

India

A MAN CAUGHT SMUGGLING BIBLES SPARKS A NATIONWIDE MOVEMENT

"If you want to see what you've never seen. Then you've got to do what you've never done." This challenge from his Biglife leader moved Rafiqul. The young man thought about it as he studied scriptures and as he prayed.

Rafiqul was desperate to share Jesus with his Muslim neighbors in Bangladesh, but he lived in India and the two countries are separated by the River Ichamati. Crossing the river is illegal, and swimming across is dangerous. But Rafiqul wanted to see what he'd never seen, and so God gave him a plan to do what he'd never done.

When night came, he put 10 Bibles in a bag. He was going to swim across the river, share the gospel with those on the other side and hand out Bibles. Rafiqul knew he could drown. The Ichamati was notoriously swift, but he was determined to bring the Word of God to Bangladesh—regardless of cost.

As Rafiqul stood on the bank preparing to jump into the dark water below, a light suddenly illuminated him and a voice shouted, "Stop or we'll shoot!"

It was Indian border security forces.

Instinctually, Rafiqul threw the bag towards the river and ran. Even as the soldiers chased him, he was coming up with a plan to return, collect the Bibles, and attempt another crossing. This was on his mind when the soldiers caught up to him and when they dragged him off to a military camp.

Upon arrival, he was searched and then detained for three days.

Immediately after he was released, Rafiqul returned the banks of the Ichamati to look for his bag of Bibles. In daylight, he quickly found the spot where the soldiers confronted him, but he couldn't find the bag. He looked tirelessly but went home discouraged. *Next month I will*

come back and try again, he thought. *God told me to do it, so I will do it.*

Rafiqul shared his plan with a group of friends who told him he was crazy. He didn't mind. He trusted God to provide a way.

Not long after, two young men he'd never seen before visited Rafiqul at his home. They told him they were happy to finally meet him, but at the same time they were a little upset that he did not include his phone number on the books he'd sent them.

"We had to search for hours to find you."

Rafiqul was surprised.

"What books?" he asked.

"The books we found in the river."

The men had already started reading the Bibles and were especially grateful that Rafiqul had even underlined certain texts for them. They'd already read John 3:16, Romans 3:23 and several others. They'd loved these verses so much they shared them with their friends and families. Now, five villages were reading them. "Please come and tell us what to do next," they said.

Rafiqul called his Biglife leader for help. Together, they started discipling the Bangladeshis across the river. Soon, these disciples were baptizing new believers of their own. In time, these new believers became disciple makers and were baptizing even more believers. Through this, God granted Rafiqul the chance to see something he'd never seen: he accidentally threw ten Bibles into the Ichamati River but, because of his faith, God used this to spread disciple making movements from one corner of Bangladesh to the other—and many of his Muslim brothers were saved.