



Instructors:

1. **Samuel Vaiphei:** Indian Revenue Service (IRS cadre, Week One and Two instructor).
2. **Canato Choppy:** Asst. Professor and Social Researcher (Week Three instructor on **Social Movements**).
3. **Justin Khup:** Research assistant in a top corporate honcho (Week Three instructor on **Jesus and Money**).
4. **Chubamenla Jamir:** Asst. Professor at TERI University (The Energy and Research Institute) (Week Three instructor on **Environmental Cost of India's Predatory Growth**).

List of Readings

1. *Simply Jesus* ~ N.T. Wright
2. *Hope For Troubled Times* ~ Bob Goudzwaard
3. *Political Sociology* ~ Dipankar Gupta (Samir Dasgupta, same title)
4. *We Answer To Another* ~ David Koyzis
5. *Jesus and Money* ~ Ben Witherington III
6. *Money: The Unauthorized Biography* ~ Felix Martin
7. *Why Nations Fail* ~ Daren Acemoglu
8. *Churning The Earth* ~ Aseem Shrivastava & Ashish Kothari
9. *Collapse: How Societies Choose To Fail Or Succeed* ~ Jared Diamond
10. *Social Movements II: Concerns of Equity and Security* ~ T.K. Oommen
11. *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* ~ Christian Smith

Report

The Intensive Summer Study 2014 began on 7th July 2014 for a course of three weeks amidst the hot and humid Delhi weather (ending on 26th July 2014). Forty bravehearts jumped on board to a strange and exhausting journey. It soon dawned on them that they were not ready for the rough seas and had to change their initial assumptions, gear up, and strengthen their mind to brace the journey ahead, day after day. The end was as sweet as the beginning. They all began their journey as novices; they came out refined by the journey.

Week One:

In Week One we learned about the **various brands of Christian belief** viz. Catholics, Protestants and Eastern Orthodox. Thereon we proceeded to the various translations of the Bible—how some versions are riddled with biases while others have translation issues. Quite an eye opener for us the next time we decide to buy a Bible for ourselves or gift our friends.

Next, we were introduced to a picture of **Jesus we never knew** could be painted that way. Pages after pages filled with intriguing pictures of who Jesus was, what his mission was, what he did during the three years of his ministry on earth, what his death actually meant, and what his resurrection does for his followers and for the entire creation. Teaching from ***Simply Jesus by N.T. Wright***, our instructor Samuel clearly illustrated to us the inadequacy of the picture of Jesus taught in our churches. For most Christians it would have been perfectly okay if Jesus was born of a virgin, died on the cross and did nothing in between. Or if Jesus was born in India, or Africa, or China, would it make a difference...thus highlighting the importance of context and the narrative flow of the story of Israel. Besides the person of Jesus we also learnt the context from which Jesus narrated his parables. It served as a colossal eye opener to realize that parables were not just earthly stories with heavenly meanings; they are much more than that.

Among others, mention can also be made of the videos we watched on the Muslim apologist Zakir Naik and his arguments on the non-divinity of Jesus.

Week Two:

Week Two took a different turn as we diverted our course to undertake a **theological assessment of law, power and state**. To consolidate our critique on these avenues we read diverse papers, and critically analyzed a lecture by Joseph Prince, pastor in Singapore, whereby he put “law” and “grace (and truth)” in two neat compartments. We learned to examine and analyze such faulty teachings.

The textbook that guided our minds to think was ***Truth Speaks To Power*** written by the noted Old Testament scholar **Walter Brueggemann**. From the book we were introduced to the other side of Joseph, David and Solomon... It was heartbreaking to see their lives in a different light than were usually taught and preached, and how power corrupted them. Joseph was the man responsible for enslaving the whole kingdom of Egypt using food as weapon. Solomon, the man who was blessed by God with wisdom, ascended the throne by devious and deceptive means, and David, the man after God’s own heart, was not able to maintain discipline in his family and even asked Solomon to kill some of his own soldiers.

The pressing question asked by Pilate to Jesus, “What is truth?” had its answer from the lives of these kings: **Truth is what keeps power in check!** Then on the other side there is Moses transformed by the truth. Where Joseph learned the ‘ways of Egypt’ to enslave the masses Moses had to unlearn the same ‘ways of Egypt’ to free the slaves. Josiah was transformed by the truth: where his son Jehoiakim tore the scrolls, Josiah tore his clothes and transformed the kingdom.

The message of ‘power’ speaks clear and loud in our lives too. Where many of us want to ascend to power, be it in the bureaucratic or administrative services, truth constantly challenges us to face up to reality. Power is the real test of a person’s character. It either makes us or breaks us. And truth is indeed what keeps power in check!

