

Introduction

What Is True Love?

My definition of true love is sincere, unchanging loyalty and lasting devotion. It is the type of love we give to people like our parents, family, friends, nation, religion, etc. When it comes to love, most people tend to think of love between a young man and woman. Everyone wants to be loved by someone. Before we fall in love we often set conditions such as:

- appearance
- intelligence
- personality
- finances
- health
- education
- background

Most women will look for these conditions in a man even though they might have a different order of priorities. Some people say that it is hard to find true love and even harder to hold on to it. Over time, love seems to diminish or not be sustained like it was at first. It seems that true love is for a short time only.

However, the meaning of true love for Christians comes from God and is without any conditions. In fact, even when we didn't love Him, He sacrificed Himself for us so that we could have eternal life. The Bible says in John 3:16, *"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."*

The Bible describes true love in 1 Cor. 13:4-7, *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."* This is the kind of love all Christians should have in their hearts.

This book is the story of my true love experiences. I want to share this with everyone and hope that it will be a good guide to those who choose to live with a purpose in life.

Chapter 1

Leaving home

I can remember as a primary student my Mum saying to me, "Child do not get pregnant before marriage." She said that bad women sleep around with men before marriage and I must learn to control myself and not bring shame on my family. She said that if a man loves me he will not be offended; he will be patient and wait until the wedding day. I kept that thought in my mind at all times even though I did not understand it that much because I was only 12-13 and romance was not on my mind. Also my body developed very slowly into a woman.

During that time I had been staying with my brother and his wife. They had two toddler sons named Meng and Neng and sometimes I had to look after them but not for long as my brother's marriage failed and they split up. I was sent to live with other families several times and had to move to new schools. I did not understand my brother's problems that much. I only heard that he liked to drink a lot and had an affair. At 15, I moved school again and lived with a new family who were doing

radio programs. My brother left me with them and I had to work on their duck farm. I also got experience in radio drama for the first time, playing the role of an old lady. It was fun.

The Accident

At the age of 16, I moved back to my old school and lived with my brother's family again, after they reconciled. One morning I was riding a bus to school and we had an accident. Many students in the bus were injured and one girl died immediately; I was told that her body was cut in half. I was injured badly and what I can remember is just like a dream. I woke up with the bus still sliding along the road and it seemed like the trees were running fast beside the road. There was smoke and the smell of burning tyres. I saw the driver and asked him to please help me but he ran away. I got up with blood all over my face and I had wounds to my head, shoulder, right arm and hand. A wound on my neck had blood flowing but I didn't feel much pain at the time. I rubbed my head and patches of hair and blood came off. Blood was flowing into my eyes so I could not see clearly and some of the blood flowed into the mouth. It smelt fishy and I had to spit it out.

I went into a ditch beside the road to clean the blood off my face but when I used the canal water I found that it was very dirty and smelt of buffalo dung. I felt very sad as it was like bad luck twice in a row. Instead of washing with the water, I pulled my skirt up and wiped my face and eyes. The area had no housing, hospital or health centre nearby. All the injured were together on the road side.

I remember how shocked I was, shivering and confused. I heard other kids crying out for their mothers, "Mummy, Mummy help me!" I cried along with them for a while and then I stopped. I told myself that Mum could not help me now and it was up to me and I thought about what I should do next. It seemed like nobody could help us. Finally, a generous person came along in a truck and took all the injured to a recently completed hospital, about 10 kilometres away. But we were unlucky for the third time. The hospital was not yet open; no service, no drugs, no treatment, nothing at all so we just sat there and waited. When my brother came to see me and saw my condition he didn't say a word. After he looked at me, he went away to tell my parents that I had an accident and may not survive and told everyone to accept the fact that I might die.

After a while they took all the injured to another hospital which was about 35 kilometres away. I remember sitting in a pick-up truck without a roof and it was windy and cold. At the hospital, I felt very weak and had trance-like symptoms. I could hear the nurses talking and the strange sound of the needle stitching my head. I was lucky not to have any broken bones so the hospital allowed me to go home and in the evening I began to feel a lot of pain. I went back to the hospital to have my wounds cleaned and it hurt so much that I cried like a baby. That accident caused me to miss school for one month.

I now had scars all over my right arm and there are still small pieces of glass inside my arm. After the accident I was more scared of death than ever before because I thought back to my childhood when, at age 7-8, I killed a mantis by slowly pulling its head off. My friend said that it was bad because in the next life I will be reborn as that insect and it will pull my head off. This made me afraid for some time and whenever I got just a little bit sick I would worry about dying.

I also thought about the girl who died in the accident when her body was cut in half. Her death made me realise that even though she was the daughter of a powerful man with high social standing good karma did not protect her. I was a Buddhist and believed in karma and even though I had a pendant of a Buddhist monk hung on my neck it didn't protect me from the accident. However, people said that the pendant kept me alive. Still, I never stopped worrying about dying. Every time I

travelled by bus I would be very concerned when the bus braked suddenly. I felt nervous and scared to death.

I struggled for a year with that feeling. I was afraid of dying and worried about life after death. What will happen to me when I die? Where will I go? Will I be reincarnated? Will my spirit go to heaven or hell? This made me very worried and I tried to find the answer in my religion. I even thought of becoming a Buddhist nun to escape from these worries and concerns. After I finished my studies, I spent some time looking for answers that would give me peace but I didn't find any that satisfied me.

