

Placed by God for a Purpose in the Workplace

by Philemon Dharmaraj

I come from a very good Christian family. My parents are godly people who trust the Word of God, who want to follow the Word and know the Lord Jesus personally in their life. There are four children in the family, three boys and one girl. My father chose each of our names with much prayer.

My parents are from a Christian family. We have a family background of five generations of Christians. My ancestors were in the deep South of India. In a village in the late 1800's, some Danish missionaries came and presented the Gospel and through that my father's ancestors accepted the Lord. Later on, our relatives began serving with the Danish missionaries. When the missionaries left they trusted them with the work. They had a small church in the village and my father's father served as a pastor. My parents later moved on to the city of Madras to look for work.

Since I was in a good Christian family, a church going and bible reading family, I knew about salvation because of their teaching and going to church. In my first year of college, when I was 17, I decided that I had to give my heart to the Lord. I knew that it was not enough just being in my Christian family. So one day it happened in one of our Gospel meetings. The preacher invited people to give their heart to the Lord and I gave my heart to Him. This was on a Sunday evening at the church my family attended.

Since I come from a Christian background, after becoming a Christian I looked the same as I had already looked on the outside. To the world I was a very good boy, but I knew in my heart of hearts that I had some hypocrisy. I continued serving in our church and serving the Lord.

Later on, when I was an aircraft maintenance engineer, I worked on a light aircraft doing an engine test run and by mistake almost walked into a propeller rotating at about 2500 rpm. If I had walked into it fully, I would have been minced meat. Normally after the run, we cut off the engine and do an oil check. It so happened on that day that I was told to go on to the next aircraft. I went with the routine normally used and got out and went to the engine. That is how I almost walked into the propeller. It felt as if somebody pushed me away to save me, but no other person was there. This was three or four years after I was born again. I felt like the Lord was giving me a second chance. In another instance, I was with a friend who almost landed our light airplane in front of a Boeing 737. The moment we crossed the runway the Boeing 737, without warning, landed on the main runway in Madras. These things happened within one or two months of each other and made me think that the Lord had spared my life for a purpose.

After these experiences I started seeking the Lord in a more earnest way. I said to Him, "You spared my life for some purpose, so let me know how I can serve you more." I became more actively involved in serving the Lord in various ways like Gospel outreach and getting involved in music because our family is musically talented by God's grace. I also started searching the word of God seriously and wanted to know the heart of the Father and what He had in store for me. Life became different as I tried to please God in all areas of my life.

Later on in the early 1980's, I had an opportunity to go to work for Indian Airlines. Then, I met a girl and we were both interested in marriage. The Lord made it possible for both families to approve and we were formally engaged. I took a job in Bombay and then we got married. I was 27 years old.

My wife Emmy is a very beautiful woman in all ways including attitude and character. She is actively involved in ministry. Married life is a blessing. One benefit is that a wife is free to correct a husband and when I take it with a right attitude it is a blessing for me. It is wonderful to have a godly wife. We have three sons Jeff, Andy and Micky.

Earlier on in my work after marriage, my desires were focused on furthering my career by becoming an engineer and making more money. But, the Lord brought me to the right priorities knowing that I have to grow more in Him and seek his kingdom first over success in the workplace. The moment I set my focus on priorities as God would direct, the Lord began to aid me and I did become an engineer. That was a wonderful gift from the Lord. I am now a Senior Aircraft Engineer for Indian Airlines.

I was very excited to hear about the Fellowship of Christian Airline Personnel about six years ago. One of our friends, Mark Fernandes learned of FCAP when traveling to Atlanta for Delta. Also some of my other friends flying for Air India were going to FCAP meetings in Australia and other places. They all shared this information with me. After Mark came back from the U.S. to Bombay, we discussed FCAP with our pastor, Pastor Joseph, who was very supportive. He immediately said the ministry sounded good and we should start it. FCAP Board Member Stefan Heusser came for the opening day of FCAP in India. We had a small gathering

and he explained the purposes of FCAP. This happened on May 27, 1993. After that we began to meet. Mark, myself and other friends hired a small room and we invited other Christians in order to introduce them to FCAP. This meeting was followed with a visit from FCAP General Director Paul Curtas and Barney Brogan, former Fellowship Coordinator, for FCAP training. It really benefited us. We also got regular correspondence from the FCAP International Office.

There are currently groups in Chennai (Madras), Hyderabad and Mumbai (Bombay). There is also some activity in Dehli and Calcutta. We have been praying for leadership there. Lav Samuel is active in our Bombay fellowship. He goes to routes in Trivandrum City. He has been talking with others about a group there. We also have great support from a number of people in Bombay including Pastor Joseph.

I went to my first FCAP International Convention in 1997. It was fantastic. It gave us a broader view of FCAP and It was very good to know what was happening around the world. Also, we found there was an affection one for another in the various airlines for Christian brothers and sisters. At the convention, the Lord gave us a burden to pray for those we heard share like those from Uganda and Ghana and also for airline companies that are struggling.

FCAP has been a great encouragement to us. In FCAP India, God is giving us a burden for unsaved airline employees. We are placed here by God in our work for a purpose. For me, FCAP educates and helps me to grow in the Lord. At the 1996 Indian Convention, Paul Curtas's teaching on becoming a shining a light in the workplace really ministered to me.

I used to pray that God would take me into full time ministry for the church. I don't pray that way anymore because when I prayed for that the Lord clearly spoke to me and said I was to be in the job that He had given me. He has placed me in this mission field for His purpose. ■

Philemon Dharmaraj is with Indian Airlines and lives with his family in Bangalore, India. This article is a reprint from our July/August 1999 issue of THE TRIM TAB.