

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 253

The Persecuted Church in Nepal

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Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Guest: “Theo”

Episode Summary

In this episode we interview “Theo,” an American living in Nepal who teaches students full time. Theo has been a long-time listener to the podcast. Theo found the divine council context put forth in Dr. Heiser’s books to be paradigm changing, and now uses that content to teach his students in Nepal. Unfortunately, there are serious obstacles, as the Nepali government has become more antagonistic to Christianity in recent years.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 253: The Persecuted Church in Nepal. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! Happy New Year!

MH: Happy New Year! We’re finally here in 2019. It’s going to be a good year.

TS: Yeah, it is. I guess first and foremost, how is your dad?

MH: As of this recording, my dad is still alive. He spent the last two days mostly unconscious or not awake (I don’t know what the proper term is). But it was really good. It was a wise decision (prompted by my mom) for me to move my trip up. So when I was there, I got to talk to him and say all the things that needed to be said. He is certainly ready to meet the Lord, so I don’t have any concerns there. But going ahead, if people could pray for my mom, because it’s going to be a big transition for her. We expect my dad to pass any day.

TS: Well, we have been praying, and we will continue to do so.

MH: Thank you, to everybody.

TS: Absolutely. And that also prompted... We got a week off for the first time in four years last week. In that week was Christmas, my birthday, and New Years’.

So I got to celebrate... All three of them were sandwiched in there. It's a busy week for me.

MH: Wow. Did you get double presents?

TS: No.

MH: I grew up with somebody that had a birthday on December 28th and he used to complain about the same thing.

TS: Absolutely. And I'm still complaining. [MH laughs] But what are you going to do? That's fine. Well, Mike, also our Fantasy season wrapped up, and you finished 6th and I finished 7th.

MH: I know. But I made the playoffs and you didn't. So I was a couple of games better. But the Pugs just... Man, they petered out at the end. It was disappointing. So Mori has told me that I'll still be the head coach next year. He's not going to fire me.

TS: Well, that's nice.

MH: So, yeah, I survived. He's been merciful.

TS: Well, I guess we *have* to congratulate Tim.

MH: Yes, we do. Tim Andrews, who has been on the podcast before, has been the doormat of this league for three or four years [laughs]. But he won this year, so kudos to him!

TS: Congratulations, yes, sir!

MH: Miracles do happen. [laughter]

TS: I think I sent him an email or something congratulating him, and he said thanks. He didn't rub it in or anything.

MH: He wouldn't. He'll be good about that.

TS: That's no fun. [MH laughs] Well, Mike, also our poll concluded, and it was a neck-and-neck tie all the way through—back and forth, back and forth—End Times and Exodus, End Times and Exodus. And then finally on the day that the poll ended, it was basically still tied, so I had to extend it another 24 hours and Exodus squeaked out by one percentage point. So congratulations to the book of Exodus. That'll be the next book that we cover, pretty much for the rest of 2019. [laughter]

MH: Yeah, there you go. That's remarkable. That is really remarkable.

TS: Yeah, you mentioned that you had mentally prepared for End Times, didn't you?

MH: Oh, yeah. I've been there a few weeks now, just expecting that to be the winner. But wow. Yeah, I'm surprised.

TS: Well, Mike, this week, we're going to be talking to a special person: Theo.

MH: In Nepal. We go from some pretty light fare to something a little more serious.

TS: Looking forward to it.

MH: Well, we're blessed to have Theo with us who is in Nepal, and Theo has a connection to the podcast that we're going to talk about a little bit. We're going to get into a lot of subjects, really focusing on the persecution context where he is at in Nepal and then some of his ministry. I think the best way to begin with this is, Theo, can you just introduce yourself to the podcast audience?

5:00

Theo: Yeah. I've been teaching the Bible around the world in different places and ended up in India about 10 years ago. I spent eight years there. I felt called by God to go full-time, and I worked with an indigenous ministry. And we began taking Indian nationals into Nepal over the course of that eight years. I was doing teaching at the basic level. Then I felt led in 2016 to go full-time into Nepal. So I actually married someone from Nepal in my travels, and we have a family. I live here and I teach at the different institutions. God called me specifically to the academic community here.

