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A table of contents for Honeycomb can be found here:
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A bilingual Khmer-English Theological Journal to give biblical knowledge to its readers as a honeycomb gives strength to exhausted travelers.

Vol. 3, No. 1
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January 2002

  <br><br><br>ชญ్ㄲำกา Russell H. Bowers, Jr.<br><br><br><br> <br>Honeycomb is published by Training of Timothys<br>Central Post Office, P.O. Box 479, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia Email, Russell_Bowers@wvi.org Editor, Russell H. Bowers, Jr.<br>Translation, Uon Seila<br>Khmer proofreading, Barnabas Mam<br>Technical support, Mark Chann Sitha<br>Manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the editor.<br>Printed in Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia.

## Honeycomb

 ..... 9 6รวร โษฬ
The Calling and Great Obligation of Church Leaders ..... 12
Rev. HENG Cheng
On Respecting Beliefs and People ..... 18
Russell H. BOWERS, Jr.
 ..... ต๓

 ..... mes
ตู่ โิ่ญา
Wearing A Helmet ..... 42
UON Seila
Human Rights and Responsibilities ..... 47
Approaching a Biblical Balance
Rolf LEPELAAR

 ..... \&
Jonah-The Reluctant Missionary ..... 72
Russell H. BOWERS, Jr.
 ..... 69

Biography: YOURNG Soth ..... 98
Debbi MAHER
 ..... ๑0円

Addresses of the Training of Timothys Board of Directors ..... 112

First listing of an article is the language in which the article was originally written.



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## The Calling and Great Obligation of Church Leaders

Rev. HENG Cheng

TThe Cambodian Church went through so much suffering that it nearly perished in the hopeless Dark Age of years past. But God has a compassionate love for Cambodians, and rekindled his church as promised in his word. For nearly two decades now his church has been growing steadily year by year, even though there are some difficulties and not enough resources. At this point the church is growing everywhere throughout the country; the Kingdom of God keeps advancing. God is at work although this nation was in a Dark Age until recently.

God needs more leaders to develop the church-to make it stronger and more sustainable. The Holy Spirit spoke through Paul: "From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus and an apostle chosen and called by God to preach his Good News."' This verse shows God's call of Paul to do his work-the great mission God wants his church and his sacred people to undertake. We need an attentive ear to hear his special call in order to respond to the great need the church faces these days. How can a person step in to serve God in church leadership?
${ }^{1}$ Rom 1:1.

## God's Call

A divine call is essential for a person to truly be God's servant. According to John 10:1, there is a proper gate that leads into the sheep pen, as well as inappropriate ways to enter. Similarly, there are individuals who jump into the work of leadership with their own plans and agendas. Some see Christian service chiefly as an opportunity to earn a living. Others come seeking the title and status of great leaders. In short, this kind of servant has not entered the sheep pen the proper way-through the gate. This kind of motive stems only from ambition and feeling. A person so motivated does not look up to God. ${ }^{2}$

Therefore I strongly believe that anyone who steps into a leadership role to minister the Good News of Christ should know clearly that God has called him or her to the task. The voice of calling from the Holy Spirit vibrates in our spirits and compels us to serve in his great task. ${ }^{3}$ This calling becomes an imperative that we cannot avoid.

God calls different people in different ways, though a common thread runs through this variety. He does not first force us into a common mold before he summons us to serve, but respects both our individual station in life and our common sense. This common sense leads us to open our hearts to accept his call.

The Bible gives examples of different methods by which God has called. Moses was a shepherd tending sheep in Midian. As he followed the flocks he doubtless recalled the suffering of his fellow Israelites and the injustice practiced against them as described years later in Isaiah 59:14-_"So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter." This was the situation from which God called Moses, and he was compelled to follow.

Isaiah's experience was different. Isaiah may have been a friend of several of Judah's kings, particularly Hezekiah. His rich vocabulary and imagery suggests that he was well educated, and he may have spent time in the palace and lived in a pleasant environment,

[^2]unlike the desert that was Moses' home. Isaiah's call came "in the year that king Uzziah died." ${ }^{\prime 4}$ Because Uzziah was clever, the country had prospered under his reign, and the people placed their hope in him. But now at Uzziah's death their hope was falling apart. It looked like their strong trust and hope was going to collapse. The country possibly faced breakdown and turmoil. When Uzziah's throne was vacated because of his death, Isaiah saw the Lord seated on that throne. These events showed Isaiah that this world will end some day because it exists in time, but the foundation of God's reign will last forever and never change. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted," and "heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'"s The voice of the Lord touched Isaiah's heart and made him serve the Lord as a prophet. "Here am I. Send me!"

Jeremiah's calling was different still. We are not told the circumstances that surrounded his call, but one day he heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." ${ }^{\prime \prime}$ This was the voice of God's calling. It was real and not a daydream; it was the voice of the Spirit in his heart that he could not reject. Even though he was afraid of the great task he nevertheless accepted the call wholeheartedly.

These are just a few of the various ways God has called his servants. If we examined the Bible further we would find still other instances.

Therefore we cannot say specifically how God may callwhether in this way or that-until we have gone through the experience ourselves. Sometimes his invitation is full of comfort, as in Psalm $32: 8$, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you." Sometimes it is full of power that we cannot escape or reject. So the call comes in different forms, but with the same purpose of advancing his mission to the world. Paul

[^3]wrote, "'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

Concentrating on the call by which God entrusts his task to us is an excellent thing for us to do as leaders in God's work.

## A Great Task

Those who accept the Lord's mission when he calls will understand the glory of God. God graciously invites us to be his coheirs, and we are commissioned to share his offer with others who have not yet heard the Good News. Thinking about the call and grace of God will inspire us to fear the Lord and advance his kingdom.

This fear of the Lord dominated Paul's life. After receiving salvation, Paul was surprised at God's call to him. God commanded that Paul proclaim his grace. ". . [T]his grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." ${ }^{8}$ God's call shone brightly in Paul's mind and moved him to fear the Lord and continue working in times of trial. God manifested special grace to Paul as described in Ephesians 3:2-"Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you." He told Timothy, "I was appointed a herald and an apostle-I am telling the truth, I am not lying-and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles." When we know for sure that God has called us, and recognize the greatness of his task, we cannot neglect our duty. God has commissioned us to point the way-to serve as soul physicians for the people whom God has entrusted to us. We should show them the way to the true faith and the abundant life in Christ. We should pay attention to the duty God has given us. We have to take it seriously and search how people should live in present society in order to deliver them from the slavery

[^4]of $\sin$. We must be persons who bring to Christ his pure bride-who do not seek their own glory.

## A Living Sacrifice

The Lord Jesus Christ left his glorious throne in heaven to become man and live among us in this sinful world ${ }^{10}$ by becoming a son of a simple carpenter. Let us consider the tools of a carpenter and what they can teach us. Each carpenter owns many kinds of tools he uses to carve wood. He has both specialized and common, simple tools. Which kind do we want to become for God to use? 2 Timothy 2:20-21 teaches, "In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work."

