

South Asia: Who is listening?

August 15, 2018

One thing I was told before leaving for South Asia this summer was, “You never know who is listening to what you are sharing.” However, I didn’t know how real this statement was until the end of my summer experience. Just two weeks before I came back to the States, I saw God pursue the hearts of three girls after one of them overheard a story I was telling some people nearby. I witnessed the Lord lay out a pathway that led directly to him, only I didn’t know it at the time.

Discouraged and frustrated

While the end of my summer had so many beautiful moments and memories, it was also really challenging. I was feeling discouraged and beaten down by two things.

First, I was frustrated by the small number of Muslim women we were reaching. Coming into the summer, I thought each day would be spent with Muslim women. The reality was that it was spent mostly with Hindu women, instead. Though I loved spending time with the people I met each day, my heart weighed heavy for the group of women we weren’t getting to reach, because I knew they also needed Jesus.

The second burden I was carrying around was formed from words I would hear each day when we would share our faith. People would say: “Yes, I worship Jesus. He is my favorite god.” They do not worship Jesus as the Son of the one and only God; rather, they see him as one of many gods. They worship him as another idol of theirs, instead of worshiping him as the one true God. Because of this polytheistic worldview, I felt like the women were not fully grasping what we were saying. I was ready to present the gospel to Muslim women because they also believed in only one God. I wanted to

see another set of beliefs from the people in my city.

After talking to my supervisors and telling them about my struggle, they gave my team and me a list of areas in our city that were predominantly Muslim, and I was very excited. With only two weeks left in the city, we sought out these Muslim areas. The first place we went was once again disappointing and frustrating. There were no Muslim women in the area, and I began bracing myself for yet another day of hearing: “Yes, I worship Jesus. He is my favorite god.”

The girl who listened

My team and I decided to split up and go our separate ways to walk the streets to share the gospel with people. Right away, we found a group of women sitting outside their government housing building, so we approached them and began talking. During our discussion with them, people would pop in and out, which was typical for the area. Everyone was so interested in the foreigners and wanted to know why we were in South Asia. But as curious as they were, no one ever stayed around for too long, because they quickly became bored and would continue on with their day.

After talking for a little bit, we began to share the gospel and tell how Jesus gave up his life so that they too could be in heaven with him one day. As we were talking, I noticed a girl walk up. She slowly made her way down the hallway close to where the ladies were sitting and stood there leaning against the wall, listening to every word of the gospel. As the conversation got deeper and more in depth, I turned my attention away from the woman in the hallway and focused on the women in front of me.

After a few more minutes of talking, we could tell the women no longer were interested in talking to us and hearing what we had to say. So, I turned my attention back to the girl in the hallway but she was no longer there. As we continued down the street I couldn't stop thinking about that

girl. Why had she stayed, listened to the full story, and still walked away? What were her thoughts on the story? Did she believe it was true?

It was almost lunch time. The heat was at its highest for the day, and no one had any interest in sitting outside when they could be in their shaded homes. We were becoming desperate to find women to talk to. As we walked along the streets, there was no one in sight except for a few men, and it was culturally not OK for us as women to approach these men.

Invited into a home

Then, far off in the distance we saw three women standing outside their building. As we made our way to them, they noticed us and decided they were not in the mood to talk and quickly retreated to the inside of their homes therefore cutting off any opportunity we might have to share with them. We quickly turned around to go down another road and there she was—the girl from the hallway who had stayed to hear the whole gospel story. How crazy is that? Not only was she standing right in front of me, but we were standing right in front of the building where she lived.

She invited my partner, translator and me into her home. We walked in, took off our shoes and plopped right down on the concrete floor, and then she left. As we were sitting in this small dimly lit room with little airflow from the single window, we were confused as to why she would bring us into her home only to leave. After a few minutes, the girl came back and we were thrilled to see she had brought her neighbors to meet us and talk with us as well. Then a few more minutes passed and more people come in to sit and talk to us. Eight girls—not including myself, my teammate and our translator—ended up squeezing into the one small room that day where we got to share the story of Adam and Eve.

We told the women how when God first created the world, there was no sin, and we had peace with God. But we were separated from him after man

sinned. That then led into the gospel. We told them God does not want to be separated from us. God wants us to be with him eternally in heaven. God loves us so much that he sent his Son to the Earth to live the perfect life so he could be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of everyone in the world, because the wages of our sin is death. We told them they could have a relationship with Jesus while on earth, and he can cleanse them of their sins so they too could spend eternity in heaven.

Lives changed

As we were telling them all of this, the girl from the hallway began to weep. She had just been kicked out of her home by her husband and no longer was able to see her daughter. She felt abandoned, unloved, unwanted and hopeless. After she heard what Jesus did for her because of his immeasurable love, she couldn't believe it. Filled with gratitude and awe of Jesus, she decided to give her life fully to him that day, and so did her friend. They both understood Jesus will always love them, that he desires to know them, and he will never leave them or forsake them. Then another woman in the room who had already believed in Jesus said that she wanted to be baptized and make a public profession of her faith in Jesus and to walk boldly in it.

I have been back in the States for a few weeks now, and I've been praying for my friends I met that day. Just a few days ago, my translator, who is from the city I was in for the summer, sent me a video. I opened it up and saw those three girls being baptized. I saw them choosing Jesus and choosing to take up their crosses each day in a city that is so far from knowing the one true God because they worship all the wrong gods. As I read the message attached to the video, I was filled with joy because those three women went and shared the gospel with a friend and that friend also came to faith. As I kept scrolling down and reading the message I saw another video of their friend being baptized on the same day.

To see the way the Lord worked in just one day blows me away. He took my negative outlook and showed me that what I'm sharing is so urgent and life-changing, and I will never know who around me is impacted by what I say. I need to be focused on the people I am reaching and not question why I'm unable to reach a certain group of people. God will send me to the people who are ready as long as I am willing to go. Looking back, I see how the Lord intricately worked that day and how he continued to work in the days following. He is finding ways to make his name known in a place filled with so much darkness, whether it be with people from the States or nationals in that area. Please join me in praying for South Asia. It is now a place so close to my heart. Pray for my friends who are new to their faith, and pray they would be bold in sharing their beliefs with the lost people around them.

Connor, a student at Texas A&M University, served in South Asia with Go Now Missions. Her last name is withheld for security reasons.