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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.

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January 2003





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ษณูกโิิการ Russell H. Bowers, Jr.






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## Delegation: An Introduction

Graham CHIPPS

Leadership is not easy--and yet it is a great privilege to be called by God to serve in this way. The Bible comments on leadership in several different ways and so we know just from the Bible that leadership can be complicated and it takes years to learn to lead well. One of the many responsibilities of leaders in the church is delegation.

## Delegation: What Exactly Is It?

A very simple definition is "giving some work to another to do." A less simple definition is "assigning or commissioning responsibility for a particular role, or the completion of a task, to another while retaining ultimate responsibility."

- The task may be large (for example, organizing a special program in the life of the church) or small (for example, helping clean up the mess after a church meal); it may be one task or many.
- The role may be large (for example, leadership of the church's youth ministry) or small (for example, being in charge of the parking of motorbikes each Sunday); it may be long-term (years) or short-term (less than a day); it may be for a high level or low-level position.
- The role may involve authority to act as a representative of another.
- It usually involves devolution of power and authority to someone lower down the church or organization.
- It requires trusting others with the responsibilities involved.
- Delegation always includes accountability. The leader retains final authority and so others should report to him or her from time to time.
- Delegation must include training, support, and supervision, as well as the provision of the resources needed to fulfil what is required.
- Delegation at its best involves increasing freedom and responsibility over time as the wisdom and abilities of others increases. Ideally, others will one day be able to do all that you do-and do it even better than you do!


## Delegation: Is It Biblical?

The short answer is a strong "YES!" Some examples for you to explore:

- Check out Exodus 18:13-27. Moses delegated responsibility to the elders for many of the decisions that needed to be made.
- Note the way Jesus appointed others to both large and small responsibilities. There are lots of examples through the Gospels, not just in sending out the disciples on mission journeys but also in the small practical arrangements of daily living.
- Starting in Acts 6:1-7, we see several examples of delegation in the Acts of the Apostles. Acts 6 is not just an example of delegation. It also demonstrates that there are priorities for leaders, and to be free to focus on these, leaders must hand over responsibility for other things to other people in the church. Note also that those who were delegated a task needed to be qualified to handle it.
- Paul delegated responsibility to Silas, Timothy, Titus, Tychicus, Epaphras, Epaphroditus, Onesimus and Philemon,

Erastus, and no doubt others not named. In fact, the pastoral letters could be subtitled "Delegated Responsibilities." For example, in 2 Timothy $2: 2$, training is essential so that delegation can be practiced so that more and more people are able to teach others.
Another way of addressing the question about delegation in the Bible is to ask this question; "Is it possible to have a church that follows Biblical instructions for church life and ministry without delegation?" The answer is a strong; "NO!" A number of passages make it very clear that church leaders must delegate to others.

- Paul describes the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians $12 . \mathrm{He}$ leaves no doubt that for the body to function, every member needs to do what it is equipped to do: toes must function as toes, lungs as lungs, arms as arms, and so on. If just one part of the body does not function as it is designed to do, then the whole body is affected. In other words, each member of the church has a role in the church. And the leaders must delegate responsibility to others to ensure each one is involved in accordance with his or her gift for serving the church. If there is no delegation, the church will fail to operate in accordance with God's instructions for the church to be like a body.
- Notice the verse immediately after the list of gifts for ministry in Ephesians 4:11. Paul immediately says that these gifts are so that others might be trained for ministry so that the whole body can be involved in the work of the church. People are not to be trained (prepared and equipped) so that they can then do nothing! The next step after training is delegation of responsibility for an area of ministry. Sometimes the delegation may happen before or during training-there is no fixed way these things need to happen just as long as everyone in the church is involved in serving.
- Recurringly, the apostles urge ALL in the church to love and serve others. This can only happen effectively when the leaders regularly appoint others to the many roles that need to be filled. Sometimes people will volunteer, but mostly
people will wait until the leaders invite others to be involved and assign each one to a particular responsibility in the church. This is what delegation is all about.
So in the Bible, both by example and by instruction, delegation is highly valued and strongly encouraged. In fact, as I have already written, delegation is totally necessary to have a church that fulfils what God wants in every church.


## Delegation: What Happens if Leaders Do Not Practice It?

Here are some of the consequences of leaders failing to practice delegation routinely:

- The leader will have far too much to do, much more than she can do in the available time. Eventually she will become very weary, frustrated, disillusioned and discouraged-and probably give up.
- The leader will have to do things that he is not qualified to do; nor gifted nor skilled to do. And therefore these things will not be done very well and everyone will get frustrated.
- Many important things will be neglected. They are not done because the leader is too busy and has no time. Things such as evangelism, teaching and training in discipleship, training others for ministry and good works, caring for and pastoring ALL the people in the church or organization, developing the organization of the church.
- Church members will either become frustrated (as they would like to help and be involved but are not allowed) or they will find it easy to remain lazy, disinterested and lukewarm.
- Church members will lack opportunities and experience to learn new roles, develop new abilities, grow into leadership, increase in Christian maturity, and understand how to make wise leadership decisions.
- Everyone will be disobedient to the scriptures. Leaders will not be doing what scripture requires: delegating responsibilities and ensuring as best they can that the church
practices every-member ministry. Group members will be prevented from doing what God has called them to.
- The church as a body will remain immature and not built up into the vision for the body outlined by Paul.
- God's glory will be limited in that his glory (for example wisdom, Eph $3: 10$ ) is to be revealed in the life of the church as the body of Christ functions as he designed-including in every-member ministry.


## Delegation: What Happens if Leaders Do Practice Delegation?

Here are many of the advantages of leaders routinely practicing delegation:

- The work is shared among many more people and so everyone is less likely to be overworked and tired, because delegation results in a more even and fair distribution of work amongst the whole body.
- The more the leader delegates, the more he is free to focus on other priorities such as teaching, training and prayer, coordinating the work of others so that each one is able to be helpful for the others, leading the church with vision rather than just organizing lots of things.
- If leaders both delegate and then coordinate the many things people are doing, there will be increased efficiency and much more will be achieved.
- Everyone is able to reach up to higher levels of responsibility, and so each one has the possibility of developing their abilities. The leader rises up to a higher role (coordination, leadership, and training rather than lots of smaller roles) and this creates space for others to take on greater responsibility and develop further in their skills, wisdom, and leadership. Delegation helps produce the best people have to offer-it enables people to move towards their full potential.
- The Holy Spirit makes good use of such experience to increase our maturity and develop our gifts for ministry and
leadership. Without delegation, the every-member ministry of the body of Christ is not possible.
- As more people are able to take on increased responsibilities, their motivation for the church and to serve in the church increases.
- Delegation gives opportunity for people to be involved in more complex and difficult decision making, which increases their wisdom and leadership ability.
- Delegation strengthens the relationships between leaders and others, as delegation only works if leaders spend time supporting those to whom work or ministry has been delegated.
- Delegation requires the setting of standards and expectations, which in turn increases the level at which people complete their work or ministry.
- Delegation is essential for increasing the body-like functioning of the church, and this pleases God.
- Delegation reveals the wisdom and power of God in that it proves his ways are best and he is powerful enough to grow gifts for ministry in every single Christian.
- Delegation only works if the people of God have a longing for unity because delegation needs much cooperation and coordination. So delegation facilitates much stronger expressions of unity.


## Delegation: How Can I Learn How to Delegate?

I started learning about how to delegate when I was still a teenager. But I find that I still have lots to learn. I still make mistakes. Some of these mistakes are:

- Not being clear enough in my explanations to others as to what I want them to achieve or do.
- Asking too much of people: giving them more responsibility than they are ready to handle.
- Blaming others when they don't do very well when really it is my own fault for either asking them to do more than they
were able, or for not providing sufficient guidance, training, or support.
- Not spending enough time with people to encourage them and to help them increase in their abilities.
- Interfering too much by giving responsibility to others and then taking the responsibility away from them by telling them what to do.
- Expecting others to do things in exactly the same way I do! It never works out this way because people always do things in ways that are unique to them.
But even if I make many mistakes, I need to keep on learning how to improve.

The best way to learn how to delegate is to start delegating! You can approach this in two ways: start with the people or start with the needs.

1. Consider the people in the church and ask how each one could be involved. What responsibility can be given to each person that she would be able to handle with sufficient training and support from the leaders'?
2. What are the needs in the life of the church for which people are needed to take responsibility? Who can be assigned to meet these needs?
You won't be able to cope with all the people and all the needs at the same time. In the average church, working through all the needs and all the people would take months at least. Often you will find you just don't know yet what would be best for some people; and often you will not be able to find anyone who can be asked to deal with a particular need.

But please do not avoid delegation because it is difficult or takes a long time-or because you might make some mistakes. Remember, we must delegate if we are to have churches that are healthy and strong. We must delegate if we are to have churches that obey the instructions of God for church life and ministry.

## Delegation: What Do You Know Already?

Here's a simple exercise to help you to think about delegation and learn more about it. It is based upon the idea that everyone who is likely to read this article has already been delegated some responsibilities.

- Think about those times when you were delegated a responsibility by a leader. This could be just one example that you remember well or a time when you served under a leader who often delegated work and responsibility to you.
- Describe just one or two things that your leader or manager did in supervising you that was NOT helpful for you while you were learning how to do the job. Write these down!
- What things did your leader do that you did find helpful? Write these down!
- Given your own experience, how would you delegate responsibility to another so that he is encouraged and able to improve in ability and wisdom with less and less close supervision being needed?
In working through these questions, you will realise that you already know some things about delegation!


## Delegation: Some Questions to Ask

The following is a list of questions to consider as you decide how to delegate responsibility to another. Some of these can be ignored if the task is small (for example; going to the market to buy the snacks for a meeting). But the larger the responsibility, the more these questions need to be considered.

- What exactly is the person expected to do, and what are they expected to achieve? Is the responsibility large enough to need a written job description? If so, who is going to produce the job description?
- What exactly is the time frame for this delegation? Is this for a day or five years?
- What decision-making authority are you giving to them: what freedoms and limitations are being given? Is it clear which
decisions must be referred back to the leader and which ones they are free to make them selves? (Remember, the more we can give decision-making responsibility to others, the more they will have opportunity to grow in wisdom!)
- What training will be needed and how will it be provided?
- What resources and facilities will they have to use-including finances and people? Who exactly is responsible to provide these things?
- What support can they expect from you or others? How will you as the leader ensure the person receives plenty of encouragement and support from you?
- How they will be supervised? What requirements are there for reporting back to you? How often will you need to meet with her? (If the responsibility is an ongoing one, the inexperienced will need weekly meetings; the experienced will need monthly meetings.)
The answers to these questions vary from one person to the next and from one task to the next.


