

Talk on India and Nepal

To the Youth of Willow Creek 3rd Ward on November 30, 2014

(Tom commenced by quoting 10 scriptures pertaining to the poor and their upliftment. I commenced as follows while Tom showed slides.):

What a blessing to visit India and Nepal from October 24th through November 4th. We have gained a greater understanding of how Eastern thinking differs from Western thinking. Basically Easterners believe that God will make us “more than we are.” They focus on healing, helping, and lifting. The goal is to find wholeness.

Westerners look to the atonement to save us from sins which sometimes results in shame and self-condemnation. Easterners focus on mercy. They bless themselves and others by placing a mark in the middle of their forehead. They are contemplative. Easterners meditate to find peace within. They look to the past. Westerners look to the future.

We learned that the Bible was written from an Easterners point of view. It has a lot of symbolism: For example, in the parable of the good Samaritan Jesus is “the good Samaritan.” The Jews are represented by the man who “fell among thieves.” The entire Jewish nation needed healing. They had departed from light and truth.

BIRTH Peter Clark in Port Elizabeth, South Africa which is directly across the ocean from India, asked this question:

Why would a just God, who loves his children, allow some to be born in very favorable circumstances while others are born into abject poverty?

Brother Clark has a testimony of the gospel but he had been inactive for 27 years and the Elders asked us to join them on their weekly visits to him. I answered by sharing this quote from Bruce R. McConkie’s book The Millennial Messiah. It is also found in Mormon Doctrine:

“The Almighty Elohim is the father of billions of spirit children, all of whom lived for millions of years in his eternal presence. He ordained and established the plan and system whereby they might advance and progress and become like him. . . . Our Eternal Father knows all of his spirit children and in his infinite wisdom, he chooses the very time that each comes to earth to gain a mortal body and undergo a probationary experience. Everything the Lord does is for the benefit and blessings of his children. Each is subjected to the very trials and experience that he should have. No matter where or in what circumstances that find themselves. . . . Whatever the Lord does is right whether we understand his purpose or not. . . . (p.660-661) He tells in Isaiah 55:7-9 : “My ways are not your ways. . . .”

This explains why some people are born in countries like India and Nepal. Let's explore some other differences. Like marriage customs.

MARRIAGE: Ninety-percent of marriages in India are arranged marriages. Most people believe they are fated to marry their chosen mate. The search begins with parents looking for a prospective mate for a son or daughter. When a good prospect is found, the girl's family is approached concerning a possible match. Then her family evaluates the groom's ability to support a wife. Marriages always occur within a particular cast: whether merchant, artisan, or laborer.

The girl's parents investigate the young man's character by going into his neighborhood and asking people about his character. They want to know if he drinks, gambles or has any bad habits.

As the marriage negotiations proceed, astrological charts are drawn for the prospective bride and groom. These charts are taken to religious leaders who compare them to determine the degree of compatibility and best time for the marriage to take place if it is to occur. It is the responsibility of the groom to provide a dowry for the bride (money, possessions, items of value). Their two families negotiate and a settlement is determined. The groom rides to her house on a white horse. The bride is veiled and the couple do not see one another until the marriage ceremony. They believe they will grow to love one another. In India marriage is considered the beginning of a life-long love affair. Westerners fall in love and marry and then some couples discover they are not compatible and so divorce. In India sacrifice is the basis of marriages—they sacrifice personal feelings in order to support one another.

DEATH

70,000 Hindu's come to the Ganges River each day to bathe. They believe that the Ganges is sacred, the water coming from God that can cleanse them physically and spiritually. Cremations take place on its shores and ashes of the cremated are scattered upon its waters. Though the headwaters of the Ganges are in the Himalayas where the water is clean, the river becomes polluted and is the second most polluted in the world, the Amazon being the most polluted. Cremation involve five elements – wood, fire, earth, air and water. Hindus believe these are needed to purify the departing soul. Young children and pregnant women are never cremated. Hindus believe they are pure.

Those bearing the body to be cremated must circle the funeral pyre three times. The body is enveloped in wood. Only the oldest or youngest son may light the cremation fire. Hindu's cremate their dead while Muslims bury theirs. The Maharajahs build beautiful and ornate tombs.

