a very exciting time, and then I got invited to go to this medical school. So when I came back, when I was doing all this thing, I said, okay, we've got food on their plate now, but if they don't have education, what do they have, these tribals? So we said, okay, we'll start.

Since they won't come to school, they cannot come to school because they have to graze the goats and the cattle during the daytime. So you have to do something in the evening. So I started some schools.

So I found some tribal boys living in the village, and they were Hindus. And I said, you know, we want to start these literacy classes, but I was keen to introduce gospel also. So the tribals are good at singing, so you can start off by introducing songs, choruses.

So I said to these Hindu boys, listen. And these boys were not very literate. They were third, fourth grade, mostly failed, but they could just about read or write.

So they were my first school teachers. And then I said to them, listen, this is not just literacy class. You have to teach them from the Bible stories and things like that.

Are you willing? So they smiled and they said, we are willing, but we don't know the Bible stories. So I said, that's not your problem. Come every Saturday, I'll tell you Bible stories, and then you can teach the children about those Bible stories.

So I started systematically from Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, down the line. And all these names were strange names for them. They never heard of these names.

Some time later when I went to discover how they were teaching, I discovered they got all the names mixed up. And suddenly Adam was having a baby from his side, from his side, all kinds of funny stories. And I said, where did you learn this story? I said, you taught us.

Oh. So by the end of the year, something astonishing happened that was not in my radar. These 10, 12 boys that I was training were going into villages.

They came one Saturday morning and said to me, we want to be baptized. My vision was very limited. I was only thinking the children should know some Christian songs and stories.

They grow up knowing something about Jesus. But these Hindu teachers becoming Christians was not in my thinking. And eventually by 86, when I left, I had 250 baptisms.

And every time it was a bit of a shock to me, you know, because I simply wasn't thinking that far. But by the time of medical school, I came back and was starting with church planting, I now knew firmly that, you know, you go all the way to not only preaching and teaching and baptizing, but you go beyond to make them church planters. This I already got an idea in 92, 93 when I came.

And I had a framework on which I could work. I knew how these literacy classes had become church planting classes. And without overtly preaching, there were no crusades, conventions or special Bible classes.

It just happened. And so when I came back, I got some of the boys again. I have a farmhouse.

My father had a farmhouse. And every morning about 9 to 11, these boys would come from villages. And we'd study the Bible, scriptures.

I had no idea where to start. I'd never heard of Luke 10, and I'd never heard of the Great Commission, and I'd never heard of House Church, nothing of that sort. But it was happening.

You know, all this was happening. So then they would go at 11 o'clock back to their villages, and they would try what they had learned, practice immediately. Then they would come back next morning and tell me whether it worked or not.

And sometimes they would come back with the questions the villagers were asking. We were teaching something else in the classroom, and the villagers were asking a completely different set of questions. So very quickly that set me right that you don't do a systematic course on what you think they need to know.

First you need to resolve their difficulties and problems and questions they have before you can proceed. So then we, instead of studying Bible systematically, we started studying according to the question, the problem that was there right there in front of us. We've got to answer this man.

I've got to go back today and answer this man today. I've told him by tomorrow I'll come back and answer him. And my Bible knowledge is very limited.

My wife is a Bible scholar. You know, she reads ten chapters a day. Come hell or high heaven or rain or thunder or she's traveling or whatever it is.

Ten chapters. Now of course she's using technology because she's got this cell phone and she hangs it around so when she goes for a walk in the evening, she does the ten chapters. She's done the ten laps of walking as well.

So we had to ask her, where is this worse and where is that worse? That was a big struggle. Sometimes I had to go to the kitchen and say, honey, where is that worse? And she'd say, oh, go to Philippians 2.9 or something like that, you know, while she's rolling the chapatis. Which was very helpful.

And these boys did wonders. The amazing thing was they did wonders to me that I, from the beginning, understood the approach, the methodologies. Because, first of all, I was not a theologian.

I was not a pastor. I had never been to Bible school. Thank God for that one.

And so I never got structured. And so I was learning from these boys, what are the questions, how do we answer these, because if I go to the field. And then I discovered, two core? Oh, okay.

So one day I got excited. I said, you know, the result is coming too slow and I'm a surgeon. I can't wait for the result.

I have to have the result by next morning. I've operated on the patient. So I went to villages.

I tried two, three villages. I went there and I had great reception there. The headman of the village came out, you know, and he got his old tatty old broken bed to sit on, the dirty sheet, and I sit there.

And they'll make this sickly sweet tea for me. And I said, get everybody. He said, get all the sick patients.

I said, no, no, not sick patients. I'm not doing a medical clinic just now. So everybody in the village would turn up.

And I would, my boys would sing some songs. And I preached. And at the end of 45 minutes I would ask these people, now, how many of you believe in Jesus Christ? Raise your hands.

And all hands would go up, 100%. I thought, I said, wow, that's good. Then I asked the boys, did they really understand what I'm asking? So I said, put your hands down.

I'm going to ask you a second time. When I'm saying, do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I mean you have to reject all the others. Do you understand that now? They said, yes.

Now, those who really accept Jesus Christ, raise your hands. And all 100% hands would go up. And I said, wow, that's a good job.

And I tried two or three times. Then I'd come back. And a few days later I'd ask the boys, what happened in that village where we went, and we had 100% response.

And they would all laugh at me. So I said, why do you laugh? They said, you know, we went back to that village. Nobody's accepted Jesus Christ.

What happened? He said, that headman who was there, we went and talked to him. And he says, that Dr. Chaudhary has operated on my wife. And this son is the product of the caesarean section that he did.

If he says to me, stand on your head, I will stand on my head. But this religion thing, he says, we have our own old tribal traditions. And so, yes, we accept Jesus Christ, no problem, he said.

But we have our own as well. So I discovered, you know, there was a big cultural gap between me and them, even though I was an Indian. And, but I discovered that when they would finally come, is because these boys who came from the same culture, there was a huge dialogue would take place, for days together.

And then they would accept Jesus Christ, because then they had understood what the implications were. And some chose to walk with Christ, and some didn't. But at least those who chose walked not so strongly after a dialogue.

Then what happened? What happened was, there was so much occult in the villages. Evil spirits, you know, the tribals have, they are not idol worshippers, really. They believe in spirits that live in the forest, on the trees, in rivers, in mountains.

So they were terrified of these spirits. They really were. I mean, in the middle of the night, if you have to tell a tribal, we have to go this way, and if there is that particular tree where the evil spirit resides, he will not go that way.

But if he goes this way, the tiger will not bother him, but the evil spirit will bother him. And I lived in a place where there were tigers and panthers in those days. So, you know, what happened in these meetings, when they would do, they had been empowered in our teaching, that they would cast out evil spirits, and they would pray for the sick, and then there were a lot of snake problems, people would have been bitten by snakes.

They were healed. Then many barren women who had no children were now conceiving and having babies. That really got the movement going.

So it was a combo of both the word and the power of manifestation. That worked. And so the people who had been healed or delivered, they were very strong, they had very strong witness.

They really stood up for their faith. Like Bible times, whereas I was blind, now I see. Whereas I was lame, now I'm jumping around.

So it was never just the word. So we did a casual survey of our house churches and discovered that close to 95% of house churches came not by mere word, but through power manifestation. That's... So briefly, that's what happened.

From there on, we never had to look back when we understood the concept. It took me 2-3 years to understand that. It didn't happen overnight.

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