Focus On South Asia Edition

Multiplying Disciples in South Asia

“H”ow does a pastor with very little or no theological training address issues that come up as every day realities?

It’s a question central to this ministry, and one that motivates Langham-supported Scholar Dr. Havilah Dharamraj in her work at the South Asian Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS).

South Asia is a place where explosive church growth is rapidly outpacing the training of pastors and leaders — leaving believers vulnerable and with little guidance on how to biblically address their critical issues like conflict and corruption, marriage and family, karma and fatalism, poverty and wealth. As professor and academic dean at SAIACS, Havilah is investing her time equipping the future seminary teachers and pastors who will shepherd the church in South Asia.

“We have trained now faculty for Bible colleges and seminaries, right across the subcontinent, and further down into Myanmar. For example, a graduate school of theology in Myanmar has 14 faculty trained by SAIACS. So when I see this multiplication, it motivates me to do what I do. I know it’s not simple multiplication, but multiplication on a logarithmic scale.”

One of these leaders is Sunny Joseph, a former student of Havilah’s at SAIACS. Today, he is teaching at a Bible college in northern India where hundreds of future pastors are being trained and mentored to preach the Bible and shepherd new believers. Graduates of the college plant new churches in rural villages across northern India every year.

“It was my privilege to study at SAIACS under the leadership of Dr. Havilah ... It has helped me to think critically and have a better understanding of God’s Word,” Sunny shares. “It’s time to train up indigenous Bible scholars because this region is a vast mission field.”

Over the past 20 years, fourteen Langham Scholars, theological leaders like Havilah who have received their PhDs with support from Langham, have taught at SAIACS — and the school has graduated more than just future Bible teachers. The students of Langham Scholars have been described as seeds — multiplied and scattered out into the world where they take root and serve as agents of change —transforming their communities with the power of God’s Word.

“Our investment takes roots into terrain that sometimes we don’t even anticipate,” says Havilah. “Though we are training mostly teachers and pastors and missionaries, we also end up with administrators in very significant spheres of influence. We end up training Bible translators. We have as alumni those in publishing, as well. We are so proud to see the many different ways God uses the investment Langham has placed into us.”

The ministry of Langham is grateful for your faithful prayers and support, which over the years has helped us support and mentor nearly 400 Langham Scholars like Havilah around the world.

South Asia is the term used to describe the southern region of the Asian continent, sometimes called the “Indian subcontinent”. It includes the countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (and sometimes Myanmar is included). With a population of 1.721 billion people, South Asia is the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world. It covers about 4.4 million km², which is 10% of the Asian continent or 3.3% of the world’s land surface area. South Asia is ethnically diverse, with more than 2,000 ethnic entities with populations ranging from hundreds of millions to small tribal groups. India is the largest country in the region, both in geographical size and population.
The ceremony marked a groundbreaking moment in the church in India and across South Asia. After eight years of dedicated work by scholars and editors — partnered with the persevering, generous support of Langham donors — the South Asia Bible Commentary is finally a reality!

It was launched with great joy and thanksgiving in New Delhi, India on Sunday 4 October 2015 at the Cathedral Church of the Redemption.

The ceremony was attended by leaders from many different denominations. He preached from Psalm 33: “The word of the Lord is right and good …” and also said, “This South Asia Bible Commentary … is not only a gift to South Asia — which we pray will enable the great Christian populations of the countries in this region to fulfill the calling of our faith, to obey the teaching and follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by works of love, service, justice and the care of creation, to live as good citizens, bringing blessing to their own countries and nations. But also, it is a gift from South Asia to the rest of the global Christian church in many other lands and cultures, who, as they eagerly receive and read it, will hear the voice of this region speaking through and alongside the voice of the Scriptures we share in common throughout the world. That is our hope and prayer in Langham Partnership.”

After the Service, celebrations continued in the garden behind the Cathedral. The space had been transformed with a stage and festive marquee. There was a huge model of the Commentary on stage, and a background poster with the slogan: ‘Faithful, Clear, Relevant’. Bright colours, flowers, joyful Indian music and a dance performance by girls from a local school added to the festive ambience.

