

Questions and answers at WEC in 1961:

Foreword:

At the united worldwide evangelization Crusade and Evangelical Literature Services conference in Mussoorie in 1961, Brother Bakht Singh gave the Lord's message for the first three days. Many felt that, not only his messages, but also the spirit in which he spoke to them, as the servants of the Lord in India, was much honored by God.

These messages give a complete answer to any who ask what principles and methods of work have governed the movement with which Brother Bakht Singh has so long been associated. As they are presented here they form the simplest expression of New testament ideals and principles, proved to be living and workable and applicable to the needs of the Church today.

Let any gathering of God's people seek to put these principles into operation, and they will surely rejoice in The Return of God's Glory.

Question 1:

According to your message, what steps should evangelical missions in India take in order that the glory of God might be manifested?

Answer:

The first thing we should ask ourselves is: "Are we really anxious to see God's glory according to God's Word?"

There are people praying with a burden, everywhere. Some say, "Lord send a revival". Others pray for a renewal in the work, or for a quickening. But beneath it all there is a common consciousness of a genuine lack – something missing. In other words, they want something which they have not got!

Now all of us can begin to pray. We will never agree as a group- it is a personal matter, because only those who are prepared to pay the price can labor in this way. If you want a manifestation of His glory, you must be prepared to pay the price, as Hannah did.

This is how the Lord began to deal with me in the beginning. In my travels here and there, I saw spiritual barrenness; and God gave me a burden to pray. I lost all desire for food, sleep and for everything else as I prayed. My burden was to see God work fully: "Lord, I know Thou canst work; Thy Word says so; and I believe it".

If you are sincere in your questions, you will find that God will give you also a burden to prevail in prayer. It may be for whole nights, or whole days. God will show you how you can become His partners like Hannah, Samuel, David or Solomon. It may be that you can be all four of these, but if not; you must be ready and satisfied to share in his burden in whatever way He shows you.

I don't think that we can accomplish much as a group. It is a message which can only be accepted by those who are definitely burdened to see God's glory revealed. Whatever God shows you, you must take your share. If God commands you to spend more time in prayer then by all means do so. If God shows you something from His Word, be faithful in fulfilling it and sharing it with your co-workers.

Questions 2:

Do you consider it possible for foreign missionaries working in present-day India to establish a local church or assembly which is indigenous and which functions in the New Testament pattern?

Answer:

I do not consider anyone 'foreign' in the first instance. God brings a man from any country and we receive him as God's messenger. We do not receive him as 'American' or 'English' or 'Japanese'. In the second instance, not everyone can establish a church. It is only those who have the apostolic ministry – the apostolic calling and experience – that God uses in this way; and they may be from any country. In the book of Acts we see that God used men from different places. He was not bound to choose men from Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus or Colosse. Those whom He called, He anointed for this particular task. It is not a question of national or foreign. God can use anybody who responds to His calling. We may preach or we may teach but that will not establish a 'Church'- it is not that easy. Do you desire that gift?

Question 3:

The principle that God works more fully through the Church, as a body of believers, than through independent believers working separately, is clear from Scripture. However, there are indications from Church history which show that there is just as much dynamic working through men whom God uses, and who function quite independently, such as Paul the apostle and other men of God. We see that after Paul's initial missionary journey, there is scarcely any time when he consults a local or a sending church for his moves, and there are no signs of church submission as taught today. He consults his team, if anybody, but he usually goes on his own guidance.

Answer:

Yes, I agree with you that it is a general Scripture principle that God works more fully through the church – the body of believers. The scripture is clear – so why not believe it? I have no doubt about it. But I have never said that God cannot use men functioning independently. I have said many times that God is sovereign and He can use anybody – even Balaam; but that is not proof that a man is perfect before God. It is possible that God could work through me and bring many souls to Himself, and there may be great outward results, but there may be in me something that God does not like.

Do not confuse these two issues. Of course God can use, and is using teachers and preachers and men of God of every country to expound the Scriptures and to win souls, but I emphasize that if you want to know God's fullness working through the church, then you must come into God's plan – there is no other way.