On the issue of power, we read and analyzed a very important treatise written by Theodore Beza (1519-1605), a French theologian, on the rights of magistrates on the one hand and the conditions on which subjects can choose to disobey commands from higher authorities, on the other hand. The treatise analyzes in depth to what extent magistrates can exercise their authority and when subjects can choose to defy such authority (as a last resort). Questions like “Must magistrates always be obeyed as unconditionally as God?” “How far must obedience be rendered or refused to unjust or impious commands?” “What is the duty of subjects towards their superiors who have fallen into tyranny?” etc. are dealt extensively and assessed through a biblical lens.

Week two also saw **debates** on three topics:

1. Should gay/lesbians/transgenders be allowed to hold positions of leadership in the church?
2. It is for a good cause to lift liquor ban in the states of Manipur and Nagaland (Northeast India).
3. Hindi as a compulsory language both in the government sector and in the university is a good move. (Context: the new government has been pushing to make Hindi a compulsory language).

Week Three:

Week three introduced us to three areas of concern: Social Movements (Instructor: Canato Chopi), Growth and its impact on the environment (Instructor: Chuba Jamir), Money and its implications (Instructor: Justin Khup).

In **Social Movements** we learned about various social movements in India like Bhagat Movement (Jharkhand, Central India), Seng Khasi Movement (Meghalaya, Northeast India), and Donyi Polo (Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India).

We assessed these movements and compared it to the Jesus Movement which begun in the first century in Palestine. The aforementioned movements are a revival of the indigenous religions of the particular regions. Known as Religious Revival or Revitalization Movements, they are an expression of the inadequacy or irrelevancy of the universal religions (Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam) to their particular contexts. From the lectures we learnt that all societies are fallen. The biases that we have against foreigners (and ‘foreign’ religion like Christianity) and

also the common notion that tribal societies are basically innocent cultures and that they are not to be disturbed but to be left to themselves are complete hokum.

The rise of Marxism and Naxalism as resistance from the margins were also dealt in detail. The bottom line being the complete break of the Jesus Movement from all other movements, and how one person in first century Palestine changed the way we look at society, women, culture etc. shook our conventional knowledge.

The second issue on Week Three was on **India's predatory growth and its implication on the environment**. We learned that to love our neighbour includes love for the environment and not just people. "How can we glorify God as a good Creator standing near a garbage dump?" was a pressing question put to us. Interactive sessions helped us understand the intricacies of government policies. Six teams were asked to frame a policy each that would be beneficial to the poor and also economically viable and sustainable. It was a fun and informative way of understanding the policies of a nation. Another interactive session that helped us understand how products are priced was to divide into five teams and decide how to price a kilogram of coffee by determining how much farmers, exporters, shippers, roasters and retailers would receive as their fair due wages. (References for week three: *Churning the Earth* by Aseem Srivastava & Ashish Kothari, and *Collapse* by Jared Diamond).

The third issue of Week Three was on **money**. Next to the kingdom of God, money (or mammon) was the topic which occupied the teachings of Jesus the most. We learned about what the Bible had to say about money. Some consider money (wealth) as blessing from God (Prov. 10:22) while others consider it a curse/scandal to possess wealth (Psalm 73:12-13). In the sessions that covered the issue of **money and international politics**, we learned that money flows not from rich to poor countries but the other way round. We also learned the bias policies of IMF and the World Bank on poorer countries. Mention was also made of WTO and the erstwhile GATT. The principles of WTO like:

1. No discriminatory and rule-based trading system (where foreign goods and services should receive the same treatment as domestically sourced).
2. Trade barriers are to be dismantled... international trade should be free.
3. Less developed nations should receive preferential terms of trade (which hardly happens at all).

At face value, the principles seem to be sound and fair but dig in deeper and we find that these principles favour the developed nations and place under-developed and developing nations at their mercy.

Several issues on money were raised and taught to us by our instructor Justin from the book *Jesus and Money* by Ben Witherington III.

Week Three saw two **debates** on

1. Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.
2. National Food Security Act 2013.

Thus concludes the Intensive Summer Study 2014.

The Word of God is truly liberating. We now know better what it means to follow Jesus. We have a better picture of who Jesus is and what that means to us as we continue to participate in God's mission. We believe we now stand at the threshold to engaging the university and the government. We believe God has allowed us to see greater things and called us to partner with him to stand at places where the world is in pain (in N.T. Wright's words) and transform them. We also believe we are called to speak the language of the culture—be it in the university, in our respective disciplines, in the bureaucracy or in the street. We humbly pray that we go out willingly into the world to be scattered like mustard seeds in the wild and see the Kingdom of God grow and take root.

SEE THE FULL PROGRAM: <https://summerstudy2014.wordpress.com/>

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Date: 7 – 26 July, 2014

Event organizer: The North Delhi Evangelical Graduates Fellowship (EGF) and Inter-Collegiate Evangelical Union (ICEU)

Event topic: Intensive Summer Study 2014

Location: New Delhi

Country: India

Participants: Recent graduates of Indian universities

Language: English