How can we become a good tool for the Lord? There is only one way-namely to offer our lives to him as a living sacrifice and spare nothing for our own benefit. We should not rely on our own experiences or knowledge derived from any particular book or school. There is only one ultimate training institute, and it is not from the hand of man. If we want to serve God effectively we have to enroll in his school of testing, and our teachers will be the obstacles we personally go through. Who can graduate out of this kind of school? The one who learns endurance through suffering. More trials improve the servant of the Lord. Paul said, "We rejoice in our sufferings." ${ }^{11}$ Please be reminded of the carpenter's tools again. The tools that the carpenter relies upon for his most important projects, or to use on the toughest and longest-lasting woods, are those that are his best. We sometimes casually boast of our capacity to serve the Lord, but it is when we actually enter the real battle that we (and others) will learn whether or not God considers us his trustworthy plane or chisel that can go through hard wood. Am I a plane or chisel blade that has been suffi-

[^5]ciently tempered to work tough wood, or am I too soft to be of much use?

Dwight L. Moody dedicated his life to God's work. He became a valuable tool in God's hands, even though he was born in a poor family in Northfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A., in 1837. He became a hero in praising God though his faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord used him greatly throughout his life.

1. He offered his life as a living sacrifice without withholding anything for himself.
2. He was a man of prayer who wholeheartedly trusted God.
3. He learned and followed the words of God.
4. He was patient, enduring, and gentle.
5. He was free from greed.
6. He burned with compassion for the lost.
7. He was baptized in the Holy Spirit from the Most High.

May my brothers and sisters become tools that God uses as he wills to bring good news to millions in Cambodia waiting in darkness for lives with hope.


## On Respecting Beliefs

 and PeopleRussell H. BOWERS, Jr.

Aletter to the editor of the Cambodia Daily published on February 18, 1999, pondered how Christians should relate to other religions. The Daily entitled that letter, "Good Christians Respect Beliefs of Others."

But is that true? Do Christians respect beliefs, or do we rather respect the people who hold them? Should we not distinguish between these two?

Without question Christians should respect people. James warns us not to curse our fellow humans, each of whom is made in God's likeness.' Jesus welcomed all kinds of people to hear himrich and poor, educated and ignorant, powerful and weak. To him they were equally people; their social and economic status mattered little compared with that. Jesus did not try to attract attention to himself by denouncing others. He did denounce when necessary, of course, but this was not his preferred or characteristic style. Rather, as Isaiah foretold Jesus generally exercised a quiet ministry of good words and good deeds:

Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.
He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.

Peter instructs that even when we are in the midst of defending our faith we should present our answers "with gentleness and respect.": So obviously Christians should respect people.

But what about beliefs? The English word "respect" means both "to consider worthy of high regard (often after careful assessment)," and "to refrain from interfering with." All who value democracy and the rule of law "respect" religions other than one's own (assuming they do not advocate violence or other crimes) in the sense that they "restrain from interfering with" them-that is, they allow them to be practiced, and they defend their right to exist. In his parable in Matthew 13 Jesus instructed his servants not to uproot tares, but to permit them to grow to the end of the age. So we "respect" different religious beliefs in the sense that we acknowledge their right to exist. ${ }^{3}$ But that does not mean we "respect" them in the sense that we consider what they teach "worthy of high regard." Nor does it mean we do not labor to dissuade people from believing them.

As unpopular as it is in postmodern society, some ideas, beliefs, practices, and religions are just plain wrong. They are therefore unworthy of high regard and perpetuation.

George Washington led America's war for independence and was its first president. He refused high honors for himself, feared
${ }^{2} 1$ Pet 3:15-16.
${ }^{3}$ There are, of course, some beliefs and practices that governments must suppress. Shouting "Fire!" in a crowded theater is one. That is a separate issue that the present article will not address.

God, and served his country well. In his sixty-seventh year he fell ill. His physicians agreed he had "bad blood" that must be drained from his body. Four times they drained it-and as a result Washington died. Standard eighteenth-century medical wisdom was wrong and killed the man. If I were a physician attending a patient today I would not "respect" a treatment plan that advocated such bloodletting. The only responsible course of action would be to argue against it, demonstrate its errors, and urge a sounder treatment. To do less would be to shirk my duty.

There are many beliefs that I do not "respect": the antiSemitism of Adolph Hitler; the hedonism of Hugh Hefner; the genocidal mania of Pol Pot; the nihilism of the Columbine High School murderers; the callousness of those who crash airliners into skyscrapers. These and other philosophies are objectively and horrendously wrong, and I do not respect them.

The same holds in religion. Christians are not those who have simply taken a Kierkegaardian leap into the void and decided, out of all the religions and philosophies out there, to mindlessly opt for Christianity. Rather, we believe that biblical Christianity is objectively true, that Jesus of Nazareth is in fact uniquely the Son of God, and that his death and resurrection provide the only way to forgiveness and eternal life. That is what being a Christian means. By implication other "ways" are wrong. They may be popular and practiced by millions, but in the end turn out to be spiritual bloodletting.

So while we recognize that many people do not believe these truths and consequently follow other ideologies, and while we both respect them as people and do not forcibly deny their right to hold to different faiths, we need not "respect" the beliefs themselves. In many cases, to do so would be to abandon the faith we ourselves claim.

If we wish to be biblical, there may be times when we decry error. The same Jesus who welcomed all people excoriated the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in Matthew 23. Elijah mocked the prophets of Baal. ${ }^{4}$ The Psalmist berated the folly of the atheist.s Paul called

[^6]${ }^{\text {s }}$ Ps 14:53.

Elymas a "child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right" 6 (not exactly a cordial or "respectful" statement). In these cases, those who espoused error had so consciously and culpably identified themselves with it that they as persons were virtually indistinguishable from their beliefs, and so themselves had to be opposed. He told the Athenians that their religion was wrong, and urged repentance from such "ignorance." Good Christians do not smile benignly at theological error that will thrust its adherents to eternal doom, just as good physicians do not accede to bloodletting plans when medication is required. As Stott once observed, to be "intellectually tolerant of opinions we know to be false" is "unprincipled indulgence."s

Two caveats for Christians. First, we should recognize that rejection of a person's religious (or medical) beliefs does not require us to reject all else he is and does. Much in non-Christian culture is beautiful and worth celebrating. As has been said, "we can trust and respect, even have as a friend who can be relied on, a member of the Flat Earth Society, even though we know that his cosmological views are less than accurate." 9 There are many warm, moral, communityminded Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and other non-Christians. Rejection of their faith implies neither rejection of them as persons, nor out-of-hand dismissal of their other beliefs.

Second, Christians have sometimes assumed they have all the truth while the non-Christian world has none. That is wrong. Acting on this presumption may cause us to repeat the embarrassing error of Abraham, the believer and friend of God, who lied to Abimelech about Sarah because he thought, "There is surely no fear of God in this place." But Abimelech was the one who heard from God, and this
${ }^{6}$ Acts 13:10.
${ }^{7}$ Acts 17:29-30.
${ }^{8}$ John Stott, Involvement: Being a Responsible Christian in a NonChristian Society, vol. 1 (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Revell, 1985), 78.
${ }^{9}$ Paul Griffiths and Delmas Lewis, "On Grading Religions, Seeking Truth, and Being Nice to People-A Reply to Professor Hick," Religious Studies 19 (1983): 79.
${ }^{10}$ Gen 20:11.
pagan king then turned and rebuked God's deaf prophet. Likewise godly King Josiah "would not listen to what Neco [king of Egypt] had said at God's command, ${ }^{11}$ and so rode to his death on the plain of Megiddo. Christians need to learn what Paul argued to the Jews in Romans 2-that those who profess correct propositional truth may act less righteously than those without it, and may in the end prove less acceptable to God. Having heard and believed the great things that God has done through Christ does not justify the Christian in being proud of having heard and believed.