Now the question is, 'Am I independent by nature or by God's command? There are some people who remain independent because they find it difficult to work with others – they are happier on their own, and yet they are good people. Can you say truthfully that God has called you to be independent? My own experience has been that after working alone for seven years making my own plans, I now prefer to work in a team – usually of 10 or 12 people. I never knew how to enjoy the prayer fellowship of the whole church, but since then it has been a source of strength to work in co-operative with others. It means so much to me now to have the prayer

fellowship of the churches, and I know I have been saved from many mistakes by their prayers. As a church we pray together and the Lord gives us wonderful times of blessing, more than I have ever known before. But please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that no one is being used apart from us. We pray for God's people every where, but it comes to building a church -- it must be according to God's plan.

To answer the second part of your question, I feel it is a very forceful statement to make in saying that Paul did not consult the local church or group after he finished his missionary journeys. You see, the Bible does not give all the details. In the first place, it was Paul who so emphatically and faithfully instructed the early churches in these divine principles; and would he therefore not carry them out himself? Would he himself not want to be an example of these things? Now there have been circumstances in which he was not able to consult the church, and there may be in our case also when we have nobody to pray with. But then we are not under law but under grace. If we cannot consult our co-workers in persons, then we may surely do so by letter.

When the work began in Jerusalem there did not seem to be any church order, and at that time you will find Barnabas and Saul moving about on their own. It was only at Antioch that the church order was made clear, and it was from there that they moved forward under the direct influence of the church.

Throughout the epistles we find Paul appealing to the church to pray for him:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with Joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." (Romans 15:30-32).

"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth, boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel." (Eph 6:19).

"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak". (Col 4:3-4).

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith." (II Thess 3:1, 2).

From these Scriptures it is clear that Paul was always counting upon and asking for the prayer fellowship of the churches. When we seek prayer fellowship, it does not mean that we are bound by the opinions of others; it simply means that we value that fellowship in prayer. Our safety is in being upheld by the whole Church fellowship. They must know what we are doing, and we must communicate with the whole church, not just one man. That is what Paul did.

Question 4:

We are doing medical work, and frequently we pray for patients. The patients are Hindus and Moslems who are happy to have us pray for them, but who do not have a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. How far can we expect God to answer prayer for their healing, that the glory may be to the Name of Christ? When they have no faith, can we expect God to heal them?

Answer:

That depends upon our faith and not upon their faith only. It seems in many cases that our Lord went on healing people even though they had not faith. In our case I feel we should pray for their healing as well as for their salvation. I know that they come only for the sake of the body, but I generally pray for the disease of both body and soul. That is our privilege because our Lord is the loving Creator, and in His mercy He heals their diseases, and delivers them from trouble even though they do not call upon Him.

Question 5:

In the instance of a nucleus of Christians in a little village, far from contact with the outside world, how would you suggest they go about establishing elders? Who establishes elders? Paul could appoint various ones to go here and there to ordain elders but if there is no one of the status of Paul, how would it be possible in a village?

Answer:

Generally speaking, the persons through whom a work begins are responsible for its growth. If we cannot ourselves fulfill this ministry we must continue to solicit the prayers of other groups of believers that 'the Lord may raise up someone to shepherd them'. Through their prayers God will make full provision and will send someone to stay with them long enough to help them out. It is a divine principle that God never forsakes His sheep, and He expects his co-workers to ask Him, and to claim His promise to shepherd His flock, and He will.

Question 6:

In the scriptures we are commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature. To that extent we can safely say that the need of the lost world constitutes the call to the whole world. As you know, the evangelization of the entire world has been the emphasis of the WEC over the years. I accept that as a basic proposition but I understand that your experience has been more to evangelize where one is definitely sure that God has already been preparing the way. Could you share your personal thoughts along that line?

Answer:

First of all, I believe that the command to preach and teach is a full command. They go together and must never be separated. Recognizing this dual responsibility we have gone into the villages.