## Delegation: Three Pastors

Which of these three pastors is working towards building a church based on Biblical instructions?
$\operatorname{Pastor} \boldsymbol{A}$. The church that he leads is average in size. There are some elders with whom the pastor meets about three or four times a year. Sometimes the pastor asks one of the elders to teach in the weekly Bible study or preach the Sunday sermon. The pastor is happy when people offer to help, and usually accepts these offers, but he doesn't ask people very often or provide training. This pastor also is the main Sunday School teacher and leads the youth group. He doesn't understand much about Paul's idea of the body of Christ and every-member ministry, so he doesn't teach this to the church. He also says that the culture of the society recognizes that leaders should do most of the work themselves so that others will respect them. He is too busy to do much evangelistic work. He has a desire to see God glorified in the church and for the
church to grow.
Pastor B. This pastor's church is also about average in size. The pastor is gradually increasing the number of people helping in Bible study groups, youth ministry and Sunday School. He often asks people to help with small tasks. He has a team of elders and he meets with them at least monthly to discuss and agree together on the major concerns in the life of the church. Once a month he has a training day; sometimes for the elders, sometimes for the evangelists, sometimes for the service leaders, sometimes others. He often discusses with others what they think about the church and spends a lot of time listening to their opinions. His goal is to have at least two ministries of the church with sufficiently healthy leadership within three years so that he no longer needs to have much involvement, though he would still meet with the leaders regularly. He has a desire to see God glorified in the church and for the church to grow.

Pastor C. Again we have an average size church. This pastor is a strong leader. He sometimes says God has anointed him to be the leader and therefore he says he should make all the decisions and he does not need to include others in the ministry and work of the church. He says the instructions about eldership that are found in the New Testament are not relevant in his culture and he has found that having elders is always a problem anyway. He often tells people what the church needs but does not provide opportunity for people to share their thoughts with him. He has a habit of being quite critical of anyone he sees to be liked and respected in the church-even if he delegated some responsibility to them and even if they are good in what they do. He is quick to blame others when things go wrong and yet does most of the work himself. He often preaches on those passages that stress submission to leaders. He has a desire to see God glorified in the church and for the church to grow.

Which pastor is most consistent with the leadership teachings of the Bible? Which one is growing a biblical church?

## Delegation: Is That All? No!

The title to this article says this is just an introduction. There is much more that could be said. May I encourage you to take up the opportunity to participate in the Training of Timothys seminar on delegation when next it is offered in your area!

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## The Value of Wise Rabbits

Douglas SHAW

## Introduction

All theology depends on discerning, reflecting upon, and responding to the evidence of God's work in every place and time, even where Jesus is not yet known as Lord. This approach is endorsed by all major branches of the Christian church. ${ }^{1}$ All cultures have values that can be both affirmed and challenged. Christians, seeking to live out the transforming values of the Kingdom, can respond to other value systems with a word of understanding and appreciation, a word of criticism and judgment, and a word of hope of transformation ${ }^{2}$. However, Christians, especially those from other

[^0]cultures, must first clarify their own values and allow others the power to decide their own values. ${ }^{3}$

A process of critical contextualization is needed. Syncretism results from an approach where an existing value system is uncritically accepted or replaced by a foreign value system. ${ }^{4}$ This critical contextualization must stress the centrality of Scripture, the role of the Holy Spirit, and the active participation of the Christian community in evaluating issues.

## Values in Literature

Imaginative literature has been described as "the most accurate index to human values, longings and anxieties that exists." Such literature not only enhances our understanding of values such as love or justice, but also allows us to clarify our own values and respectfully consider an alternative worldview with which we may not agree. ${ }^{5}$ Folk literature in particular reveals fundamental beliefs about the nature of things. ${ }^{6}$

## Cambodian folktales

A vast amount of Khmer literature has accumulated in the thirteen hundred years since the earliest Khmer inscriptions of the seventh century. This literature was inspired and influenced by Chinese, Hindu, Buddhist, Thai, and French sources. ${ }^{7}$ Some elements of Cambodian folktales, such as neak ta, may predate the Christian era. These folktales entered Cambodia in parallel oral and written streams of transmission with considerable modification over time. ${ }^{8}$ They were first published in the late nineteenth century from palm leaf manuscripts in monastery libraries. ${ }^{9}$ There are two main
${ }^{3}$ Taylor 1990:36-7.
${ }^{4}$ Hiebert 1985:183-9.
${ }^{\text {'Ryken 1979:27, 76, 102,145. }}$
${ }^{6}$ Hiebert 1985:175.
${ }^{7}$ Huffman and Proum 1977:1.
${ }^{8}$ Thierry 1985:34, 63.
${ }^{9}$ Davidson and Cordell 1993:253.
collections of Cambodian folktales: the collection of the Buddhist Institute and the Gatiloke. The Buddhist Institute collection consists of seven or nine-volumes, while the Gatiloke is based on Buddhist teaching.

Most stories involve ordinary people in their life and work in villages, towns, and forests, giving insight into traditional and contemporary Cambodian society and morality. ${ }^{10}$ Five universal themes have been identified in these stories: loss, estrangement, acquisition of magical powers, ordeal or combat, and rise to riches or royal status. ${ }^{11}$ Several features of Theravada Buddhism have been identified in these stories. ${ }^{12}$ The foolishness and greed of kings, officials, and old Hindu gods is contrasted with the kindness and compassion of ordinary people. The equality of women with men is depicted in tension with their inferior status under the old Brahmanic religion. Individual responsibility is highlighted by a lack of sympathy for foolish victims of trickery. Governed by karma, punishment and reward are inevitable, but not executed immediately. The Buddhist prohibition on killing is reinforced by stories where kind and intelligent animals outwit cruel and insensitive hunters.

Among the most popular stories are those of the Wise Rabbit. In one group of stories, the clever animal just manages to escape death, while in a second group of stories the Wise Rabbit is the Judge. ${ }^{13}$ Justice is achieved in legal disputes between animals and humans, usually through innocent tricks or deception involving clever use of words. However, the rabbit is not consistently on the side of justice.
${ }^{10}$ Huffman and Proum 1977:4-5.
${ }^{11}$ Thierry 1985:218.
${ }^{12}$ Carrison 1987:15-16.
${ }^{13}$ There are similar stories in Laos and Vietnam and parallels with the mouse-deer (Palanduk) stories of the Malay (Davidson and Cordell 1993:245).

## Five Cambodian Folktales

Aspects of mutual responsibility and trust in relationships are evident in the following story. A caterpillar, about to be eaten by a crow, poses four questions: what is the sweetest thing in the world; the most bitter; the most rotten; and the most sweet-smelling? The crow responds with the literal answers of honey, lemons, manure and jasmine. The caterpillar's life is spared when it gives the alternative responses of loving and sincere words, unjustified malicious words, an evil reputation, and a reputation for integrity and honesty. ${ }^{14}$ Another story involving a deer, crow, and tortoise highlights the qualities of a good friend-willingness to help others and share resources, honest speech, treatment of others as equals. ${ }^{15}$

Motives for unjust decisions such as personal desire and greed, fear, hatred, and ignorance are found in the story of a tiger that has been poisoned by a snake but revived by a hermit. ${ }^{16}$ The tiger threatens to eat the hermit, as it believes it has been woken from a restful sleep. Various animal judges are biased in ruling in favor of the tiger. The jackal and vulture both depend on the food left by the tiger, the ox is afraid of the tiger while the monkey and a forest spirit are seeking revenge for offenses other humans have committed. The final judge is the Wise Rabbit, who recognizes the bias of the first five judges and suggests that the initial scene be re-enacted. The same snake again bites the tiger, but this time in not revived by the hermit!

A poor man accidentally loses a borrowed axe head. ${ }^{17}$ The rich owner, claiming it as a valuable family heirloom, refuses to accept even ten axe heads as repayment. Sadly, the poor man offers his son as a servant to the rich man. Happily, soon afterwards he finds the axe head and redeems his son. Later, the rich man's daughter asks for some delicious food that the poor man's wife is preparing.

[^1]The rich man borrows an ordinary earthenware pot from the poor man to carry the food, but it is accidentally broken. The poor man appears heartbroken, claiming the pot was a family heirloom, and refusing to accept ten new pots as repayment! After an unfavorable initial judgment, the poor man appeals to the king who learns about the axe head. In advocating equal treatment, he orders the rich man to give his daughter as wife to the poor man's son!

The story of Mea Jurng, which contains four shorter stories, is well known. ${ }^{18}$ In addition to justice, it extols the virtues of an intelligent woman. A jealous man exchanges his intelligent wife for the attractive but foolish wife of a poor man. Through her intelligence she gains the respect of her neighbors and obtains work at the palace for her new husband. On a hunting trip the king gallops deep into the forest. Only Mea Jurng, having been urged to train by his wife, is able to keep up with the king and is able to offer the king delicious food prepared by his wife. He overhears a forest-spirit's plot to kill the king and saves him on two occasions. That night he kills a huge serpent in the king's bedchamber, but wakes the queen while attempting to remove some blood from her breast. The angry king orders his immediate execution, but the four palace gatekeepers prevent the executioner from leaving with Mea Jurng. Each gatekeeper relates a separate story showing that the king is placing himself above the law in rashly judging without a proper trial. The next morning, during the trial, the king remembers Mea Jurng's previous service and the dead serpent is found under the king's bed. Mea Jurng is vindicated and promoted!

## The Value of Wise Rabbits

I believe that these five selected folktales contain values that can be affirmed. Cambodian folktales can therefore provide excellent opportunities for reflection and clarification of values in many different settings. For example, in community development practice, a Cambodian community group could be encouraged to discuss values directly related to a particular development issue. Selected folktales

[^2]could be introduced to stimulate this discussion. Reflection on biblical values could follow to allow comparisons and contrasts. A similar process could be used with new Christians facing difficult decisions in living out the values of the Kingdom of God in the Cambodian cultural context.

Because of my limited knowledge of Cambodian culture and religion, I believe that this-process of reflection and clarification of values must be done by Cambodian Christians, guided by scripture and the Holy Spirit. However, in order to outline how these stories may be used in community development practice, I will make the following preliminary suggestions.

O'Leary and $\mathrm{Nee}^{19}$ have identified six core values of development practice: empowerment, participation, justice, sustainability, equity, and role. These values may be compared with traditional Cambodian values such as respect for authority, status, obedience, order, conformity, merit, charity, harmony, and consensus. The five folktales sketched above contain elements of these traditional values, as well as some core development values.

The story of the caterpillar and crow could be used to stimulate small group discussion on roles and relationships in community development, since mutual respect and trust lie at the core of successful development. The story of the deer, crow, and tortoise could also be used to probe personal relationships, but expanded to involve community participation (helping others and sharing resources) and equity (treating others as equals). Similar values from the teachings of Jesus could be introduced to allow comparisons and contrasts.

The story of the tiger and the hermit could aid community discussions where people are struggling against an unjust decision from biased or corrupt judges. One example might be a dispute over land ownership, where a more powerful and wealthy person has obtained legal title to land through unjust methods. Persistence in

[^3]seeking justice is evident in this story, a theme that parallels Jesus' parable of the persistent widow. ${ }^{20}$

The story of the poor man and the axehead also involves seeking justice in the presence of unjust oppression, but could also lead into a discussion of the courage shown by the poor man in confronting the rich man and persisting in his attempts to obtain justice-an example of empowerment. An interesting discussion might also be stimulated by considering how the poor man made effective use of the local but limited resources available to him-one earthenware cooking pot!