So do we "respect" the beliefs of others? Not necessarily. We respect the people who hold them, and endorse their right to do so. They are our co-workers, our neighbors, our fellow-citizens, our friends. We should invite them into our homes and visit freely in theirs. We can enjoy socializing and working with them on many levels. But if we love them, we will at times earnestly share the Christ who can save them, urging that they abandon the false doctrines they may sincerely believe.















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 Non-Christian Society, vol. 1 (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Revell, 1985), 78.
 Seeking Truth, and Being Nice to People-A Reply to Professor Hick," Religious Studies 19 (1983): 79.





























































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## Wearing A Helmet

At dawn the broad boulevard toward the airport is the only road in Phnom Penh that seems fit for driving, since the other city streets are as bumpy and potholed as the country lanes. Battered bicycles balance bamboo bottles brimming with palm tree juice, and tired Japanese motor scooters weave among the gleaming white Toyota Landcruisers marked "OI" and the Mercedes sedans bearing the Cambodian flag on their number plates.

The road looked smooth that morning, so everyone sped along. I glanced at my watch-seven fifty-five. "Oh! It's already late for work!" I murmured. So I gunned my white Honda 125-formerly owned by UNTAC. My shirt flapped furiously in the breeze. A glance at my speedometer told me I was doing $80 \mathrm{~km} / \mathrm{h}$. I overtook a white Toyota Landcruiser and a red Honda Dream II 100, and then at the road junction I saw a truck with a rusty water tank. While it was crossing the road it seemed like it was going to slip back, so I tried to speed up to overtake that truck and then-***CRASH ${ }^{* * *}$ !!!

Two speeding metal machines had slammed together. Now on the pavement lay two motorbikes-my white Honda 125 and a black Honda CD 90.

I smelled something burning and tried to get up, but could not because one of my legs was stuck in the wheel of the other motorbike. I pulled up my visor to see what was burning. Through a hole in my
trousers leg I spied two white patches on my calf that were gradually turning red, and felt pain at the same time.

Again I tried to get up by pushing my hand against one part of the black motorbike. Unfortunately I chose the wrong part-the exhaust pipe. "OUCH!" I cried. A nearby policeman came and helped me stand.

The owner of the other motorbike was a man in his thirties wearing an army uniform. He was uninjured. He asked the policeman to measure the accident site to determine who was right and who was wrong, in order to know who would have to pay whom. By then the officer told me to walk to the roadside where some other policemen were standing. I limped in torment to the roadside. It was difficult to balance because one leg hurt so badly, so I dragged myself to where he instructed me to go. I was sweating profusely from the pain.

I inspected my motorbike for damage in order to distract my mind from the pain. The hand clutch was twisted and the fuel reservoir scratched. The other man also inspected his bike. "It was borrowed," he said. "It is not mine." His headlight was scratched very badly.

One policeman said, "You two must try to come to an agreement. But if you cannot, I will help determine which of you is right and which is wrong. But first try to compromise between the two of you." He turned to me. "Where were you coming from?" he asked.
"I was riding on the main road from home to work," I answered.

He turned to the other man. He said he was riding from his house in red-light district toward his office near Sihanouk Hospital. Because of the truck we could not see each other and therefore collided.

The man kept nagging, "It was borrowed." I grew annoyed because I was already late for work and my wound still throbbed. "Do you want me to pay for the damage of your motorbike?" I asked. He said nothing. I mustered all my courage and asked the policeman, "Do I need to pay him or does he need to pay me?"

The officer replied, "Do you want me to tell you which one has to pay according to the traffic laws?"

Then the other man said, "Let's just go. I don't want anyone to pay." Then I said good-bye to the policeman.

Around 8:30 I arrived at YWAM office where I worked. "What happened to your trouser leg?" inquired Marcia, a Filipino who was staying in YWAM office for language study before starting work in the province. I replied with a little chuckle, "Oh, this morning I nearly went to heaven before you!" She smiled, went upstairs to retrieve her personal medical kit, and dressed my leg. "Be careful when you are riding on your motorbike!" she scolded.
"I'll be careful, but even if I am it doesn't make any difference," I protested.

How many people feel the same as I do?
One of the most fascinating aspects of Phnom Penh is the traffic. Accidents are just waiting to happen. We are never sure when we will get into one, and how serious or painful it will be when we do. Do we need somebody to help us in those circumstances? Yes, we certainly do! In my accident, had I not been wearing a helmet I might have seriously injured my head. And if a policeman had not helped me get up I might not have been able to because my leg was caught in a wheel. Even my boss said that if his son Nathan had been wearing a helmet he would not have so seriously injured his face that he had to fly to Bangkok for surgery. You see the importance of a helmet! We need helmets! Marcia's instruction, "Be careful!" and the traffic laws were not enough. I needed a person to help me get up. How many people, I wonder, feel caught in the middle of a problem, just as I was caught in that wheel?

After Marcia dressed my wound I switched my worrying to my trousers. I owned only two pairs of trousers, but now one pair was destroyed by the accident. I was a new returnee from a refugee camp in Thailand, so finances were so slim. "They cannot be mended," I murmured to myself.

The next day I came to work as usual. On my desk lay a new pair of trousers! The day of my accident Philip returned from Stung Treng and bought me a new pair. I was very happy that I could have two pairs of trousers.

Do you know of Someone who is always waiting to help you?

He is not only concerned with your spiritual need, but your physical need as well. He is our provider and good policeman who can pull you out of the snare of this sinful world. His name is Jesus!

Let me tell another story. Sin reminds me of a car stuck in the mud. One evening I went on errands in Boeung Tompon where my aunt lives. In front of the Tumnop Toeuk Church runs a small dirt road. Rain had fallen the day before. People often shovel dirt on top of the mud to try to fix a road after such rains. The road then looks good, but underneath traction remains treacherous. When I saw this newly-"repaired" road, I knew that it probably still had problems. But, equipped as I was with a four-wheel-drive vehicle, I determined to try it anyway. Soon one of the front wheels slipped into a small ditch beside the road. I tried to accelerate but I could not get out of the ditch so I shifted into 4WD. Still it would not move out.

At first I was happy and said to myself, "I'm glad to have a chance to use my 4WD!" But as I worked on and on at trying to free the truck, the sun gradually sank in the west. It was growing darker and darker. My excitement at using the 4WD turned to worry. My heart pounded quickly deep down in my chest. My lips turned blue and sweat flowed across my eyebrows. I wanted to use the winch, but there was no tree nearby to which I could hook.

In the church compound I saw a group of young people playing volleyball. I called to them for help, so they came and pushed me out of the sticky mud until I was close enough to hook the winch cable to a nearby coconut tree. Finally I escaped the mud-not because of how skillful a driver I was, or how well I knew the traffic laws, or how well-built a 4WD truck I drove. I only broke free because of help from an outside source.

It was the same with sin. It does not matter how well educated you are, or how many good deeds you do, or what set of rules you try to keep. These will never set you free from sin. Why? Because you were born with a sinful nature and in a fallen human race! Sin entered God's beautiful world through the disobedience of Adam. What we need is an outside force to pull us out of the sticky mud . . . or out of the two fallen motorbikes as in my accident.

The outside force is God. He is not of the same nature as man.

