

Helping the Poor in Pakistan

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me... As you did it to one of the least of these...you did it to me.'
(Matthew 25:34-40).

Within Pakistan are places of great poverty and low quality of life, where Christians are marginalized and impoverished. Tanveer Gulzar was raised in an orphanage in this milieu. This year, he completed Cover-to-Cover Bible survey course offered by Village Schools of the Bible (VSB). Here is his story.

Tanveer's story

Early life. I was born in Pakistan in 1981. My mother was a homemaker and my father was a laborer. I have three brothers (who are now married and live in Pakistan). On December 24th, 1983 my father passed away from rabies. Our family fell into severe hardship. Being unemployed with no savings, my mother could not afford to raise four boys, so she gave us over to a Catholic orphanage. At the age of 4, the orphanage became my home. We grated under the nuns' discipline, but we were happy to have food and go to school instead of ending up as child laborers at a brick-kiln factory. I was moved from orphanage to orphanage according to the age group that each orphanage accommodated.

My early faith journey. I had been born into a Christian family, and my faith grew stronger while in the orphanage. Since the time I was very young, the Lord gave me a heart to give to and bless others. After completing high school, I was sent to the Catholic seminary to become a priest. After four years, I became convinced that this was not what God wanted for me. So I returned to the orphanage as a tutor.

My life in the USA, and the call to ministry in Pakistan. I moved to the USA in 2006 with the help of the Lord through church and friends. I currently live in Golden Valley, Minnesota, with my wife and two children. In 2008, before beginning the US citizenship application process at the immigration office in Bloomington, Minnesota, I sat in my car, praying, *"Lord, give me the opportunity to live and work in the U.S. and I will serve your people in Pakistan."* The Lord blessed me with the opportunity to be able to live and prosper in the USA.

A heart for the poor. My desire to learn more about Jesus continued to grow, as did my relationship with Him. From that, the Lord gave me the vision for ministry to some of the poorest people in Pakistan: brick-kiln families who live in virtual slavery. An estimated two million men, women and children in Pakistan work for no pay, indebted for life, often for several

generations. These modern-day slaves are prisoners of a system of debt where interest rates are so high they can never be met. The dire needs of *the least of these* led to the formation of *Savior's Mission International* (SMI). Through SMI we have been ministering to the poor in Pakistan for over a year.

SMI's Vision and Mission

SMI's vision is a gospel-centered, discipleship movement spreading from city-to-city in Pakistan. Our mission is simple: to liberate captives in rural Pakistan. We do this by equipping these families with the education they need to come out—and stay out—of bonded labor. This includes 1.) discipleship to help them learn their true identity in Jesus, and 2.) vocational training, which includes a.) training in new job skills, and b.) helping them find new jobs or start small businesses as a means of supplementing their income to pay off their debts.

Why Pakistan?

SMI's geographic focus is rural Pakistan because:

- I have personally witnessed the abuse of Christians in rural Pakistan, and the Lord has shown me how to help them break out of the chains of slavery and abuse.
- I have personally experienced the life-changing power of the Word of God in my life, and I want to share with these neglected people the same blessing of personally knowing Jesus, so that they too can experience the wonderful freedom we have in Christ.
- The Lord has given me a vision and put a burning passion in my heart to help free His people, feed His people, teach His people and multiply His people in this dark land.

When it comes to helping the poor in Pakistan, SMI is addressing a major gap. SMI does what other non-profits working in Pakistan do not do. Unlike other non-profits:

- SMI focuses on rural Christian communities.
- SMI is committed to liberating people from indentured slavery.
- SMI provides Bible-based vocational training and marketplace ministry.
- SMI provides Biblical and civil education.
- SMI is orientated towards taking action urgently.

Accomplishments

Some of the things the Lord has done in the last 12 months include the following:

- Bible Education: We have identified Bible Schools in Pakistan with whom we are partnering.

- Vocational Training: We have started vocational schools to help people learn job skills and start developing financial independence.
- Emergency Relief: As a result of Covid-19, we have provided emergency food supplies to poor Christians who are neglected by the Muslim government.

Village Schools of the Bible and Savior's Mission International Partnership.

In 2020 we launched a new strategic partnership to bring VSB to Pakistan. This partnership is crucial for the following reasons:

- The Holy Spirit, working through God's Word, is essential for character formation.
- Most Pakistani Christians have very little Biblical knowledge or formal education.
- Poor people living like slaves in brick factories need God's liberating truth in their lives.
- They will be equipped to share Jesus and the Bible with families and communities.
- Pakistani Bible Schools will benefit enormously from the depth that VSB can provide.

We are making great progress. Recently retired executive director of VSB, Rev. Warren Coe, wrote an *Introduction to the Bible* course, which our partners in Pakistan have already translated into Urdu and contextualized for people in Pakistan. This introductory course will lay the foundation for further Bible study training.

A Phased Project

The Village Schools partnership with SMI is being rolled out in phases starting with VSB's help in preparing course materials, as described above. We are working according to a detailed project plan. Project initiation (planning and governance) is complete. Stage two (course development) is close to completion. In stage three we will identify the team and office in Pakistan, and then, in stage four, provide the training to people in Pakistan with help from VSB instructors. We plan to accomplish this by year end. In the remaining stages starting in January 2021, we focus on post-training execution, launch and follow-up. After launching this discipleship ministry, we will go into an ongoing review-and-improvement cycle.

Our Partners

We have a broad-based Kingdom focus. We are committed to the principle that together we can accomplish so much more than we could on our own. So far, our partners include the following:

- Village Schools of the Bible (USA).
- Wayzata Free Church in Plymouth (USA).
- Bible schools and Christian educators in Pakistan.
- Living Hope for World Ministries Faisalabad (Pakistan).

- The Pentecostal Church of Khushpur (Pakistan).
- The Free church of Jhang (Pakistan).
- Various other Christian churches in Pakistan.

Leadership and Governance

We are absolutely committed to good governance and accountability. To this end we have accomplished the following:

- SMI has registered as a 501(c) 3 non-profit in the USA.
- SMI has constituted a board of experienced members.
- SMI has adopted board best practices with help from VSB.
- SMI has committed to a third-party financial audit each year.

Would you like to learn more?

With the help of key ministry partners, we envision a sustainable, expansive, city-to-city movement of God's people in Pakistan through a network of well-equipped Pakistani Bible schools that provide Biblical depth as well as vocational training. This will prepare leaders to multiply disciples, grow God's Kingdom, and draw many to Christ, for God's mission and for His glory.

If you would like to help or learn more, please contact TanveerGulzar514@yahoo.com, or Warwick@VillageSchoolsoftheBible.org.