MH: Now when you say "teaching," is this Bible teaching, or is it Bible teaching plus other stuff? (Like are you teaching English to foreign nationals?)

Theo: No, I've been able to... I did a lot of that kind of stuff in India (teaching different things) but I've been able to focus primarily on the Bible teaching, and even at the academic level in the fledgling academic community, as we'll get into later on.

MH: Now, where are you from in terms of the United States? (Or I don't know if you're Canadian...) Where are you from originally?

Theo: The US—the Midwest, southern Illinois area.

MH: Who is the fledgling academic community that you're talking about?

Theo: Well, for many years, the Nepali nationals (Nepalese) had to go outside... Their believing community is only about 65 years old, so they've been going outside to get any kind of training. So they've been able to implement new programs recently. They have a Bachelor's and they've just now got (last July) a full-blown M.Div. program in place, and now they're moving toward adding M.Th., and eventually they want to go Ph.D.

MH: So you're actually in a context that sounds very organized. Does this have government approval? How does this work?

Theo: Actually not. The government is not too approving of it. I went to visit one college and followed the directions on Google Maps and I couldn't find the place. I left and came back to the exact same spot, because the institutions here theologically have no standing with the government whatsoever. Some of them do have accreditation with outside Asian theological associations. So a person who would get a degree in Nepal, that degree could be of use outside of Nepal in the Asian academic community. But inside Nepal it's basically worthless, as far as the government is concerned. They're probably operating illegally. About the only thing I understand now that is possibly legal is the local church. And it kind of goes into what Johnny Cisneros always talks about: instead of bringing people so far at such great expense into an academic community, let's try to do it locally within the body of Christ. And that's what I'm trying to exemplify here as I find my way through what the government might entail, as far as those things.

MH: So how did you... Listeners are naturally going to want to know, "How did you and Mike get together?" What was the connection to me and to the podcast? Can you describe that a little bit?

Theo: Well, in one word, I'd say Providence, of course.

MH: We really like that word here. [laughs]

10:00

Theo: Yes, I do, too. Your podcast, your teachings, really resonate with me. When I was called to India, I just packed my bags and I came and visited. I came back to America, and in six months had sold everything and moved to India and started working (volunteer) with an organization. Then when I got called again to Nepal, I just came with my family and just two suitcases. We came, and then God showed me what he wanted me to do, just teaching and training pastors. So when I went back to the States and began to tell some people what I do, I ran into someone who had gotten familiar with your stuff and your materials. They mentioned your name and it didn't resonate so much with me. But they mentioned Logos Bible Software. So I'd known about that, but I always thought it was kind of expensive. When I returned to Nepal, I found out that I needed to complete my Master's, and then they wanted me to pursue my Ph.D., and I was able to find an online university in the States that allowed me to do that. So when I contacted my school, they asked me how I was going to do my research. I told

them I wasn't sure, and they suggested Logos. Then the conversation came back to my mind that I had with that individual about your materials. So I began to research, and boy, did your material just really resonate with me! In the missionaries' talk about the 10/40 Window... I'm a biblical theologian. That's what I told the people that I wanted to do—stay in biblical theology. But those that are in practical theology (missions) talk about the "10/40 Window." And we talked at the Naked Bible Conference in Dallas about that—John Walton and his avoidance of the supernatural, in some cases—how scholarship has done that. Well, in the 10/40 Window, supernatural is just huge. It's a huge part of life. So in my prior studies before coming to Nepal, they said you're going to have to deal with that. [MH laughs] So your material is just able to bring together both the academic side of understanding the supernatural and this need.

MH: So you saw the connection point there pretty much out of the gate, is what I'm hearing.