God is no respecter of persons. He has provided holy men to guide the people. The purpose of religion is to lift people to a higher level. **There are some parallels between Eastern and Western Religions:**

Hinduism – Has a belief that a divine being will come to the earth. Vedas is their holy scriptures. They practice cremation to purify the soul as it leaves the body. They believe in the progression of the soul as it travels through many life times (reincarnation). Hindus believe that the body and spirit take on the attributes of the lives each soul has lived and that the soul influences one's outward appearance.

Buddhism—teaches there are three degrees of Glory. All life must come to an end in the Millennium. Some souls reach perfection after many lifetimes but choose to return again to heal and bless others. Their goal is to reach Nirvana – a state of complete peace.

Shinto belief embraces loyalty, courage, justice, truthfulness, politeness and honor.

Sikhism is practiced by 1.8 % of India's population. Sikhs reject the cast system and worship only one God. They contribute 10% of their means to feed the poor. They have a soup kitchen in Delhi that feeds 6,000 people daily every day of the year.

Mormons have beliefs in common to these religions: Catholics teach that there is a curtain between the pope and God. While we Mormons “go through the veil.” Egyptians use a sacred embrace. They set aside an area in pyramids known as “the Holy of Holies.” We have such a room in each of our temples.

Water is used as a symbol in every religion.

Muslims stress prayer and appropriate conduct. They wash and remove their shoes before entering a mosque, symbolically shaking the dust of the world off their feet so they can come before God properly cleansed. Moses did so as well.

Islamic temples have dress codes; Women cover their heads and worshipers dress in clean clothes. They believe that prayers in a house of God are 27 times more powerful. (We use prayer robes in our temples.) **The number 40 is symbolic;** it indicates how long it takes to get a job done. For example, we say the Israelites wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. Actually they only wandered for 38.

Buddhists and **Hindus** believe that our actions in this life determine our place in the next life. The soul grows as it overcomes ego attachments. Karma is the law of cause and effect. We get what we sow— in this life or in the next. As we overcome our weaknesses we are able to access the gifts God has for us.

Hindus believe there is no one true religion, that there are many pathways leading to God ; They teach that there is a common goodness in all human kind. But it takes many life times to achieve inner peace. Both practice non-violence toward all forms of life. Cows, monkeys and other animals wander around in their cities.

Easterners believe that men are ignorant of their divine nature. They desire to become like God. Likewise, Mormons believe: “As God is man may become.” Mormons teach of a pre-existence, an earth life, and a resurrection. Both Easterners and Westerners believe in the progression of the soul as Mormons do. Matthew 5:48: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

GOD LOVES ALL OF HIS CHILDREN

Book of Mormon, 2nd Nephi 29:7: “Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all nations of the earth?”

God promises, “I will find you and bring you my word. . . ” in all languages, cultures to the four corners of the earth. As people in the world we are all in God’s purpose. God blesses everyone. He uses nations to bring about his cause. Light and truth can be found in religions. God loves all His children equally.

Can just one person can make a difference?

David O. McKay said: “Every man and every person who lives in this world wields an influence, whether for good or for evil. It is not what he says alone, nor is it what he does. It is what he is. Every person radiates who he or she really is. And what we radiate affects people around us.”

Sister Teresa was a Catholic Nun, born in Macedonia of Albanian descent, who went to India and spent most of her life helping the “poorest of the poor.”

Mahatma Gandhi experienced discrimination when he went to South Africa. So he led peaceful demonstrations to secure fair treatment for everyone under the law.

He returned to India and used the same tactics to win India’s independence from the British. Martin Luther King admired Gandhi. He visited India and adopted his tactics to help end discrimination here in the U.S.

The Crusades perpetuated evil in the name of religion. The Spanish Inquisition tortured and persecuted Jews, Muslims and other Christians including my own ancestors. ISIS and other radical groups are killing people in the name of religion.

Adopt 3 Principles of understanding: 1. Learn from devoted members of other faiths. 2. Do not compare your best self to the shortcomings of those who believe differently. 3. Always leave room for holy things.



Buddah was born in Nepal, which consisted of a number of small, independent kingdoms made up of people from Central Asia, India and Tibet until the 1700s when Nepal became a Monarchy. Nepal was not open to the west until 1954. Hippies came in the 50's and 60's and named one Buddhist temple "the monkey temple." Animals are sacred. Hundreds of monkeys roam around unrestrained.