Good Girl

I lived with another family while I studied at technical school. This family managed a theatre and my brother worked there also. At that time my body started to change to become a woman. Because of that I started to get interested in the opposite sex. I had romantic fantasies about having a boyfriend and I was struggling against the hormones in my body. The more cautious I was, and the more self-control I exerted, the more I became a target for the boys. They asked me to go out with them to the movies or parties and even offered to pay my tuition fees. Once I met someone on a bus who later sent me a romantic letter, a poem. I liked it and read it again and again but through all this I never went out with anyone

This experience made me very excited and tempted at the same time but I still recalled my mother's words. It is not that easy for a young woman who was living far from home and wanted to have a boyfriend. I actually lived in an area where there was gambling and prostitution and I had to walk through those places regularly. I knew a girl of my age who would sell herself as a prostitute for money just so she could shop more.

There was another temptation for me while I was staying with the family who managed the theatre. I could watch any kind of movie, including pornography, and I was surrounded by men who worked in the cinema. Sometimes I would practice martial arts alone for self-defence. I learned so many things, good and bad, through the movies.

The college had a very romantic atmosphere. A girl in my class got pregnant and had an abortion and a girl in another department got pregnant with a man in my class and had a baby girl. Some of my girlfriends got pregnant too and had to take maternity leave from school.

It was very common for girls and boys in these age groups to have sex before marriage. I used to think of my mother words, "Do not get pregnant before marriage," and I always thought that I would never do such a thing. I always told myself that it was important to keep my dignity and not to follow others. What others did was up to them. I had chosen not to do it and would wait for my true love.

Self-sufficiency

While studying in school I had to work also so that I could pay the school fees and reduce the burden on my family. I had to get up at five o'clock every day to do laundry work, washing bed sheets for the local hotel. I also worked at night in the cinema to get some extra money for bus fares to school. Later on, the hotel burned down so I lost that income. I needed to work somewhere and got a part time job by supplying a service to a gambling group. My job was to buy food and drinks for them. With the proceeds from these jobs, plus some money from my family at times, I was able to pay the tuition fees until I graduated.

I always did what I was told. I didn't do any bad things that would bring shame to my family. I was a good girl and did not have a special relationship with any man. I often got compliments because of my good behavior, hard work and self sufficiency. I was a good example for the other young people and my parents used to describe me as a good example to others. It made me proud to be able to carry myself through those situations and it made my parents so proud also. They trusted me and never had to worry about me in any way.

After graduation, I worked in the cinema for a while to have enough money to find something else to do. I travelled to another province to find work and stayed temporarily with one of my father's friend's family. I was employed as an assistant in a company which sent Thai workers to work in the Middle East. After working there for a few days, I had to travel with the boss to see customers in the rural areas. I discovered I would be travelling alone with him which I had not expected. I thought I would have had another female employee to go with me but that did not happen. The boss was a man aged around 45-50 and during this long trip I did not trust him and regretted that I was alone.

We had to travel hundreds of kilometres across the provinces. On the way back that night, after we had met the customers, he stopped at a nightclub in the city. The women were dancing in small pieces of clothing and I was embarrassed. It was a dim atmosphere like in the movies and I was curious about why he brought me there because he was supposed to take me home and it was late already. I needed to be vigilant at all times to make sure there were no drugs in my drink and even though I was very afraid, I tried not to let it show. Instead I prayed to the Lord of the world, the international God, if that God existed. I prayed for safety and protection and that nothing would happen to me. I felt relieved when the boss took me out of that place late at night. On the road home, the car broke down. I was afraid again and thought that the boss wanted to do bad things to me. It would be very easy for him because there was no one to help me in that dark and isolated place.

Again I prayed to the international God, the God of all the world and asked Him to protect me from bad things and for the car to start. I prayed all the time, waiting and waiting. Finally the car started and we drove home. We arrived at my place at five o'clock in the morning. The family I was staying with were very worried and the husband was angry with my boss for bringing me home at 5 am. He was in such a bad temper that he wanted to take his gun and shoot the boss because he thought I was hurt or had been harassed by my employer. I explained to him that nothing serious had happened to me; no one hurt me or raped me and there was a problem with the car. When he heard that, he calmed down. After this, I stopped working with the company and later heard from some people that the boss was a dishonest man. I was so glad that I did not work for him any more. At times I believed that the God I did not know had really protected me from danger.

I went looking for work again and got a new job. I became a film courier and carried bags of films to the movie theatres in different districts. It was a challenging job because I had to travel to various locations and it was quite dangerous for a young woman to be carrying several film bags and running after trains, buses and other local transport. Much of the time I had to stay in hotels alone. It was both a scary and exciting adventure that I was having.

After doing this work for a while, someone said to me, "You should not work in this kind of job because it is not suitable for a young woman to travel alone." Later, I realized that they were right. Often I met men who wanted to have a relationship with me. Once a man knocked on my door at the hotel and introduced himself as a policeman. He wanted to be friends with me and asked for my address but I did not give it to him. I looked friendly on the outside but inside I didn't trust anyone. I no longer felt safe in the job so I quit and after this I began to feel dissatisfied as a woman because it was not an easy life.

Chapter 2

Not Happy Being A Woman

I felt hopeless about finding my true love. Past experience showed me that most men were not what I had expected. I could not trust anyone and found that most were dishonest with their partners. They gambled or drank or went with prostitutes or used sweet talk and money to get women. Their only interest in women was for sex.