He is holy and righteous! He can save us through His grace.
Many people say that if a medicine is effective there is no need to advertise it-somehow its value will become known all by itself. Is that true? I don't think so. People often ignore things that could save their lives. I observe that television commercials rarely promote useful things such as helmets (which can save people's lives), but rather lethal items such as cigarettes, beer, and wine (which can destroy them). How can people know that helmets are important unless you tell them?

It is the same with Jesus. People will not know unless they hear about him. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can preach unless they are sent?"

If you have never heard someone tell you before, I am telling you now: You NEED Jesus! And WEAR YOUR HELMET of salvation.

It is not enough to just wear a helmet when you ride your motorcycle, but you need God's HELMET OF SALVATION as well. Mere instruction from an experienced person cannot help you. Similarly, one cannot escape sin by obeying the law of any religions. It is the same as if you were in the middle of two motorcycles....

## Conclusion

- A helmet is very important when you ride your motorbike through bad traffic like that in Phnom Penh.
- You need the helmet of salvation to protect your mind from being attacked.
- When caught in two motorbikes you need someone to help you; and when your truck is stuck in the mud, you need someone to help pull you out.
- We need Jesus (like the policeman or the volleyball players) to help us out of $\sin$.
'Rom 10:13-15.



## Human Rights and Responsibilities

Approaching a Biblical Balance

Rolf LEPELAAR

## Introduction

Many people in today's world suffer greatly, often as the result of other people's action. The powerless often suffer at the hands of others. It is estimated that fifteen million children under the age of five die each year because they don't have enough food, water and medical care; and many of those who do survive are exploited by child labor and child prostitution. Untold numbers of street children are abused or killed by the local police. Millions of refugees and asylum seekers exist under inhumane conditions. The last one hundred years are full of events showing man's inhumanity to man. In the two world wars, approximately sixty million people were killed. Masses have died under their own leaders in Russia, Cambodia, Uganda, and China, as well as many Latin American countries.

How should people respond to facts such as these? In the last century there has been an increasing awareness and promotion of human rights. The concept of human rights is not new. It was already proclaimed in the Bible thousands of years ago. The British, French and American revolutions attempted to protect human dignity and people from abuse at the hands of the leaders and those with power. However after two world wars in the twentieth century it was decided
that more needed to be done to protect peace and human rights. Eglantyne Jebb, who had a Christian faith, witnessed the suffering of children in the First World War and played an important role in drafting the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child. World War Two resulted in the organization of the United Nations in 1945 and the issuing of the International Bill of Human Rights in 1948.

Proponents of human rights have many different claims. First, human rights proponents from a western individualistic background proclaimed rights of the individual such as the right to life; the right to freedom of thought, opinion, conscience and religion; the right to participate in free and frequent elections; the right to equality; the right to privacy and to fairness before the law; and the prohibition of torture, slavery, and arbitrary arrests. Proponents of a more socialist background emphasized the right to work and fair pay, the right to leisure, and the right to form trade unions. Other rights proclaimed by many from different persuasions include the right to education, to proper medical treatment, and to social security.

Yet despite the advances of the human rights movement over the past fifty years there is still a massive amount of suffering and abuse of people. What should be the Christian's approach to these issues? Is proclamation of human rights the correct approach? Should we agree completely with everything that is proclaimed by advocates of human rights? Has the human rights movement gone beyond what is appropriate? This article will seek to show that Christians should be concerned with human rights, although we should make some corrections. For example, we cannot agree with some of the rights that are proclaimed, and we should have a correct balance between human rights and human responsibility. Moreover, the Bible also stresses God's right to rule over us. In order to clarify our thinking it would help to develop a biblical worldview, to understand the world through the teaching of the Bible.

## Biblical worldview

Genesis chapters one and two teach us that God created and sovereignly rules over everything. He created men and women in his image and spoke to them in a relational way. He instructed them in
the form of commands. They should "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground. ${ }^{11}$ God also commands the man to take care of the garden. ${ }^{2}$ These few truths gleaned from these chapters already have a great deal to teach us about the issue at hand. God created us with three kinds of relationships.

1. First with God. We were created to relate to God, to love him, ${ }^{3}$ to obey him, to worship him, etc.
2. We were also created to relate to ourselves and fellow mankind. We are to love mankind. ${ }^{4}$
3. With nature. Our role is to fill the earth, subdue it, enjoy its fruits, and take care of it. ${ }^{5}$
In all these relationships God has bestowed on us human responsibility. We have the responsibility to love and obey God, the responsibility to love our neighbor, the responsibility to rule over and to take care of the earth. Moreover these truths tell of God's rights to rule over us. God has the right to command us, the right to give, the right to take away and the right to judge. ${ }^{6}$ The final judgment is a great proclamation of these truths. Together with responsibility comes accountability. God's act of judgment over all mankind proclaims God's right to rule over us and our accountability for that which he has made us responsible. Therefore throughout the Bible there is a great emphasis on human responsibility.

At the same time the Bible also gives a true foundation for human rights. The fact that God made us in his image also gives mankind great dignity or value. Murder is a great evil because it is killing someone in the image of God.' The human rights tradition has
${ }^{1}$ Gen 1:26.
${ }^{2}$ Gen 2:15.
${ }^{3}$ Matt 22:37.
${ }^{4}$ Matt 22:38.
${ }^{5}$ Gen 1:28ff, 2:15.
${ }^{6}$ See Job 33:4, Ps 68:35; Matt 20:1-16; Ps 9:8.
'Gẹn 9:6.
tried to base human rights on human dignity or value. We see from the Bible that as man is created in the image of God he has that value to establish human rights. One problem for many in the human rights tradition of the twentieth century is that they came from a worldview that said man was not in the image of God but we are just the result of meaningless, purposeless chemical reactions in the past. If that is true then why should humans have any worth? Why should a human have any more rights than a dog or a rock? The biblical teaching that God creates us in his image gives a foundation for human dignity and human rights. The foundation for human rights is creation. Human beings never acquired them nor has any government or any other authority bestowed them. Occasionally governments and authorities simply recognize the dignity and rights that God has already bestowed (although they may not attribute them to God).

## Biblical teaching on defending human rights

There are a few passages that deal specifically with the issue of human rights. ${ }^{8}$ When we read through these we see God has particular concern to defend the cause of the powerless. Human history shows that those with power take advantage of those without it. Hence the rich take advantage of the poor. Adults take advantage of children. There is often much injustice. God is a God of justice who is concerned for his whole creation. Therefore this injustice is displeasing to him and it is godly to defend the rights of the poor, the oppressed, the powerless. Romans 13 teaches that God established governments and authorities to promote law and order, to promote righteousness and justice. Therefore Christians should be concerned that those in authority will indeed promote these and not use their power to oppress the poor and make unjust laws.

## Weaknesses in the human rights movement

Despite the fact that God is concerned with human rights as we have seen above, there are a number of concerns that Christians must have with the human rights movement. Below are listed a few such concerns.

## The abuse of the term "human rights"

Consider the following two cases.
a. In some countries the issue of abortion is very much debated. Those who defend the act of abortion say that women have the right to choose, which means the right to kill their unborn child if that is their choice. What should we Christians believe regarding this? Does anyone have this right? Are we infringing on women's rights if we say they do not have the right to do this? If so, is it wrong to infringe on their rights? It is helpful to remember the biblical worldview that we learned above. God has the right to command us what to do. We do not have the right to rebel against God, but rather God has given us the responsibility to obey him. If God has not given women the right to kill their unborn child then they do not have that right. Christians should defend the rights of unborn babies in the image of God.

