

On Coronavirus and the Power of Incarnation

By Tom Smith, ITEM Executive Director

When news began seeping out of China at the beginning of the year about a new viral outbreak in some place called Wuhan, none of us imagined it would turn into a world-wide pandemic. Most of us could not have foreseen that almost every nation on the planet would go into some form of lockdown. The lockdown restrictions have been hard on all of us, but especially on lesser developed economies.

Because the vast majority of our students overseas are bi-vocational, the shelter-in-place restrictions are extremely hard. No work means no income, and no income makes it hard to buy food. Because ITEM cares about our students and their families, the Executive Committee decided to give financial aid to some of our worst hit representatives in India, Kenya, Belize, Bolivia and Indonesia. We welcome your contributions to help sustain our student leaders.

In April, online classes were taught in Latvia and Bolivia. Lectures are being recorded for upcoming classes in other locations. ITEM is making available previously recorded lectures from the past 15 years at Baltic Regional Theological Seminary in Riga, Latvia.

In Kenya, when restrictions are lifted and students can gather, a MINTS trained professor who is in Kenya already will teach for ITEM, as it is not possible to travel to Kenya. Projection equipment is being procured for four training sites in India so that leaders can be trained via the Internet and through recorded lectures delivered on memory sticks.

Livestream and recorded lectures are not ideal. We think in-person instruction to be the best. Jesus Christ came and dwelt among us. The Son of God was incarnated during his earthly ministry. We believe discipleship is best done incarnationally.

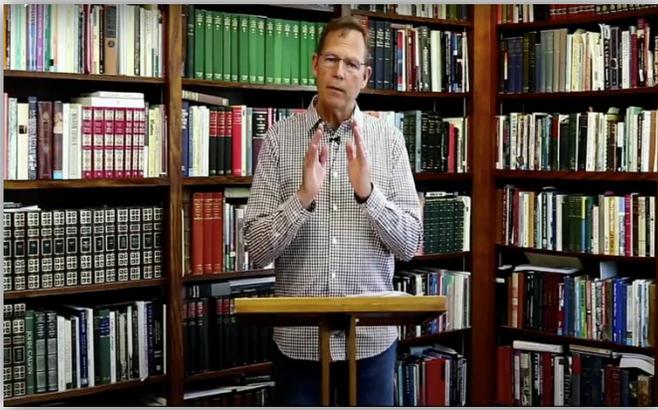
Once restrictions are lifted ITEM instructors will be getting on jets and crossing oceans to teach. But for now and in future unique situations, ITEM will employ the Internet to continue training leaders for ministry. We thank God for allowing us to use technology for his glory and to advance his kingdom.

In most cases, international travel is not possible. And in the cases where it is possible, it is not safe or wise. We hope and pray all of our supporters and newsletter readers are protected from this deadly virus. May much good come out of this time we are required to stay at home until the virus is contained. May God be glorified as he builds his church and revives and refines it.

Check us out on Social Media

ITEM is on **Instagram**: @itemmission. Follow our journeys and tag us when you go on yours.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalTheologicalEducationMinistries/>



Using YouTube, Smart Teaches Classes in Bolivia

Bob Smart has preached for 27 years. He has taught at seminars across the United States. He has taught seminary level courses in 35 countries. That's a lifetime of experience digging into God's Word and sharing what he has learned. But he's never had a day of teaching like he did last month as he delivered messages for a class on Christ and Salvation.

From the first message (The Glory of Jesus Christ and Salvation Accomplished and Applied) through the ninth (Spiritual Warfare Regarding our Identity), he spoke for six hours.

"I was exhausted," he said. Of course, six hours is a long time, to be sure. But it's not unheard of. Bob has spoken often at conferences, and those are long days. What made this day unusual was the audience, or, rather, the lack thereof. He spoke alone, just him and his camera, inside a library at Christ Church PCA in Normal, Illinois.

That changed what he said and how he said it. His target audience was students in Cochabamba, Bolivia. If he was there, he would have tailored it more directly to them. But because it would be posted online, he made it more general.

Also if he had been there, he would have had to accommodate a translator. In this case, the translation came after he was done.

He uploaded his messages to YouTube with the expectation they would be watched by students

individually, not in a class, since gatherings are banned there due to the coronavirus.

A common lament in the coronavirus era is the lack of interaction, and Smart wrestled with that. He had been to Cochabamba, so he imagined the room in front of him was full of students from there.

The closest thing to interaction he had were daily zoom meetings in which students could ask him questions. "That was very good," he said. But he longed to speak with his students, to hug them, to hear their stories, and he couldn't do any of that.

One blessing of this is that Smart's teaching remains on YouTube. If Smart traveled to Bolivia and presented the lectures to the class, that would have been the end of it. But now anybody can watch the classes.

Prayer Requests

1. Pray for the field directors and Christians in Ukraine, India, Belize, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, Indonesia, Kenya, Bolivia and the Philippines who are experiencing quarantines. No American teachers are able to go to these fields.
2. Pray for ITEM's new plan to facilitate teaching during the quarantine by sending modules via the Internet. They will be watched using ITEM-provided projectors and smart televisions.
3. Pray for local teachers in Manipur, India who are teaching the Ministry Foundation Course.
4. Pray for ITEM's new program to provide funds for food for students in fields hard hit by the coronavirus. Pray that the suffering will soon end.
5. Pray for the field directors and local Christians who are suffering greatly due to the coronavirus.

How to Contribute

In the U.S. send contributions to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO 63131 or at www.ITEM.org through PayPal.

Email executive director Tom Smith at tomsmith@item.org.

Contributions to ITEM in Canada may be sent to:

Action International Ministries
3015A 21st NE
Calgary AB T2E 7T1