Kathmandu, capital of Nepal, is on the same latitude as Provo, Utah. This ancient city was founded by Buddhists who claim it is 2,000 years old. Men wear hats representing Mt. Everest.



This temple is said to have been built from a single tree trunk. "Tanebada" is the Nepali word for "Thank You."

The light of the gospel strengthens and empowers. President Hinkley said our church makes "bad men good and good men better." Like Mt. Everest in the Himalayas we can be the light of the world.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they will see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven. Matthew 5:16

We can grow spiritually as we gain knowledge and have greater understanding of our world, "He who receives light and continues in God will receive more light." D&C 50:24

Our Beautiful World

The Himalaya is the youngest mountain range in the world with hundreds of rivers and snow-capped peaks. The range, especially the part which falls in Nepal, is a great place for trekking. One can achieve internal peace in the Himalaya.

After it was discovered to be the highest mountain in the world by British surveyors, it was decided that the tallest mountain should be named after Sir George Everest, Surveyor General of India in the mid-19th Century.

He was not in favor of the idea. Sir George believed that mountains should be known by their local names. However since both Nepal where the highest peak is located and Tibet where the mountains base is found, were both countries that were out of bounds for foreigners then, British map makers were not able to ascertain whether or not the mountain had a name. So they called it Mt. Everest.

Later it became known that the people living around the mountain called it "Chomolungma," the mother goddess of the earth. But by then, the mountain had become much too well-known as Everest. The Nepali name for Everest is Sagarmatha, meaning "forehead of the sky." The word "himalaya" comes from ancient Sanskrit. Hima means "snow." Alaya means "abode" or "Abode of snow."

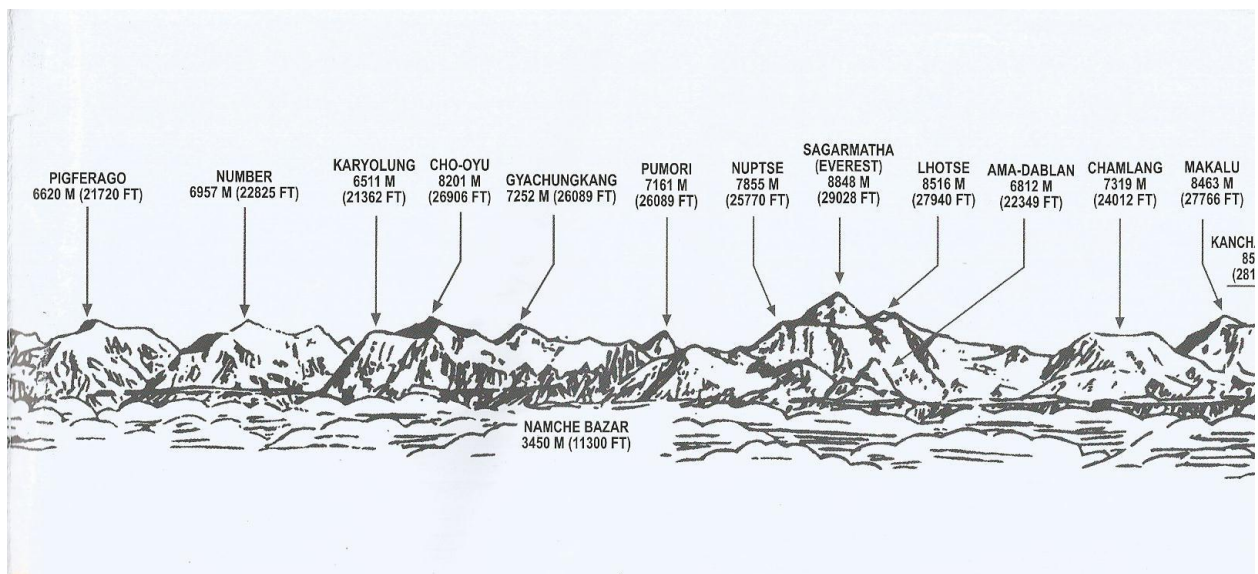
In a thousand ages of the Gods,

I could not tell thee of the glories of the Himalaya.

Just as the dew is dried by the morning sun,

So are the sins of mankind by the sight of the Himalaya.

Poem by Skand Puran



It was a great blessing for Tom and I to visit India, Nepal and to fly over the Himalayas and view Mt. Everest.