The debate regarding abortion and birth control can be quite complicated. What do we do in the situation where the baby is causing great danger to the mother's life? It is beyond the scope of this article to go into depth on this issue. However, whatever stance we make the purpose of the illustration still stands. All Christians should agree that when we approach this issue we should do so within the framework of human responsibility before God, not just the rights of the individual. Even if we are to talk of rights, we must not only think of the woman's rights but also the rights of the unborn child. A woman with child is two human beings, not one. We saw that God defends the cause of the helpless. Who is as helpless as an unborn child who is not seen and whose cry is not heard?
b. Another human right often proclaimed is the right to freedom of religion. Suppose that you evangelize someone but they respond they have a right to follow their own religion. How would you
respond? In some ways it is correct to say freedom of religion is a human right. Every human has the right to follow his conscience with regard to religion without being persecuted or being forced to recant or follow another religion. Each person has the right to make his or her own decision.

But in another sense to say that each person has the right to follow his own religion is misleading. Again we should introduce the biblical concept of human responsibility. Choice of religion is not only a human right, it is a human responsibility. As such we will be held accountable before God for the choice we make. If we choose idols we are guilty before God. If we choose the true God as revealed in the Bible we will be blessed by God. A great example of this is found in Joshua 24:14-24. (Read through several times.) Joshua was the leader of the people and therefore had authority over them. Yet despite having this authority he did not force them to follow God. He exhorted them to serve the true God but also told them that it was their choice. He warned them that they are accountable for their decision so if they follow idols they will come under God's judgment. Likewise, we cannot force people to become Christians. Yet it is our responsibility to witness about the true God and what he has done through his son Jesus, and it is their responsibility to respond with repentance and faith.

The danger of proclaiming human rights without reference to God The examples in point number one above show the danger of proclaiming human rights without considering God's revealed will. Some in the human rights tradition believe there is no authority above man who commands us what to do and believe. If this is true then who can decide what is right and what is wrong? Who can decide what truly constitutes human rights? With no authority above us, the rights proclaimed will mirror the values of the people that proclaim them. Of course the clear danger here is that the values of these people may be misguided with no higher authority to challenge their assumptions. Christians know that our Creator has spoken authoritatively in the Bible and we must submit to his standards. His word is the lamp to our feet that can prevent us from walking into the darkness of moral mayhem.

## The uselessness of proclaiming human rights without fulfilling human responsibility

Let us consider the issue of education. Many proclaim that each child, male or female has a right to education. This is indeed true and very important. However, education is not just a right, it is a responsibility. It is the responsibility of the government to adequately fund education, and the responsibility of teachers and parents to teach the child and encourage him to learn. It is also the responsibility of the child to use his God-given mind as he applies it to learning. If there is an occasional speech proclaiming the right to education, but people do not fulfil their responsibility, then no improvement will be made. However, if proclaiming the right to education leads to people fulfilling their responsibility then progress has been made thanks partly to the proclamation of human rights.

## The danger of proclaiming human rights when the appropriate approach is human responsibility

If you look again at the passages from the Bible listed above dealing with human rights you can see that it teaches us that we should defend the rights of others. It does not call us to defend our own rights, indeed the Christian is sometimes called upon to forgo his own rights. ${ }^{9}$ Both noted passages deal with the issue of love. The two greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor. In loving others we must think of our responsibility to them. In loving others sometimes we must defend their rights and forgo our own. In relationships this can be very important.

Consider the most intimate relationship between people: marriage. Let us look at Paul's advice to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:21-31 (read through). Paul does not tell husbands nor wives to defend their own rights. He does not instruct wives to tell their husbañds to fulfil their responsibility, nor the husband to tell his wife to fulfil hers. (This does not mean a husband or wife cannot rebuke each other). Paul's advice to a married couple is that each party makes sure he or she is fulfilling his responsibility to his partner. This is very sound

[^9]advice. It will be beneficial for a marriage if each party strives to be faithful in his or her responsibility to his marriage partner, rather than just thinking about his own rights.

When we consider another relationship within the home, that between the parents and the children we can again see the danger of proclaiming human rights over against human responsibility. The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child has been involved in promoting children's rights. Some children's rights do need to be defended; however, religious groups have expressed concern that the incorrect proclamation of children's rights will undermine the rights and responsibilities of parents to raise, teach, develop, and discipline their child. For example, a parent disciplining her child with a smack may be accused of infringing the child's rights. A parent giving religious instruction to his child may be considered to be infringing on the rights of the child to make his own choice. Christians should be wary of any future developments such as these.

## The nature of mankind

We have seen that Christians should promote human rights. We hope that promoting human rights will improve this world. Yet at the same time we must not think that this is the ultimate solution to the problems people face. Many believe that people are essentially good in nature and therefore they are optimistic regarding the results from human activities such as proclaiming human rights. Christians should not suffer such a delusion. The Bible clearly teaches that people have a sinful nature and that we are incapable of saving ourselves not only from the penalty we receive due to our sins, but also the power of sin over us. ${ }^{10}$ Human solutions will not fix the problems in this world. But God has acted in Jesus to save us from our sins. The solution to the problems in this world is the gospel. In the gospel God not only forgives us from our sins, but gives us new life to be obedient to him. This gives true hope for a better society. We also wait for the future world when all will be made perfect.

[^10]
## Conclusion

In the face of much suffering in this world Christians should defend the rights of the poor, defenseless and oppressed. We should seek to reform governments, systems, laws, companies, etc., so that people will be treated fairly.

Yet Christians should also be cautious of the abuse of the term "human rights." Christians working with secular organizations should be careful to check that what they are hearing is consistent with the Bible.

When we check with the Bible we realize that it places much more emphasis on human responsibility before God. We should proclaim to the world that they are accountable to God for the responsibilities that he has given them within the three relationships that were outlined above. Nothing is hidden from him; he sees everything right down to inside our hearts. The whole world has rebelled against God and is therefore under his judgement. We are incapable through human solutions or human religion to solve this problem. Yet God has acted to save us through Jesus, particularly what he accomplished in his death and resurrection. In the gospel God calls people to repent of their wrongdoing and believe in Jesus. This will not only bring personal salvation but true transformation of society.

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## Jonah-

## The Reluctant Missionary

Russell H. BOWERS, Jr.

What Christian can't identify with Jonah? His story captures the contrasts of the life of faith. Jonah's actions display his human weakness, yet God's activities are so miraculous that many readers doubt the story's historicity. Jonah loves God but hates people. He serves faithfully in one role but shuns another. He believes in God's omnipresence yet tries to run from him. He celebrates the grace God shows him but begrudges it to the Ninevites. Surely the speckled character of this prophet-countered by God's patience and grace toward him-should encourage our confidence in the Bible: the picture it paints of us is all too true. Few whom God uses are unblemished saints.

Jonah prophesied in Israel about the time of Jeroboam II (793753 BC ). His successful prediction of the restoration of Israel's boundaries' accredited him as a true prophet and qualified him for God's call to a new task. Jeroboam II ruled during a period of Assyrian weakness between the death of Adadnirari III in 782 and the usurpation of the throne by Tiglathpileser III in 745. This may help explain
both Jeroboam's ability to restore Israel's borders, as well as a sense of vulnerability within Assyria which helped prompt her repentance under Jonah's preaching.