I just turned 22 and started to dislike myself as a woman. My interests turned to the same sex and I admired the women who behaved like men. They became my role models. These women looked so cool and I wanted to be like them. I thought that if I had a relationship with a woman it would be better than with a man. A woman would be good for me and we would understand each other better than men.

This feeling became clear when I was working at a small convenience store in a military camp in the town of Lopburi. There was a soldier in uniform whom I used to like very much. He often rode his motorcycle and parked in front of the store to see me. A few times he asked me to ride with him or go out to a movie but I never went with him. I always looked over his shoulder because I was interested in a young girl who lived across the street. She was the daughter of a senior military officer. I saw her almost every day and wanted to get to know her more. I wanted to have the opportunity to build a relationship with her in order to express my feelings for her. However, my chances were very small. During that time, I began to really feel the need for a same-sex relationship even though my conscience told me that it was not right. Sometimes I felt that this kind of relationship was unnatural. But at other times, I thought that it was natural because I wanted to be free to do what I wanted to do for my own satisfaction.

Finally, for family reasons, I had to move out of that place and go back home. I began to dislike being a woman more and more. My mother was wondering why I did not like to dress up like other women. She said I was not a teenager any more. She sometimes asked, "Why don't you have a boyfriend like a normal person?" I told her I did not want to be a woman any more. I wanted to be like a man because I thought it would be better. And if I was going to have someone, then I preferred to have a woman instead of a man. I told her that some people are like that and I did not see anything wrong with it. Plus, if I had a relationship with a woman, then I would not need to worry about becoming pregnant.

I decided go to Bangkok and borrowed money from my mother. In fact, we were poor and she borrowed from someone else and gave it to me. After I got the money, I told my mother that I might go to a doctor in Bangkok for surgery to remove my breasts to become like a man. I said that I would get a job and pay her later. She did not say anything. She just let me go. When I got to Bangkok, I was so excited about living in the environment of a big capital city. It looked so different from the places I had lived before. People there had a very different lifestyle. Neighbors living next door to each other did not recognize or greet one other. They woke up early in the morning, went to work, came back home in the evening, bought food to eat and then slept. So many of them lived like that. Most of them were from the North East of Thailand, just like me. They were in Bangkok just to work in order to get money to send back to their families.

At that time, I stayed for a month with distant relatives in the Sukhumvit area, Udomsuk market. I lived together in the same place with their friends, five men. The money I brought with me was being quickly used up. Before long, I did not have enough for breast surgery. I did not feel comfortable living in the same place with these men. Although they would not do anything bad to

me, I still did not trust anyone. I always thought that as long as I had a feminine body it would not be safe for me.

I tried to find a job in many factories, but it did not work out. I was discouraged and confused about my life and future. I seemed to be drifting without a goal in life. Thus, I decided to go back to my hometown. When I got home, I gave the remaining money back to my mother. Surgery would just have to wait until another time. Becoming a man was not as easy as I first thought and it costs a lot of money. I stayed at home with my family in order to be with my parents but I still did not feel comfortable living there. I needed to find new things to do and a new place to live. I had to move on.

Chapter 3

I Found New Life

In late 1983 I returned to Bangkok and again tried to get a job. I stayed with a relative named Noi and only planned to stay with her temporarily. I knew that she was following Jesus. I was warned that I would have to be careful not to stay with her too long because she might try to convert me to believe in the Western religions (I knew that several years ago she was expelled from her home after she believed in Jesus Christ. It was a shameful thing). The fact is, I was already prepared for the situation and only intended to stay until I had a new place to go to. I planned to appease her by pretending to be interested in what she said. However, I would not follow Jesus Christ as she did. I was Thai and had my own religious beliefs. I wanted to follow our tradition as Thais. I did not need the Western religion to guide me.

I went to see her and asked if I could stay. She was surprised because I had not told her in advance. Anyway, she gave me a warm welcome. I was informed later that she was working as a servant of God, a missionary, with an organization called "Campus Crusade for Christ" (C.C.C). She lived in the same building, as her office was located at that time. After greeting her, and a small chat, she asked me right away, "Have you ever heard the story of God?" I said, "Not really," and she asked if I would like to hear it now. I said, "Yes, why not?" (It seemed she wanted to tell me so much, and I wanted to be polite and listen to her).

She read the Four Spiritual Laws booklet of eternal life. She started by saying that God is Spirit and is everywhere on earth and in heaven and has lived forever. She said that the Almighty God is great and that He created all things in the world and the universe; He knows everything and maintains all things. He rules and protects the planet and the universe with His power; God's character is holiness, righteousness and justice and He is a God of love; He loves man so much even though man rejects Him and does not obey Him. Man is separated from God but God is spreading His love through Jesus Christ to bring mankind back to Him.

While I was listening to the story about God, inside I was rejecting what I heard because it was too confusing for my mind to comprehend. I felt overwhelmed by the details of the story. I wanted her to finish as soon as possible. So I asked her, "Where is God now?" She said God is everywhere and He is firmly established with us here. I swept my eyes around looking for God. She said that we can't see God with the naked eye. I asked, "Why? If we cannot see God with own eyes then how do we know that God exists?" She answered that He is Spirit which we cannot see, but we can feel Him just like we feel the wind. We can see Him through our heart by faith.