Theo: Yeah, I did. It's just fascinating. Well, it totally changed my way of thinking and reading the Scriptures myself. Even going through your materials was a brush-up for helping me to get re-entry into the academic community, as I've been out of it for so long. So when they wanted me to do academics, I was so grateful for the ability—watching and reading your materials and understanding how you go back to scholarship and how you properly think as a biblical theologian, versus the normal systematic theology of things. Part of the problem I see in my travels and missionary work around the world is the influence of western things that you and Johnny Cisneros talk about, and many different things the podcast talks about—the problems entailed in our western thinking. When I talk to my students, they're so close to the Bible. There's a temple everywhere. There are idols—just right out of the pages of the New Testament. I explain to them that, "You guys are just so much closer to the Bible than we in the West are, and your thinking is so much closer to the Bible." So following some of your materials, like "think like an ancient Israelite," has really opened up the thinking of my students. For those people who may not be familiar with Nepal, Nepal has Tibet and China to the north, and it's surrounded by India on its three other borders (to the south, mainly). It's nestled in there. It's where the highest mountains in the world are (the Himalayan mountains). The main Hindu religion is here in India and Nepal, with over 80%. They have 330 million gods. I don't know of any other religious entity on the planet that has a pantheon that large. But 330 million gods. So I'm reminded again of Bill Arnold at the Dallas conference in his view of comparative studies, and how you go through... I'm able to teach my students that this is a proper way, I think, of evangelization—through the dialogue of comparative studies between the Judeo-Christian worldview and the Hindu worldview. As Bill Arnold said, when you get to those distinctions, that's where you can really make some inroads into conversation and understanding—Divine Council, the gods. Instead of Mickey Mouse, there's a famous cartoon over here that the kids watch called Ben Tin. I don't know if it's in America or not.

MH: [laughs] Never heard of it.

Theo: But I'd say, we don't look at the gods like Ben Tin (like Mickey Mouse). It's not a cartoon. We actually understand that there's something to them. And when you are able to do that with the Hindu religion, especially that 10/40 religion, that's so focused on the supernatural, wow!

15:00

MH: I have a couple of specific questions in regard to that, but before we go down that trail, you had reached out to me and we had a couple of conversations that were general conversations. And this will give us a chance to be (I hope) a little more specific without putting you in any kind of jeopardy. But you mentioned that you have a problem where you are with persecution and that this has been going on for a while, but it seems to be accelerating. Could you talk to us a little bit about that? What's the context for this? Is Nepal an independent state or is it controlled by a bigger entity? What's the political situation and what's going on over there?

Theo: Well, Nepal is a Hindu kingdom, originally. There were a group of kings, much like India. Just a group of kings. India was united, obviously, because of the British. That brought them together. They wanted to get rid of the British. Nepal has never been ruled by any foreign power. Their problem has always been internal. Eventually, the king of the hill (the king of the mountain, as I joke, because of the Himalayan mountains here and Mount Everest)... One king became king of all—"one king to rule them all." About 300 years ago, Catholic missionaries made their way to the Kathmandu Valley, but eventually they were expelled because of the fear of being British spies. So Christianity was really just wiped out and it was a closed kingdom, much like Bhutan still is today. In 2006, though, they had their major civil war and the revolution. It was a very bloody time in Nepal—a very, very difficult time. So things have changed. But in the 1950's, pretty much the evangelical missionary outreach was started as Nepal opened up its borders around 1951, I think. By 1954, we started to see the influence of missionaries that had been all along the border, mainly in India, where the people would cross over for services—jobs or hospital needs or whatever—and missionaries were able to reach out. But they started coming in around 65 years ago (1953, 1954) and they were able to begin with the church. But they had the underlying promise worked out with the government back then that they would no evangelism—that the western foreigners would not evangelize proper. And so no proselytization would be allowed. And they just served people. As I talked to some of the missionaries that have been here for many, many years, it's just natural: people want to know why you're there.

MH: Right.

Theo: Why give your life to the nation of Nepal? Nepal has faced so much internal strife, even in the last decade when they formed their government, finally.

It took them over 10 years of turmoil to finally come up with a constitution, and they're still fighting it. It used to be a joke, that people would be a prime minister for almost a day. It was just crazy, all the turmoil. So now they've firmed up, and they've got a stable government and they've elected their first majority for a five-year term that has actually gotten somewhere. So they're pretty stable. It's a democracy, patterned off of the Indian constitution. So Nepal has always pretty much turned to its southern big brother—the Hindu nation of India—for the most part. But in recent years they've been turning towards China because they've been mistreated by the Indians. One of the things India promised to do for Nepal for many years (decades, apparently) was to build a police/military headquarters. And the Chinese government did it in two years and handed them the keys. So China has really made some inroads. It's a back-and-forth between the two. And Nepal does not want to be underneath either one, but they're very heavily influenced by both the Chinese and India.