## Chapter One: Jonah Goes From God

The story of chapter one is simply told. God calls Jonah to preach against Nineveh. Jonah flees in the opposite direction. God sends a storm that threatens to scuttle his ship. The sailors throw the runaway overboard, and the sea calms.

God's call to preach against Nineveh introduces an important theme of the book. Yahweh is not the God of Israel only, he also cares for her pagan neighbors. This truth Jonah fights to the end. Nineveh, situated about 800 kilometers northeast of the prophet's hometown of Gath Hepher, was one of the main administrative cities of the Assyrian Empire. Assyria was noted for its cruelty. ${ }^{2}$ Jonah, a Galilean patriot, had prophesied that his own land would be strengthened, but was displeased that God should seek the welfare of an enemy, particularly one so wicked and cruel. One can imagine a similar reluctance many Christians today might feel toward a call to minister to the Khmer Rouge. They treated our families and neighbors here with the most heartless cruelty. Surely God does not wish them well! Surely any doom hanging over their heads is well deserved! Surely we should do nothing to help them avert it!

But God cares even for such wicked people, and commissioned his prophet to preach to them. Jonah could not agree, and fled in the opposite direction.
${ }^{2}$ One king boasted after a successful battle, "The nobles I flayed. Three thousand captives I burned with fire. I left not one hostage alive. I cut off the hands and feet of some. I cut off the noses, ears, and fingers of others. The eyes of numerous soldiers I put out. Maidens I burned as a holocaust." Another says of his enemy, "I took him alive in the midst of battle. In Nineveh, my capital, I slowly tore off his skin." Such atrocities help us understand Nahum's closing words, "Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?"

This leads us to a second theme of the book. Sometimes everyone and everything obeys God except his own people. God hurled ${ }^{3}$ a great wind; it obeyed by churning the sea with gusto, and both crescendoed and quieted on cue ( $1: 4,11,15$ ). God appointed ${ }^{4}$ a fish, a vine, a worm, and a scorching east wind ( $1: 17 ; 4: 6-8$ ), that swallowed, sprang up, gnawed, and blew as directed. When God spoke ${ }^{5}$ to the fish, it vomited its meal (2:10). When God spoke to the Ninevites through Jonah's preaching, they repented. The only one to disobey the Lord was his prophet, who ran the other way (1:3) and griped about God's grace (4:2-3).

Pagan people in particular are presented as more pious than God's prophet in this story. Jonah seems untroubled as he flees from "Yahweh, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land"-he is sufficiently relaxed to fall into a deep sleep as he does. By contrast, the sailors were terrified when they learned from whom he was fleeing ( $1: 10$ ). They did their best to try to save Jonah from a watery grave, and when they at last reluctantly prepared to fling him into the waves they implored God's pardon and acknowledged his sovereignty ( $1: 14$ ). When the sea calmed these non-Jews feared Yahweh, offered a sacrifice, and vowed vows (1:16). Later, when Nineveh's king heard Jonah's warning, he repented and commanded his subjects do the same. Although Jonah says that he fears " "Yahweh, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land," it is the pagan sailors and the Ninevites who actually do so.

[^13]This is not the only occasion in scripture when the actions of outsiders outshine those of God's people. Judah acknowledged that Tamar had acted more righteously than he (Gen 38:26); Abimelech scolded Abraham (Gen 20:9); many from east and west will enter the kingdom while its subjects are thrown outside (Matt 8:11f). Why is it that sometimes those who should know God act worse than those we imagine to be ignorant of him?

So Jonah's rejection of God's love for his enemies and refusal to seek their salvation start him on a disastrous downward descent. He goes down to Joppa, ${ }^{7}$ down into the ship, down below deck to sleep, down in the sea "to the roots of the mountains," ${ }^{8}$ and down in the belly of the fish. He only starts back up after his repentance in chapter two.

## Chapter Two: Jonah Goes To God

It is amazing how trouble prompts God's people to repent and pray. Jonah had thought he could hide from God by going to a far city. God has reacted by hiding him more profoundly than he had planned. What is more hidden from view than the stomach of a fish swimming beneath the waves? Yet from that "hidden" place Jonah goes to God in prayer, confident now that even from there God sees and hears him. Somehow his theology of omniscience and omnipresence had changed. In fleeing to Tarshish the prophet was disobeying God; now he promises, "What I have vowed I will make good" (2:10).

What prompted these changes of heart and action? Trouble. "In my distress I call to Yahweh. . . . From the depths of the grave I called for help" (2:2). Trouble caused him to turn. Jonah's situation is not unique. David acknowledges, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word." ${ }^{9}$ Israel's historical pattern has

[^14]been to require distress to drive her to God, ${ }^{10}$ and it will require the distress of the future tribulation period to convince the nation to "look on me, the one they have pierced, and . . . mourn for him,""l welcoming Jesus as their messiah at last.

But why wait for trouble? Why not seek and serve the Lord when things are going well? Then perhaps he won't have to send us the trouble. That's the idea behind 1 Corinthians 11:31-"But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment." God "does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men, ${ }^{112}$ only what is required to punish us (though not fully) for our sins and turn us back to the right path. But why not walk the right path in the first place? Why go through all that pain to force us eventually to do what we could have freely and more enjoyably done?

But at least Jonah turned. That is a further example for us. When God chastens let us learn the needed lessons and be healed, rather than either continue to rebel or lose heart and give up. Jonah illustrates the precepts of Hebrews 12:4-13. It is a shame that he required the loss of his boat fare and the possessions he had with him in the ship-to say nothing of three days lost inside a fish's slimy stomach-but at least he learned.

Some people object to Jonah because they find incredible the story of a man's being swallowed by a whale and surviving. The Hebrew text does not specify the species, but uses the word for "fish." ${ }^{13}$ Whether it was fish or whale, there have been documented cases in modern times where sailors have been swallowed and recovered alive by their shipmates after many hours.

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## Chapter Three: Jonah Goes For God

Jonah has wasted time, lost resources, and physically suffered. But he has gained nothing. After all his struggles and losses he hears the same commission. ${ }^{14}$

Nothing is gained when God's people resist his will. Often he simply brings them through deep waters back to the very place they first left the path. This was Israel's experience after the exodus. God brought his people to Kadesh-Barnea and instructed them to fight a people stronger than they and take their land. The nation failed to believe and obey. The result was God's chastening the nation with forty years of wandering-they wasted time, lost resources, and physically suffered. At the end they were brought to another entry point but given essentially the same command-fight a people stronger than they and take their land. Centuries later Israel rejected Jesus as her messiah. But God did not change his deepest plans for Jesus or for them because of their unbelief. Israel has lost time, wasted resources, and physically suffered over the centuries (and will do so even more during the tribulation period). But she will gain nothing through her rebellion, but simply be brought through suffering to the place where she is again offered the messianic rule of Jesus, but this time finally says, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." ${ }^{\text {s }}$

At his second opportunity Jonah "obeyed the word of Yahweh and went" (3:3). Because Jonah apparently preached periodically as he penetrated Nineveh, his visit would require three days. Or perhaps the time notation includes the city's suburbs. At any rate he proclaimed God's message of impending judgment.

Some people who have survived hours in a fish's stomach have emerged with their skin bleached a deathly white or greenishwhite by the stomach acids. The victim's hair may fall out. In 763
 The identity of the words [צָ in in in in often interchangeable with אֵליֶָ in 3:2] is lost in the NIV translation.
${ }^{15}$ Matt 23:37-39.
B.C. Assyria had an eclipse of the sun, an event often viewed as ominous by superstitious people. As noted earlier, the years 782-745 B.C. included military decline and threat. ${ }^{16}$ A combination of a green, hairless stranger predicting doom at a time when the sun had been eclipsed and the empire appeared vulnerable may have inclined the population to take the prophet's warning seriously.

