

Cambodian Servants



God is clearly moving in an amazing way:

- The government officially recognized Christmas for the first time in Cambodia.
- Steve was invited to be the keynote speaker at a "noel" party (31st of December) to all the government officials and key leaders of Banteay Meanchey province (about 700 officials).
- As Christians united under Jesus alone, the Governor apologized for past persecution and difficulties which Christians faced.
- The governor has invited Steve and Noit to move to Banteay Meanchey to help develop the province, especially by "helping the poor children".
- While trying to reach an unreached people group, called the Kraowl people, the chief of the tribe gave us an entire government school building for our ministry to use.

The Amazing Favor of God

An Official "Merry Christmas"



Steve with Governor and Vice-Governors of Banteay Meanchey

I heard through CNN that once again this past Christmas the liberals in the US were in full-swing trying to stop the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Yet Cambodia, a nation which is 85% Buddhist, is seeking to understand Christmas. In the last few years, celebrations of Christmas have grown throughout the country.

Cambodia has 24 provinces (states) in which one of them, Banteay Meanchey province, officially celebrated Christmas this last year. The Governor publically apologized to believers for past difficulties and persecution against them, and also has embraced Christians to be involved in the government's plan for

developing the province.

With 3 days warning the Governor told the Christians to prepare for Cambodia's first officially sanctioned Christmas celebration. The Christians gathered together, pooled their money (less than \$1,000), and on December 25, more than 10,000 people heard about Jesus' birth! All the key government officials attended the celebration as well. Now that is cost-effective ministry; God-style ministry!

The Governor was impressed with the performers, songs, message and the volunteer effort put on by the churches. Jesus was indeed glorified. The next day the celebrations were on

national news and in key national newspapers.

In a moment, God changed the hearts of the officials from being anti-Christian, to embracing Christians and opening up doors not only for the gospel, but for a tangible influence in society.



Fireworks over the celebration

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The Glory of God coming!

My wife and I had just driven 6 hours from northeast Cambodia, looking forward to an afternoon of rest, when the phone rang. It was a pastor saying the Governor was looking for a foreigner who could speak fluent Khmer. The Governor desired to have a "noel" celebration, but wanted a foreigner to introduce him. The pastor told me that God was doing something special and would I come as a honored guest of the Governor. I talked to my wife and in a few minutes we agreed, knowing that God was up to something. Later that night the Governor personally called me and invited me to speak.

Immediately my wife and I got back on the road for another 8 hour drive north. As we arrived late at night, we could tell the glory of God was in that place. God was clearly at work and we wanted to be a part of what God is doing. This movement of God is what I have been praying for in the last 15 years!

Cows for Cambodia

A few years ago we started a poverty alleviation project called, "Cows for Cambodia." In Cambodia, nearly all fields are plowed using cows. The main crop of Cambodia is rice, and so families need to have cows to plow their fields. Poor people who do not own cows have to rent cows to plow their fields. The usual price for plowing a field is 50% of the rice harvest. That means, 50% of their potential harvest is already lost. Most families do not even produce enough rice to feed their own families, so not having a cow keeps them in a cycle of poverty. Our ministry started "loaning" out cows a few years ago to poor Christian families who had proved their honesty and work ethic. After one year, the cow has a calf and that new calf becomes their property in exchange for taking care of "our cow". The following year, the ministry receives a calf (to put into another family), the next year the family keeps the calf and so on. More than 70 cows have now been placed in poor families significantly

increasing their families livelihood.

Some have been sold for food, others traded for land, but every year the number of cows continues to grow. This has been so successful, and is such a simple thing to do to help the poor that we are going to expand this project. If you would like to help a poor family, you can buy a cow: it only costs \$250. One cow will grow to 2, 2 become 4, 4 becomes 8 and soon a family which struggles with having food to eat, can send their children to school, drill a well, and expand their food production.

Their lives will improve, not because of handouts, but through dignity and dependence on God. The poverty in Cambodia is intense. However, we must always re-mind ourselves that alleviation of poverty is not the ultimate goal, it is a transformed life of a believer in Jesus. A transformed life is one in which character, life, family and society is dedicated to following Christ's model.



A Cow for Cambodia:
Helping to defeat poverty

Incredible Poverty

If you are poor in Cambodia it seems as if the whole world is against you. There are no government services, school is not free and no one will give you a helping hand. Buddhism teaches that whatever happens to you is your own fault, so don't bother anyone with your problems. In such a society, the poor are extremely poor and have no hope. Let me share with you a few stories to illustrate the poverty of some fellow Christians:

**God is at work
all around us.
His hand is
never far from
those who are
desperate for his
touch. In
Cambodia, the
people have no
choice but to
depend on God
in their dire
poverty.**

she replied in days that she can't find food, they eat an old water buffalo hide. They boil it in water and then drink the broth and chew the hide to keep away hunger pains. *(If you want to know what that is like, cut a 6 inch piece out of your leather sofa and eat it; 3 times a day for 7 days. Then you will know.)*

Ming

Has 3 children and lives deep in the jungle. She testifies with joy that before she became a Christian she was starving. Now God always provides for Ming. I asked her what she eats and

Owm

Two widows live together struggling daily to get by. From day to day they don't know how God will provide their food. Last week, their cow had a baby, and they praised God. That day, their food was the cow's after-birth and placenta which was cooked. Tomorrow they don't know what they will eat.

Plok

Plok is legally blind, yet tries to provide for his wife and 3 abandoned children in the middle of the jungle. This year Plok's crop was stolen and another man cheated him out of his farmland. Each day he works out in the jungle trying to gather food. . . by touch. God provides a little for him each day. He had two cows, but one got a disease and died, now he doesn't know how he will plow his fields. He can only trust in God to provide a solution.