20:00

MH: So you have a situation where you've got a native population that doesn't want to be under the thumb of either China or India, and they also don't want to be unduly influenced by you guys. [laughs] So how do you do what you do? Or are you starting to suspect that there's been more of an awareness that you're there and that that might turn into something hostile? What makes you suspect that there's something looming over the hill here in terms of another wave of persecution coming back?

Theo: Ah, what the deal was is primarily... it's the influence of India. Narendra Modi, their prime minister that was recently elected a few years back, is very much Hindu, so...

MH: Oh yeah, I've heard he's cracking down on Christians in India.

Theo: Yes, it's very hard. Many missionaries have left. I left Providentially. God called me. I wasn't paying attention necessarily to the politics of it. I'm independent. I'm not sent by any huge organization. I just went. And a few friends were like, "Hey, we might want to support you." So I just went. So I'm not with any organization. But yeah, he really has cracked down hard. I've talked to both Indians and missionaries that have had to leave because of him. His influence in the Indian government (influence in Nepal) has led to heightened persecution against Christianity. And then there's China. I wanted to talk about China. I don't know if you're familiar with what's happened in China. For about 10 years, China let everything go free as far as the Church. Then late in 2017, they began to crack down and they actually imploded (if that's the right word) a church. It kind of reminded me of 9/11. They've been burning churches. And they said they monitored the Christians for 10 years, and they said, "We know who you are now. We want you to register. If you don't come and register, we're coming after you." So it was in the Chinese news media just several months ago that China said, "We made a pact with both prime ministers (of India and Nepal) to drive out the U.N. and all western influence with Asia, and the rise, and the

21st century kind of thing, especially Christians. So they made a pact. As we talked about earlier, the theological institutions here have no leg to stand on, as far as the Nepal government. Some of them don't even wish to be seen. They have no presence. You can't even see or know that there's anything there. It's kind of secret.

MH: That's what I was wondering. It's not like they're hanging a shingle out or a sign.

Theo: No, they're getting away from that. So they really don't know if it's going to be like the Chinese, where they're monitoring. They've been told that close to some 1000 missionaries have been put on a list. They're cracking down where they can, legally, and that's why I really liked your conversation about the Church with Johnny about theology and the Church. The one pastor here... I'm just so blessed, because he's raised up people within his church and he's followed that model. He's raised up a pastor and sent him out from his church, and he's raised several more. So that model is where I find that the Church has legal standing. But they're going after visas. I don't have that problem because I'm married to a Nepalese national. They're going after visas. The South Korean ambassador was contacted by the Nepali Home Minister saying that 60% of the people on student visas and work visas had come for church work, and that's illegal. They've even just recently (within the last month) gone into a Korean's residence where he was at and they checked through his things to try to find out if he had any Bibles and if he's preaching, because it was not according to his visa. They've instituted an anti-conversion law along the lines of what the Indians did, and no one can be converted. No one is to be converting in Nepal. So if you're caught baptizing, it can be a problem—especially for foreigners, which has always been a problem. But they've actually expelled some foreigners. They even expelled a Jehovah's Witness (and they thought the Jehovah's Witness was Christian because they were going door to door—believe it or not—over here). There are a lot of cults I have to deal with out of South Korea. South Korea has a very strong presence here. The South Korean church has lots of missionaries here. They've been very strong. But there are also cults that have come out of South Korea teaching really weird doctrines. We had the "Daughter of Jesus" come, and she spoke to the...

MH: Well, that was nice. [laughs]

Theo: Yeah! She spoke at an Asian summit. And she gave the government \$100,000 USD. Her husband had a dream that she's the daughter of Jesus. So the cults get so much leeway, for some reason. But the original die-hard Christians like me, they're just going after. They're trying to go. So they're going legally right now. They've got a little bit of a problem with the U.N. Some of the indigenous Christians have taken their case before the world. So they've made another law called the "Preservation Law," saying that they're trying to preserve the Nepali culture, and they're afraid...

