

Stories abound at training event

Pastors tell of God working throughout their regions through Bible storytelling

Storytelling Bible study groups are multiplying across northern India, changing lives and opening doors to further ministry.

In October, 500 pastors working for NIEA'S Parivartan Sahavaks and Story Fellowship Group (SFG) gathered in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, for the fourth Pastoral Leadership Development (PLD) Training. These pastors lead storytelling Bible study groups with 26 language groups in five different Indian states (Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh).

The four-day event was designed to help leaders and field staff learn from each other how they can improve their work. Each day began with worship and prayer. Then, experienced missionaries gave devotional messages geared toward each day's topic. This was followed by sharing, discussion or training exercises.

Salvation, healing and more

One common theme was how storytelling Bible study groups are multiplying and have opened doors to further ministry. For example, in Chhattisgarh, 20 people came to Christ just during the field training. In the Dura language community, a new congregation of 75 people began. And story-telling groups multiplied in Maharashtra. Even class attitudes have changed. People in higher and lower classes now freely and mutually help one another.

In another northeastern state, Odisha, new families started going to church after listening to Bible stories. Pastors report that a paralyzed man and another man with TB were healed after people shared stories of Jesus's miracles of healing and prayed with them.

New groups started in Uttar Pradesh including in the



Attendees compared lessons from Scripture with their own lives and then checked how they responded in practical situations. A time of dedication helped each to recommit one's life to serve the Lord sincerely and faithfully.

Jogi language, and more people are receiving story-telling training. SFG leaders are making a difference as well. A family of 10 from the Mundeli language community began following Jesus after they came to know an SFG leader.

In Madhya Pradesh state, storytelling training has been conducted in every language group. Local pastors are even asking for it because they see it as a way to improve how they teach the Bible in their churches.

Bible storytelling practice

The group practiced telling the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), and the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Each participant told the stories twice and then contributed to a discussion on each story.

Participants reported learning a variety of lessons from the stories: the importance of a healthy fear of God, the consequences of lying, being faithful with big and small things, using one's gifts well and not blaming others for mistakes. They were invited to apply these lessons to their own lives and recommit to following Jesus more sincerely and faithfully.

On the final day, the group split up by state to talk about regional issues pertaining to Bible storytelling ministry. Included in their conversations were evaluating which Bible stories were being shared in each language community in their state, the reception of each by the communities, and their effectiveness.

The group hopes to meet again in January 2019.