The Bible says that when one part of the body hurts, the whole body hurts. Jesus Christ can really bring hope to these people and many more, in a society which doesn't care. Jesus cares and so does the body of Christ. They live in incredible poverty, yet, as we disciple these people, we see step by step how God provides and empowers them. They grow in their faith and their character is slowly transformed into models of Jesus Christ. Over time, they see their lives change, their friendships change, and their personal significance increase as they show Christ's love to others, even in their own poverty.

Stand with us in 2009



God is clearly opening new doors of great favor. I feel like I am standing before a big gate, but I cannot see on the other side. The gate is open, but I have to walk through the gate to see what is on the other side. I have been here before. Coming to Cambodia was a big step, starting a children's home was a big one, and I know that God is asking me to take another big step now.

There is no way I can do it alone. I have never done it alone. Hundreds of my friends have stood with me for years. Now, as we continue to work for change in Cambodia, we see what we have been praying 15 years for beginning to happen. The government is finally not only acknowledging Christians, but realizing that Christians will work with them. Actually, we know that we are

the key to bringing transformation to the nation. Jesus has a solution for every problem the government faces and he can transform this country.

We need you to stand with us, now more than ever, as we know that God is opening a big door of opportunity. We sense also that our responsibility will also be enormous. In the least, we feel that God is wanting us to open another children's center.

Through this and other opportunities, we sense God is going to open more and more hearts to him, truly bringing transformation on a national level to the people of Cambodia.

We need you and others to stand with us to accomplish all that God is asking us to do!

School Building Given to Us

About 5 years ago I figured out the secret to reaching "unreached people groups". I had tried "adopting a people group"; I had prayed for people groups; I had given funds to people who reached people groups; I read books about people groups... but somehow I just didn't get it right. The people were still "unreached". Then I figured out how to reach an unreached people group: all we had to do was to physically go to the tribe and tell them about Jesus. Why didn't anyone tell me that it was so easy!

So, as you know, we reached one already, the T'maon people. The whole tribe became Christians. Now we are aiming our sights at two more: the Mel and Kroawl tribes.

When we got to the Kroawl tribe they gave us their school building. So we are going to teach them the ABC's of Jesus. I think that will work. Be ready for news about how we reached the Kroawl tribe... and soon, the Mel tribe as well. Pray for us! It is really tough living in the jungle. We never have the right equipment, reliable transport, or even enough food, and sustain plenty of injuries, but we know how to share about Jesus and show his love.

We can never do anything by ourselves. We are totally dependent on God, but with you standing beside us, we can together make a difference in whole tribes who never had a chance to know about Jesus.

"I figured out how to reach an unreached people group... All we had to do was physically go to the tribe and tell them about Jesus."



Just Don't Quit

I love sports. All my life I tried hard and practiced harder, but I am not a gifted athlete. I played soccer, ran cross-country, did track and field for fun, wrestled (until I ripped tendons in my ankle; which still hurts 20 years later), and most of all I loved basketball. Still do. I was never the best at any of these sports though. I rode a lot of pine, but I always played and did pretty good, because I would never quit.

Being a missionary I feel much the same. I was horrible at learning languages, so much so, God had to miraculously enable me to speak Khmer, otherwise I would not be effective here. I don't play guitar, nor speak very beautifully. After I have been living in Cambodia for 15 years, I would say the reason I am successful (apart from being submissive to the will of God) is that I just don't quit. I never give up, even though I feel like giving up all the time! Now, after much patience and just sticking to it, I see God has been able to do so much through me and the ministry. Not because I am so gifted, but because I don't quit. Thank you God!

As we face 2009, we sense we are going to have to depend on Jesus even more!

2009 God at Work

What to pray for in looking ahead to 2009:

- The government will continue to be open to Christians in Banteay Meanchey province and in others as well.
- That Christians will be united and not seek their own personal gain.
- That resources can be focused to bring tangible benefit to the poor people of the province, and at the same time, open up the doors for people to respond to the gospel of Jesus.
- That business people will invest in the lives of Christians in Banteay Meanchey province.
- That the two schools in Kracheh province will be able to open with adequate equipment and teachers.
- That, if God wills, a large Children's and Educational Center can be opened in Banteay Meanchey province educating the children of church leaders.
- That more resources, both financial and personnel, can be released for what God is doing here in Cambodia.
- For divine strategies to be able to reach whole provinces with the gospel and bring about tangible change to thousands of lives.
- For the continued favor of God.

We are looking forward to 2009 and to all God is going to do. We believe that God is calling us to trust him in faith to open many more ministries.

We also realize that the whole world is looking at a global recession and while many ministries, churches and individuals are having to cut back on spending, we believe that God is going to supernaturally multiply the resources which are flowing into his work for more and more fruit. In so doing, God will be glorified and not the resources nor creative plans of men.

Please pray with us that Christ's glory will be shown in new and mighty ways here in Cambodia and throughout the world in 2009.

Jesus is all we need and in him alone we trust!

God bless you in 2009!



Contact Information

For donations to Words of Life Ministries/ Antioch Institute send donations through the Church of Glad Tidings.

Church of Glad Tidings

Mail: P.O. Box 1630

Yuba City, CA 95992

Phone: (530) 671-3160

E-mail: info@churchofgladtidings.com

Any checks sent to the church should be made out to: "Church of Glad Tidings", but clearly marked FOR: "Words of Life."

Steve Hyde Words of Life Ministries

Mail: P.O. Box 2581

Phnom Penh, 3

Kingdom of Cambodia

Phone: (855) 23-224121

E-mail: steve@asiaforjesus.com

Thank you for being an important part of the work God is doing in Cambodia and other parts of Asia through Words of Life Ministries.