25:00

MH: Of course.

Theo: ... All of the idols in the temples that were destroyed. And the earthquake was really phenomenal. Most people may not be aware, but in 2015 there were two earthquakes. The major earthquake happened in April. I felt it while I was in India. It was so powerful. And then it was followed up in June of 2015 with the second earthquake. And for many months (over a year), daily, there were tremors, from April of 2015 all the way on into 2016. January 2016 was the last time I felt the tremors. It was just crazy. Now it's calmed down. I haven't felt a tremor in a while. But the earthquakes brought in so much destruction. And then the governments of the world, obviously, turned to Nepal and gave aid. But you know how that works when foreign governments give to a corrupt government. Lots of money... And so it was the Church that showed up from all around the world—that came in. And so we had this explosion. Some media outlets have reported it's the fastest growing Church statistic in the world in Nepal, where you went from 0.4% Christians to today about 1.4 or 1.5% (by some estimates). That's probably conservative because the Nepali census does not want to show so many Christians. But they've seen an explosion of Christianity happen because people came and they rebuilt Nepal. Nepal is totally being rebuilt from the ground up after the earthquakes. A lot of that is the Christians that came from around the world, that support them. And so people saw this. They saw this great outreach. And so many people have come to the Lord in that time. So it's Providential that I came here. You have a fledgling academic community. The Church is 65 years old at best. So a church here that celebrates 25 years, they call it "jubilee." It's very exciting because churches are not that old. So for someone to celebrate their silver jubilee... And some get a gold jubilee, which is very rare here. Fifty-year-old churches are exciting for the community because it's just brand new. Then you have all these cults that come in that they're trying to fight as well. Jehovah's Witnesses are here, as I said earlier. The Mormons are here. All these South Korean cults that come. The famous one is Mother God. (I can't think of the whole name. It's a long name.) This lady that was married to Jesus in Korea.

MH: So we've got Jesus' daughter and Jesus' wife. Oh, boy!

Theo: Yeah!

MH: That's exciting.

Theo: And they're very good. They promise... Because for most Nepalis, there's nothing here. The number one thing is tourism, and the government's trying to change that, taking steps from either the Indians or the Chinese or various entities that want to invest in Nepal. But for the most part, people are trying desperately to get outside Nepal and go anywhere. So if someone comes to you and preaches Jesus and you're a Christian and you're not very smart, you don't know much about it... And many people upwards of 40, 50, 60 years old can't

even read. And they give you a visa to Korea! And your son will go to “Bible college.” You think, “That’s great!” But you don’t realize your son’s going to a cult. So they’re very persuasive. So it’s very difficult here, to...

MH: So your ministry is basically... You’re trying to train the indigenous folks there with the goal of producing people who can pastor churches—who can essentially be replicated, in terms of what they know of Scripture. Is that correct?

30:00

Theo: Yeah, they say they just don’t know. It’s very... You go out into the village areas, which is where some of the schools try to pull from the village area and bring them in to the capitol—the Kathmandu Valley—and try to train them up, because if you can read in the village, you might be the pastor just simply because you can read the Bible and nobody else can. And that’s very dangerous because nobody can read their Bibles. And then the pastor reads and he can say whatever. Of course, there are all the different variants of Christianity, too, that have come in with abuse. I just talked to a missionary the other day that’s been here for close to four decades, and we talked about the Church in the 1950s. Just coming out of the gate, it was pretty new. And then you had the Charismatic wave hit in the 1960’s and 70’s across the world. So just about every form of Nepali worship is Charismatic in nature because of that. So you have influences that are within the Church, and then you have cults outside of the Church, and then you have persecution from the government (the Hindus and some of the Buddhists) and of course the Muslims that are not so big in Nepal. So you have lots of persecution from within and without. It just reminds me of reading the general epistles in the New Testament.