We have a greater appreciation for the different religions of the world. I hope you have enjoyed learning about marriage customs, cremation and the religions on India and Nepal. Even though we both taught World History this trip was a life changing experience for us. We love our Heavenly Father and have enjoyed sharing this with you.

What we can learn from the Mughal Emperors:

1. Babaur took the throne at age 13 in 1526. He descended from Genghis Khan, the Mongol conqueror who founded the largest land empire in history. Later Babaur defeated the last sultan of Delhi to become the first Mughal Emperor. Babaur conquered most of northern India which he ruled until 1530. **He succeeded because he surrounded himself with able advisors and generals.**
2. Humayun - The Mughal Emperors were Muslim but they tolerated all other religions. It's important to **support and understand people from a different culture and belief system.**
3. Akbar the Great (1542-1650) expanded into Pakistan and Afghanistan and won over the Hindus by making many of their leaders government officials. Akbar had a great interest in all religions and ruled with tolerance and justice. He was a great builder. He had a vision of a golden age in India. Beautiful buildings were built and his power was consolidated.
Akbar teaches us to dream big!
4. Jahan Gir – was botanist and not much interested in governing the empire. So his favorite wife came to rule. She promoted her brother to chief of the army and made her father prime minister. She built the “Baby Taj” a tomb and monument for her father. Her niece became the favorite wife of Shan Jahan. **Jahan Gir knew how to delegate.**
5. Shah Jahan ruled from 1628-1658 and built the Taj Mahal for his favorite wife the Empress Nur Jahan. This prince was 15 years old when he first saw her. He married her five years later and called her the “Jewel of the Palace.” They were very much in love. She accompanied him when he went to battle. They were married for 19 years and she bore 14 children. Only six survived. She died of complication delivering Aurazzen, her last child. Her husband built a monument to their love. He said, “Even the Sun and the moon shed tears from their eyes.”

The Taj Mahal took 20 years to complete. It is the most costly tomb in the world. The land, stone and other building materials were donated by the local maharajah. The emperor paid the workers and gave his artisans a bonus to “never use their skills again.”

Shan Jahan teaches us that Marriage is like a monument that we built over a lifetime. Each act of service, kindness and goodness represents a brick in our monument of love. Love is an act of will. Choose to love!

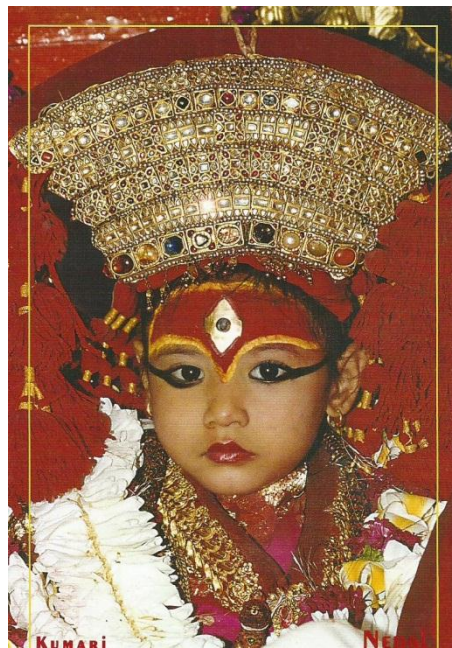
6. Auranzeg – Youngest son of Shan Jahan & his beloved wife, defeated his brothers in a battle to control the Empire in 1658. He placed his father under house arrest and had the heads of his two brothers presented to their father at a banquet. Auranzeg destroyed many Hindu temples and tried to forcibly convert the Hindus to Islam and the Mughal empire began to fall apart.

What does this emperor's life teaches us about free agency? Our bad choices bring about our downfall and can destroy everything we hold dear.

By the mid 1700's little remained of the Empire. There was no effective central power. The British moved in and took over and divided the country into separate states in 1858. They governed indirectly through local maharajas.

Romans 2:19: "You are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness." You have important leadership responsibilities in the world.

Interesting Facts, 1. Nepal selects a "living goddess" a beautiful young girl to serve as their goddess from age 5 until first menses. Then she returns to her family and another is selected.



The current "living goddess."

2. The Sikhs no longer have a prophet. After their sixth prophet died they started worshipping their holy scriptures. They put them to bed each night and bring them forth at daybreak and display them just inside the entrance of their mosque. There they are honored as a current prophet.