She continued to tell me about God: God is the Creator; He created the earth and the universe; He created the first human couple, Adam and Eve, from the dust. He let them take care of the Garden of Eden, which was filled abundantly with every good thing needed to sustain life. But Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. As a result, they were cut off from God and expelled from the Garden of Eden. The world's first human couple had sinned. This sin has passed on to everyone in the world; Sin has caused human suffering as well as many of the problems people face in the world today. However, because of God's love for all people, He gives everyone the opportunity to get right with Him again. In the Bible it says, *"For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16).

She continued by saying that God the Son is Jesus Christ. He was sent into the world to die on the cross for our sins. On the third day, He rose from the dead. Jesus is alive today! She said that Jesus loved me, that He was ready to forgive all my sins and had a wonderful plan for my life. Immediately I thought, "Wait a moment! You don't know me well. What are you talking about saying I'm a sinner? No I'm not! I have been a good person all along and I have been hard working, self-sufficient. I have never slept with a man and have been no trouble to anyone. I have always served people. I have never disappointed my parents; never done anything illegal, and have never harmed anyone. Why does she say that God is ready to forgive my sins?"

Before I could think of anything else, she explained that Jesus must pay for every sin. We need to believe in Jesus and turn away from all sin before we will be saved. I asked, "What is saved?" She said that saved, or salvation, means that we will escape from the lake of fire. Anyone who does not believe in God and accept Jesus into their life will be judged when they die and their soul will go directly to hell. Although a man can do many good things while he is living in this world, it will not help him to be saved from hell. *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23) and *"The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ as our Lord"* (Romans 6:23). This death means spiritual death because of our sins. We will no longer be able to communicate with God.

Continuing on, she told me that God is pure and we are sinners. We are spiritually dead and this puts a barrier between us so that we cannot go to God. The only way is through Jesus. Jesus is the bridge that brings us to God who is perfect in all His ways. Jesus Christ said, *"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* The only way we will get to heaven to be with God is through Jesus Christ. He will give us eternal life. No one else can give eternal life but Jesus Christ. I asked, "Isn't Jesus just a human prophet of Western religion and the son of Mary?" She said, "Yes, He was the human son of Mary but He was God at the same time."

She explained that God was three in one. There is God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit. They are three separate persons but together they make up the one God. This is known as the Trinity. Jesus was God in human form but He was pure and never sinned. His birth was not normal because He was born of a young virgin named Mary who had never had sex. The Holy Spirit came upon her and she became pregnant. She gave birth to the child named Jesus and He was completely free from sin because He was conceived of the Holy Spirit. He died for the sins of all mankind which means that He died for your sins as well as mine. If anyone believes, and invites Him into their life, He will forgive their sins.

I asked, "What does believe mean?" She said that it means to have faith and to be sure of the thing we hope for; to be certain of the thing we cannot see because we cannot see God (Hebrew 11:1). But we must also believe that God exists, that Jesus is God, and that He will forgive our sins and take us to heaven. We believe even though we cannot see. If we want to receive salvation, then we

have to believe and put our trust in Jesus. Believing is not just knowing about Jesus, but committing our ways to Him and trusting in Him for eternal life in heaven. We are saved the moment we invite Him into our life. I was very surprised when I heard this story of God because I had never heard anything like this before. This was the first time in my life that I really heard God's story.

I asked if believing in God would be better than my traditional beliefs. I said, "What benefits do I get from believing in God?" She explained, "He will give eternal life to you immediately. And when you die, you will be in heaven with God." I interrupted, "Do the dead really go to heaven?" She said, "Yes, those who believe in God do not worry about death because they know for sure that when they die they will go to live with God in heaven." Jesus says in the Bible in the Gospel of John 10:10, *"I have come that you might have life in abundance."* That is, we will not only have eternal life but a full and better life while we are in this world. He is the one who fills our hearts. He will give us true peace that the world cannot give. He will give us hope. He is a true friend and will be with us forever.

I asked if those who follow Jesus Christ are able to get married (I asked this because I thought that if I decided to believe in Jesus then I would be like a nun). She laughed and then said, "Yes, Christians get married. The person who teaches the Bible at Church is married and has a family like normal people." I asked, "What about the Catholics who worship Mary and have priests and nuns? Are you the same?" "No", she said, "we don't have priests and nuns. I will explain that to you later."

I kept asking about Christian men: "Were they good? Did they love their wives? Did they cheat on their wives or get drunk? What about alcohol addiction, smoking, wife beating, drug addiction, gambling and not being responsible for the family. Are Christians like that?" She said that men who really believe in God are given a new life, a better life. If they obey God, they will not do these things because they fear God and know that these things are harmful to the health of both body and spirit. If he obeys God, he will love and be faithful to his wife according to the promises he made to God in marriage. Women make the same promise. "Wow!" I exclaimed, "That is amazing. It's unbelievable that Christian men are so good. Are they really?" She answered, "Yes, they are."

We talked about God for four days and I also read the Bible. She read a verse from the Bible to me which said, *"Behold, I stand and knock at the door. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him"* (Revelation 3:20). She said, "He is knocking at the door of your heart right now. Now that you have heard the story of God, what prevents you from inviting Jesus Christ into your life?" I said, "Nothing". So she asked me if I was ready to invite Jesus to come into my life. I said, "Yes I'm ready." But she said, "First, you must be willing to give your heart to Jesus and believe in nothing else. I removed a pendant of a Buddhist monk from my neck and gave that to her. She said that I must focus on Jesus who is much, much greater. I believed because of what I had heard. I decided to invite Jesus Christ into my life. I said this prayer: "Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Saviour and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person you want me to be. Amen."