MH: Let me ask you this. Now you’re dealing with... You’ve got a problem that a lot of people can’t read, you’ve got a problem with going out to the villages and bringing them to you or vice versa (you going out to them), so there’s a little bit of a logistic problem... What do you have... the resources... Now, I want the audience to know that you were instrumental in finding someone to translate my little *Supernatural* book into Nepali. We also have a Hindi translation. I don’t know if you’ve tried to use either of those. But how are you (if you are) making use of those materials? And what other resources do you have?

Theo: Well, that’s what I’ve been trying to do, is gather resources. The internet is the big deal now because everybody has a phone, pretty much. So you’re trying to get the resources off the internet as much as possible. So I have a PDF of seven pages of just links off the internet where people (my students) can get materials to study, because that’s what they want to do. We do have a few libraries, but just two, three, maybe four thousand volumes in it, and a lot of them are older. And so I’m desperately looking for stuff off the internet. So it was a blessing to get your materials because that’s when I started... I told one of my schools, “I’ve got to teach this class.” And I developed a class based on *The Unseen Realm*. And then when I heard about the MIQLAT project of *Supernatural*, that was just perfect, because that’s exactly what is needed in our

10/40 Window—the supernatural—and from an academic perspective. Because again, you have the cults and you have the persecution from within and without the Church. So you have all this stuff...

MH: Can a lot of them read English? Or are they dependent on tools in their own language?

Theo: A lot of it is dependent on their own language. *Supernatural* is a huge blessing because we have so many Koreans here and we have the Korean version of the book. The Hindi language and Nepali language use the same alphabet and many people are familiar with both, so even the translator himself was so thrilled because I shared with him the Hindi version. And he said, “Wow, that was so helpful.” Of course, I purchased for him (through Amazon Kindle) *The Unseen Realm* so he could have that, too, to help. But he was just so very much blessed to have the Hindi version. So I give them those versions, and my students are able to... And it was finally completed, so this last term, I was able to teach your class. My students coming out of the village... I even had a couple of Indian students, by chance, that made it to our school. So I teach in the English medium (I’m not able to teach in Nepali yet). But to have the Nepali there and for them to be able to read it (and some of them to be able to read the Hindi as well)... To have that... And then those that are connected with Koreans can then share the Korean version as well. Because what you teach is supernatural, and some of that’s avoided. But in the 10/40 Window, that’s just paramount.

35:00

MH: So when they encounter things like that, it sounds to me like you don’t get any pushback. [laughs] Like, they just... It helps them piece together, really... The supernatural is part of their worldview anyway, so it helps them to parse that biblically. Am I hearing that correctly?

Theo: Well, yeah. I have to say this. 1) Yes, the supernatural... They’re closer to the Bible than any westerner would be in the way they live. 2) But there is pushback. That’s one of the problems I talked about earlier with the western influences. Some of it’s in academics. But I do get pushback from the elder generation. A lot of my students love this. They love it because this fits exactly what they see. So my students are just in love with this, but then when they go back and they begin to try to share what they’ve learned, then they hit the older generation and they hit this thing, and that’s why it’s very important to have the Korean translation, too, for those that are dealing with Korean leadership that have been a part of the history of their church. And it’s good that it’s academic. To tell them that it’s backed up by a bibliography of some 5,000 volumes, you know? And to tell them... I have one student who had to have *The Unseen Realm*, so I purchased it and brought it here. He owns a copy of it. He got a copy of *Reversing Hermon*, too. He just had to have it. So getting this in their hands... And then your whole teaching about Eden and the purpose of... It’s like the academic version of *The Purpose-Driven Life*.

MH: [Laughs] That's the first time I've heard that. [Laughs]

Theo: Yeah! Because you teach *purpose!* And many Nepalese people want to leave Nepal and go to America or Korea. And I say, "But why did God have you born here? And why are you sitting in this classroom at this time?" So you begin to explain to them the dominion mandate—the original Great Commission—what the dominion mandate's all about, and how we're supposed to go make the rest of the world like Eden, and how we're supposed to make the rest of Nepal like... And I explain the history of America, how it's not perfect, but Americans were the ones that made the hospitals, and Americans were the ones that made Harvard, Princeton, Yale... Through Christians... The Church was the outlier at the leading edge of technology that you mentioned in your podcast with Joseph Fioramonti. And the Denver podcast was all about God and how Christians were at the forefront of everything. We were community, and the best minds were Christians and bringing and producing the best materials. And they were on the cutting edge of TV and things, because they wanted the gospel to go out. So I try to use your materials (along with other scholarship) to show how through comparative studies and through this idea of purpose—of Paul's life... That's where I focus my education...

