

Do you not say, "There are still four months and then comes the harvest"? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! (John 4:35)

# White for Harvest

Rob Gaebler's news from Gospel for Asia

September 2008



**Above:** Matt, Tony, and me lining up for the 5k race; rounding the final turn.

**Below:** My brother Dave and his fiancée Leslie



Dear Friends,

My life has been busy and exciting since I wrote to you last! Michael and Tye, the two young men I have been discipling for the last year, finished their internship at the end of July. For our final Bible study time as a house, we each wrote letters of encouragement to each other about how we have blessed by each other and seen each other grow during the year. When we met, we spoke those things to each other, then prayed for each other. It was a time of celebrating what God has done in our lives during the year. Michael has now gone on to Criswell College to study missions and evangelism, and Tye

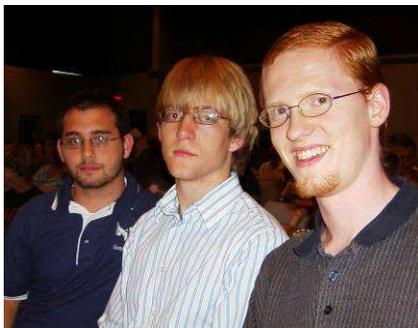
has gone to Virginia Tech to get a graduate degree in biology.

In August I moved into a different house, and had just enough time to settle in before the arrival of the next group of interns. I just can't get enough of the internship! I am now living with Danny, Shawn and Alex, three awesome young men with a real heart for the Lord. They are giving this year of their lives to serve the Lord. More on them later.

On July 4<sup>th</sup>, I ran in my first ever 5k race (about 3.1 miles). Matt and Tony, two of my friends from GFA, were running for the fun of it, and the day before the race I decided to join them. None of us are runners, and we finished in 25:04, better

than we expected. It was a lot of fun, and I hope to do it again. My goal is to beat 22 minutes.

Exciting family news! My brother Dave got engaged to Leslie Wilson, whom he met while home for Christmas. (Leslie lives in Cedar Rapids and attends the same church as my family.) It didn't take long for Dave to be convinced that she was the right person for him. In his words, "Leslie is not the woman of my dreams—before meeting her, I wouldn't have dared dream that such a woman even exists." After a brief courtship, he proposed to her on July 10<sup>th</sup>. They plan to get married next Spring.



**Above:** Michael and Tye finished their internship... and now I have Shawn, Danny, and Alex!

## Renewing Your Passion Conference

For several months, we at Gospel for Asia prepared, planned, and prayed fervently for the *Renewing Your Passion* conference, which took place on July 11-13 here in Dallas, TX. What a wonderful blessing it was for all of us when the conference finally came! More than 1000 people gathered at the Hilton Anatole hotel to hear GFA missionaries and leaders share about God's incredible work in Asia and calling us to love God passionately.

Here is what some of the attendees are saying: "The [six-hour] prayer time was amazing. It felt like everyone was family. It changed my view of missions and what I want to do with the life God gave me." "I have a new fire burning for the kingdom and for the lost as well as a renewed passion to encourage and disciple the believers that I have influence with in my own life." One person told me that they

felt the presence of God when they entered the auditorium. The attendees shared many sweet times of teaching, prayers, songs of worship, and tears as the Holy Spirit spoke into our lives.

Six missionaries from the field shared inspiring messages of how their nations are being changed for Christ. Narayan Sharma, Gospel for Asia's Nepal country leader, told how 50 years ago, Nepal was the world's only official Hindu kingdom and its king was considered to be a god. But now, Gospel programs are aired over the same government-owned radio stations that used to carry reports of Christians being arrested. "The Bible says that after the night, joy comes in the morning, and morning has come to Nepal!" Sharma told the enthusiastic crowd.

A handful of the GFA staff, including me, felt that God was



leading us to meet to pray for the nine speaking sessions while they were going on. We met next door and watched the sessions on a screen as we interceded for the speaker and all the attendees. These prayer times were very memorable for me. I believe God answered our prayers!



