

The Forming of VOCM-America by Dr. Daniel Grell

During a three-week trip to India, I spent the last week in the village of Valathi in the province of Tamil Nadu, south India. There, I reestablished a friendship with a man named Arputharaj. I first



met him the summer of 1987 while on a trip around the world. During that trip I stayed in the home of a British woman, Betty Shelton. Arputharaj was her assistant in ministry. Since then, I've only had a few points of contact, assisting him with some schooling and helping with the purchase of some farm land to help fund a church planting project. I have, however, over the years received their

ministry prayer letters so had some idea of what God was doing through their ministry. During this time of reconnection, I was able to see firsthand the work of God through a ministry they established known as Valathi Outreach Church Ministries (VOCM). For years, this ministry has been strongly supported by churches in the UK, through VOCM-UK. This modeled for me the great need our brothers and sisters in India had for others to come alongside them to assist with this work of God.



During this visit, my daily Bible reading took me to two texts that spoke to my heart. The first was the call of Moses and his response found in Exodus 3:7-12 and 4:10-12.

- [Exo 3:7-12 ESV] 7 Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" 12 He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."
- [Exo 4:10-12 ESV] 10 But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." 11 Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12 Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."

While reading these texts I sensed God telling me he wanted me to do the same thing he asked Moses to do. For Moses, he asked him to rescue his people out of the bondage of slavery in Egypt. For me, I was to help rescue people out of the kingdom of darkness and their bondage to sin and bring them to the kingdom of light, the truth of the Gospel message. I also felt like Moses, very inadequate. But God said, “Who made you?” “Who has prepared you for the task?” “So, go, and I will be with you.”

I also relate somewhat to Moses since he was 80 years old at this time...I’m now 73 ½ years so also wondered about doing such a venture at this time in life...but God definitely said “So, go, and I will be with you.”

During this same period of time, I was also brought in my reading to Genesis 26:15 and 18. The wells that Abraham had dug had been filled up with earth and couldn’t be used any more...unless the rubble was removed.

- [Gen 26:15, 18 ESV] 15 (Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father.) ... 18 And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them.

This sounds very similar to the present situation of VOCM. Betty Shelton’s vision had been to plant churches in the villages of south India. However, due to Covid, challenges the VOCM-UK churches have had getting money into the country and other miscellaneous challenges, the vision has become overcome with “rubble” and has been struggling. Again, I felt God using this text to give direction to me. He was saying “Clean out the rubble that is keeping the vision from functioning as it should.” Again, I asked, “what can I do?” The Holy Spirit brought the following two sections of scripture to mind.

Brothers in need – The village churches of India

- [1Jo 3:16-18 ESV] 16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed, and in truth.

Money sent to the church in Jerusalem – The village churches of India

- [Rom 15:25-26 ESV] 25 At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.

During my years of involvement with missions, I’ve been a strong supporter of the philosophy that says “national churches need to be self-supporting.” However, in order to be self-supporting, they have to have the ability and resources to do so. The above two sections of scripture and my personal onsite visit to these villages challenged me to change my thinking. My brothers are in need and I’ve personally seen it. If Christ asks me someday why I didn’t help my brothers in

need, do I really want to say, “My mission philosophy was that national churches should be self-supporting.” This is not the answer I want to give Christ.



God didn't necessarily give me an exact plan, but put on my heart to begin to move forward doing something to rescue people who live in the villages of southern India from living in the kingdom of darkness and to revive a vision that has already accomplished great things by bringing churches to these villages.

So, I began to walk down the road which was to form a new non-profit tax-exempt mission



ministry called VOCM-AMERICA. The purpose? To join in partnership with VOCM (Valathi Outreach Church Ministries) of India, to plant churches in the unreached villages of southern India. This purpose follows the goal the apostle Paul had for his ministry as recorded in Romans 15:20-21, “and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, ‘Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.’”



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