



Pastor Steve Stump tells of the eternal gift they have in Christ after donating fishing nets to the village.

CASTING NETS FOR MEN'S SOULS

photos by Mike Calloway

CC Paso Robles, CA, felt led to help with the tsunami relief. A team traveled to the central and northern coast of India carrying relief aid, a few contacts, and faith in God's command to go.

"The name of the place is Jesus Island," the locals insisted. Pastor Steve Stump, CC Paso Robles, thought it was a joke. "When they told us the island's name, we all thought they had just made that up for our sakes, a bad joke on the Americans," said Steve. But when the team came ashore, they knew their Savior was with them as they brought relief to this place that was indeed named Jesus Island. "The rain stopped, the sun shone through the clouds, and it was like some scene from a movie with music in the background ... it was the most amazing moment of my life," added Steve.

The entire village came running to the beach to greet them. Some had never seen Westerners. Children eagerly outran



At another village, Steve shares the Gospel after giving away a truckload of fishing nets.



Indians eagerly waded out to unload the boats of donated fishing nets. The place was called "Jesus Island."

the men who were wading out to unload the rickety boats that the Americans had used to cross from the Indian mainland. The tsunami's massive surge of water had wiped out the villagers' livelihood, sweeping their entire supply of fishing nets out to sea. The economy, totally dependent on the fishing industry for its survival, had been devastated. Without the means to purchase nets, the people had no hope of recovery.

The air became reverent as the island elders ceremoniously accepted the precious cargo the team had brought. Papers were signed—official stamps sealed the transfer of the gifts. Each individual fishing net would enable the islanders to recover.

Finally, all attention turned to Pastor Steve, and the crowd hushed to hear him speak. "Our hearts broke when we saw the devas-

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Pastor Steve Stump, CC Paso Robles

tation of the tsunami and all you have suffered," Steve said as their Indian guide and friend translated. "We wanted you to know that we care and love you. These nets are a gift from God who has given us all a greater gift—One that can't be destroyed by storms or waves. That gift is His Son, Jesus Christ, and salvation through Him. We noticed that your island was named after God's Son. Jesus is the Son of the only true God. Jesus Christ came to this earth and died for all our sins so we would be blameless before His Father. Believing in Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. Every time you catch fish in your nets, remember the One who gave you these gifts—the Lord Jesus Christ."

The natives stood in silence and listened to the Westerner. They understood his sincerity as he choked back tears and told them about Jesus. The 164 families that lived on Jesus Island could now begin to restore their livelihoods. Believing the islanders contemplated why the men had traveled so far to give them these precious gifts, the CC Paso Robles team prayed that Christ would become the focus of Jesus Island. Indian Christians who acted as guides would soon return and show the Passion of the Christ



The entire village listened as Steve compared their small gift of fishing nets with the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.



Local men were puzzled by the generosity of the Christians.

film and translate it into the local dialect. Recognition of rank and responsibility is extremely important throughout Indian society and would allow the accompanying Indian Christians to return and continue to share the Gospel.

On the mainland, the team had purchased the larger nets, which required 60 men to pull them out of the water. Historically, these mammoth nets had been passed from generation to generation, constantly mended and repaired. Villagers could not have replaced any at today's costs.

The CC Paso Robles team traveled to 11 Hindu villages by truck, reached 2,500 families, and replaced 14 tons of fishing nets. Originally, they thought they would be using their donated capital to purchase rice, medicine, and clothing. To their surprise, it was fishing nets that were needed most and that gave them an open door of love to share the greatest gift ever given to mankind—God's Son, Jesus Christ.

The boat trip to Jesus Island came at the end of an arduous, 7-hour truck ride over nearly impassable roads, some of which led to

dead ends. With no road maps in hand, the team had grown discouraged with each passing hour. But at the end of the long road, they had found their greatest surprise and reward—the privilege of casting the love of Jesus Christ with 200 fishing nets. ☞

During the trip, Steve led the team in a study of John Chapter 2, where Jesus turned the water into wine. Mary said of Jesus to the servants, "Whatever He said to you, do it." The team from CC Paso Robles had taken the servants' role and had the honor of witnessing a miracle. The water had turned to wine and tasted sweet.

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