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# Meet Noun Pheap 

Mark FENDER



Mr. Noun Pheap
World War II had ended one year earlier. A couple living in Poyon village, Ta Moeun commune, Battambang district, gave birth to a son named Noun Pheap. He was the fifth of ten children-four boys and six girls. Pheap's parents were farmers who employed two servants-one man and one woman.

Pheap recalls being a very active boy. When his father's servant went with an ox-cart, he would cry and beg to go along. Because they all loved him, they often let him go. One day his father and the servants went with the ox-cart early in the morning to the rice paddy, and Pheap also went with them. On the way back home the ox-cart was loaded full with sheaves of rice. About two kilometers from his house, Pheap fell asleep and tumbled off the ox-cart in front of the wheel. This was very dangerous. As Pheap lay unmoving and semi-conscious on the ground, one ox kicked him so that he jerked his head out of the way just as a heavy wagon wheel was about to crush it. The wheel ended up running over only his finger, inflicting a scar that he still bears today. This close brush with death gave him the sense that some unseen power was protecting and preserving him for His purposes. The young Pheap fell off the cart not just this once, but on four occasions!

Pheap attended school for fifteen years. Pol Pot made him despair, since all his efforts at learning now seemed to be wasted. When the regime fell he returned to live with his family. In 1981 during the Republic of Kampuchea he started working with the postal service in Battambang district. He married in 1982, and fathered three children-two daughters and a son. Noun Kanya is now fourteen years old, Noun Kolyan is twelve, and his son Noun Boramy is ten. From 1982-84, he left for Phnom Penh to study how to work for the postal service. When he finished in early 1985, he was sent by the Ministry of Post to work as a director for the postal service in Pras Net Pras district in Battambang province.

He struggled in his heart because of jealousy over the prosperity and success of the wicked. This struggle, however, subsided to calmness, though he did not know how. He used to tell his family and friends, "In these times if there are 1,000 people like me who are not jealous of the wicked and try to be like them, the society will prosper and make good progress." He said this even before he knew there is one true God.

Another wonderful circumstance took place while he worked in the postal service in Phnom Penh. Why did he have no responsibility to inspect packages entering the country from
abroad? Why did he have such responsibilities only in Pras Net Pras?

In 1986-87 there were three to four hundred packages coming in Pras Net Pras Postal service. One was filled with Christian tracts and booklets about the "Only True God."

Intrigued by this booklet, Pheap asked the owner of the package if he could have a copy. Pheap was able to read this booklet and compare it with the Bible. He especially remembers that Isaiah 57:20 likened the wicked to the restless, tossing sea that stirs up dirt and mire. Pheap compared this image of an unsettled, rough, and dirty life with his own experiences of drinking and dancing. After reading this booklet, in late 1989 Pheap visited his village to find a way to change his work place. When he reached his home village and met his relatives he received an audiotape from his uncle, who was a pastor in the United States. This tape again communicated the message that Jesus is the only true God, confirming what Pheap had read in the booklet.

In 1989 the Ministry of Post transferred Pheap to Battambang. This was the result of the Holy Spirit's work in his life. He felt restless and took a reemock-moto to Chkae Koun, about seven kilometers from where he lived. He went there to visit some Christians who lived there before the fall of Cambodia. There were believers in that area. He met with some church elders, and they gave him a Bible and hymnal. He spent a whole morning in Chkae Koun to receive instruction on how to use these books.

He traveled to Chkae Koun for five weeks to worship the Lord with them. Later, he and his relatives decided to use a house in which to worship. For more than one year he worshiped the Lord, but did not yet decide to give his life to Jesus. Finally, in 1990, without a pastor present to give any kind of instruction or invitation, Pheap knelt, confessed his sin, and gave his life to Jesus. His family joined him in following Christ a few months later.

In 1991 his American pastor uncle came to visit. He told his uncle, "Our relatives and neighbors need Jesus." He asked if his uncle could erect a small building in which to worship God. His uncle was so excited and he answered, "Our God not only can
provide a small building, but He can provide His children a church where they can worship Him happily."

After his conversion, Pheap began a church called Bethany Church near the Battambang district post office. He focused his ministry primarily on his relatives, but with uncles, nephews, cousins, etc., this became a sizeable number of people-around three hundred.

Pheap took up study with Theological Education by Extension (TEE) materials in the early 1992, and continued for about three years. TEE is a decentralized system of biblical and theological education that takes training to pastors in ministry, rather than requiring potential leaders to come to a central institution. After some study with this material, Pheap felt that Jesus was close to him, and that Jesus had become real in his life. After he finished TEE grade four, he began teaching the materials to others. Pheap was chosen by the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) to be the regional TEE director responsible for four provinces in northwest Cambodia.

Eventually Jeff Williams, a CMA missionary active in TEE, asked Pheap to join the Theological Education by Extension Association of Cambodia (TEEAC). Pheap did not immediately agree, but asked Jeff to pray for him for about three months. He finally joined in July 1997. TEEAC is an association designed to facilitate and promote the ongoing development of TEE in Cambodia. It is responsible for standardizing policy and procedures, stipulating accreditation standards, producing study materials, and networking among different ministries using the TEE system. Pheap fulfills an administrative role in TEEAC's Phnom Penh office. Through this work, he wants to be involved in training church leaders, strengthening them so that they can in turn train others.

His involvement in TEEAC meant leaving his peaceful village life for the more tense, expensive lifestyle of Phnom Penh. Pheap was willing to make this sacrifice in order to serve God in this way. His family was supportive, and they share this sense of God's direction to Phnom Penh. Every night they praise God and
study together before going to sleep. Pheap's ministry in the capital also allowed him to help with some newly planted churches, and to teach in five different places using the TEE material. He has been especially involved with the Jerusalem Church in Phnom Penh.

Pheap has a passion to be involved in the Lord's work. When asked what the most difficult part of being a Christian is, he did not respond by addressing issues of temptation, social pressures, or persecution. The biggest challenge Pheap mentioned was the difficulty of converting devoted Buddhists to the Christian faith. Obviously, this man loves to share the gospel! In fact, the his greatest joy comes when he shares God's message and people respond to the gospel by putting faith in Christ. Pheap is willing to travel significant distances if it means people may respond to the good news about Jesus Christ. Lately, he has been encouraged by the life and ministry of the apostle Paul, since Paul was willing to endure many things for the sake of the work that God had called him to do. On a recent mission trip, the taxi that Pheap was in had an accident and went onto the other side of the road. This incident reminded him that the apostle Paul, too, endured shipwrecks and other hardships as he pursued the ministry the Lord had laid out for him.

As Pheap looks to the future, he hopes for more involvement in TEE ministry from other church leaders. In fact, he is hoping that from 1,000 to 1,500 students will enroll in TEE training programs. Pheap would appreciate your prayers that God would bless the ministry of TEEAC. The association especially needs financial support for the work of translating TEE materials. Also, there is a need for additional teachers in grades two through four of the TEE system. Clearly, God is using this faithful servant to lead others to Christ and raise additional leaders in the church in Cambodia.

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