

Bethel Bible College

Bethel Bible College (BBC) is committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the up-building of His Church. All courses and activities are centered on the Bible, the foundation of our common faith. The College seeks to help students to be faithful to the Scriptures and to sincerely apply them, holistically to their own lives and context. Thus, prayer, worship, evangelism, and service are integral parts of the College's program. As the College is ecumenical and interdenominational in orientation, students are also encouraged to learn from and participate in the rich traditions of other churches and denominations.

The College follows the syllabus for the Bachelor of Divinity (BD) program, as BBC is the only Bible College in Andhra Pradesh affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College (University). The syllabus is broad in scope and contextual in application. As such, the College and its faculty members seek to apply the latest insights and resources to the instructional process so that students are well-equipped for future ministry and further studies. The College library is being developed and is well stocked with both the latest scholarship as well as the best of traditional and foundational works.

Based on the credentials of BBC, the Senate of Serampore College (university) has also given the permission to offer external courses such as BCS (Bachelor Christian Studies) and Dip.C.S (Diploma in Christian Studies) in line with the enormous need of Indian population. External courses are very much helpful to theologically untrained pastors, elders, professionals, employees, students, and house wives.

The special features of students in BBC are wonderful. Students are from Southern, Northern and North-Eastern part of India. Besides a good number of students are from chin tribe of Myanmar as well. Students from liturgical and non-liturgical church background together undergo theological training in BBC. In contrast to other theological colleges, BBC students are mostly not sponsored by any churches. Except a few students who are sponsored by their own family members, mostly students in BBC are from poor socio-economic background. BBC's vision and mission is to prepare laborers for the harvest. Thus, BBC students are free to choose the mission field as they are inspired during their theological education and ministerial formation at BBC.

The Importance of Bethel Bible College

There is a great need of evangelization in India. As Jesus mentioned "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few", there is an immense need of theologically trained evangelists to share the good news and reap the harvest. Therefore, we need more trained people in India and in the neighboring countries. The vision of BBC is to thoroughly train maximum number of students and send them to the unreached regions of India and neighboring countries.

India, as a developing nation, is blessed with 1.2 billion people. Christian population in India is 2.3 per cent as per the census report of 2011. The number of Bible Colleges with respect to the

Indian population is insignificant and they are unable to meet the huge responsibility of spreading the good news. Therefore, India still needs more Bible Colleges.

There are many committed students who have the vision and great burden to reach out the unreached mission field. However, they are financially not in a position to get trained by their own resources and carry out their goal. On the one hand there are many people willing to go out but lack resources, but on the other hand there are many people who have resources but not in a position to practically spend their time for evangelism. Here comes the importance of BBC in trying to bridge these two groups by channeling the resources from those committed Christians to those who are willing to reach out the unreached places. Therefore, we need a number of committed youths and equal number of sponsors to fulfill the God given mission that they together share the burden and reap the harvest.

It is also to be noted that there is a difference between students of BBC and the students of other theological colleges. In contrast to other theological colleges, BBC students are not sponsored by any churches. Therefore, our students are free to choose the mission field as they are inspired during their theological education and ministerial formation at BBC. As BBC students are mostly from poor socio-economic background and a few are self-sponsored by family members they are free to choose the mission field as per their choice. In other words, BBC students have a free choice to fulfill their God given vision. While other existing theological colleges in India cater to the need of the established and organized churches, BBC's vision and mission is to prepare laborers for the harvest. Thus, a good number of BBC graduates go to the mission field.

Courses Offered:

- 1) Five Year B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity) Degree
Eligibility: Intermediate/+2 Pass.
- 2) Four Year BD (Bachelor of Divinity) Degree
Eligibility: Graduation from any recognized University
- 3) Four Year Bachelor of Christian Studies (BCS) as Distance Mode
Eligibility: Graduation from any recognized University
- 4) Two Year Diploma in Christian Studies as Distance Mode
Eligibility: Intermediate/+2 Pass.

The Impact of BBC

Nearly three hundred students have graduated with Bachelor Degrees recognized by colleges and universities worldwide through Bethel Bible College since 2005. Our students represent different cultures, languages, denominations, from several states of India and neighboring country like

Myanmar. At present 156 students from southern, northern and North-Eastern part of India, are studying in Bethel Bible College. Besides a good number of students are from chin tribe of Myanmar as well.

Fees and Sponsorship

Theological education is quite expensive. The expense of theological education is increasing year by year as the cost of living like maintenance, tax, electricity, water charges, etc., increase. The annual fee of a student, including tuition, mess, and lodging, is \$1500. Each student is expected to pay \$ 750 as half of their fees. BBC takes care of the other half with the contributions of well-wishers.

Practical Work

Practical exposure is an integral part of theological training in BBC. BBC sends students to various mission fields as per the choice of students. As part of ministerial formation, a good number of students assist pastors of various church traditions. BBC also conducts a considerable number of Sunday schools in and around BBC campus. Week-ends are separated for practical ministry. The expenses of practical ministry are taken-care by the college authorities.