The story of Mea Jurng again deals with seeking justice when faced with an unjust decision made by a person with power. The role of the four gatekeepers in advocating for justice could lead to fruitful community discussions. The story could also be used to explore first the innovation and empowerment of the intelligent wife, and then more general gender issues. The limited local resources of the poor family are effectively mobilized to achieve results. The wife actively builds the capacity of her new husband, and he is immediately able to apply what he has learned with good effect. This story further could illustrate the action learning cycle employed in community development (action-reflection-learning-planning-action).

It is my hope that this article will stimulate and encourage Cambodian Christians to seek values within their own rich culture and to creatively apply these values to sharing the Good News.

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${ }^{9}$ Davidson and Cordell 1993:253.
${ }^{10}$ Huffman and Proum 1977:4-5
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${ }^{12}$ Carrison 1987:15-16

















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${ }^{19}$ O' Leary, Moira , and Meas Nee, Learning for Transformation. Krom Akphiwat Phum, Phnom Penh, October 2001: 45,63.
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## Balancing Praying with Doing

Russell H. BOWERS, Jr.

Christians sometimes say, "If only we would pray, God would change our world." "Prayer-meeting is the most important meeting of the week-the 'Hour of Power'." "Satan doesn't care what else we do, as long as we don't pray." All this implies that our talking to God outweighs God's talking to us (as we scrutinize the scriptures). It throws back into God's lap responsibilities he has assigned us. And it leads to a flurry of prayer and fasting vigils, seminars, and conferences.

Certainly prayer is essential. God does meet with us when we call on him. His Spirit aids our praying, unmasks our sins, breaks our pride, and draws us to Christ. God does answer prayer, and "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." But some people speak as if prayer were the whole of our responsibilityas if all we need do is pray and wait. That is wrong. Though prayer is $a$ key to God's blessing, it is not the only key. Another is informed obedience.

Some people balk at that. Obedience sounds so pedestrian next to prayer. Isn't obedience a human work? Would not our efforts detract from the supernaturalness of revival? Would not God's glory
be dimmed if human contributions played a part? Are we talking synergism here?

So we bristle with Naaman and mutter, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of Yahweh his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me. . . " Naaman nearly forfeited his cure because he wanted to wait and watch God work, rather than participate by plunging into the Jordan. How we crave the passive (on our part) and the spectacular (on God's)!

But although there were times when God's people were to watch and do nothing (ask Jehoshaphat), there were others when God said, "Stop praying and start doing." This is the message we need today.

## Times to Stop Praying and Start Acting

Joshua was leading Israel into Canaan. The nation had defeated Jericho, but lost at Ai. Israel's panicked leaders fell prostrate and prayed. Nothing wrong with that, but what did God say? "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?" In brief God said, "Stop praying. Start acting. You have disobeyed. Correct the problem." Had Joshua insisted on continuing to pray when God said to do, Israel would have lost again. Do we ever substitute prayer for our nation or churches when there is obvious practical work that we should do?

Judah in Isaiah's day longed for revival. The nation prayed for it, but nothing happened. They wondered why.
[D]ay after day they seek me out;
they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask me for just decisions
and seem eager for God to come near them.
'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it'?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?'

They prayed, but no revival followed. When they asked why, God told Isaiah to denounce their sin. If they would rise from their knees and obey him in their everyday relationships and responsibilities, God would answer. They needed to loose the chains of injustice, share their food with the hungry, do away with malicious talk, etc. These may not sound as "spiritual" as prayer vigils and fasts. They have to do with human actions and human relationships, not spectacular divine displays. But these, and not prayer, were the keys which would unlock revival:

Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear.
You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.
Blessing for Judah would follow obedience, not more prayer and fasting.

We resist such counsel at our own peril. "Hear the word of Yahweh, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship Yahweh. This is what Yahweh Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place." (Notice that God does not say, "Start a 24 -hour prayer vigil," or "Go on a prolonged fast." He doesn't say, "Start praying to me," but "Start doing right to people.") "Do not trust in deceptive words and say, 'This is.the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh!' If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, . . . then I will let you live in this place. . . . But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless." These deceptive words suggested that Judah need not obey, but should instead continue to "worship." Unfortunately Judah ignored Jeremiah, and God sent Nebuchadnezzar to end their empty temple prayer meetings.

## Attempting to Give Back to God The Work He Gave Us

Does the same thing happen today? Do we ever pray when God tells us to act? Has any church ever tried to return to God the
responsibilities he has assigned to us? This, I suppose, would be the ultimate in "upward delegation."

For example, God commands us to evangelize. We invert that command and pray that he would do it-that he would somehow "open the hearts" of our neighbors while we say nothing to them. Perhaps we erect a church sign to inform passing sinners when we meet, but then fail to think up ways to creatively introduce them to Christ. There is nothing wrong with pleading for God's aid in our evangelism, but only if we plan to participate in the process. Or we "fulfill" our responsibilities to the sick and elderly by praying that God would comfort them, but ourselves neither call nor offer a meal. We pray that God would correct our nation's moral problems, yet write no protesting letters and watch the same videos as everybody else. We are commissioned to reach the world with the gospel, yet some churches tend to keep to themselves. God urges us to value our families and people and we chase things. Yet we pray for revival. What's wrong with this picture?

## Why Some People Prefer "Praying"

Why do we prefer prayer to action? One reason may be laziness. It is simply easier to open our mouths in windy prayer than to expend our lives in costly obedience. Actually building a house for a poor person is sweatier than praying that God house the needy. Finding out how best we can serve our neighbors, and then doing things for them that will open them to the gospel, exhausts us more profoundly than merely requesting that God speak to them, and then blindly plowing ahead with our Same Old Thing. Work is messier, too. When we struggle with people we make mistakes. We do things wrong, blunder up blind alleys, lose our patience, and drop the ball. We find ourselves needing to apologize and start over. We face criticism and ridicule. How much less traumatic and error-prone to instead intone orthodox prayers from our church buildings. We prefer prayer to obedience because of the toil of obedience.

A warning-good praying is also strenuous. Epaphras wrestled in prayer, and thus worked hard for the Asian churches. But while Epaphras worked hard at prayer he was surrounded by
those who worked hard at the work. The early church did not deceive itself into thinking prayer alone was the answer.

A second reason we prefer prayer to action is selfishness. Selfishness'means I pursue my perceived best interest. Christianity, the church, people, and ultimately God, all exist to fulfill and make me comfortable. And while, in Christian charity, I am willing to pray that God bless others, I cannot reasonably be expected to sacrifice myself to help bring that blessing about. Prayer is cheaper; obedience costs too much.

Third, perhaps an inadequate loathing of sin blunts our urgency to obey God. We reduce sin to a theological concept-the reason why Christ came-and quote verses on its nature and consequences. Sin becomes only an abstract idea, not a concrete choice and terrible habit. But to God sin is not a tome on our theological shelves. It is a stench, and stirs his wrath and judgment. And while through the blood of Christ God forgives sin, we must learn to loath it, fear it, and run the other way. The church cannot dawdle in iniquity-either wrong things we do or right things we don't—and expect God to bless simply because we ask him to. If revival is what we want, certainly we will plead for it. But we will also in fear and faith obey the God who grants it.

A fourth reason we prefer prayer to action is that some people don't understand how important are the things we do. They think that if humans contribute to a ministry, it will detract from the glory of God in the fruit it bears. But that is not true. Rather than "Get out of the way and let God work," we must learn to "Get on board and do what God is doing." Paul did not think it was either God or us-he meant it when he called his team "God's fellow workers."

## God Uses People

Certainly God is not limited to using humans when he wants to do something. We served as neither consultants nor engineers when he made the world. God is sovereign; he is free to work when and how he chooses. But frequently and meaningfully God nevertheless does use people to accomplish his will.

Christians understand that the Bible is the word of God. The whole was breathed out by God. And while that is true, there is not a word of it that did not pass through the mind and flow from the pen of a man as well. Paul (not God) was the one who was on the verge of wishing himself cursed and cut off from Christ; Jude the person who was eager to write about salvation but felt compelled to address a different matter; Luke the individual who thought it good to write a gospel account, and so researched and composed it. The Bible is one hundred percent the word of God, but it is simultaneously one hundred percent the word of man. When God determined that humanity should have a written record of his will, he did not supernaturally float it down from the skies. Human beings struggled $\ldots$. and thought . . . and wrote . . . and sometimes rewrote. Through the centuries God has preserved that word as people copied, hid, carried, and translated it. Though he does not need to, God often accomplishes his work through people.

The humanity of Jesus is as essential to evangelical Christology as is his deity. Jesus was a man. We must remember that "the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man . . . there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus . . . he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. . . ." God's salvation was not diluted by his using the man Jesus of Nazareth to accomplish it. On the contrary, salvation would have been impossible had that man not participated. Like the written word, the incarnate word is one hundred percent divine and one hundred percent human. Being human Christ could say, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." Eternal salvation is the work of God. But because Jesus is the savior it is also the work of a man-one who was like us in every way. God's glory is not diminished when he uses people-and their obedience and sacrifices-to accomplish his plan.

## Who Builds the Church?

By what means does the church grow today? Jesus said, " $I$ will build my church." The book of Acts begins: "In my former book, Theolophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach. . . ." This implies that Acts records what Jesus continued to do and to teach. But how does Jesus build his church? How does he continue to do and teach? Through people. Acts records some of their sailings . . . struggles . . . sermons . . . and sufferings. Paul told the Colossians, "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, which is the church. . . . I want you to know how much I am struggling for you. . . ." Acts says that Christ was building the Colossian church. Colossians says that Paul was building the Colossian church. How do these two fit together? Christ was building the church through Paul. God does his work through people. And Christ builds his church today as people obey him-choose not to get out of his way, but rather get on board and do what he is doing. No church is built without the evangelism, teaching, giving, serving, and labor of people . . . as they are motivated and empowered by the spirit of God. The church grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work, not as each part sits and waits for God to do his work. It is simultaneously the work of God and people.

The same with revival. Sure we need to pray for it. But we also need to work for it. Our work does not detract from God's work, or diminish his glory when the answer comes. God often does his work through people. So we need more calls for the church to quit the monastery and obey God in the marketplace. When we are busy practicing daily righteousness

Then [our] light will break forth like the dawn, and [our] healing will quickly appear. . . .
[We] will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.
Pentecost is not going to be repeated; there is no need to pray for that to happen. The church already stands "clothed with power from on high." We need more calls to take the tasks we have been given and fulfill them in the strength God provides.

## What Does God Want?

Christianity is not that complicated. Does the Almighty crave our self-denying ritual? The prophet ponders that question:

With what shall I come before Yahweh and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does Yahweh require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
Micah's conclusion is simple. God does not seek our prolonged prayers or extended fasts. He is not as impressed with showy display as he is with daily obedience. Similarly, the answer to the psalmist's question, "Yahweh, who may dwell in your sanctuary?" doesn't mention religious ritual, but instead discusses practical, daily righteousness. When people asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" he answered mundanely: "Donate your excess, act honestly, be content." Nothing spectacular or "religious" here. Yet God would bless if people obeyed.