MH: We're going to have... The little book I just came out with, *What Does God Want?...* We're going to be looking for some translations of that. We've got two of those going. There's another possibility there that's really basic. But even English readers have found it useful. So we, Lord-willing, will be able to produce that for you as well. But how can people either get you resources, or maybe... I don't know if you have translators there that could be translating things, maybe in public domain... What do you do for support? How do people who are in this audience listening, how can they help in teaching the students that you have? Do you have some concrete ideas? Or do you have a means by which people can contribute financially? I know you said you're not under a specific denomination. But how do you get support?

Theo: Well, currently I'm working in conjunction with DivineCouncil.org to produce courses for the indigenous students here in Nepal, akin to your goal at MIQLAT of bringing content to those who hunger for it but cannot get it otherwise. So this is...

MH: So how does that work? Because DivineCouncil.org is not my website. Are they having things translated? Or what's going on there?

Theo: Well, I just started with them and we're working on raising funds. 1) We're going to get a subscription to FaithLife to bring Logos and its entire Mobile Ed. catalog of over 220 courses by some of the best scholars across the globe to natives here in country where they can get certification and bring proper academic peer-reviewed scholarship into the fledgling community of faith here in the context of this persecution (as I said, from within and without the Church

here). So folks can follow or support the work we do by going to a website dedicated to me: www.DivineCouncil.org/Theo. (That's the short form.) And I will be able to keep everyone there updated as to the progress of the project in Nepal. Everyone just needs to sign up for the newsletter, and then they can email me. I'm at Theo@DivineCouncil.org. And so those folks have opened up a way for me to be on the internet safely. And I'm producing classes. And so I'm going to take PDFs or... Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology has been translated here. David [inaudible] stuff is translated here. So people are in process of translating different... I've run across different scholars in translating materials here. One missionary group have a commentary series that was actually written in the Nepali language. And it was requested that it be translated from Nepali into English. It was written in Nepali by western missionaries to doctors (medical doctors) and it's been translated into English so that it can be translated into other languages around the world. So the goal here is for me to produce content (like you're always talking about), teach classes, and then that can be translated back into any language. So I could produce the classes in English and then, through process, we'd get it translated in Nepali or any other language.

MH: Well, I'll tell you... What I hope for, as we wrap up: I'm hoping that people stateside are listening to this for two reasons. 1) I get asked with some regularity about, "How do I get this content to other people in my own church?" And the short answer is, "You just do it." [laughs] So I'm hoping they hear that here you are... I'm sure you have some colleagues over there. But you've come up with a plan to produce things with the content that you can hand to someone else or that you can use (in your case) in a classroom setting. But there are things already in existence that people can use in small groups or just hand off. In 2019, we're going to have a few other ideas to try to help people take this task upon themselves to get the content into the hands of other people. So that's one of the reasons I'm hoping people are listening to this, and they can get that as a take-away. 2) And the other is, this sort of thing, where you just take it upon yourself to do this, this is a replicate-able model. And what we're going to try to do on the podcast periodically (and in the newsletter and whatnot) is that now that these things exist in other languages (at least *Supernatural* and hopefully the smaller book that leads to *Supernatural*), people are going to know other people (like you) in other language settings and other context settings, I'm hoping that people can say, "Hey, that guy from Nepal was actually using some of these translations." And hopefully people listening can do that and recommend those translations to other people. Folks, I've got news for you. We can't really do a whole lot of... Well, we *can* do a lot of fancy things in marketing, but at the end of the day, it's really about this audience and word of mouth, honestly. That's just it. There's nothing that replaces that. So I'm hoping that people take away, essentially, a model here—that you come up with an idea for getting the content out, either within your own little area or somebody else's area, and you just act on it. You just try stuff out. You just do stuff.