It was in Sindh that I began my work. I was alone; and it was the most difficult and backward part of India. Very few have ever ventured to go into the streets and villages of Sindh- it is such a hard place. I felt the need for help and for fellowship, so I began to ask the Lord. He sent me some co-workers. We worked together, prayed together and shared fellowship in the things of the Lord. We used to pray for hours remembering the Christians by their names and praying for revival among nominal Christians. God has a certain time for every place and he kept us

there for five years. By that time we had about thirty invitations to campaigns in the north of India in various places. I was expecting to go north until God spoke to me very clearly one morning and told me to go south. I had no desire to go south; furthermore, there was no invitation from anyone to go south. But that morning a letter came from Madras inviting us to come to Madras. I wrote back and told them that I would pray more before I would give the final reply. I wanted to be doubly sure of His leading. We prayed and the Lord confirmed His word to us to go south.

It was in 1938 we went south to a certain town for three weeks. We began to have all-nights of prayer and continued for 19 nights, and from 12 midnight to 5 in the morning. We travailed and the Lord revealed to us his pattern in dividing up India into different sections; and we sensed at that time that there was more of a burden for the south than for the north. However, it was always a struggle for me to remain in the south- I was always longing to be in the north, primarily because of the language difficulty. We never thought of it nor desired it, but the Lord always seemed to be pushing us to go south. We had to obey the Lord for we could see that the Lord will not be governed by our own ideas and desires.

We have never initiated a campaign in any place, nor written to anyone asking for meetings, nor have we been guided by the map. Let me give you a simple illustration of how another door was opened to us.

A letter came from Vellore from a young girl who wanted baptism. This letter had followed me for three months from place to place, so first of all I apologized for not being able to come earlier: but I went to her place and talked with her. Then I spoke to the mother, "Are you sure that your daughter is taking the right step? She assured me that the girl was born again and added "I am very happy that she is going to testify to it in baptism". After that I enquired, "This is all very good but what about you? If you think that your daughter is doing the right thing then you must follow that way yourself- God does not make any exceptions". In our conversation she told me there was going to be a cottage meeting and warmly extended an invitation for me to come. To that meeting many of the staff of the Medical College and Hospital of Vellore came, and from this I could see how God's time had come for Vellore. The Lord's Word came to me clearly, 'Don't delay, hire a house, and have a campaign'.

Similarly, such invitations have come for us to enter Poona; invitations from Assam to enter the large open door among the Lushi, Naga and other tribes-people.

The Poona door opened to us without our making any plans- we were just available. Four of us were there. A man came to see me on Saturday and said, "We have no speaker for tomorrow in our church building, will you give God's message to us tomorrow?" We prayed about it and accepted the invitation. A very large crowd came despite the fact that there had been no previous announcement- and within three days we gave out over thousand decision cards. Six hundred and seven decision cards were signed by people who had accepted the Lord as their Savior. At that time too the Lord indicated that His time had come to work in Poona and so we took a house and began to teach them the Bible.

We have prayed much for the north, and now our feeling is that God is moving and that His time is approaching to work in the north. We can't say where – it may be in Lucknow or in some other place.

In Guntur it appeared this way. I was in Bellu and God told me to go to Guntur. I went there but only for a few hours. I was having prayer at the station when two men came up behind me and said, "We have been sent to you by some Hindus from a village about forty miles away. There are about 30 people wanting baptism. Could you come and baptize them? I told them I would pray about it and sent a friend there first to confirm the facts. After two months we went there as a party. Now there is a small group of believers there. They have their own place of worship. Also in a neighboring town there are 30 to 40 believers who gather every week for worship, and the believers themselves are now being used of the Lord to open up the way for us.

These are illustrations of how we seek to fulfill the command to evangelize and teach under the Holy Spirit's direction.

Question 7:

A). My question has to do with Indian co-workers. As a mission we are trusting the Lord to send us Indian co-workers who would be willing to come and work with us on the 'faith' basis, the same as we are. Other missions have Indian helpers but they pay them a salary.

b). what about those working where there is no church?

Answer:

A). that is the mistake- that you are working as a mission. People who come to work in a mission naturally expect to be paid. That is commonly understood by all Indians. But if you work on the church basis, they are more likely to come in on a faith basis. That is why we do not approve of missions, nor do we ever make appeals for workers.

b). You see, by working on a church basis you may expect God to give gifts to the church (not to the mission) as He did in the early church. You must ask Him to give workers, whether they are from the north, the south or anywhere. This is in accordance with His order found in Ephesians 4: 11-12. These are the gifts which God wants to give to the church. Any other ways simply an employer/employee basis.