How often do we say, "I'll pray for you," when what we need to say is, "Let me help you"? Prayer is not the end of our responsibility but the beginning: it opens the door for God to direct and strengthen us for our tasks. However one may assess her theology, Mother Theresa did more through her deeds to make Christianity and Christ respectable in non-Christian India than do the genuflections of thousands who may think more biblically but who do nothing. "Dear children, let us not love"-or seek revival, or attempt to win the lost-"with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

Doubtless our nation needs God's hand upon us. Certainly we should pray for that. But no less surely we need to be doing what God has commanded. We need to rise from our knees and go with
our feet, help with our hands, speak with our tongues, and embrace with our arms. Prayer is $a$ key to revival, but so is obedience. God answers, but he often answers through people. Perhaps his answer will include us. May we not be guilty of sitting and sighing, "I wish God would do something," while all the time ignoring the God who says, "I wish you would do something."

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# Do Justice, Love Mercy 

Combating tourism-based sexual exploitation<br>of children

Laurence GRAY

## Introduction

Lee is a fifteen-year-old girl lured by her aunt into prostitution. She was sold to a fifty-year-old American man for $\$ 400$ for four days. After that she was forced to go with a twenty-five-year-old Japanese man for $\$ 50$. Then the pimp brought her to sleep with a Chinese man far $\$ 30$. Finally she slept with a forty-year-old Frenchman. The Frenchman slept with her for a month at his rented house. After that she came to stay in an entertainment establishment again. Two days later she was freed through a police raid and sent to an organization.

Physically she was free, but her mind and spirit were still bound by her experience. In all probability true freedom will take much time and support. Linking children with opportunities to regain dignity is a ministry in itself. Challenging the principalities and powers that allow this type of exploitation to exist is the focus of this paper.

The Bible contains many examples of setting captives free. We need today to work toward this aim, while all the time realizing our limitation as broken people who are often captives ourselves. Galatians 5:1 states that Christ has set us free, and instructs us not to allow ourselves to become slaves again. To be a captive to anything
results in reduced potential. Some limitations, such as addiction, can be mitigated by a personal change of will or lifestyle. Others, such as poverty, are externally imposed and less easily remedied by the captive. God challenges us to fulfill our potential.

While it is possible to reflect dignity in adversity, captivity is not God's purpose for humanity. Nevertheless we see children in debt bondage and physical captivity through forced prostitution. Traffickers prey on children in villages, at markets, and on the street. Justice is often slow to act, as systems representing the poor never seem to catch up to the need. God tells us that there is a deceiver, a force working to diminish and destroy life. He appears as a snake in Genesis to tempt and distort. As we work to combat poverty and exploitation, and bring God's presence more fully into the brokenness of the world, we encounter this force of evil. As we work with others in this enterprise we must use the armor God gives to us, since our strength and will alone are not enough.

History provides examples of God's people bringing about change through striving for a different vision. Prophets have challenged the actions of ruling authorities. Leaders are called to account for their faithfulness and their care for the poor. Political success was not recognized if the most vulnerable had no voice in their favor. When the poor were not cared for, and laws absent or misused, God clearly called through the prophets for justice to be restored. The story of Jonah is but one example where a reluctant prophet was given an unpalatable message to tell the city of Nineveh that it needed to change its ways or be destroyed. Certainly Cambodia needs advocates who in the prophetic tradition speak for the defense of others-in this case for children who are exploited for pleasure and profit as tourism grows.

Speaking out can be effective, but if not planned wisely can cause further problems. We may be tempted to focus not so much on our message but on ourselves as messengers to gain credibility, respect, and praise. Jesus was tempted by the devil to perform miracles in the wilderness. He answered that people must not tempt the Lord their God. In order to balance opportunity and risk we need good council and prayer.

We are obligated to pray against exploitation. Joint prayer is an exercise in calling into being by faith an improved set of circumstances-"praying in the kingdom." Change does not always occur immediately before our eyes. The ending of slavery took hundreds of years, but it happened. More recently many people prayed for the ending of apartheid and for justice to come to South Africa. Many can petition governments or international bodies. This is needed especially when working on behalf of the poorest of the poor who have no voice of their own. Christians should be part of this process. Those who hold the Christian worldview are impelled to oppose oppression and injustice on both the spiritual and the political and social levels.

Christians believe that God has made all people in his image. Thus all have inherent dignity and the opportunity to know God. Sin is a barrier to this relationship, which was bridged by the death of Jesus who willingly gave himself for our sake. While Jesus' gift of reconciliation has given a new opportunity to relate with God, we are vulnerable to the influence opposing powers that seek to destroy and debase God's creation. Although we are often weak, we can be strengthened through God's love, and so exercise moral choice and oppose injustice practiced against others. Through our relationship with God our eyes will see and ears hear these things more keenly.

We also have promises from God on which we need to act. "Where two or three are gathered I am there." "Ask and it shall be given, seek and you will find." We need to own these promises, raise our voices to God in prayer, and act locally to the extent we can. As we do so God may call us to further action. A challenge to all is to listen for God's voice in a given situation. We may be called to be led rather than to lead, to change rather than control. This was the call to Peter-to allow himself to be led even to places to which he did not want to go. Prayer with others in humility and seeking God's grace in situations that cry out for intervention is something Christians can do through a personal relationship with their creator. A child being used as a tourism commodity traded for profit and pleasure is one such situation.

## Tourism

Cambodia attracted 270,000 visitors in 1999, a number predicted to triple in four years. Cambodia has much to offer with its proud heritage and famous Angkor temples. Recent history also attracts visitors to see this land that has emerged from the shadow of Year Zero. It is a new frontier with more excitement and mystery than those neighboring countries that have been on the tourist trail for decades.

Tourism also provides easy access to vulnerable children through the power and economic disparities fundamental to the "cheap third-world holiday-sun, surf and sex." This other side of Cambodia is promoted through word of mouth, Internet chat rooms, and sometimes publications. Thailand and the Philippines, wishing to mute their reputations as popular destinations for sex tourists, have taken legal moves to protect children. As these countries become more restricted, attention will turn elsewhere. Sex tourists are attracted by impoverished conditions that promote low cost of prostitution, wide availability, and perceived impunity from prosecution. Recent prosecutions and the jailing of an English schoolteacher have served notice that impunity is not assured. However in recent years Cambodia has been increasingly linked to child prostitution, and risks this reputation overshadowing the publicly promoted cultural heritage of the country as its principle association.

## The Effects of Sexual Violence on Children

Sexual violence can devastate young lives, as shown by this story of a sixteen-year-old girl. World Vision worked with her from 1999-2000.

At age thirteen Sokha allowed herself to be sold for $\$ 600$ to a foreigner to help her family pay for medical treatment. After that she practiced prostitution for two years until she became sick. When that happened, clients would not take her and she was thrown out on the street. We worked with her for over a year while she battled HIV. Sokha died at age sixteen, weighing less than 20 kilograms, with no family present. She touched others with her dignity in the
face of death. and through her a church became involved in visiting women at the Russian Hospital to bring support and the Good News.

The story shows the powerlessness of the victim, abuse of power by the offenders, humiliation, physical assault, and isolation in suffering. World Vision partnered with Physicians for Human Rights in 1996 to write a report on the psychosocial effects of sexual exploitation. This study identified the following effects on children:

Trauma. Sexual trauma is the violation of the most intimate and personal aspects of the self. One's own body becomes the setting in which the atrocities are perpetrated. For the young women living in the brothel the sexual violations take place inside the tiny cubical that is their only private living space. There is no safe haven for them.

Shame. A powerful psychological reaction linked to the sexual nature of the trauma. Personal value falls sometimes to the point of seeing no other option because they are worthless.

Betrayal of Trust. Approximately half the young women are sold to brothels by people that they know. This betrayal has long-lasting effects, and relationships develop slowly with children in recovery. Information is precious and sharing in it is earned.

Layers of Truth. The inaccuracy of personal stories suggests coping mechanisms that the girls may have used. Some girls constantly need to reinvent themselves, as they are given a new name and history every week by brothel owners who want to control them and prevent the detection of a missing girl.

Self-blame. Many girls blame their fate on themselves, assuming an exaggerated sense of their part in the events that led to their present circumstances.

Disruption in Normal Development. Young women are forced into a role that separates them from the community. They are not able to participate in many informal socialization activities that would prepare them for future roles as income earner, wife, and mother.

Separation from Family. Important relationships suffer. Many young women grieve loss of contact, particularly with siblings.

Grief and Depression. A sense of hopelessness develops at the loss of freedoms, relationships, and innocence.

Fear. Beatings and punishment from brothel owners are common. Young women are also fearful of contracting AIDS; however, they cannot refuse clients.

Captivity. Young women have endured captivity for weeks, months, and sometimes years. Initially they may fight the brothel owner's demands that they service clients. This results in their being locked in a room for a week, or being beaten until they yield. They lose any sense of control over their own fate.

Being a Good Daughter. In the Cambodian context this is a crucial factor. Many young women see themselves as being able to help their family survive through their prostitution. This gives context and meaning for their personal sacrifice.

These effects serve as a background for those who aid the recovery of survivors.

## Contributing Factors

World Vision undertook a joint study with the International Office of Migration in 1996 to understand the pattern of trafficking from Cambodia to Thailand. We found the following factors increase the risk to girls of being sold or trafficked:

> Poverty
> Lack of education
> Involvement of relatives
> Ease of deception by traffickers (in situations where people do not know about traffickers, or are too trusting)
> Lack of border control
> Lack of vocational options
> Community resignation to the existence of prostitution

These factors are not exceptional in many countries. World Vision works in different ways with a variety of actors in the best interests of children.

## What Can Be Done Against This Background?

Freedom from exploitation is upheld through such international instruments as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Countries where the rule of law is strong have mechanisms to address crimes of exploitation. These include not only the legal system but also medical and human services. Public debate enables the public to express its views; helps hold the police, judiciary, and government accountable; and encourages debate on the need for change.

World Vision Cambodia as a child-focused Christ-centered agency places advocacy as a core activity in working with the poor, seeking justice and promoting transformation. It both uses its own voice to speak up on issues adversely affecting children, and helps the poor and marginalized to speak for themselves.

## Child Sexual Exploitation and Tourism Research Project

Sexual exploitation clearly violates the rights of children. World Vision undertakes projects that work with child victims. World Vision is therefore witness to the resulting damage done to the children-physical (sexually transmitted diseases), psychological, and social (stigmatism by family and society). These in turn lead to unemployment, isolation, sickness, and even death.

As a result, World Vision initiated an investigation of the link between the tourist industry and sexual exploitation of children in Cambodia. The research was conducted jointly by universities, NGOs, and government ministries (including the Ministry of Tourism). The investigation was structured along the following lines: Aim: To reduce the incidence of child sexual exploitation in

Cambodia, and to promote mechanisms to protect children from sexual exploitation through tourism.