But for whatever reason, the city repented. The king decreed that even the animals should fast, and that all people should stop their wickedness and call on God. It was one of the most comprehensive responses in religious history.

God was pleased. When he saw how they turned he had compassion on them and waived the threatened punishment.

Compassion.(Sanskrit, karuna) is central to Buddhism. The story of his enlightenment teaches that, after perceiving that existence is without substance, Siddhartha filled with compassion for all living things as they suffered in ignorance. He resolved to share his newlydiscovered wisdom with the world, a pledge which is repeated in the vow of the bodhisattva: "However innumerable the sentient beings, I vow to save them all." To be enlightened includes having compassion on all sentient beings and seeking to bring them together with oneself to enlightenment. Wisdom and compassion are inseparable. Because of its centrality, compassion in Buddhism parallels love in Christianity.

But, as mentioned above, God is compassionate too. His compassion moved him to warn the Ninevites through Jonah in the first place. When they repented, God's compassion moved him to "not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened." God forgave; Nineveh was spared; Jonah's prediction failed.

## Chapter Four: Will Jonah Go With God?

But does God's servant share God's compassion? Does Jonah celebrate Nineveh's pardon, or would the patriot prefer to watch the

[^16]wasting of his foes? Will Jonah retain the nationalistic pride that prompted him to run rather than preach, or will he now "go with God" and share God's compassion for the lost?

Verse one gives the answer: "Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry." He wanted to die.

God is not as interested in dealing out death as people in the book seem to be in trying to find it. He is "a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity." ${ }^{17} \mathrm{He}$ will prove as gracious in turning his prophet from death as he was in turning the Ninevites. He will not allow people to persist in their rebellion and its judgment without warning. Since Jonah does not seem to listen to words, God reverts, as in chapter one, to an object lesson.

Jonah had probably entered Nineveh from the west, traveled through it as he preached, and arrived on its eastern edge. Leaving the city he sat outside, apparently hoping for its destruction. The episode of the vine, the worm, and the east wind riled Jonah for a second time to the point of his wishing to die. The withered vine provided the illustration by which God could make his point.

Jonah had been greatly concerned for the vine. He valued it and was glad it was there. ${ }^{18}$ This was true even though Jonah had neither planted nor tended the vine. When it died he grieved. By contrast, God had made the inhabitants of Nineveh. These included 120,000 humans and many cattle, not merely one vine. In the light of

[^17]these contrasts, can Jonah see how God should be concerned ${ }^{19}$ for Nineveh, so that its demise would displease him? Will Jonah repent of his narrow, hard-hearted sectarianism and actively share God's universal, compassionate concern?

The book ends with this question. We don't know Jonah's response. That is probably good, because in this way the question now confronts each reader. What will I do about the lost who face God's judgment? Withhold my heart and help in lofty disdain? Or share the love and compassion that should arise from grace and enlightenment, and work to dissuade them from their delusions and demise?
${ }^{19}$ The same word (07ח pity, look upon with compassion) is used of Jonah's concern for the vine and God's for Nineveh.


































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## Meet Yourng Soth

Debbi MAHER


YOURNG Soth

In 1946 a faithful Christian woman in Kompong Thom named Touch Hin gave birth to a son, naming him Yourng Soth. The neighbors looked down on the family because of their beliefs, and excluded them from most areas of community life.

There were no pastors or churches at that time in Kompong Thom, although occasionally a pastor went down to Kadam Ha village in Khum Chhouk Kasarch Baray district. Therefore his mother took him to attend the annual conference at Takmau Bible School in Phnom Penh. Sometimes his father would take him to the local wat. Although Yourng Soth was thus raised in a home with Christian influences and was familiar with many Bible stories and spiritual songs, he did not yet believe. His mother would faithfully pray that one day he would become a strong leader in the Christian church. He would hear those prayers and consider it highly unlikely.

After high school Soth went to Kompong Cham to study. He was excited to be on his own together with other youth, and to finally be free of the "Christian family" stigma. Although his friends were typical college students looking for thrills and excitement, his mother's. influence somehow led him to live a responsible and restrained college life.

After finishing school in 1968 he married Kang Koeung. The marriage had been arranged by Soth's mother, who was pleased that Koeung was a Christian.

Soth soon left to begin his government-issued rubber-manufacturing job in Ratanakiri. That malaria-plagued province proved a difficult place to live, and the job itself was hard. He was not happy and decided to walk out on his contract-a dangerous move to make.

He managed to find a taxi heading back to Kompong Thom. When the taxi approached one of the checkpoints, the driver asked him to get out, circle around, and meet them up ahead. Soth would have needed travel permission forms, as contract workers were expected to remain in their work locale except during certain holidays. But the driver did not wait for him. So Soth was forced to travel out of sight in a dense and dangerous forest, infested with tigers, snakes, and other sinister creatures, for nearly one full morning. He was petrified. His fear of death turned this into a dreadful day.

Soth stripped off his hat and shoes and knelt down and cried out to God for forgiveness. He promised to serve God if he lived, and pleaded that God would receive him if he died. A great peace enveloped him, and Soth suddenly realized that this moment was the answer to his mother's prayers. It also marked the beginning of his seeing God's grace and provision in his life.

He put on his hat and shoes and began walking out of the forest-no longer afraid, no longer alone. In ten minutes he came to a road. Rolling toward him was a man on a bicycle. Soth simultaneously felt relieved and suspicious. This person might know that he was fleeing and have him arrested. He wanted to ask if he had been following him, but did not. The man offered Soth a ride, and told him he had no reason to fear. Soth still felt uneasy, but grew amazed that as they talked the man would answer his questions before Soth asked them as
if the man were anticipating them. This was reassuring. They rode for hours.

The mysterious stranger spoke of the various modes of transportation up ahead. He assured Soth that should the taxi be unavailable or refuse to take him, then Soth would be welcome to stay at his place for the night. He pointed to a beautifully painted house not far away. It was clear that he was a man of wealth.

Then the bicycler pointed to a waiting taxi--the same that had stranded him before! "Go and ask if they will allow you to ride with them," said the man. Soth dismounted and dashed off to the taxi, which had stopped for repairs. When he reached it, the taxi was fixed. Immediately the other passengers pushed him in without giving him a chance to say goodbye. The driver explained that he had been forced to leave without Soth because the security officers would have shot at the taxi had they seen the driver pick up a man without papers. Soth felt so sorry for not being able to say goodbye to the man on the bike and thank him. To his amazement, the man was nowhere in sight and the house did not exist! He was amazed in his heart and he thought that man must be God's angel.

Before coming to Phnom Penh in 1969, Soth and his wife did some farming in Kompong Thom. This was difficult at first because he was an inexperienced student. But despite opposition, theft of crops, and ridicule because of their faith, his family learned how to grow various kinds of crops. This was a bittersweet period, as on the one hand they watched the Lord miraculously bless their harvest, but on the other Kang Koeung's mother passionately opposed her daughter's marriage to a Christian. She hated Christians. She threatened to take all of her daughter's possessions if she did not leave her husband and renounce her faith. Koeung decided to return everything her mother had ever given her, (such as necklaces, bangles, hole, and pharmourng [two kinds of Cambodian cloth]) and trust fully in the Lord for her needs.

