

# Baker Bulletin



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## Shining in Darkness

With constant media reports of terrorist attacks and heightened security, people often ask if we really feel safe in India. Most often I reply yes, we perceive no threat of physical harm but on the other hand, we are constantly on guard against the spiritual attacks of the unseen world.

Dominated by Hinduism and its plethora of gods, India is blanketed by a spirit of darkness.

Earlier this month I had the opportunity to visit the Tirumala Temple complex in our state, cited ahead of the Vatican as the most visited religious shrine in the world. Hosting upwards of 200,000 pilgrims a day, and half a million during various Hindu festivals, the temple sits atop the largest of seven hills.



Tirumala Temple

Dedicated to the Hindu god Venkateswara, the only god who can provide release from samsara (the cycle of reincarnation), the brilliant gold covered temple lies in the center of a large 10 square mile city, complete with its own local government.

During our 45 minute drive to the top, we saw hundreds of men, women and children walking, most barefoot and carrying gifts, on a minimum eight hour climb.

What really struck me was not the ostentatiousness of the impressive Temple and its surroundings but the dedication of the people. Old men and women, mothers carrying babies, barefooted children in rags, had all made the trek and were bowing in adoration of an unknown god.

Much like our Muslim neighbors in their commitment to Allah, it was impressive to witness the dedication and fervor displayed by the followers of Venkateswara. But if only they knew the idol in front of them was powerless to save them. If only they knew the one true God of the world was not only watching them but calling them into His arms. If only...

My guide to the temple was a local pastor who, with a team

of believers regularly makes his own pilgrimage to the top. Prohibited from carrying Christian materials with them, they gather outside the temple praying in unison to the one true God, shining a bright light to dispel the powers of darkness and, as the opportunity arises, openly declaring the name of Jesus to the devotees on the hilltop.

“For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.”  
Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

## A Monkey on Your Back?

It was a clear morning in Rajahmundry as our commuter plane was on final approach to the single landing strip at the town's tiny airport. Then suddenly, with no warning, the aircraft suddenly banked to the right and increased



altitude in what appeared to be an aborted landing.

Moments later, the pilot's reassuring voice announced that ground control had advised there were monkeys on the runway and ordered a holding pattern until they were cleared.

By no means a unique event in a land where simian primates run wild, it reminded me of the 'monkey on our back' that Paul had called his "thorn in the flesh" (1 Cor. 12:7).

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

1 Cor. 12:8

Living in India is often cause to lament the impossible task ahead in a country so overshadowed by the powers of darkness. But it's reassuring to know that regardless of the monkey on your back, “the Lord's grace is sufficient, and His power is made perfect in our weakness” (1 Cor. 12:8)

## Praise & Prayer

### Praise Report

The Lord is adding to their numbers daily (Acts 2:47).

### Charitable Status

TCC and PAOI are still facing hurdles to register as charities with the Indian government.

### Student Recruitment

TCC is conducting a special drive to recruit more students that are committed to work with the PAOI church planting ministry.