## Objectives:

- To raise awareness among Cambodian government ministries of the nature of the problem and how it can be tackled
- To raise awareness among children and their families of the nature and occurrence of the practice
- To reveal the need for cooperation between all sectors of the Cambodian government and civil society to work toward ending this practice.


## Activities:

- Research project organized by World Vision Cambodia, in partnership with the government of Cambodia, the Cambodian National Council for Children, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, and Vocational Training.
- Publication of the report "Child's Work, Adult's Play: Report of Research on Child Sex Tourism in Cambodia." This report was distributed among various government ministries in Cambodia, as well as embassies, industry, and NGOS.


## Participants:

Interviewees in Phnom Penh, Seam Riep, and Sihanoukville:
68 children (average age 15)
26 motorbike taxi drivers
32 government staff of Ministry of Tourism
14 government staff of Ministry of Social Affairs, Women`s Affairs, provincial police departments
5 NGO staff
32 tourist facility, e.g., hotel guest house staff
20 general public

## Who is Involved in Child Sexual Exploitation?

The Ministry of Tourism says that $65 \%$ of tourists to Cambodia in the year 2000 were men. Research conducted with the Ministry of Tourism and The Cambodian National Children's Council in three main tourist locations revealed the following information from children themselves.
$88 \%$ of children had been involved in providing sexual services for tourists. Information also came from twenty members of the general public who live close to entertainment establishments. They estimated that $42 \%$ of the girls were taken away from the facility by clients, $47 \%$ were left alone, and $9 \%$ were taken by pimps. It was estimated that $60 \%$ of the children who had contact with tourists were 14 to I8 years old, and $40 \%$ were 18 to 22 years old.

Twenty-two travel agents and tour operators in the three locations estimated that the main groupings of tourists were: those visiting for cultural tourism $32 \%$; for business $25 \%$; for official visits $20 \%$, for sex tourism $22 \%$.

According to the interviewees, the foreigners that contacted children for sexual intercourse were 45\% Chinese, 22\% French, 18\% American, 4\% Australian, and 36\% unknown Westerners.

Among the twenty-eight Ministry of Tourism officers interviewed, $78 \%$ said that they saw children going with male foreigners. The interviewees identified the major groups of foreigners that the children went with as follows: $18 \%$ American, $18 \%$ Japanese, $14 \%$ Chinese, $9 \%$ French, and $32 \%$ European white-skinned men.

The impact to date of the study has been:

- Increased Government response in training, regulation, and monitoring of tour guides.
- Formulation of Government regulations for tour guides and commitment to regulate tourist services.
- Increased publicity of the issue locally, regionally, and internationally; i.e., media coverage in Khmer language press and CNN.
- A workshop planned with government, NGOs, and business on the tourism industry's role in combating sexual exploitation of children.
- Commitment from some tour operators to be partners with the Government and NGOs in promoting child-safe tourism.
- The Ministry of Tourism presents the study at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific regional inter-governmental conference on prevention of sexual exploitation of children linked to tourism.
- Continued cooperation with the Royal Government of Cambodia in the implementation action of their five-year plan to combat the sexual exploitation of children.
- The research has been used by the Asia Development Bank in forming its poverty alleviation strategy.
- The British embassy has funded World Vision to work with the Ministry of Tourism for two years to strengthen its training of tour guides and monitor this issue.
Responses from the Government as a result of the July 2000 study and the subsequent workshop have included:
- Convening of a further planning workshop with government, NGOs, and business on the tourism industry's role in combating sexual exploitation of children
- Commitment from several tour operators to partner with the government and NGOs in promoting child-safe tourism
- Increased links with industry and NGOs
- A Ministry of Tourism presentation of the July 2000 study at a regional inter-governmental conference on prevention of sexual exploitation of children linked to tourism
- Inclusion of study findings and key recommendations in the Royal Government of Cambodia Report to the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Yokohama, December 2001.
- Continued cooperation by the Ministry of Tourism and NGOs with the Royal Government of Cambodia in the implementation of the five-year plan to combat the sexual exploitation of children
- Discussions with tour associations and businesses on selfregulation measures to enhance child protection.
-. At the request of the Ministry of Tourism, the Asian Development Bank has included building government and tourism industry capacity to respond to commercially sexually exploited children as part of its assistance to the Cambodian government's Socio-economic Development Plan.


## Conclusion

Sexual violence directed at children is unacceptable. It requires action at many levels. Tourism is growing; it involves all countries; visitors include both domestic and foreign visitors. Industry standards are clearly needed. Prosecution is required, regardless of
the nationality of the offender. The world's governments, with the support of United Nations agencies and international organizations, have the responsibility to ensure that children are protected from such crimes. Developing countries need support through bilateral and multilateral initiatives to respond to these issues as part of their efforts to build civil societies. Further, the tourist sector has the obligation to move away from practices that allow the exploitation of children and promote child safety. Initiatives must also involve child participation in communities to promote a safer world for children. Community leaders need to be rallied so that it is no longer acceptable for a girl to be traded, or that a rapist pay only financially for his actions.

Failure to act will mean that we fail children like Sokha. We leave them only few options and a short, painful life. Christians know that this is not right, and through God's grace believe things can improve. We need to be challenged by these circumstances and not indifferent to them. To take action will build opportunity for children. Those with influence, economic power, and the privilege of choice can greatly influence the lives of children in poor areas near borders and tourist destinations. Our actions must reflect the seriousness of this task.







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## Portrait of a Leader

> Russell H. BOWERS, Jr.

Pol Pot, Mother Teresa, Hun Sen, Heng Cheng, George Bush, Yassir Arafat, Gautama Buddha, Osama bin Laden. What do all these people have in common?
They are leaders. For good or for ill, with evil intent or noble, they have stood at the front and rallied compatriots to follow. The fortunes of millions have been shaped by these few.

A good leader is beyond price. Where would people be without his or her inspiration, courage, determination, and wisdom? Would not their hopes have evaporated? By contrast, an evil leader can cause unspeakable woe or embarrassment to his followers. Examples are too many and too painful to recite.

How can we find the one and avoid the other? How can we become the one and not the other? In Cambodia where the church is growing at warp speed, we labor to train a new generation of leaders. For what shall we aim? What qualities should we seek to find and produce?

This article cannot fully answer those questions. But let me suggest five characteristics for starters. These qualities may be useful for many kinds of leaders. But particularly in the church, a good leader is someone who:

- follows
- serves
- builds
- leads
- passes on the baton.


## A Good Leader Follows

It may seem an inversion to talk about a leader being a follower. Leaders, we are told. stand at the front, point the way, and issue commands. But the best leaders started out as good followers. How can a leader know how the chain of command works unless he has experience in the lower links of that chain?

Therefore the best leaders have started low. They have learned how to obey directions before they are entrusted with the responsibility of giving them.

For example, early in his ministry Jesus chose twelve men who would lead the church when he was gone. He called them "apostles"-a word signifying "those authorized to act in the sender's name." They were not volunteers but draftees, and Jesus was going to send them out to preach and cast out demons. So this was a responsible calling. But what was the first part of their job? Mark 3:14 reads. "He appointed twelve-naming them apostles-that they might be with him...." The first part of their call as leaders was simply to be with Jesus. They watched him. listened to him, observed his character. and learned his objectives and principles of ministry. Yes, they were going to lead, and in time they did. But their first task was to follow. Good Christian leaders were once good followers.

Joshua was a great leader. He commanded Israel in her campaign to conquer Canaan. But for long years before he served as leader he served as follower and aide to Moses. ${ }^{1}$ Before becoming a great prophet Elisha "poured water on the hands of Elijah." Timothy was fully aware of Paul's teaching and doctrine, ${ }^{3}$ and had served the

[^9]great apostle as a son with his father. ${ }^{4}$ That is why later he led so well.

Not only were biblical leaders good followers before they started to lead, they continued to be good followers while they led. Paul urged the Corinthians, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." Paul was still following-day by day and hour by hour-the example of Christ. His following made him an effective leader. The minute we stop following Christ is the minute we stop effectively leading.

So good biblical leaders are good followers, as have been many secular business, political, and military chiefs.

How can we apply this principle? First, we ourselves should not rush into leadership. A wiser attitude is that of Solomon and Jeremiah. ${ }^{6}$ Leadership is a great responsibility; those who point the way (and especially teach) will be judged more strictly. ${ }^{7}$

Second, we should therefore devote much energy to our own discipleship, preparation, and learning. Time spent in Bible studyboth formal and personal-is an investment, not a luxury. "It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way." ${ }^{\prime \prime}$ Zeal without knowledge was Israel's problem; hence she missed her messiah. ${ }^{9}$ True prophets excoriated their false counterparts who rushed to speak without stopping to hear Yahweh's council. ${ }^{10} \mathrm{~A}$ hurried leader may plunge into battle only to discover that he has engaged the wrong enemy or is using inappropriate weapons and tactics. Further, a theological degree does not mean that its owner can relax and coast through serving and sermonizing. Following, learning, and growing are lifelong pursuits; it may thus be wise to choose a ministry where peers can continuously evaluate and correct us.
${ }^{4}$ Phil 2:22.
${ }^{5} 1$ Cor 11:1.
${ }^{6} 1$ Ki 3:7; Jer 1:6.
'Jas 3:1.
${ }^{8}$ Prov 19:2.
${ }^{9}$ Rom 10:2.
${ }^{10}$ e.g., Jer 23:16-32.

Third, we should not be too quick to promote others to leadership. Hence the wamings in the pastorals against new converts and hasty ordinations. ${ }^{11}$ In our rapidly-growing Cambodian churches and NGOs we scrounge and pray for leaders, but before we appoint them let us be sure they are true followers of Jesus Christ and accomplished in whatever technical and people skills the position we envision requires. Ecclesiastical and organizational horror stories abound of aspiring young leaders who have assumed major responsibilities too quickly, only to succumb to pride, corruption, or temptation. "They must first be tested" 12 is a wise caution for all kinds of positions. It is not enough that a candidate be enthusiastic, personable, liked, and able to repeat catch phrases. We must also determine whether he or she is a skilled and proven follower.

## A Good Leader Serves

There has never been a stronger or more deserving leader than Jesus. He was always right. He is Immanuel-God with usand hence savior and lord. He is worthy not only of obedience but also of worship, which we should render to no other. But how did Jesus lead? Did he parade his authority, forcing his subordinates to bow the knee and pamper him? Did he use his position to enrich himself? No. Jesus' leadership was characterized by service. In a key verse of Mark Jesus explained why he had come-" "not ... to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."13 Jesus was and is the world's greatest and most deserving leader. But as leader he came to serve, and to serve in the most profound wayby giving his life. If we wish to follow his example, then we will lead by serving, not by exploiting our positions to make ourselves comfortable, powerful, or rich.

