# Theology  

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## Meet Ngov Vorn



NGOV Vorn

Pastor Ngov Vorn was born in 1928. He was raised by a Christian farmer who lived in Kdam Ha village, Chhouk Kasarch subdistrict, Baray district, Kompong Thom province. He has one younger sister. Ngov Vorn gave his life to Jesus when he was 17 years old.

In 1950 he took up studies at the Takmau Bible School in Kandal province. After graduating he worked as an evangelist with Christian and Missionary Alliance.

In 1952 he married a Christian woman. Choeun Kim Nonn. Nine children were born into this family. They lost one daughter, along with her husband and their children, in the Pol Pot time. But eight chil-dren-three sons and five daughters-survived. All are Christians. After his wife Kim Nonn passed away in 1983, he married a Christian widow. Ly Kim Ny, whose husband had died in Pol Pot regime. Together they have served the Lord in Kompong Thom since 1990.

There was intense persecution around the time he believed in Jesus, but he is strong in persevering in his faith regardless of whether people look down on him. Pastor Ngov Vorn retained his faith throughout the Khmer Rouge years. God spared his life to testify to us about his amazing grace.

After the Khmer Rouge regime fell, Pastor Vorn set up an independent worship place. No denomination supported the work, but friends from overseas provided some money. He saved it, bought a plot of land, and built a church building in 1998. He named the church "First Baptist Church of Kompong Thom Town." In 1999 he joined with the Baptists.

When asked why he believed in Jesus when his community did not, he answered that he originally did so to please his believing father. At first he knew very little about Christianity, but during Bible school he learned a great deal. In addition, surviving the terror of Khmer Rouge regime taught him even more clearly about the amazing grace of God. who took care of him and drew him closer.

When he first came to faith he frequently asked his father, "Why do we believe in Jesus while everyone else believes in Buddha?" He dared to ask such a question because he was somewhat of a favorite of his grandfather, and he knew that his grandfather would take his side. In recalling this question, Pastor Vorn is dropping a hint to us that in his younger years he was embarrassed because of his family's faith.

Before the Khmer Rouge era there were only fifteen Christians in the whole of Kompong Thom province. After the fall of Phnom Penh, he was arrested and jailed for twenty-two days because they accused him of being an American CIA informer. The reason for this is that before the war, missionaries from Christian and Missionary AllianceHamong and Peterson and some Khmer evangelists-used to come to Kompong Thom to hold evangelistic rallies, and they would come to see him. But God delivered him from the hand of Khmer Rouge, and he was evacuated about forty kilometers from his home village to La Boeuk. There he was designated to work in the plowing corps.

The Khmer Rouge twice tried to kill him, and they demanded, "Are you an American CIA agent?" He answered, "I believe in Jesus, as do the Americans. They believed before I did, and came to tell me
about him. But I do not believe in Americans." Then Khmer Rouge stayed mum. He was not sure what would happen next, because he felt he had spoken eloquently to the Khmer Rouge. But the power of God eased the hearts of the Khmer Rouge soldiers so that they did not kill him.

In 1980 when he returned to his home village, he found that no other Christians had survived. He and his family were the only Kompong Thom Christians that made it through the dark age of three years, eight months, and twenty days. He bicycled throughout Kompong Thom and Siem Reap to search for any remnant Christians, and eventually met a handful in Siem Reap.

Between 1980 and 1988 he worshiped God in his own house, but then went to Phnom Penh to contact other Christians. While there he got some Bibles from Alice Compain. He also cycled to Kompong Cham and met with some Christians in that place. For all these ministries he never received any salary. He was a farmer-and his wife sold things in her small business-all the time he was serving the Lord.

I asked him, "If we compare church growth before the country fell into Khmer Rouge hands with the present rate, in which era did the church grow more rapidly? At present the church is growing rapidly everywhere, emerging like a mushroom even in remote areas. Why?" He answered, because evangelism today is holistic and there is a stronger drive toward evangelism.

When the country was first at war, people scattered everywhere. Some moved to a second country, and of these a portion then went to a third. Still others died. Those who moved to a third country came to believe in Jesus. After peace returned to Cambodia they repatriated, or came to visit their relatives. When they did, they shared with their relatives the good news about God's amazing grace in saving their lives. Because it was now relatives who were sharing and not just foreigners, because many of these relatives had dramatic testimonies of God's deliverance during their escapes, and because these relatives had freely chosen to become Christians in the more affluent West, and not as a ploy to get rice, the gospel had a much greater impact.

Second, people thirst for the Word of God nowadays more than they did before the fall of the country. Previously most evangelists were
only foreigners; therefore when people believed they were labeled as believing in the French God. After the war the gospel had more impact. I believe if God did not let the Cambodian people go through the agony of the civil war, maybe the gospel would not advance as fast as it is doing today. There are two pastors today who survived the war and the Pol Pot regime-Pastor Gnov Vorn and Pastor Seang Aung. Seang Aung escaped to Vietnam during the Pol Pot time, while Gnov Vorn stayed here in Cambodia.

I asked him if he felt sorry that God let Cambodia go through such a war? He said praise the Lord. if God did not allow the Khmer people to go through that suffering, there would not be the rapid spread of repentance and faith that we see today. From this perspective he sees the suffering during the civil war as a blessing from God.

What is the difference between missionaries today when compared with those of the past? Pastor Gnov Vorn answered that in the past missionaries who came to work in Cambodia were narrow-minded. not like those of today. They did not want to go to the countryside. They liked to live in towns and cities. For example in 1965-66 there was only one missionary family, Thompson and his wife, who accompanied Pastor Gnov Vorn to the northeast to share the gospel. Another bad example was a handful of missionaries who preached about love from their Bibles, but did not practice love in their lives. So progress in sharing the good news was slow and not widespread.

We are so grateful to God that he has sent good missionaries to do his work in Cambodia today. They are very friendly to us, and show brotherly love to us and to other Christians in remote areas. This is the real love that God commands in his word-and about which Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13-that we should love without discrimination or regard to social status. Most missionaries in the present day set good examples for us, and what they have taught reflects the power of God and His word in the Bible. Therefore the gospel that the missionaries share today has more weight and is more holistic. Present church growth is in part the fruit of the missionaries' labor

When asked which ministry can most help restore Cambodian society, he replied youth and children's ministry. If that ministry is well developed, youth will fear God. If they fear God they will become good
leaders, and if we have good Christian government leaders, our country will prosper and be blessed. Pastor Gnov Vorn requests that missionaries from various organizations focus mainly on children's and youth ministry. In the war Cambodia lost a lot of people, and the present population is very young. The reason that he has been able to stand firm in faith so long is because he believed in Jesus when he was young. Even though he went through suffering and persecution, he can stand firm in faith because the word of God was rooted deep in his heart.

He is very grateful that God sent World Vision to Kompong Thom. World Vision initiated a monthly pastors' fellowship. Training of Timothys has helped with pastors' training. May God bless those who came to help us!