In 1970 Yourng Soth attended Bethany International Church. Norman and Marie Ens were missionaries there and influenced him greatly. In 1972, he began a three-year course of study at the Takmau Bible College. Soth later became an assistant to the pastor in Zarephath
church, helping with the youth and evangelism. By now there were many churches in Cambodia, as well as faithful missionaries such as Andy Bishop (WVI), Mel Gravan, Jean Hall, Alice Compain (OMF), and Don Cormack.

A few days before the fall of Phnom Penh, warnings arrived from friends outside the country. When the Khmer Rouge entered the city and it was clear that the foreigners would be leaving, Yourng Soth's immediate family was offered the chance to leave as well. He decided that if all of his family couldn't leave then he too must stay.

He was encouraged by a dear friend to leave all nonessentials behind, including medical supplies, literature, clothing, and food. God would provide all that he needed. This advice probably saved his life. As he was being relocated to his native Kompong Thom, Soth's simple dress and his listing farming skills as his background removed suspicion from him. Although many Cambodian Christians died for their beliefs, Soth's relocation officers never asked about his religion.

Because he had returned to his native Kompong Thom, Soth was known to be a Christian. His home village told him that he and his family would not live because he had served the American imperialist! This frightened him, and he did nothing but pray that God would spare his and his family's lives so that they could serve him. At that time he was able to hide his Bible and read it daily because he was working as a sugar palm worker. He kept God's word tucked inside his pillowcase. Reading it strengthened and encouraged him during this tragic period in Cambodian history.

When asked how the Khmer Rouge years affected his faith, Soth replied that it made it stronger. His most intense time was when one official-Comrade Cheng, a leader of the collective in Kadam Ha, Chhouk Kasarch, Baray-plotted to kill him. Everybody knew about it and warned Soth to be wary. Soth prayed to God for protection. One day another group of Khmer Rouge caught Comrade Cheng and put him to death. Now Soth and his family could breathe easily. This was the way God spared his life. At that time he led three people to Christ-Khiev Vanlong, Dith Savy and Moeung Lamoeuy.

Today Yourng Soth is the leader of the Khmer Evangelical Church throughout the country. He has held leadership positions in
this church since 1990. He and Koeung have eight children ranging in age from fifteen to thirty-two. His children have followed in their parents' faith and serve in various ministries in Phnom Penh. The church has outreach programs for youth, for their immediate neighborhood, and for the provinces. Local congregations of the Khmer Evangelical Church each have men's, women's, youth, and children's groups, to help them accomplish their goal that each congregation plant a new church annually.

Soth believes the greatest asset of the Cambodian church is that it is strong and has a good structural foundation. As Christians develop good study habits and scriptural discernment, they will continue to grow and not become confused by the cults that bring false messages to Cambodia. Prayer with those who have been led astray is also essential.

In discussing how new missionaries can best support the Cambodian church, he says that those who work alongside existing Cambodian congregations and those who seek wisdom and input from Cambodian Christians are probably the most effective. Others who arrive and start churches with foreign pastors, bypassing cultural and historical wisdom, will have a tougher time adjusting. These latter will also be easily deceived by Cambodians who offer to assist their ministries for wrong and often selfish reasons.

Yourng Soth's prayer for Cambodia is that God would give Christians clear understanding of his word and of the true meaning of service. He prays that God would share his light and wisdom and that Cambodians would seek God's will. He also prays for religious freedom, and that the politicians would not make laws that prohibit religious freedom and worship.

Yourng Soth has seen the Lord's hand of protection, provision, and miraculous grace. He has also witnessed the amazing outcomes of a faithful mother's prayer.

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[^0]:    

[^1]:    

[^2]:    ${ }^{2}$ Ps $121: 1-2$.
    ${ }^{3} 1$ Cor 9:16.

[^3]:    ${ }^{4}$ Isa 6:1.
    ${ }^{5}$ Isa 6:1, 8 .
    ${ }^{6}$ Jer 1:5.

[^4]:    'Rom 10:13-15.
    ${ }^{8}$ Eph 3:8.
    ${ }^{9} 1 \operatorname{Tim} 2: 7$.

[^5]:    ${ }^{10}$ John 1:14.
    "Rom 5:1-5; 1 Pet 4:12-13; Jas 1:2-3.

[^6]:    ${ }^{4} 1 \mathrm{Ki}$ 18:27.

[^7]:    

[^8]:    

[^9]:    ${ }^{9}$ E.g., see Matt 5:38-48; 1 Cor 8:1-9:23.

[^10]:    ${ }^{10}$ See Rom 7:7-24; Eph 2:1-3; Jer 13:23; 17:9.

[^11]:    

[^12]:    

[^13]:    ${ }^{3}$ טּוּ, a forceful word. Four of its fourteen occurrences in the Hebrew Old Testament occur in Jonah 1 (verses 4, 5, 12, 15).
    ${ }^{4}$ מָנְה, another relatively uncommon word used four times in Jonah (1:17 [2:1 in Hebrew]; 4:6, 7, 8, translated "provided" in the NIV). The sense of "assigning someone a responsibility" may be seen in the word's occurrences in the book of Daniel ( $1: 5,10,11 ; 2: 24 ; 49 ; 3: 12 ; 5: 26$ ).

    Tמַּ, a common word meaning "say" or "utter," but sometimes with the sense of "command."
    ${ }^{6} \mathrm{~K}$ ", translated "worship" in the NIV, v. 9.

[^14]:    ${ }^{7}$ Present-day Jaffa. This was not the port closest to Jonah's town, but it was one where long-distance ships anchored. Jonah was preparing to flee as far as he could.
    ${ }^{8}$ T구 "go down, descend" is used in 1:3 (twice), 5; 2:7.
    ${ }^{9}$ Ps 119:67.

[^15]:    ${ }^{10}$ E.g., Jud 10:9-10.
    "Zech 12:10; cf. her trouble in v.3.
    ${ }^{12}$ Lam 3:33.
    13ג דָּ twice in 1:17 [Heb 2:1] and once in 2:10 [Heb 2:11]; [Heb 2:2]. The LXX translates with $\kappa \eta$ ๆि०ऽ ("sea monster, large fish," including spouting cetacea) in all four places. Matt 12:40 also uses $\kappa \mathfrak{\eta} \tau 0 \varsigma$.

[^16]:    ${ }^{16}$ Assyria struggled during these years against mountain tribes from the north, who had encroached to within 150 kilometers of Nineveh.

[^17]:    ${ }^{17} 4: 2$. In this verse Jonah essentially quotes God's self-description given to Moses in Ex 34:6-7 and repeated in such passages as Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps $86: 15 ; 103: 8 ; 145: 8$; and Joel 2:13. He is objecting to a central attribute of God's character, and forgets that he himself has benefited from God's gracious forgiveness.
    ${ }^{18}$ The mean maximum temperature in Mesopotamia's hot season is $43^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$. During a "sirocco" east wind the temperature rises $8-12^{\circ} \mathrm{C}$. above the average. The heat bakes so much moisture from the air so that one's skin feels drawn tight. During sirocco days people tend to be irritable and quick to seek shelter. It is easy to see why Jonah valued the vine.

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     The identity of the words [עָ א'אליה in 3:2] is lost in the NIV translation.

[^23]:    
    
    
    