A leader who ignores this counsel may find himself without followers. That is what happened to Rehoboam. At the beginning of his reign Rehoboam's prospective subjects petitioned him for relief

[^10]from the heavy tax burden his father had imposed. The elders counseled, "If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants." But Rehoboam rejected that sage advice and heeded the young men who urged that he show the people who was boss. The result? He lost ten of the twelve tribes he should have ruled. ${ }^{14}$ Heavyhanded leaders tend to lose their followers-certainly in their affections, often in their allegiance.

Paul, by contrast, led by serving, as did his Lord whom he followed. Instead of polishing his own reputation vis-à-vis Apollos he taught that both were merely servants, of no importance when compared with God, and not competing with but rather complementing one another. ${ }^{15}$ As a servant he was willing to suffer for the church, which he often did. ${ }^{16}$ In this way he became a great leader whom Christians still respect and follow today.

Similarly, if we today wish to be remembered as Pauls and not as Rehoboams, we must recall and practice Jesus' advice-"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." ${ }^{17}$

## A Good Leader Builds

Some leaders think that the best way they can use their position is to secure their own wealth, power, and reputation. Their job is certainly not to help others. They are interested in the welfare or advancement of constituents and subordinates only to the extent that these are encouraged to continue to support them. If another leader in the organization begins to rise in power or popularity, he or she is considered a threat that must be put down.

Leaders who think this way are consequently afraid of allowing those who work under them to succeed. They don't want associates to acquire skills they themselves lack, or to be seen too

[^11]often in highly visible ministries. They fear that if others gain too many skills or too much recognition, their own status will be threatened. Nervous self-seekers then harass, publicly disgrace, demote, or fire rising stars. They may assign them to peripheral posts, or to jobs impossible to accomplish and certain to lead to criticism. Some sink to making scandalous innuendos or threats, or to inflicting physical harm.

By contrast, great leaders build their subordinates up and rejoice when they succeed.

Ephesians 4:11-16 tells why Christ gives spiritual gifts to individuals. It is not to make the recipients proud or powerful. No, spiritual gifts are given "to prepare God's people for works of service" (v. 12). My giftedness is not so that people will think I am great, but to equip me to help others so that they will be able to serve. A good leader does not try to do everything himself so that he keeps all the power and no one else develops ministry skills. Rather, a good leader works to build others up-to empower and enable them-and rejoices when they succeed. It is only when everybody in the church is working-not just the pastor-that "the body of Christ [is] built up" and "we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature" (v. 13).

So a good church leader continually asks himself, "Am I trying to do everything myself and to limit the opportunities of others so that all power remains with me? Or am I working to build others up so that they also may succeed?" Do we show others how to study the Bible for themselves? Do we show others how to care for the church's finances so that they are wisely spent and accounted for in an honest, open manner? Do we teach others how to teach and preach, and give them opportunities to do so? These are things that good leaders do-they build others up so that they can succeed.

Some leaders are afraid to do this because they fear that in time their disciples will do better than they themselves, and hence become more powerful and better known. It is true; that may happen. But that is O.K. The disciples of John the Baptist became jealous for John when Jesus started his ministry, because people were leaving John and following Jesus. But John replied, "He must become greater;

I must become less. ${ }^{118}$ Andrew brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus, ${ }^{19}$ and soon Peter was better known than Andrew. When Saul of Tarsus came to faith, the early church thought his conversion was a ruse. But Barnabas believed Saul and introduced him to the church. ${ }^{20}$ Before long Saul-the Apostle Paul-became stronger and better known than Barnabas. But if our love is for Jesus, and our deepest desire that he be honored and known, then it should be O.K. with us if God uses those we train even more than he uses us. After all, ministry is about the success of the church and the honor of Jesus' name, not our success and the honor of our name.

In the nineteenth century a nervous Sunday School teacher in the United States visited a shoe store to share the gospel with one of its salesmen. Most of us do not know the name of that Sunday School teacher, but many have heard of the shoe salesman. His name was Dwight L. Moody, and God used him as a great evangelist. Today a school, a radio ministry, and a publishing house bear his name. The follower surpassed the leader, but I'm sure that nervous Sunday School teacher thinks that is just fine.

We must conclude, therefore, that a good Christian leader is someone who does not focus on protecting or promoting himself. Rather he edifies others so that they can succeed.

## A Good Leader Leads

So far we have said that a leader is someone who follows, who serves, and who builds others. If that were all that the Bible says on this subject, we might conclude that a leader should never be strong or decisive. If a leader is a good follower, and one who serves and builds up others, then is it ever right that he should stand at the front and give bold, firm directions?

The answer to that question is an enthusiastic "Yes!" While it is true that a Christian leader, like Jesus, seeks to serve rather than be served, and, like Paul, to build up others' ministries rather than

[^12]focusing attention on himself, that does not mean that he does not act decisively. On the contrary, by definition a leader is someone who leads! He takes the initiative, points the way, and warns of dangers. He does not sit back and wait for others, or even for God, to do something. A good leader serves by leading.

Sometimes people bear the title of leader, but leave the actual work of leading to others. For example, Saul was Israel's first king. As king he was Israel's leader. So when the giant Goliath challenged Israel to battle, Saul should have been the one to accept that challenge. Rather than sitting in his tent with the title of leader, he should have stood up in God's strength and led. Instead it was the shepherd lad David who, although he had no title, stood strong in God's strength and led Israel that fateful day against her enemy. It was Saul's own fault that when the army returned from battle the women who came out to meet them celebrated David more than they did the king by singing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands!"

This was not the first time that Saul, who bore the title of king and leader, failed to actually lead. In 1 Samuel 14:1 Saul's son Jonathan took the initiative to trust God and lead in an attack against Israel's enemies. Verse 2 shows us what the king was doing-sitting under a pomegranate tree with his six hundred men. Later in chapter 15 he let the people talk him into disobeying the LORD's commandhe didn't take a stand and lead against their wishes. It is no wonder then that Saul's kingship did not last, and God found someone else who would lead his people as he should.

Leading means we will sometimes have to take a strong stand, and sometimes a lonely stand. Sometimes others may be afraid or asleep or ignorant, and be walking down the wrong path. That is when a leader stands tall and speaks strongly about what should be done, even if what he advocates is unpopular. He does this not to build his own status, but for the sake of the truth. Elijah was a strong leader who stood alone against Jezebel's four hundred prophets of Baal. He did this not for himself but for the sake of the truth. Jeremiah and other Old Testament prophets often took unpopular stands. Paul opposed Peter to his face in Galatians 2. He did this not to enhance his power or reputation at Peter's expense, but simply
because Peter was wrong. Peter needed to be corrected before he led a large segment of the church into error.

So even though a good leader first follows, and does not deprive others of training or opportunities in order to keep everybody's attention on himself, at times he serves them best by taking a strong stand to show them the way to go. A good leader serves by leading.

Because a leader has to actually lead his people, he must first be certain of the direction to take. That is why he must first have been a good follower. Leaders have to lead, but if they are unsure where they are going because they are not closely following the Lord, they may lead their flocks into disaster. That is what Jesus was talking about when he said of the Pharisees, "Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit. ${ }^{י 21}$ The Pharisees were not following the Lord. So although they were doing their job as leaders to lead, they did not know where they should be going and led their flocks into a pit. A good leader knows the way he should be going, and then boldly strikes out and leads his people down that path.

## A Good Leader Passes On the Baton

Footraces are popular athletic events. Runners crouch behind the starting line, and when the gun is fired all take off for the finish line. Many races are individual events. Each racer in an individual event is his own "team"-how she does and whether she wins depends solely upon herself. She has no teammates. But other races are relays. A relay team may consist of four members. As the race is ready to start, an official gives the first member of each team a small stick or baton to carry. When the gun is fired, this first member runs around the track carrying this baton. Then as each returns to the starting point the second member of his team is waiting. This second member starts to run alongside the first, and the first hands over the baton to him. The first member, having completed his lap, drops out and the second carries the baton and runs around the track. As he completes his circuit and approaches the starting line the third member

[^13]of the team is waiting. Again the baton must be handed off, and the second retires and the third takes over. This process continues until all team members have run with the baton around the course. The winner of the race is not any individual, but the team that runs together the best and can execute smooth and efficient handovers of the baton. If any individual team member does not work well with the othersracing alongside the one in front to take the baton from him,' and making sure he firmly places the baton in the grasp of the one who follows him-his team will not win. Even if that individual runs the fastest lap of all the runners in that race, if he does not take and hand over the baton efficiently, his team will lose. A relay race is not about individual performance but about team performance.

Christian leadership is like that. We are not in leadership to draw attention to how well we lead, or evangelize, or teach, or preach. We are part of a team where we are called upon to do our part as best we can, and then hand on the baton to someone else.

Christian ministry started with Jesus. When the time came for him to finish his ministry by dying for us, being raised, and returning to heaven, he passed on the baton of ministry to his apostles. He told them, "Now I am going to him who sent me, . . . [and] you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." ${ }^{22}$ Later he said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. ${ }^{{ }^{2} 3}$ Jesus was leaving; he was handing over his ministry to them; and he would send the Holy Spirit to enable them to fulfill it.

So the apostles took over where Jesus personally had stopped. The New Testament talks about Jesus' apostles laying the foundation of the church. ${ }^{24}$ But the apostles did not minister forever, though some of them did well and their ministries started the church. The time came when they had to hand over their work to others. Paul, for example, was personally commissioned by Christ, did his job well,

[^14]and then handed over his work to Timothy. Paul gave important instructions to his follower by commanding, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." ${ }^{25}$ Timothy was to take the baton from Paul, run his own lap, and then pass the baton on "to reliable men" who would run their laps and then "be qualified to teach others." Christian ministry is not an individual race, designed to draw attention to individual stars or heros. It is a relay race where we take over message and commission first given to others, and after running our brief lap find someone to whom we can entrust the work.

As leaders, then, we should be always on the lookout for a few good people with whom we can invest extra energy so that some day they can take over smoothly and run well. Just as a relay race cannot be won if one team drops the baton or does not hand it over smoothly, so our Christian ministries will suffer if we do not have people trained and ready to take over when we move on.

Because Jesus knew he would soon be crucified and leave this earth, he spent much time in the latter part of his ministry training his disciples. After Peter came to the conclusion that Jesus was Israel's messiah, Jesus "began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer. . . .2 ${ }^{26}$ It seems he spent more time with them and a smaller percentage with the crowds. Instead of doing all the preaching himself he sent out the Twelve, and later seventy others, to preach and teach. Rather than standing up himself and teaching, he gave others the opportunity to learn the skill, even though he could have done it better. He was preparing them to take the baton.

So if we are to be good leaders, not only must we do our own job well, we must constantly be training another to take our place. Are you doing this? Do you have someone with whom you meet for study and prayer? Do you take others with you as you minister, so that they can observe . . . and then share . . . and then take over?

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## How God Turned my Mourning into Dancing

Noren Vann Kim (Known as Tay Khonnang)

As I look back on my life, I can see God's divine intervention rescuing me from despair and disaster again and again. Reflecting on David's words in Psalm 30:11, I have come to view my life thus far exactly as he described-surely God has turned my mourning into dancing!

