
A Divine Calling: The Journey of an STN Graduate

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A Divine Calling: The Journey of an STN Graduate

By Ryder Kumar

During our visit for a graduation event in November 2024, we witnessed how the Lord is increasing healthy churches and spreading the equipping and training of native leaders and pastors. Our hearts are grateful for the prayers of God's people, to whom God has given the burden of praying on our behalf. An STN graduate of 2019 who organized and coordinated the 2022 class is D., whose wife M. graduated at this event. Here is a brief story of not only a brilliant young but a man with a vision. He is now the pastor of the church he planted.



Praying on Graduation Day



Call of God

In 2015, "God gave me the vision to witness for Him in a remote village called P," says D. "God and His word were the only sources I knew, and I knew no one else who could lead me in my situation." Since D. passed with outstanding grades, he desired to study medicine to become a medical doctor. Though thousands are turned away based on merit in India, D. passed the test and was accepted. D. rejected the offer to be a doctor because "I began to see the call of God within me." For two months, D. prayed for God's assurance of His call. During this time, he mentioned that he could not sleep and had no desire to eat. These two months kept him on the battlefield with warring questions: "Should I become a doctor or become a teacher (per uncle's instruction), or do I have to obey God's call? As I was going through a struggle, God spoke to me through His Word, Matthew 6:33. God assured me of His plan for my life, leading me to serve Him."

His choice did not come without opposition. His family and community discouraged him, believing he was wasting his potential. Yet, D. remained steadfast. "I obeyed God with a determination to serve Him, being fully assured that it is God's plan for me," he declares. In 2012, he was baptized by Pastor Elia, who later played a pivotal role in his journey with STN.

Planting Seeds of Faith

In 2015, D. felt an undeniable calling to P. By 2016, he and his mother relocated there, living in a rented house while engaging in street evangelism across 25 villages. "I held cottage meetings and gatherings for gospel outreach," he explains. Though financial struggles loomed—weekly church offerings barely covered a fraction of their expenses—D. remained unwavering: "I didn't ask or appeal to anyone for money, knowing the call of God. I depended on Him alone."

Through perseverance, the ministry grew. By 2018, he joined STN training, traveling 100 miles each month to attend classes. "The course books immensely blessed me—more than even my formal Bible school education," he testifies. Upon graduating in 2020, he was better equipped to lead and expand his ministry.



Graduation of D

Trials and Triumphs

As the church flourished, new challenges arose. A Muslim family that had come to Christ donated land for a church building. But just as construction began, opposition emerged. "The community refused to allow the donation unless I married a girl from their faith," D. reveals. Unwilling to compromise his beliefs, he and his congregation were forced to leave. "We met under a tree for our church services," he recalls. Despite the setback, his faith remained unshaken. Six months later, an unexpected blessing arrived—an unbeliever from a Hindu background donated land, allowing the church to have a permanent place of worship.



Present Church Building

The Legacy of STN Training

Determined to equip others, D. approached STN leadership in 2021 to organize training in his region. Though initially met with doubts, his persistence won out. "I will take the challenge of bearing all expenses," he insisted. With limited resources, he and M. made countless sacrifices—preparing meals for 48 participants while balancing personal struggles. "Where would the money come from?" M. wondered. Yet, God provided.

New classes began in 2022 with the challenges surrounding them, and D. accepted all of them. When the STN class began, M. was in her eighth month of pregnancy. The challenges encountered were extreme. During this pregnancy, M. would cook for 48 participants with some help from the volunteers, but it wasn't easy. M. was also one of the participants in the class. So, she would cook and at the same time study to be an STN graduate.

In the midst of this, their faith was tested again. When M. became pregnant with their second child in 2023, doctors advised an abortion due to predicted abnormalities. "Why did this happen when we are serving God?" she lamented. But they stood firm in faith, refusing to terminate the pregnancy. In a miraculous turn, their child was born

completely healthy, stunning doctors and strengthening their testimony.



M. at graduation in November 2024



D. and M. family photo

The Future of the Ministry

Other graduates from the 2024 STN program are also now actively planting churches. One such graduate, V., a former Hindu, now leads a church of 20 believers. Another, Y., who previously thought he understood the Bible, admitted, "I realized I knew nothing after 20 years in ministry." His STN training transformed his approach to serving God.

D. and M. continue their work, living humbly in a one-room home attached to the worship hall. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). Their journey is a testament to unwavering faith, perseverance, and the power of God's calling.



"H" man saved and baptized

What's Happening in Panama

All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God. Psalm 86:9-10



by STN Board Member, Tammy Werth

In October, I had the privilege of traveling to Panama. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I am thankful the Lord allowed me to join Pastor Eddie and his wife, Xiomara, in Panama. I've always wanted to see the Panama Canal, and the city and the people exceeded my expectations. The start of each group brings the exciting opportunity to meet new pastors and students.