Plan of Development

A few more developments in terms of infrastructure and library are essential for BBC to move towards a higher level. The following are a few proposals for the development of the Bible College.

i) Upgrading to Masters Level

It was the vision of the management to upgrade BBC to a Master's level theological college. No theological college in A.P. is equipped enough to conduct a Master of Theological (M.Th) degree program of the Senate of Serampore University. Similarly, the distance education BCS also can be upgraded to MCS (Master of Christian Studies). If BBC upgrades to a master's level theological program, it will be highly helpful to the students from socially and economically backward strata to get the best theological education.

ii) Library Development

Library is the heart of any educational institution. The present library situated in the Hostel building has sixteen thousand plus volumes of books and journals. However, the present library building is not sufficient enough to accommodate all the existing BD students. Moreover, the books available are also not sufficient enough to upgrade BBC into a master's level theological college. The following proposals are for the library upgrading:

- a) **New Library Building:** The Board of directors of BBC has taken a decision to construct a separate library building in front of the hostel with all modern library facilities. With sufficient number of books, the new library would be meeting the requirements set for the BD and M.Th program of the Senate of Serampore University.
- b) **New Books:** An estimated cost of \$20,000 is to be invested on new books in the coming years in order to upgrade BBC into an M.Th level theological college.
- c) **Digitalizing the Library:** As all the BBC students are not equipped with their own computer facilities, library is to be facilitated with adequate computer facilities in order to have access to the e-books. Therefore, a fully digitalized computer lab is the first priority and then the library has to secure sufficient e-materials.
- d) **Securing Used Books from Other Countries:** BBC Library can be enhanced with used theological books from international universities/ theological colleges and other donors. A soft copy of the bibliography of the required books would be sent to the interested partners/donors to secure the required books.
- e) **On-line Library:** Online sites like ATLA, SAGE, etc., are to be used to upgrade the library with sufficient journals in the field of the Old Testament, the New Testament, Theology, Christian ministry and Philosophy.

iii) Students Hostel

The present hostel building can accommodate a maximum of 150 students. The aim of BBC is to accommodate 250 students including M.Th students and students of short term courses. An extra building or raising one more floor to the existing building is the option before us.

iv) Faculty Quarters

There is no separate faculty quarter for BBC. Faculty members of BBC are accommodated in the student's hostel and majority are accommodated in rented buildings outside the campus. If we can have our own faculty quarters within the campus, then the faculty members can be with students and can save a good amount of money that we spent for rent.

v) Faculty Development

As we upgrade from Bachelors degree to master's level, BBC needs more faculty members. Especially, the number of doctorate holders is to be increased. For instance, one branch of master's program requires two doctorate holders. In order to apply for a master's program, the University insists to apply for minimum two branches. This incurs additional amount of salary and increments.

In addition to this, BBC has a plan to send the existing faculty members for doctorate program as part of the faculty development scheme. As we send them for doctoral studies, we have to meet the expenses of their studies. This program would yield good reputation to the college and quality of education can be maintained.

vi) Distance Education

Theological education at the door step is the aim of BBC in introducing distance education. At present, 300 students have registered for theological education through distance mode. Our aim is to enroll around 1000 students. Distance education has enormous potential. Those who are having a job or business can participate with the theological education as an ongoing program. Having a theological degree would make the participants more effective in witness and evangelism.

vii) Short Term Courses

The college has a plan to start short term courses like a certificate course (C.Th) and graduation in theology (G.Th). The purpose of introducing these courses is to bring more committed students who lack a secular graduation into the ministry. They would be equipped within two years. A constant monthly financial support would help these people to pioneer churches in the unreached area.

viii) Securing Assets

As the number of students increase, the facilities are also to be increased proportionately. It is true with upgrading to Masters' level as well. Securing assets in the form of land, buildings, endowments, etc., are essential for the further development of the Bible College.

ix) Additional Staff and Expenses

Additional staff is essential for the Bible College as it upgrades towards Masters' level and accommodates more students. Faculty members with doctorate are mandatory for us to upgrade to higher level. More supporting staff is needed to have more students in the distance mode. These developments incur additional expenses. Moreover, there is an addition of ten per cent of expenses every year.

Partnership

BBC seeks partnership in the ministry. The one who supports and the one who goes to the mission field are equally important in the ministry. Although you are entrusted with a mission, you perhaps may not be in a position to go and preach the gospel in Indian villages/ Myanmar/ Bhutan or Nepal. Thus, it is an opportunity for you to support those who are willing to go with proper theological education and send them to the unreached places. It is high time to support BBC and its various projects, as similar to the exhortation of Paul: "how can they preach unless they are sent?" Let us take up partnership with BBC and get involved in the God given ministry.