Theo: Yeah! So I'm (like you said) sandwiched between the two largest unreached people groups on the planet, Chinese to the north and the Indians to the south. I'm connected with a lot of organizations here that are all over Asia. So for me to get materials that somehow can be translated, it can go across all of Asia, just so fast.

MH: Do the young people there... Let me ask you this. How many people have phones?

45:00

Theo: Oh, everybody. Everybody has to have a phone. So that's what I love about your MIQLAT project. Bam, here's a link! Somehow, they'll get it. They'll get that link and they'll get that book and they can read it right off their phone and they don't have to worry about it. I live in a 10 x 13 apartment. I don't have room for books. But if I can keep it on my phone (that's why I love Logos) or on my laptop... I've made online course folders and I have tons of PDFs. And I can just gather PDFs and eventually, if possible, get them translated into different languages as I get the rights to do that, like I did with *Supernatural*. We want to do a conference on discipleship in 2019, and it would be perfect to have your other book ready for that so we can tell the churches that are going to be gathered together, "Here's the textbook that's in your language that you can use and share with different people and get it out to the villages because it's on your phone. It's on the internet." All they need is just to get their own online course folder and just start gathering their own PDFs and having them in their Google account or whatever, and they're there, and they can share them with pastors and people anywhere. And if you want to print them, they can be printed. But most people... "It's the phone. It's on my phone."

MH: Well, that's good to know. This is what we want to see happen. This is the vision, because it's the content that's the focus here. So we want it disseminated—cast to the wind and disseminated in as many languages as possible. And the same thing for the podcast. We hope that people will latch on to the podcast (those who can understand it in English). There are some barriers, but there are lots of open door here. So I want to thank you for coming on and sharing what's going on in Nepal (your neck of the woods, your little corner of the world) and what you're doing, and hopefully people will be prompted and stimulated to do something like it or something totally different. But it's really... This is audience-driven. It's people-driven. It's individual Christians just doing things that need to be done. So thanks for spending part of your day with us.

Theo: Yeah, I appreciate it! And thank you for anyone that's sharing this, because this is incredible to take this type of information, academically, and to give purpose to people—that they can understand who I am, my identity as a son or daughter of God—and to go out and tame the chaos of this world and do what God has called me to do. It's just phenomenal to get it. And then Logos is free now. I get that for my students. I've met people through your ministry, at the conference. Like Bill Arnold has given me some articles. David deSilva off your

podcast has given me some things. He's worked in Sri Lanka. So just getting this stuff on their phones, and then they can take it out to these villages, and they can share and do exactly what you and Johnny talked about—taking this material through the local church. I'm able to teach in church. I may be driven to my church and just teach out of the church and not able to teach in institutions anymore, so having the ability to do online classes and bring this material to people is just powerful. And then get it translated. Yeah. So thank you very much.

MH: Yeah, absolutely.

TS: Alright, Mike, it always amazes me that we can have these conversations from around the world.

MH: It's nice to hear people doing something with the content. That's always the goal. People have heard me say it a hundred times: my goal is to produce useful things. And it's gratifying when people take what I produce and do useful things with it. So I'm glad to hear it. And hopefully, like I said as we were winding down, this is a template. If you see something that needs to be done, just do it. It's okay if you improvise and change or never do something again or do something different. But just try to do something with what you're learning. And the audience is really "it." They are it. This is word of mouth, audience-driven.

TS: Alright, Mike. Well, next week, we're going to get into introducing the book of Exodus and then dive nose-first into it.

MH: Yep. We will take it... It's going to be a deep dive intro as well, but that's how we usually start these things. But yeah, we have a lot to do. Forty chapters... [laughs]

TS: Fantastic. That's pretty much 2019 right there, right?

MH: Yeah, there you go. We know what's on the horizon. [laughs]

TS: At least it's not 40 years, so we'll take it.

MH: Boy, that's clever, Trey. That's really... Yeah. I caught what you were throwing there.

TS: One of us has to be clever, right?

MH: You're right. It's useful.

TS: [laughs] Alright. Well, we appreciate Theo, and we want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.

50:00