Question 8:

Since every church is either independent or of some kind of denomination – and even the most independent groups are joined together by some kind of federation – what are the marks one should look for to decide whether a church is a true church or not.

Answer:

Marks? This is a hard thing to say. We can go by things that appear true. Really the only way a person can determine the true motive of a group is to live with them. On the other hand we find groups that are sincere but they lack teaching. It is only by living and seeking fellowship with them that we can be sure that they want to be governed by the Holy Spirit – that is a clear working motive. Are they honoring the Lord by gathering for breaking of bread at Lord's table? Are they desirous of the heavenly plan to be brought about through the group? Do they want to be governed by their own doctrinal fancies? If they are sincere in seeking the Lord's direction at all times then accept them as the local church. That at least is the test that we go by.

Question 9:

Since you feel that all missionaries should be linked to a church, what practical steps would be recommended to bring this about?

Answer:

I have never said that. I have only expressed that those desires to follow God's plan should do so. This would not include all missionaries. Surely it is as God speaks to us as individuals that we recognize that we must come into God's plan. You can not impose it upon any one; nor is it something you come into by human wisdom and reasoning. As you begin to labor together you will become convinced that God's order is the church. Such a step should never be taken by recommendation. It must come from the Lord to the individual himself.

Question 10:

In some measure missionaries have had Bible preparation and experience of Lord's working. Ought they to be under the control of a brother or elder who is likely to be less measure, such as you would find in the smaller assemblies?

Answer:

It is not a matter of control – it is perhaps the wrong word to use. Spiritually we aim to co-operate with each other on the fellowship basis- seeking the fellowship of each and every believer. We recognize only one control as God's servants, and that is God's control. We are not under men's control. If there are church elders I respect them as elders, whether they are literate or ill-literate, mature or less mature. I accept them as God's servants and on that principle I seek their fellowship. To us this is of great value – mutual dependence and respect but not control. Now if you that God has not given you this guidance or the pattern, just wait. There is no need to be impatient.

My experience is that elders do not force their ways and ideas upon us. Once we recognize that they are called of God to be elders, it is a joy and privilege to have fellowship with them and to work with them.

Question 11:

In WEC we have a system where by candidates are tested and accepted as suitable for missionary work. There is also a further two years of probation on the field. After that they have full liberty to determine, and to engage in the ministry as the spirit leads in fellowship with the other field members. What plan d you have for fulltime workers for their acceptance and recognition?

Answer:

Of course we have no plans. Those who come to us as co-workers stay with us for one year, and some for ten years and some for less. We have no fixed period. We continue to invite them and when ever we find that they are mature and ready and can be trusted to fulfill a ministry, we recognize God's call upon them.

Some go away for various reasons. We do not force them: rather we leave the initiative with the individual. Those who choose to work with us of their own volition and desire to be tested remain on with us. They engage in open-air work, cottage meetings and evangelistic work and by this means we discover their abilities and individual gifts. We have such a variety of people come to us! Some are simple

village people and some are educated and gifted people. Each has to be tested differently to determine his gifts and calling. But as far as you as a group are concerned, I agree you would need to follow some plan.

Question 12

What do you consider to be the heavenly plan for the church in recognizing the five ministries given to it along with the operation of the nine spiritual gifts. Do you justify these ministries in the assemblies today?

Answer:

I don't think one should enforce it. The Holy Spirit must be given full charge. When He is working you will find these different gifts and talents functioning in oneness and unity. We ensure that when there is an issue of any kind the Holy Spirit is in charge.

In the second place, we are not bound by any method. In fact, often we have a new plan for every gathering. When the spirit is working why not let him work? If you find anything disorderly happening we stop it straight away. We believe that when the Holy Spirit is in charge He manifests Himself in many ways- in a way He chooses – sometimes through all the gifts, sometimes through only a few. But we do not insist that he must do things in a certain way, or in the same way.

We are generally cautious of any special manifestation of gift. We have to discern whether it is from God or from the devil, otherwise we are apt to be deceived by men's testimony. So we apply every test and when we find there is an inward peace, order, unity and oneness, then we accept it as a manifestation from God.