When I was very small, I once fell into a river and almost drowned, but God gave me wisdom to keep pushing with my feet against the bottom, propelling myself to the surface for periodic breaths. Then God sent some ducks to paddle near me and attract the attention of people on the bridge. By the grace of God, one of my relatives saw me bobbing up and down, and rushed to rescue me.

I never knew my father, because he died when I was six months old. But I was very close to my mother. Then, when I was eight years old, she died too. At the moment she was struggling to draw her final breath, I lay asleep near her and saw a vision of two ugly monkeys carrying my mom away in her hammock. I saw myself running after the monkeys, crying and begging them to bring her back. As I ran, I saw deep pits filled with millions of ugly monkeys on the right and left. But at the moment the monkeys carrying my mom disappeared into the darkness, her voice suddenly rang out, warning me: "Stop! Don't try to follow me! Go back, or you will fall into the pit."

When I awoke, my relatives rushed my mom to the hospital, but it was too late. My grandma said she was dead, and they buried her body in the ground. My grief was so great that I could not even cry. But I believe that God may have used that vision of hell to prepare me for salvation later in life.

As I was growing up, I was fascinated by the many traditional poems and stories my mother and grandmother taught me. My grandma especially loved to attend traditional drama performances, and she always invited me to go along with her. I was equally enthralled by the lavish murals of the story of the Buddha's life that graced the walls of the local temple. And in school, I learned other traditional art forms, like classical dancing and ancient art songs.

After my mother's death, my grandmother took care of me. She was very kind, and I loved her very much. But when I was thirteen, my grandmother died. Once again, death separated me from the one I loved.

After that, no one encouraged my artistic interests. I came under the strict authority of my aunt, and she treated me more like a slave than a close relative. I did her housework, and rolled cigarettes many hours of the day and night for her family business, while struggling to find time to do my schoolwork and get some sleep.

As soon as I was old enough to make my own decisions, I left my aunt's home in Siem Riep to live with my older brother and finish high school in Phnom Penh. But about that same time my brother married. After that, he didn't have much time to spend with me, and his new wife despised me.

That was when I decided that I could take care of myself and didn't need anybody else. I began to look for a way to become selfsupporting, passing the exam to attend teacher training school. After graduation, I accepted a teaching position in Kompot, where I met and married my husband Saline in 1967. We were very happy together and had three beautiful children-a son, Salina, and two daughters, Lasmy and Sovann.

By 1970, the war in Southeast Asia began spilling over into neutral Cambodia. Because of that, we eventually moved our family from Kompot to Phnom Penh.

One day in December 1974, my friend Var invited me to visit a Christian church with her. At first I asked, "What for?" But then she told me about the law of Jesus Christ: "When you give alms, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." Those words sounded so good to me. I did not like the way some people gave money publicly at the temple just to show off and earn merit. The way of Jesus sounded so much better. And so I agreed to go to church with her.

Var and I arrived at the church late and slipped in to sit on the back row. When the congregation raised their hands to praise God, we thought they looked so funny. We pointed and giggled behind their backs. But when the preacher explained that Jesus Christ is the One True God, and asked anyone who wanted to receive Him as Savior and Lord to come forward, I was the first one to hurry to the front of the church, drawn by some strange power.

When I explained to my husband what I had done, he said, "That is good." But to my knowledge, he himself never trusted in Jesus for his own salvation. Every Sunday after that first one, I took my children to the church to learn about Jesus. But while they were being well taken care of there, I went to the market to do my shopping.

No one ever gave me a Bible, and since I did not go to learn the Bible at church, my knowledge about God was very limited. But my children learned a lot. They used to "play church" at home, acting out Bible stories or playing the parts of the preacher or even God Himself. As I went about my work, I learned from them.

In April 1975, the Khmer Rough soldiers entered Phnom Penh, killing government personnel and anyone who was educated, rich, or had affiliations with the West. Then they ordered anyone left alive in the city to evacuate to the countryside.

My husband was a captain in the Cambodian government army. When he came home on the day of the invasion, he gathered all the pieces of his uniform and any photos or documents that might incriminate him, and dumped them into a nearby pond. Then he concealed our family photo albums in the rafters and packed a bicycle with some of our belongings. We locked the door of our house and left for the countryside with our two oldest children. The youngest
daughter, Sovann, was away visiting relatives. I never saw her or those relatives ever again.

Through the streets of Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge soldiers were herding people like animals, beating some, and shooting others. As we walked along the roads leading out of town, we saw dead bodies everywhere. One dead man was lying right in the middle of the road. We passed by quickly and kept walking. But suddenly we heard our daughter Lasmy's tearful voice behind us: "Uncle, get up! Come on, everyone is leaving you. This is not the time to sleep." I cried out to her, "Don't call out to this man anymore. He's dead!" Sheer terror crossed Lasmy's face and she began to scream, "I don't want to die! I don't want to die!" My husband ran to scoop her up in his arms. She clung to her father, continuing to sob. As he turned back to me, I saw tears streaming down his face too. That was the first time I had ever seen my husband cry.

We were steadily driven further and further from the city, until we finally reached a work camp in the jungle. There we were given the job of building our own hut before reporting for work in the rice fields. Fortunately we had packed tools, medicines, rice, and canned or dried food to last for a while. But before we were able to use them all, the Khmer Rouge leaders confiscated most of what we had brought.

Later we were transferred to another camp at Bamboo Mountain. Again, we had to build our own hut. Our job at this camp was to cut bamboo, day in and day out. Food allowances were strict and work hours were long. Even the children were made to work. It was here that we all began to be sick, especially my son, Salina.

Later still, we were sent to another camp in the deep jungles of Posaht. On the way, my son Salina became so weak that he could no longer walk. He just sat down dejectedly in the middle of the road. My husband and I were weak too, and loaded down with supplies, so it would have been difficult for us to carry him. Trying to encourage him to walk on his own, my husband told me to keep walking around the bend in the road to see if that would motivate him to get up and try to overtake us. But Salina could not.

Lasmy lingered anxiously at the bend in the road, calling out to her brother, "Please get up! They are leaving you!" and then to us, "Wait, he can't get up. Stop walking!" When we realized he was helpless, we went back to get him, and my husband added him to his already heavy load.

When we arrived at Posaht, it was the same story-build your own hut before reporting to work in the fields. And every day we saw the same gruesome sight-dead people being carried out of their huts and buried in the jungle. We had not been there long before the Khmer Rouge leaders transferred my husband to a different camp.

During that time, a certain wild berry became a symbol of God's faithfulness to me. When I worked in the jungles of Posaht, those berry bushes grew along the path to the fields. Every morning, as I walked to work having had no breakfast, I searched for fruit on these bushes. Each day, I always found one, and only one-a daily vitamin that helped to keep me alive. .

Even so, twice I became so sick that I had to go to the camp hospital, where most people just went to die. While I recuperated there, my children sat next to me, cheering me with stories about how wonderful our life used to be in Phnom Penh. Each time I left the hospital, the only way I could walk was by leaning on two sticks.

About six months after he first left, my husband returned to visit us. He was distressed to see all three of us looking so skinny and weak. During the two weeks he stayed, he planted a vegetable garden for us, using seeds he had brought with him. He also brought many other useful supplies, especially a mineral to be used in making medicines. At that time he begged me to try to escape with him to Thailand, but I said that was impossible, since all three of us were too weak to travel. Then the time came for him to go back to his camp, and the three of us were left alone again.

It was about June 1976 when my son Salina became sick again with diarrhea. After suffering for many days and becoming weaker and weaker, it surprised me when he started to speak very grown-up words to me. "Mother," he said," "I just cannot live in this corrupted world anymore. The wicked become stronger, and the
innocent become weaker. Do you mind if I go to heaven now to be with my Lord Jesus Christ?"

I did not have enough knowledge of the Bible to know what he was talking about. But I replied, "Of course, son, if that will make you happy. Here, eat a little of this corn to please your mouth one last time, and then you may go."

Salina gratefully received the corn from my hand, ate three kernels, and then turned his face to the wall and slept. But he never woke up. In the morning his small body was carried out and buried in the jungle.

One week later, Lasmy succumbed to malaria. But her death was so very different. As the end drew near, she was filled with panic at the prospect of dying. Her earlier experience with the dead man on the road and the loss of her brother a few days before returned to haunt her. She struggled helplessly to stay alive, but she could not make it. The next morning, another small body was carried out and buried in the jungle.

Now I really was alone. But somehow I sensed that God was there too. Only I was very disappointed and angry with Him. I often criod out to Him with tears: "Are your angels blind? Where were they when we needed them? Why do you allow all the good people to die and the evil people to live?" My grief and loneliness, added to my physical suffering, were almost too heavy to bear.

During the next few months, I myself came near to death many times. Several times, I had malaria-raging fevers interspersed with teeth-chattering chills. But whenever I had a little strength, the leaders made me get up and work, weeding the corn. In that time, I was conscious of God's mercy in a special way. As I worked in the cornfield, whenever I had chills, God sent the sun to warm me. When I had fever, He sent the cloud to cover the sun. This happened every day for about six months while I was so sick. As I thought about it, I wondered who was showing that kindness to me. Maybe God's angels were there after all.

Later, when the Khmer Rouge leaders made me carry heavy burdens while hobbling with my sticks, I became blind too. But I made medicine for my eyes by mixing the mineral my husband had
brought to me with pulverized bark from a special tree. After just three days, I was healed! Again, God provided what I needed.

Not all of the Khmer Rouge leaders were totally wicked. One of them noticed that I worked faithfully and honestly to perform my responsibilities, even when I was sick. Because of this, he respected me and chose me to work in the camp stockroom. In this position, I was given extra food to eat, and my body began to be strong again.

About a year and a half after his first visit, my husband returned for the second time to find only me still alive. With tears, he begged me to show him the graves of our children. But I said, "Oh, my husband, their lives are over now. Don't live in the past. You must move forward to your future."

Then we embraced each other and cried and talked for a long time, while sitting under a tree in the watermelon field. The moon was full that night. I had never felt as close to him as I did in that moment. Again, he begged me to run away with him to Thailand. But I told him that, even though the children were gone, I myself would slow him down, causing us both to be caught. I encouraged him to get to Thailand by himself, and then he could find a way to rescue me. When we said goodbye, it was for the last time. I never saw my husband again, and to this day I do not know if he is dead or alive.

After my husband left, the leaders began to send me from one camp to the other to work in the fields, according to the need of each season. Again, I was made to work very hard and given very little food-only rice and salt.

One day as I walked along the edge of the field in the rain, I sang a beautiful art song I remembered from my childhood. The words went something like this: "I look far across the fields, straining to see the future, but only the fields are clear." Then I prayed, "Oh, God! When will all of this heartache end?" I heard a gentle voice inside of me saying, "Be patient and wait. Things will change."

I reasoned within myself, "That's surely true. Things do change from generation to generation. Sun always follows the rain, just like my grandma taught me." From that day, I buried all my
bitterness deep inside my heart. No matter what happened to me, I wore my happy face and waited with peace for my future to come.

