

## Meet Pastor Bhim

*"I was destined for a life of punishments."*

"In the Buddhist tradition in Nepal—where I come from—one son is to be set aside for training as a monk. As a young boy, I was destined for a life of disciplines and punishments," says Bhim Gurung. "I knew nothing about Christianity and had never met another Christian in Nepal. My father was in the Indian army when he was sent to Nagaland. There, almost all of the population is Christian! A neighbor invited me to a Baptist church in Nagaland. I learned about Jesus and His love, and I became a Christian."

"At 16, I wanted to return to Nepal. I walked for 3 days, and when I returned to my village, I saw many miracles and healings there through the power of prayer. But later I was thrown out of my village for my Christianity. I found a church that had started a small Bible college. I was the first student! I attended classes there for 3 years."

"I wanted to be a pastor and plant churches in Nepal, but I needed more Bible education. I came to New York in 2000 to study. I went back to Nepal often, but it was dangerous. Young men were being kidnapped for military service. In 2004, a Maoist militia group attacked my family's home in Nepal and took everything from them," he says.

Despite many hardships, Pastor Bhim completed his Master of Divinity and also received training in basic medicine and in counseling to help address some of the needs of the Nepali community. "While the capital city of Kathmandu offers modern amenities and opportunities, the villages of Nepal remain deeply rooted in traditional practices and are often underdeveloped. These rural areas are home to various indigenous tribes and ethnic groups and are marked by economic challenges and limited access to education and healthcare."



Pastor Bhim preaching in the United States



Believers at Gorkha Baptist Church, Nepal

Pastor Bhim, his wife, and their 4 children now live in Massachusetts, but he returns to Nepal regularly. He planted his first church in Nepal in 2007 and has helped to plant and to oversee a total of 13 churches. He is also training Nepali pastors in parts of India.

Though religious freedoms have increased in Pastor Bhim's lifetime, challenges still remain. He says, "Nepal is a mosaic of diverse ethnic groups, including the Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, and Tamang communities and others. About 120 dialects are spoken, most having no similarities to any others. Hinduism is the dominant religion, practiced by 81% of the population."

"Christians in Nepal often face social and legal challenges as they practice their faith in a predominantly non-Christian environment. Some stories are very heartbreaking. Some

Nepal believers must leave everything. Some lose their spouse. There are some very broken people in the church, people who have experienced much trauma."

"Many Nepali pastors are not well trained," says Pastor Bhim. "They need help with discipleship. They experience financial strain and spiritual depression, especially rural pastors. Sometimes they don't have shoes or enough food. My vision is not to send Westerners to Nepal. It is to support the national pastors, to make them strong and to make them stable."

Would you pray for Pastor Bhim today as he leads his Nepali congregation in Massachusetts and oversees the 13 churches in Nepal? Pray for the Nepali pastors who are in need of support and training. And pray for all of our Christian brothers and sisters in Nepal.