**Above:** I got to spend a couple hours with our leader of Myanmar, a country which was recently devastated by a cyclone

**Below:** I helped man the literature table at the conference



## Orissa Persecution—Please Pray!



My heart is heavy as I share some urgent news with you. As you read

this, would you please take just a minute and pray?

In the last few weeks there has been an outbreak of mob violence against

Christians in the state of Orissa in India. Reports coming from Gospel for Asia leaders in Orissa say that as many as 20 GFA-related churches

were destroyed and four thousand Christian families have been burned out of their homes. At least a dozen members of GFA-related churches have been murdered, but no one knows the overall death toll. The Christians have fled for their lives into the forests and have been in hiding, often without food and water. Imagine the children, the pregnant mothers, and the elderly with only the clothes on their backs and no homes to return to.

"Several of our pastors are in the forest along with their church people, and one said that he could have escaped, but would rather die with his people than leave them," reported GFA President K.P. Yohannan.

"I have never seen persecution so bad in my life," Dr. Yohannan said, "and I have seen a lot of opposition to the Gospel over the years."

Attacks like this are not new. In December and January, there was a similar outbreak of violence that left more than 730 Christian homes and more than 100 churches destroyed in the state of Orissa. "Yet this past year, we have seen more

people place their faith in Jesus Christ in Orissa than in any other Indian state," Dr. Yohannan noted. "So it is no surprise that opposition is increasing."

The latest reports coming in include a long list of specific attacks against pastors, missionaries and their followers—including Christians being hacked to death. One believer's body was cut into seven pieces. "They are raping Christian girls—and some gang rapes are taking place," Dr. Yohannan said. "We are praying that the young women on our Bible college campus will remain safe. There are 250 students there, and 90 of them are girls. A handful of police officers are trying to protect them, and that is a blessing. But we have had people come on campus and attack students in the past, so I am asking for all Christians to pray for their protection."

The violence began after the murder on August 23rd of Swami Laxmanand Saraswati, a top leader of the VHP (World Hindu Council) and an outspoken opponent of Christianity. He was killed in an attack by 20 men armed with guns and hand grenades. While the murderers are suspected of being Maoist rebels, the Hindu radicals seized on the killing as an excuse to incite violence against the area's Christian community.

"What is most disturbing," Dr. Yohannan said, "is that the radicals have not only incited this violence, but they are also orchestrating it. And the latest reports are that they are bringing in militants from Gujarat,

Chhattisgarh and other states to carry out their evil plans." Reports say that the extremists are sending people whose sole job is to start massive riots to completely destroy and kill any Christians remaining in Kandhamal, the district where the violence started. The violence has spread to several district in Orissa and has even started spilling over into nearby states.

Dr. Yohannan emphasized the importance of prayer in this situation. "Please pray that God will intervene in this situation, that His peace will descend on the people of Orissa, and that His message of love



will fill the hearts of all of India's people."

From a spiritual perspective, attacks like these are to be expected. They are Satan's backlash against what God is doing. We have heard reports that more people have come to Christ through GFA's ministry in India during the first half of 2008 than in all of 2007. Jesus Christ is indeed on the throne! We should praise the Lord for that, but we must also realize that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil that have held many in Orissa captive for countless generations.

**Above:** Mobs in Orissa have burned churches and houses, and have attacked and killed Christians

***"Several of our pastors are in the forest along with their church people, and one said that he could have escaped, but would rather die with his people than leave them"***

— GFA President K.P. Yohannan

*Thank you so much for your loving support and prayers, which are precious to the Lord. You make it possible for me to serve the native missionaries who are laying down their lives to advance the Gospel in unreached lands. Thank you for standing with me!*

*For His glory,*

*Rob Gaebler*



**Left:** Christians looking for shelter

**Right:** A shelter for Christians



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*I would love to hear from you!*