



CAMBODIAN SERVANTS

May 2003

UNBELIEVABLE

March 4, 2003 started off as a pretty normal day, but better than usual. That was the first day of another 4 day pastors training conference and I was speaking about the basics of Christianity. I began teaching at 8:00am and didn't stop until 12:30pm. It was a long session, but the material was just flowing and the students are really involved in the session. I was especially excited because the first ever Cham believe (a Muslim group in Cambodia) was coming for training to be a pastor. If all goes well, when he graduates in December 2003 he will be the first Cham pastor in the first Cham church. This is a near completely unreached people group who were 100% Muslim, but now there are around 100 Cham believers.

That afternoon I turned the teaching over to Mao An and I went shopping to get some last minutes things that we were taking to the US. We were meeting up American pastor teaching in Nepal and going to speak in several churches on the East Coast of the US. That evening I went back to the training center to speak again and I was going to speak on the importance of evangelism in these days. Only minutes before I was to walk up on stage, Noit called and told me to come home quick that my Dad had been injured in a bombing. As we have trained so many people, I just spoke to a pastor briefly turning the training over to him and got on my motorcycle and sped home. The 30 minutes it took me to get back into the city were nerve racking as my mind was thinking of all what might be happening. I was thinking of my dear doctor friend in Nepal who is an expert on during surgery related to shrapnel and how I could get him to the Philippines quick.

As I got home, the phone rang again from the Philippines, it was Mom and she just said that Dad would probably not live. I had been concerned over the last weeks hearing of more elevated attacks in the Philippines, but I never feared for my parents safety, nor did they fear for me. We were all doing God's business. I sent out a rash of e-mails to everyone I knew to pray. . . Including non-Christians, but soon the phone rang again. My Mom couldn't hardly talk as she said the words "Your Dad is in heaven." We didn't sleep any that night, nor any night for



My Dad and I together in Vietnam, in December 2002

the next 10 days. We just cried.

Noit and I left on the first flight out of Cambodia and were in the Philippines very quick. On the plane back into Davao city, at the airport where my Dad was killed, the stewardesses recognized me from my Dad's picture on the front page. In the airport, men came up to me who said they helped put my Dad's body into a police vehicle to get to the hospital. As I look just like my Dad I didn't have to tell anyone who I was, they all just looked at me. Complete strangers continually came up to me offering their condolences and patting me on the back. I tried to thank them, but words were almost impossible.

Soon I was with my Mom, just crying. Many other missionaries gathered around. The phone rang constantly. It took 10 days for us to have 3 funerals, one in the southern Philippines, one in Manila where my parents served for 11 years and the final one and burial in Iowa. It still isn't over for us, because we haven't been home. Since this happened we have been living out of suitcases. I will be going home to Davao, probably about the time you are reading this. That will be hard, because everything is just as it was at 5:25pm on March 4th. My Dad's coffee on the table, a video half watched, notes next to his computer. . . March 5 never came. It is still to unbelievable to imagine. I still am waiting for Dad to come home.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR STEVE AND NOIT

Two weeks before my father was killed, Noit and I received a word from the Lord that he was going to expand our ministry into more countries. Though I have been asked many times to minister in many different countries, I have usually declined because I felt that the call to Cambodia was where I needed to be and I must focus only on Cambodia. That is what I have faithfully done for nearly 10 years now. For those two weeks Noit and I prayed about it, but we did not know what countries God would send us too. . . Immediately we received requests to go to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan (part of Central Asia where I used to live before going to Cambodia) and also requests from Vietnam our next door neighbor. Upon the death of my father, our strongest calling is to help in the Philippines. It will not be possible for the Southern Baptist missionaries to carry on my fathers vision, because they do not have the same vision. They will carry on their own visions and will be fully occupied with that.

My Dad and I were more than just look-a-likes, we were also think-a-likes. Literally, my Dad and I could carry on a conversation without saying a word because we understood each others thoughts. My Dad and I conducted the same ministry, and in the beginning we never even talked about it, the Lord just led us in the same direction. We had the same methodology, the same vision of local churches starting new churches, and getting accessible training to the largest number of church leaders possible. I currently am training 2100 church leaders in Cambodia. My Dad has just completed a training with nearly 4000 church leaders and his goal was 7000 church leaders on Mindanao Island. I believe that this model is a strategic model from the Lord for training up leaders in the great end time harvest. We are seeing a harvest of souls across the world which the institutional and traditional models of training are far inadequate for the task. So that you can imagine the scale of what we are seeing let me give you the following statistics: In Cambodia alone, our students are starting 50 churches per month. An incredible rate of growth, yet very similar to growth rates seen across Asia. Local institutional schools accept 25-30 new students each year for their 3 years of education. At the current rate of growth, we will need 1800 new church leaders over 3 years (50 leaders x 12 months x 3 years) yet, in 3 years institutional training can only graduate 30 potential leaders. The need for this new kind of training is obvious!!! What my Dad and I both do are to take practical, systematic, biblically solid training to where the church leaders are and give them on the job training. It is the teachers who do all the traveling and the students (church leaders) just wait for us at local churches. Every local church can become a Bible School in this model. Young church leaders receive solid training in doctrine, ministry skills, church growth, church administration and organization, leadership and management skills and they can practice their skills under a mentoring program over a period of one to two years. They can learn and grow in their own local environment and continue the multiplication of the church. As more groups are started, they have the skills and resources to train more leaders.

Noit and I feel God's calling to immediately take up where my Dad left off in the Philippines, yet we will continue to live in Cambodia and travel to the Philippines to conduct training. The first task that we will perform will be translating and printing of all our training materials into the Cebuano language which is the primary language on Mindanao. Translation and printing alone will cost approximately \$20,000 over the next year. As God begins to use Noit and I in more countries, we really need the commitment of our friends to carry out this task. Please pray how God might use you to help accomplish the vision in this harvest time.

***Words of Life: Helping to Equip
the Body of Christ in Cambodia***

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