Seated on stage were the SABC Board: all six editors — Brian Wintle, Paul Swarup (OT), Finny Philip (NT), Havilah Dharamraj (OT), Jacob Cherian (NT) and J.B. Jeyaraj (OT) — as well as Chris Wright and Pieter Kwant from Langham. In the audience of 750 invited guests were the managing copy-editor — Isobel Stevenson — and senior Langham staff, all looking smart in kurtas.

There was tight security in anticipation of the arrival of the Vice-President of India, Hamid Ansari, who had agreed to officially release the Commentary.

After being welcomed with gifts of flowers, a shawl of friendship and a Bible, he released the ribbon-bound copy of the Commentary, and made a warmly applauded speech. ‘I am sure’, he said, ‘the Commentary will make the text more accessible to a large number of people, particularly in South Asia, and enable them to imbibe the message of love and compassion that the Bible has for all humankind.’

The Launch was a humbling reminder that God uses Langham Partnership to equip and resource leaders who then go on to serve Christ and grow His Kingdom. This is made possible because of people like you. One of those leaders is Langham Scholar Havilah Dharamraj, a senior writer and editor of the South Asia Bible Commentary and Professor and Dean at the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies in Bangalore, India.

Pictured second from the right in the picture below is Langham Scholar Finny Philip. Finny is the president of Filadelfia Bible College in Udaipur, which not only sends students to plant churches and help equip rural...
pastors in the region, but also operates Open Door Publications, which prints and distributes Christian books in the region, including the South Asia Bible Commentary.

Relaxed publishing staff posed for photos after the event. For several of the publishing team from Udaipur, this was their first visit to New Delhi, India’s capital.

This is Rahul, one of Finny’s staff members who works to help equip the church throughout northern India. The reason for the joyful celebration was, as he said, “If you have a book in our language (context), you have Christ in our culture.”

Signed gift copies of the Commentary were presented to supporters and Christian leaders, while an overhead screen showed photos from the past eight years. Local Christian musicians performed. And a full Indian banquet was served as fellowship continued in small groups. Many people queued to buy copies. Everywhere they were ‘sampling’ the Commentary.

The press conference, held on Saturday before the launch, led to several national newspapers on Monday reporting the launch. And a Delhi-based television crew recorded the whole event for broadcast on channels across the region in the following months!

Faithful, clear, relevant … to God be the glory!

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South Asia Bible Commentary Facts

• An affordable, one-volume commentary on the entire Bible written in simple language, using indigenous metaphors and images with a minimum of theological jargon.

• Written in English, by 91 evangelical scholars from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh (including most of the Langham Scholars in the region).

• 1824 pages, with 90 specialist articles on South Asian realities.

• Published by Open Door Publications (ODP) in Udaipur, with Zondervan as the Western partner. Finny Philip, the CEO of ODP is a Langham Scholar and a NT editor of the Commentary.

• A Hindi translation is already underway and work has started on an Urdu translation. A Tamil translation is being considered.

Millions of Christians will benefit from the South Asia Bible Commentary

Pictured below are a pastor and his wife from the Rajasthan province in northern India. For pastors across India, the South Asia Bible Commentary will be an invaluable resource as they shepherd new believers with God’s Word.

Pictured below is his congregation, who walk miles to reach this humble church on a hill. Not pictured are the people gathered outside, listening to the message through a loud speaker. In the Majority World, theological resources like the South Asia Bible Commentary do not collect dust on the shelf, but equip pastors on the frontlines to teach the Bible to their flocks.
Celebrating 10 Years of Langham Preaching in Pakistan

The Pearl Continental Hotel in Lahore glitters with extravagant furnishings, marble, gilt and attentive staff. It was a lovely setting for the celebration of 10 Years of Langham Preaching in Pakistan, however this was not the reason for which it was chosen. The multiple security checkpoints, metal detectors and X-rays, armed guards and sniffer dogs meant the 500+ guests, including many Christian leaders of Pakistan, could gather in relative safety. The latest Taliban strike in Peshawar, still reeling from the murder of more than 100 school children last year, was less than a week ago.

You might expect the occasion to be a little dampened by the heightened security measures. Far from it, the mood was one of excitement, celebration and a deep joy at the wonderful things God has done and is doing among His people in this place.

“This is a milestone for Pakistan”, Bishop Irfan Jamil of Lahore told the assembled guests, “and milestones tell you how far you have come as well as how far you still have to go”.