She asked me, "Where is Jesus now?" I said, "He is in my heart," and she smiled and said, "Yes, you are right. When you invited Jesus into your life, the Holy Spirit of Jesus came to live with you forever." I asked her if that was all and why I didn't feel anything special. She said, "Yes, that's all. The Holy Spirit is in you and will never leave you. We know that Jesus Christ is alive and that we receive eternal life from the moment we ask Him into our lives. This is in accordance with the promises of God. He will not deceive us." From that moment, I was a Christian and a child of God just like her.

I told her that from now on I would hang a cross on my neck instead of the Buddhist pendant to prove that I was Christian. She explained to me that wearing a cross does not make a person a Christian. Sometimes, people wear crosses for fashion. So wearing a cross does not always mean that the person has Jesus in their life. Therefore, we do not need to wear a cross. God is with us always. He wants us to communicate with him mentally by prayer not with images or symbols, which men have created.

Chapter 4

Discipleship

From the time I first believed and invited Jesus into my life, I was trained in how to grow in my faith. I learned how to pray and was advised to read the Gospel of John. I learned how to live with Jesus by faith and to follow Him in both my beliefs and behaviour. I studied the Bible more and more and went to worship God at church. I regularly attended a Bible class on Sunday mornings and I got to know other Christians. I also found out that there were many Thai Christians at church, not just foreigners. It was the opposite of what I had thought.

I had found new hope and answers to questions that I had for a long time. I now experienced the peace of God and was no longer afraid of dying even though I did not understand everything. It felt good to believe in Jesus because I was now free. Later on I found out that Jesus is Lord of all nations not just the human leader of Western religion as I understood before. What I had learned now was that a Christian was someone who followed Jesus. Later on, I got an explanation about the two big groups of Christians:

1. Roman Catholics with nuns and monks.
2. Protestant denominations without nuns and monks.

Now that I am a Christian, a child of God, I have the Holy Spirit in me. I am a sister in Christ to other believers. I have freedom to pray directly to God about anything and at any time without the need of a person to intervene between God and me. I do not have to go to a special place to pray, like a church, and I do not need a special language to talk to God. He is everywhere and understands all languages. Prayer is talking with God like a child talks to his father. After two months, I decided to get baptized to declare my belief that Jesus was real and that I was ready to follow him forever.

In the past, I used to pray to the international God that I did not know. I prayed something like this, "Oh international God, if you are real, please protect me and not allow bad things to happen to me." Now I am convinced that the international God really did exist and that He had heard me even when I did not know Him. I believe that He saw me and heard me because He is everywhere and knows every human thought. I was glad that I had come to know Jesus Christ, the true God I was looking for, for such a long, long time.

Changing

Since Jesus came into my heart, I no longer thought of changing my body to be like a man. I no longer had any feelings for women, that was finished. I'm now happy to be a woman and hoping to find my true love one day with a man. It was a great feeling to be freed from those thoughts. I was clearer about this issue when the Bible showed me that living with someone of the same sex, as husband and wife, was not right. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 18:22, says, "*Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable,*" and in Leviticus 20:13 it says, "*If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to*

death; their blood will be on their own heads." Then in Romans 1:26-27 it says, *"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lust. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion."* Also 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says, *"Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."* All these verses make it clear that having a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex is a very serious offence and no one who continues to do such a thing will inherit the kingdom of God.

Even dressing up like the opposite sex is forbidden. God says, *"A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this"* (Deut. 22:5). Thank God that I was now aware of these facts. My study of this issue cleared up any doubts I had.

The First Job After Becoming A Christian

A few weeks after I had accepted Jesus Christ into my life, I got a job at the Victory Monument, which was not far from the church. I could easily walk there. I got a job as a babysitter looking after a toddler girl named Alice. She was about two years old. Alice was a beautiful girl with big brown eyes. However, she was pretty skinny and underweight. She had a problem eating food and only drank milk. Her parents and whole family were concerned about her. They tried in many ways to make her eat, but she refused all food. When I took care of Alice and knew her problem, I prayed and asked God for wisdom on how to help this child eat some food. I started to prepare food with what they already had. I make it look delicious and fed her. She ate well and finished all her food. That was a good start. I knew that God made it happen and was working together with me. Later on, she stopped refusing food. Her weight increased. She looked bright and healthy. The whole family was very satisfied. This put me in good standing with the family. I was allowed to go to church every Sunday and sometimes to Christian camps. Normally, when you work for a family as a babysitter, you do not have a day off.

While working I learned another lesson about humility and apologising. Penn was a maid who worked there before me. She often came into Alice's bedroom without quietly asking permission. She would chat with Alice while I was trying to get her to nap. Because of this, Alice did not sleep well during the day and would be a problem for her parents at night. I got the blame for the child's sleeping problem. Even though it happened several times, I never said anything to Penn about the situation. I assumed she knew that by talking she was disturbing Alice's napping time.

