

## **Life Group Topic #16** **Reaching the Punjabi Community**

### **WELCOME:** (15 minutes)

Besides your mother tongue, what other languages do you know and how well?

### **WORSHIP:** (15 minutes)

Use whatever means possible to turn the group's attention to the wonder and majesty of our God- including music, prayer, meditation on the Psalms, and other art forms.

### **WORD APPLICATION:** (45 minutes)

- **In all of history, God has been at work behind the scenes to bring salvation to the nations.**
- It was way back in 1905 that 50 men from the North Indian state of Punjab came to Abbotsford to work at the Lumber Company's sawmill.
- By 1911 these men built the Sikh Temple on SF Way. It stands today as the oldest surviving temple in North America.
- Punjabis remained few in number until the 1960s and 1970's, when immigration laws were relaxed in Canada, and thousands of men and woman poured into the Lower Mainland. **By far the majority of these Punjabis were of the Sikh religion- with no knowledge of the Jesus the Savior.**
- Meanwhile, not long after these first Punjabi pioneers came to Abbotsford, the Bolshevik Revolution broke out in Russia. Mennonite villages were ravaged by war, persecution and unimaginable horror. Canada opened its doors to these German-speaking Mennonite farmers. By the early 1930's, many Mennonite immigrants from Russia found their way to the Fraser Valley. **These were for the most part people who loved Jesus the Savior.,**
- By 1935 South Abbotsford Church was established on Gladwin and Huntingdon Rd.
- In God's sovereignty, by the 1960's, Mennonite immigrants who knew and loved Jesus found themselves increasingly living and farming next to Sikh immigrants from north India.
- In our church history book we read the following: *During the decade of the 70's, more East Indians entered our area than other parts of the province. Our attention was drawn to their spiritual need. People in our church, particularly Henry and Mary Stobbe made various attempts to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to them but with limited success because of cultural differences...*(page 45)
- *The spiritual need of the East Indian people was brought to our church business meeting and was presented to the Lord in prayer...*(p.46)
- We needed help in reaching the Punjabi people. Pastor Don Balzer was charged to find help, which led him to David and Stella Manuel, who joined the staff at South Abbotsford in 1980 for that very purpose: to **HELP US reach Indo-Canadians!**
- In all of history, God is at work behind the scenes to bring salvation to the nations.
- Rev 7:9-10 is a vision of the future, which gives deep meaning to how we live today: <sup>9</sup> After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup> And they were shouting with a mighty

shout, "Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!"(Rev 7:9-10)

- The times have changed since the 70's when Henry Stobbe was trying to reach Sikh neighbours. But the task has not changed.
- Among the most unreached ethnic peoples in the world today are the over 25 Million Punjabi people- where less than 1% are believers. But we don't need to travel to North India because around 25,000 Punjabi people live right here in Abbotsford. - The vast majority who are of the Sikh religion!
- What is so different today- as opposed to the 70's- is that Punjabi believers are our brothers and sisters in Christ- they are part of our church family.
- Today some of them form the Punjabi-speaking ICCF congregation, but 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Indo-Canadians, fluent in English, are integrated in all our congregations.
- In our day we can partner with them in loving the Punjabi people of Abbotsford.
- **Today, through you and I, God is at work to bring salvation to the nations: the nations who live right here in our city.**

#### **Application Questions:**

1. **Despite the Canadian values of multiculturalism and tolerance, there are still underlying attitudes of superiority and prejudice between ethnic groups. In all honesty, do these prejudices live within you?**
2. **Consider the example of Jesus with the Samaritan woman (John 4), the leper (Luke 17) and the tax collectors and prostitutes (Luke 15:1-6), all despised by the Jews. What can we learn from the attitudes and actions of Jesus towards these people?**
3. **Read Revelation 7:9-10. This is a prophetic vision of the future. But to what extent should it impact the way we live today? What is our part in its fulfillment?**
4. **How do you view the role of ICCF in our city? Is it their responsibility to reach the Punjabi community of Abbotsford? What part do we (non-Indian) have to play in reaching Punjabi people?**
5. **Who are the Punjabi people who live in your neighborhood or intersect with you at school and work? What could you do to build relationships with them?**
6. **Could you envision the future growth of your Life Group that would mirror the multi-cultural mosaic of heaven? What would be the steps to get there?**

**WITNESS: (15 minutes)**

#### **Possible Action Steps for Your Life Group:**

1. Deepen your understanding and love for Punjabi Christians by attending ICCF as a Life Group. Choose a Sunday and join them at 10:30am @ SAC! (downstairs)
2. Get a free copy of the colorful prayer guide: *The Sikhs of India* that will open your eyes to the culture and spiritual needs of the Sikh people. (Available this weekend in the foyer and from Pastor Harinder).
3. Get a free copy of the DVD *The Life of Jesus Christ* to give to Punjabi friends. This DVD is in English, Punjabi and other South Asian languages. (Available this weekend in the foyer or from Pastor Harinder).
4. Attend the seminar *How to Understand and Reach the Punjabi People* on Sunday May 24 and 31 at 10am in the Getaway- taught by John Tobin and Harinder Sahota. Put it on your calendar!