The program included an address by Paul Barker, Langham Regional Coordinator for Preaching and Scholars, who quoted an elderly lady, who told a Langham trained preacher that “I have not heard the Bible preached like this for years: thank you and thank God”. He reminded the assembled guests that the Preaching movement in Pakistan is an indigenous movement, with more than 800 people trained over the past 10 years, and all Level One courses now being provided by local trainers instead of international facilitators.

“If the Church of God is to stand up against opposition and persecution, the Word of God needs to be preached faithfully, clearly and relevantly. That is now happening all over Pakistan. Thanks be to God”.

A feature of Langham Preaching in Pakistan is the non-denominational unity with which Christians participate and support the program. The choir was largely composed of Pakistani Salvation Army officers, leading the singing with enthusiasm, beginning with the wonderful Henry Francis Lyte hymn “I will follow thee My Saviour”:

Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought or hoped or known;
Yet how rich is my condition,
God and Heaven are still my own.

A particularly touching note that may not have been recognised by all the international guests, was the interpretation provided for Paul Barker, and later Chris Wright, by Bishop Irfan Jamil. The role of translator is not highly regarded in Pakistan, and is often undertaken by a young student or unrecognised person. Instead, Bishop Irfan, who was among the first Pakistanis trained ten years ago, prior to his elevation to Bishop, eagerly grasped the opportunity to serve in this way — and did so with such enthusiasm and clarity that Chris Wright observed that “at times it became a little disorienting as to who was preaching and who was translating we were in such harmony”.

As we celebrated this great occasion, Pakistani Christians told us how Langham Preaching emphasises the whole narrative of the Bible and God’s plan of grace that comes before the law — just as salvation from Egypt came before the commandments of the law. This is specifically relevant to Pakistan today, as many Christians have been impacted by the prevailing culture of Sharia Law that must be fulfilled. “The Church is coming to understand that we are not under law but under grace”.

The work continues to go forward. I met with Church groups, with Bible Study fellowships, with individual supporters and with some small gatherings of friends who had come together to learn more. Perhaps there are some church groups or friends you know who would like to hear about the work and be encouraged by God’s faithfulness and provision for His people in the Majority World? Maybe you could help organise a morning tea or supper meeting for your Bible Study group? As I plan future trips around Australia, please let us know if you would like me to visit you and share how people are becoming equipped to teach the Bible faithfully, clearly and relevantly!

Gillean Smiley
Langham Australia Executive Officer writes:

Of the greatest joys in my role with Langham is meeting God’s people in so many different places and contexts, and discovering immediate bonds of love and fellowship. After the wonderful opportunity to visit Pakistan late last year (above), in February this year I undertook a short tour of some country regions of NSW, to meet with a number of our Langham friends, some of whom have supported us for many years, some who have come to know about us quite recently. It was a delight to meet face to face, and share some stories of what God is doing all around the world, and how we can partner together to ensure
Have you considered including Langham Partnership in your will?

Like many mission organizations, we can benefit greatly when friends make a final gift that continues to bless the ministries they have generously supported in life. Once you have made proper and primary provision for family and friends this can be a very effective way to go on making a difference to the church on earth when you have joined the church in glory! If you would like to consider this option in your will please contact the Langham Australia office on 02 4751 9036.

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See Website for Online Donations au.langham.org

Langham Partnership Australia
PO Box 530 Springwood NSW 2777

For More Information:
Phone: 02 4751 9036
Email: australia@langham.org

Our vision is to see churches in the Majority World equipped for mission and growing to maturity in Christ through the ministry of pastors and leaders who believe, teach and live by the word of God.

As an evangelical organisation, the Langham Partnership is above all committed to exalt the name and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, to promote the gospel of His grace and to foster the mission of His church.

We do this through our three programmes:

- **Langham Scholars** offers doctoral scholarships for theological leaders who will lead churches and train the next generation of Bible teachers in their home countries.
- **Langham Literature** provides preachers and Bible colleges with evangelical literature and mentors indigenous writers, editors and publishers.
- **Langham Preaching** establishes national movements for continuous training in expository biblical preaching.

Langham Preaching seminars are all about getting into God’s Word. Please pray for Langham Preaching events across the world — see the enclosed prayer slip for Preaching events to be held over the next six months.

For a weekly emailed update, contact us at australia@langham.org to request the Preaching Prayershot.

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