Apology

One day she did it again and made me mad. I exploded and shouted at her, "Why did you do that? Go and do your own things. You know that this is her nap time and you woke her up!!" Penn was shocked by my actions, as I was not supposed to explode in anger like that; showing your emotions is very, very rude in the Thai tradition. But I lost my temper at that moment. After that, Penn and I were both silent, no communication, not even eye contact. Then the Holy Spirit convicted me that my reaction was wrong. It was not right for a Christian to react that way. I was supposed to be the one who had God in their life and non-believers should see His love through my actions. I should have spoken to her in a polite way and explained why sleep was important to Alice. But I was too proud to give an apology. I told myself that she was wrong because she woke Alice. I thought that Penn should be the one to give me an apology instead. I reasoned that if I gave her an apology, it would mean that I'm the guilty one. Also, if I apologized, it would make her proud. So I decided, "No, I won't do it!"

I was struggling with my pride and I was not at all happy. I lost peace in my heart and it took me three days before I was able to give Penn an apology. After that, Penn and I became friends. She never did it again and we talked to one another more. Sometimes Penn brought me my favourite fruit as a gift. I knew that the Holy Spirit had helped me to work through this issue, as I would never have been able to give an apology without God's help. Apologising was never taught in my family. We keep quiet and tried to avoid trouble. If we were wrong, we just keep silent.

I felt great after this as if I had won the battle. Thank God that my pride had been changed for the first time now that Jesus Christ was in my life. I worked as babysitter for six months before going to work at an American missionary's house as a maid. I had been introduced to them by Noi, who was discipling me. She said it would be good to work for them so I could grow in faith and be able to join in Christian programs. This made me hungry to know God more and more. I attended different Bible classes and also read many Christian books that encouraged me to have a stronger belief in the Lord. I was also trained to rely upon the Holy Spirit when witnessing and learned how to follow up on new believers.

I felt happy to be with believers who had the same goal of seeing people won to Christ. I spent a lot of time with students at the Open University. This inspired me to apply to study there. I would then be able to join student groups easier and have the opportunity to testify to them about God. Unfortunately, there were some obstacles to my study such as limited time and financial problems. I only had enough money to pay for meals and personal expenses each month. I didn't get support from anyone else nor did I ask for money. I did not want to be a burden to anyone because I had always been self-sufficient. Because of this, my study was slow, but I always appreciated God's grace in my life. Although working as a maid sometimes made me feel inferior, I always thanked God for the work. I still had the hope in Him that someday I would have enough money to pay my tuition and enough time to complete my study. Because of my peace and hope in the Lord, I have always loved to tell everyone about God.

One day I got some Christian music from a neighbour. I listened to the beautiful voice of a woman who sang a song that I had never heard before. The song spoke of the birth of Jesus on Christmas day. When I heard that song and understood the story of Jesus coming into the world to save us, it touched my heart. I was moved to dance to this song as never before. Maybe it was because I have artist's blood and acting skills from my father's side of the family. I started to practise dancing and felt confident with myself. I prayed to God that I could do this to tell people of His Grace. I asked the program leaders at church if I could perform on stage during the Christmas programs. I performed to this song and the outcome was good. It was a surprise to many people at church. This was the beginning of my dancing to Christian music. I loved doing it to present God's story. Later, I tried to find other Thai music to practice to. However, I was not successful in that as not all music is for dancing in this manner.

Chapter 5.

Steps Into New Life

While I worked with the American missionary family, my walk with God grew in many areas. For example: responsibility to complete assigned task; obedience to the boss; being honest in small things and being on time for appointments. Being humble before God, watching how I spoke and following His instructions was a big task for me because I had never learned the importance of these things.

I also learned about controlling my hormones. Most young Christians are faced with this issue. Both men and women must learn to control themselves sexually by studying God's Word and asking the Holy Spirit to help them overcome their lust. We must be careful to do this and not become slaves to our fleshy desires as this can cause big problems with our faith in Christ. At first, I thought that Christian men would be strong in the Lord all the time and would be faithful in all circumstances. I soon discovered that this was not the case. They have the same lust issues as people who do not believe in God. If they do not let God control their lives, then they will always be doing the wrong thing.

Women must be careful not to do anything to cause men to lust. This type of behaviour can easily lead men to do things against God. Christian women should be aware about dressing modestly. They should dress appropriately. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 says, *"I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for woman who profess to worship God."* Christian women should not follow fashion especially if it causes men to lust. Instead of dressing up in fine clothing, Romans 13:14 teaches, *"Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of sinful nature."*

Most Christian women would love to have a Christian partner. But the problem is that there are not many Christian men. The quest for true love among Christians is not easy so I knew that finding my true love was going to be difficult. I realized that I must learn to accept the current situation and to trust in the Lord and wait for His provision. Whatever happens, I must believe in Him, either to stay single and serve Him, or find my true love and get married.

God loves us all even though we are sinners. God hates sin and it is an obstacle to our relationship with Him. I must learn to rely on God to help me to fight against my sinful nature in all things including anger, unforgiveness which becomes hate, pride which is the opposite of humility as also self-centredness and negative thoughts toward others. Although these things are only in my mind and not open for people to see, they are a source of sin. They can make me lose my peace with the Lord and slow my growth.