It was a blessing to meet Pastor Moreno, his wife, and his brother, who welcomed us with hospitality and made us feel like family. The joy of the Lord is evident in Pastor Moreno, who always has a big smile and a contagious laugh. His beautiful wife Giovanni is gentle and quiet and the mother of seven. Pastor Moreno's brother, Kenny, graciously became our driver, and tour guide and even cooked us a special meal.



I couldn't contribute much because I don't speak Spanish, but the Lord allowed me to experience Panama's beauty. Unlike the densely packed streets of India, Panama presented a different kind of busyness. Its roads were filled with much traffic but had a more relaxed Caribbean atmosphere. I truly appreciated your prayers; I felt safe throughout my travels and the Lord's comforting peace as we explored this exciting country.

The American influence is evident, especially near the canal, but I didn't sense the spiritual oppression I've often felt in other cities. Even while driving through a dangerous neighborhood near the historic area of Casco Viejo, I felt the Lord's peace. Our driver, Kenny, on the other hand, experienced quite the opposite when he was forced to take unexpected detours that forced us into unfamiliar streets. We traveled through El Chorrillo which is a red zone area, and tourists are advised to avoid it. We saw many neglected, overcrowded apartment

buildings, noticeable poverty, taxis everywhere, dusty streets, and lots of people sitting outside or walking around. These scenes are typical in impoverished areas or countries. The contrast was striking against the backdrop of the beautiful preserved colonial area of Casco Viejo and the sparkling modern and affluent downtown Panama.

On Friday, we attended a class that just started. Over thirty-two students are participating at this small church, which is impressive. There are now two more classes in Panama, one has thirty-six, and the other has twenty students, which is equally exciting. I thought I'd be able to grasp a few familiar words from the teaching in Spanish. I quickly realized I couldn't understand anything until the end when the students recited the names of books in the Bible. I even tried using Google Translate and about halfway through the class, I leaned over to Xiomara and asked, "Are you following this?" She replied, "No." It turned out the teacher was speaking many words in an Indigenous language from Panama, which made it impossible for me to understand anything. 🙏

On Saturday, our drive to the church was interrupted by strong winds and heavy rain from Hurricane Nadine in the Caribbean Sea. Although the hurricane didn't make direct landfall in Panama, the area still experienced its effects. Pastor Moreno called his wife, Giovanni, who was driving me and Xiomara, and asked her to pull over to safety because strong winds and heavy rain were approaching. This prompted us to pray and ask the Lord for travel mercies while we waited. Until then, we had only experienced light rains, heat, and a lot of humidity in the afternoons. The dangerous winds and flooded impassable streets made the journey to church dangerous. This serves as a vivid reminder of how quickly life's storms can catch us off guard but He is with us and our hope is in Him.

Please pray for the pastors and students in the three new groups that launched in Panama in the fall of 2024, as well as for the new group that started in El Salvador. These dedicated individuals passionately serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.



Latin America Report

All classes resumed this month, the students' spirits have not declined, and we hope to have a year full of blessings.

Below I share with you the books that they are currently studying and how many students there are in each institute.

- Honduras. Book 5. 22 students
- Mexico. Book 7. 16 students
- El Alto, Bolivia. Book 1. 40 students
- Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Book 1. 25 students
- Panama 1. Book 3. 33 students
- Panama 2. Book 2. 26 students
- Panama 3. Book 2. 18 students
- El Salvador. Book 2. 17 students

This gives us a total of 197 students.

As I shared previously, I will be traveling to Bolivia with David Nelson to attend 2 graduations in Santa Cruz and La Paz. We are very happy to reach this point and plan the planting of new churches for the glory of God.

Also in Bolivia I will be giving training to Pastor Roberto Carageorge, He is the pastor of the Evangelical Christian Church in the city of Beni, Bolivia. This is a city in the north of Bolivia closer to Brazil, Pastor Roberto Carageorge shares with me that there is no seminary or Bible institute there and that the need for theological education is very great. The church that he pastors has about 200 members and the desire is to be able to open a new institute this summer.

In the city of San Salvador in El Salvador we have a new prospect, Pastor Israel Carranza, he is the pastor of the Baptist church in a place called Sonsonate, 2 hours from the capital. There, God is also guiding us to open another institute, since Pastor Israel Carranza has a great desire to teach and prepare new leaders for church planting. In this place, we would also like to start classes in the summer of this year. We will plan the training for the next few months.

As always, I ask each one of you for your prayers, so that God blesses and uses each teacher and student, and so that from these

students come pastors who plant churches and who can also teach the word of God with love, dignity, and a sound biblical doctrine. I also ask for your prayers so that on the trip to Bolivia, God takes care of us and gives us the health that we need, since Bolivia is a country at a high altitude above sea level.

-Eddie Bueno

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