After the harvest was over that year, the leaders sent me to dig the reservoir. In all the other camps where I had lived, most of those who died had died from starvation. But at this camp, I saw many people murdered because of the whims of the leaders. Another disturbing experience was seeing even the little children working like slaves under the hot sun. Whenever I saw them, I was so thankful that my children were already dead and did not have to suffer as they did.

In January 1979, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and drove the Khmer Rouge out of Phnom Penh. While fleeing from the approaching enemy, many Khmer Rouge leaders killed the workers in the camps as their final act of power over them. Most of the children who worked in our camp were killed, because they were orphans. But, by the grace of God, I was spared. However, it wasn't until April of that year that the Vietnamese soldiers reached our area to free the rest of us from our bondage. Most camps started with hundreds of people and ended with only one or two dozen still alive.

As the Khmer Rouge leaders fled deeper into the jungle to escape the approaching Vietnamese, we workers grabbed our few belongings, looted the stockroom, and ran in the opposite direction toward the main road to greet the Vietnamese troops. After taking from us anything of value, the Vietnamese soldiers released us to go wherever we wanted. But they warned us not to follow the road to Thailand, because it was heavily mined and still infested with Khmer Rouge troops.

Our group walked barefooted for twenty-eight days to reach Phnom Penh, living on the food we had brought. At first, I drew strength by nursing my newfound hope that once I reached home I might find my husband and youngest daughter waiting for me. But scenes of destruction greeted me everywhere, and the tales of woe told by those I met along the way began to erode my hope. By the time I was within a few hours of Phnom Penh, I almost decided to stop there and work with the farmers. But then I met a few teenage
orphans who had no way to feed themselves. So I changed my mind and decided to take them to Phnom Penh and help them find work.

I left the orphans with friends, and went to Phnom Penh to search for jobs. But the first place I wanted to visit was my own home. On the way, I saw books from a looted bookstore strewn in the street. It had been years since I had seen a book, so I salvaged a basket lying in the road and filled it with all the books it would hold. As I walked through the streets with the basket on my head, I saw that the Vietnamese already inhabited the nicest houses. Refugee squatters had claimed many of the less desirable houses or apartments. But the houses that were broken and unusable were empty, with the doors standing open.

I reached into my pocket and pulled out my house key that I had managed to keep all these years living in the jungle. And then I stood in front of my own house. I saw that my door stood wide open too. I walked inside with the key still in my hand. None of our belongings remained in the house. My eyes looked anxiously toward the rafters where our photo albums had been hidden, but the ceiling was missing and I could clearly see only the exposed beams there. No one I knew was anywhere around. There was no note from my husband posted there either. My hope evaporated again.

I went back outside and squatted down to rest near the street. A little boy about the age of my son who had died ran over to me and said, "Oh, Auntie, are those books in your basket?" I said, "Yes, they are." "Would you allow me to have just one of them?" "Of course. Take three or four," I replied. "Really? Three or four?" he questioned uncertainly. "Yes, really." And so he chose three or four and ran happily away with his treasures. In a little while he returned. "Auntie, where will you sleep tonight?" I answered, "Probably right here by the side of the street." Then he said, "My mother said to invite you to sleep at our apartment."

And so I went with him to his home. His mother met us at the door and greeted me so warmly. But when I walked into the house, I saw all the things which had been taken out of my house-the dining table and chairs, the sofa, the sewing machine, and many other items. When they opened the door of the bedroom where I was to
spend the night, I saw my husband's and my son's clothes hanging there. Disguising my pain, I smiled and thanked them for their kindness. Then I cried myself to sleep.

The next morning at the river port, I found jobs for myself and for the orphans. Then I went back to the countryside to get them. They were strong boys, so their jobs were to carry heavy sacks of supplies onto and off of the boats. My job was to tend the mint garden.

Later, one of the women leaders on the river port staff asked me to run for the position of women's manager. She said that she had observed that I was not a troublemaker. I did not want to become a leader, but finally she persuaded me to run for the election. I was chosen to be the manager of the female river port workers.

But before long, the manager of the male workers came back from a staff meeting with a command for me. He said that I was supposed to make a list of any women working at the river port who had Chinese ancestry. At first I argued with him, telling him that he should make the list, since he had received the command personally. But he would not agree.

After he left, I thought to myself, "Now the killing will start again.-If I•make this list, I must put my name at the top of the list, since my grandfather was Chinese. Then I will die along with the rest. But if I refuse to make the list according to the command, then I will die also." That was when I decided to try to escape to Thailand. At least that way, I had a small chance of making it out alive.

But how could I do it? I did not know the way. I did not have any money, since the river port paid my salary in rice rations. And so, I decided to talk to God about it. Looking up to heaven, I said, "Lord Jesus, if you are really there, please help me."

Pretty soon, a man came to ask my help finding his wife in a refugee camp in Thailand. He said he knew the way across the border. Would I come with him? That's how God sent my guide. I asked him for five days to prepare, but he said he could only give me three. I told him I would try to be ready.

I decided to talk to God again. "Lord Jesus, if you are really there," I said, "please give me money within the next three days. I
don't want to be greedy. Just give me the amount I need to make the trip."

The next day another man came to see me, offering to buy some of my belongings. I already had in my mind an amount that seemed fair to me, but when he offered me twice that amount and offered to pay me in gold, I was overwhelmed. And not only that, but that very month, the river port began to pay our salary in currency instead of in rice! So that was the way God provided my money.

So when my guide came to get me on the third day, I was ready. We knew that out in the countryside, there were still three military factions competing for control-the new Vietnamese army, the old Cambodian government army, and the Khmer Rouge troops. But as we made our way on foot across the countryside, everywhere we stayed miraculously had peace. The places we had just left had fighting.

Finally we reached the border, but the last portion of the journey was very dangerous. Under cover of darkness, we had to pass through a dense jungle where there might be land mines or Khmer Rouge soldiers hiding. My guide was escorting other people across the border in addition to myself. As he led our group into the jungle, a local resident came from behind us. "Stop! Don't go that way or you will run into the Khmer Rouge headquarters!" And so, God rescued us again from danger.

Our group quickly changed direction and began to move through the tangled vegetation. At first, my guide was helping me to find my way, but then he went to help a grandmother with a little baby. I was night blind and, within a few minutes, I realized that I was lost from the group. Stumbling along trying to find them, I kept bumping into trees and falling into holes. But I was afraid to call out to them, in case the Khmer Rouge were close by.

Then I stopped to catch my breath and consider what to do. "Lord Jesus," I prayed silently in my heart. "If you are the One True God, please save me!" Almost immediately, I saw a small light about the size of my thumb in front of me. I got up and began to follow the light, which led me safely across the border to the refugee camp.

After an unusually short time staying in several different camps, I got an opportunity to go to the United States. Once there, I received a Bible and church training for the very first time. Through the Holy Spirit's work, I was gradually delivered from the roots of bitterness and unforgiveness deeply buried in my heart. Now I look back on my life and see God's faithfulness and power and love working to protect and deliver me in ways that I could not fully appreciate at the time.

And now I can also see why God allowed me to be an orphan and a disadvantaged person during the first part of my life. My early experiences strongly motivated me to follow the calling of God later in life, joining with my American partner Gioia Michelotti to return to Cambodia in 1995 to open a school for orphaned and disadvantaged Cambodian children and youth-Cambodian Christian Arts Ministry School.

In a similar way, my early love for Khmer traditional arts has finally found creative expression through this ministry. As my partner Gioia and I enable rejected and broken children and youth to find wholeness and significance by offering their creative gifts (music, dance, drama, visual art, and literature) to serve their Creator, we have discovered that we ourselves are being healed and fulfilled along with them.



[^0]:    This article is extracted from the author's Open University Master of Arts (Missiology) dissertation entitled "Wise Rabbits and the Kingdom of God," written in 1994 at All Nations Christian College in the United Kingdom.
    ${ }^{1}$ The Lausanne Covenant endorses imaginative pioneering methods to relate evangelism to culture. In Christian witness to Buddhists, all attempts to find indigenous illustrations to communicate theological truth are encouraged (LCWE 1980:9, 25). Ad Gentes asks us to uncover with gladness and respect those seeds of the Word hidden among other cultures (Flannery 1975).
    ${ }^{2}$ King 1978:27.

[^1]:    ${ }^{14}$ Buddhist Institute Collection Volume 1:23.
    ${ }^{15}$ Dik-Kem 1962:36-38 (bilingual Khmer and English text).
    ${ }^{16}$ Buddhist Institute Collection Volume 3:1.
    ${ }^{17}$ Buddhist Institute Collection Volume 3:46.

[^2]:    ${ }^{18}$ Buddhist Institute Collection Volume 4:4.

[^3]:    ${ }^{19}$ O'Leary, Moira, and Meas Nee, Learning for Transformation. Krom Akphiwat Phum, Phnom Penh, October 2001: 45, 63.

[^4]:    
    
    
    
    ${ }^{2}$ King 1978:27
    ${ }^{3}$ Taylor 1990:36-7.
    ${ }^{4}$ Hiebert 1985:183-9.

[^5]:    ${ }^{5}$ Ryken 1979:27, 76,102,145.
    ${ }^{6}$ Hiebert 1985:175.
    ${ }^{7}$ Huffman and Proum 1977:1
    ${ }^{8}$ Thierry 1985:34,63.

[^6]:    ${ }^{13}$ There are similar stories in Laos and Vietnam and parallels with the mouse-deer (Palanduk) stories in of the Malay (Davidson and Cordell 1993:245).

[^7]:    
    ${ }^{15}$ Dik-Kem 1962:36-38 (fsguraingminntgrfitgir)
    

[^8]:    

[^9]:    'Ex 24:13: 33:11: Num 11:28: Jos 1:1
    ${ }^{2} \mathrm{Ki}$ 3:11.
    ${ }^{3} 2$ Tim 3:10-11.

[^10]:    ${ }^{11} 1 \operatorname{Tim}$ 3:6; 5:22.
    ${ }^{12} 1$ Tim 3:10.
    ${ }^{13} \mathrm{Mk}$ 10:45.

[^11]:    ${ }^{14} 1 \mathrm{Ki}$ 12:1-19.
    ${ }^{13} 1$ Cor 3:5-8.
    ${ }^{16} 2$ Cor 3:8-10; 6:3-10; Phil 2:17; Col 1:24-25; etc.
    ${ }^{17}$ Mark 9:35.

[^12]:    ${ }^{18}$ John 3:30.
    ${ }^{19}$ John 1:40-41.
    ${ }^{20}$ Acts 9:26-28.

[^13]:    ${ }^{21}$ Matt 15:14.

[^14]:    ${ }^{22}$ John 16:5-7.
    ${ }^{23}$ John 20:21.
    ${ }^{24} 1$ Cor 3:10-12; Eph 2:2; Rev 21:14.

[^15]:    ${ }^{25} 2$ Tim 2:2.
    ${ }^{26}$ Matt 16:21.

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