Although our past sins have been paid for by the blood of Jesus, it is still in our nature to sin against God and we must confess our sin whenever the Holy Spirit convicts our conscience of wrong doing. We should even confess our sinful thoughts. Each time we confess our sin, we need to depend upon the Holy Spirit to give us power to overcome that sin and, in this way, we will maintain a close relationship with God. If we give in to our own desires then evil has power over us but if we allow the Holy Spirit to have control, then we will overcome evil. We cannot stop sinning by our self. We always need the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us in every situation so that we can overcome the desires of our flesh. If we follow our sinful nature then we continue to sin against God but if we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us then, through His power, we will be able to resist sin and God's blessing will be poured into our life. We must always listen to the Spirit's conviction and abide in the Lord at all times because Jesus warns us that we can lose our salvation. In the Gospel of John 15:5, Jesus says, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* Verse 6 says, *"If anyone does not remain in me he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into fire and burned."*

Before understanding this, I thought that I could not lose my salvation and that everything was safe. I believed that I was a child of God no matter what I did. I would be forgiven even if I did not confess my sins. I believed that God understood my weakness and would keep forgiving me no

matter how much I sinned. However, when I studied the Word of God, I found that this was not true. The Bible tells us that if we deliberately continue in sin then we risk losing our salvation. That is why it is so important to confess and repent of our sins as soon as the Holy Spirit convicts us. The book of 1 John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* In this verse, confession means more than just admitting our guilt, it includes repentance. God looks at our heart and if it is not truly repentant, then He will know and will not forgive us our sins. Therefore, confessing to receive forgiveness means that we must be truly sorry and intend not to do it again. In the Gospel of Luke 13:3, 5, Jesus said, *"Unless you repent, you too will all perish"*. It is very easy for me to confess my sins but truly repenting can be really difficult; we must always rely on God to help us do this. In Matthew 24:13, Jesus says that only those who endure to the end will be saved. This means that we must continue to walk in the light with Jesus and have faith all our life. 1 John 3:7-8 say, *"Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."*

It would have been better for me to understand this from the beginning of my faith. Then I would have learned much sooner to recognise God speaking to my heart. Because I didn't understand, I had to learn the lesson over and over again. I have to admit that learning to walk with Jesus was not easy and this showed me that it is very important for new believers to have a spiritual mentor to guide them. A mentor needs to be strong in the faith and a good example to follow. They must be able to show you how God works in a person's life. The first thing a new believer needs to be taught is how to have a personal relationship with Jesus and not to rely on their emotions. Even when I had a mentor to teach me how to walk in faith with the Lord, I often relied on my emotions and did things my way, thinking that I was doing it for God. After some time, I began to recognise God speaking to my heart. This made it much easier to walk with God. However, I had to humble myself before I could really understand how to hear His voice.

Chapter 6.

Spreading God's Word In The Village.

I was always encouraged to share the Gospel with other Thais. I had believed in the Lord Jesus for about two years and I loved to witness to others about Jesus. I thought of going out to share the Gospel alone even though I did not have much experience. At the time, I wanted to stop working as a maid to become a missionary so that I could go where people have not heard the Gospel and tell them about Jesus. I had experienced new life and wanted to share it with others. I had the courage and felt confident that I would be able to do it. I knew how important it was for the Thai people to know about the real God who forgives our sins and gives us hope, peace and eternal life in heaven.

In Romans 10:17 it says, *"faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ"*. With this verse in mind, I returned to my hometown alone and followed my heart to witness about Jesus. My tools were my Bible, some tracts and a white board that a missionary gave me money to buy. The moment I got there, I started to tell the story of Jesus to the villagers and taught the children Christian songs. They loved the stories I told them about God. My younger brother Krailed had faith in Christ and later he invited Jesus to come into his life. He used to play the guitar for me in the program. At the time, I tried to be self-supporting by making Thai snacks and selling them in the school. It also helped to build relationships with the people in the village. I got on well with the people and used every opportunity to witness to anyone who wanted to hear the story of Jesus. I also handed out tracts and it felt so good to be able to share the Gospel.

It was not harvest time, so most of the people were at home in the village instead of being out in the rice fields. I used this opportunity to tell God's story. Sometimes they had many questions about Jesus such as, "Is He the leader of Western religions?" I answered their questions the best I knew how. But sometimes that led me away from the story of God, so I would pull back to the Gospel. It was an interesting experience to be a witness to the local people in my hometown.



Children with me and my brother Krailed (standing far left) in 1986

The chief of the village did not like what I was doing. He started to reject me. In the early morning, he used the loud speakers to speak to the whole village about me. He said that a young woman from our village had gone to Bangkok and brought back the foreign religion and was spreading it in the village. He said, "Brothers and sisters do not listen to her. She is trying to change our belief by promoting the foreign religion to us. We are Thai! Buddhism is our religion! We have believed since the time of our great grandparents. Do not let her give us the new religion or brainwash us. Do not let our children join any activities with her. Do not believe what she says or be persuaded to believe that religion. Do not change your religion by following her. What we have is good, don't change from our own belief." This was announced for several days and I can remember almost every word he said. When I first heard this, I thought that no one would care about what he was saying because it was nonsense. By Thai law, we have freedom to believe in different religions. As a result of the village chief's early morning announcements, the children stopped coming to my program. I asked them why they did not come to see me any more. They said that their parents stopped them because the chief did not allow them to attend.

So I stopped the witnessing program and started to support the activities in the village. I got involved with a festival by helping children to dress up. I tried to create friendships with people. I did not talk much about God unless someone asked me directly about Jesus. Then I would tell him or her about my faith and why I believed. At the time, no one stopped me. However, after being there for two months, I was forced to leave the village. Someone wrote a letter to my father saying, "If your daughter stays here any longer, we cannot guarantee her safety." After my father got that anonymous letter, he was very worried and concerned for me. He came to me with the letter and said, "Please leave the village because it is not safe for you and I do not have the power to protect you. You must get out of here and tell your God story somewhere else. Go to Bangkok and live with the Christians in that city where it will be better for you because the people do not welcome you here."

Why did the chief make such a big deal of my telling others about Christ? It was not illegal, immoral, and violent nor was it forced upon them. I only told the Jesus story and let them know that Jesus is God, our Saviour, and that He is the God of ALL nations, not just a Western religion. They rejected me and closed their eyes and ears before hearing the whole story. This is just like what Jesus said in Luke 21:17, *"all men will hate you because of me."*

It was very strange that I did not feel afraid of anything. I believed that God was great and I wanted to announce that God existed. But, for my father's sake, I left and was grieved that I had to leave the village. I return to Bangkok and took my younger brother Krailed with me. He was just 16 years old. As a new believer, he needed to grow in the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. So it was important for him to be among believers. I wanted to find a way to help him continue his studies as well. I returned to work as a maid. However, I did not make enough money to support both of us. I even had to limit my own spending. After a while, my brother ran away back to our hometown. Because there was no one to follow up on him, he later lost his faith and did not believe in God any more. It was so sad. Many questions came to my mind such as, "Why didn't the other Christians help me?" or "Why didn't God save my brother's soul?" I did not get any answers, but I believed that God had a plan for me. He might have been teaching me something. I regarded all this as a lesson and decided that I must trust God more instead of relying on my own way or understanding. I thanked God for the experience.

Chapter 7

Encouragement

Although I had lived by faith in the Lord for four years, my lifestyle had not improved much. I was still poor. Most of the work I did was as a maid. Even though I tried to get different work, I ended up doing the same job. The good thing about being a maid was that it came with accommodation. However, the income was very low and I only had money for food and basic needs. Because of finances, I could not continue my studies at the University so I quit working as a maid and tried to find a new job, hoping for a better income. Eventually I went to live with three Christian women. The one who invited me to share their apartment was Jill (not her real name). Later, I got a job at a gas station, but the income was still very low. Sometimes my income was less than a thousand baht a month (about \$34) and it was not enough. I was required to pay rent, but I didn't have enough money so I asked my housemates to lend me some money, but no one would. They all had better incomes than me. I ended up using the 10% that I had saved to give as an offering to the Lord. I felt so sad and lonely. My health was very bad too, probably because I was stressed out and didn't have enough food at times. I had many illnesses also and felt ashamed to tell anyone but God. My faith was shaky, but it was hard for me to tell others because I was embarrassed to show that I was poor and weak. I feared that I might become a burden to them. I was suffering alone with my health and my soul. I had no peace at that time and felt that God was very far away from me. I prayed for healing but, no healing came. I asked God for money, but He didn't help me. I felt depressed and discouraged, like no one understood or cared. I had no strength to live any more.

One morning, I went up on the roof of the building to spend time with God. I was looking down, calculating the height, when a thought came to mind, "If I dropped to my death then it would end the issue. I would not have to bear the burden any longer and not have to worry about my health, food or rent." Then I started to think that I would be on front page of the newspapers saying a woman had jumped off a building with a Bible in her hand. Since this would not be good for God's reputation, I prayed for strength to live. I was weak because of sickness and had no money to see the doctor. My relationship with my housemates was not good and I didn't know how much longer I

could handle it all. I felt so down and useless, with nothing to live for but I did not want to find the solution in killing myself, as I knew that would be wrong. I prayed, "Please, please help me prove that I'm useful and that my life could be a blessing to others. I want to be accepted, please make me a useful person in Your ministry." Tears fell on my Bible. As I wiped them away, I saw these words: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:31). Thank God! I read the words over and over again. My eyes were opened as God answered my prayer and my peace was back once again.

God had calmed me down and I got my energy back immediately but had flashes of guilt. I thanked God for His strength, new energy and faith. My burden and doubts had suddenly gone. I was so glad that I ran down from the roof and started the day with a good feeling. Later my health improved without treatment. Proverbs 17:22 tells us, "*A cheerful heart is good medicine.*" I was very encouraged by God. I asked Him for wisdom and the ability to be able to earn enough money so that I could move out of this place and be independent.

About a week later, while I was working at a gas station, I was sewing a soft toy doll as a gift for the daughter of one of the male workers. The father asked how long it would take to sew it by hand. I said it takes a long time, but I would finish it for his daughter. He asked if I would like to buy an old sewing machine from his neighbour for 400 baht. I said "Yes!" I always wanted to have a sewing machine of my own. So I bought the machine. After some small repairs and cleaning, it worked well. Later, I had no work at the gas station so I turned to repairing clothing. I used the sewing machine a lot, but didn't make enough money to cover my daily living expenses. Still, my hope was in the Lord. I believed that there must be something better for me to do with this sewing machine. I just had to wait.

Then one day Jill, my roommate, showed me a backpack she had brought. When I saw it, I liked it very much and wanted to know how to make it. It would be great if I could make them to sell. Jill let me borrow it to learn how to make them. I studied it but did not know where to begin. So I knelt to pray for wisdom from God. It took me a week to complete that backpack. I thanked God for His wisdom because I did not have a guidebook nor anyone to teach me. To honour God for giving me the ability and perseverance, I decided to call my backpacks, "Hallelujah Backpacks." Hallelujah means "Praise God."



After that, I began making tailor-made bags and backpacks. A few people at church began to order Bible covers, bags, and backpacks. They also asked me to sew other things. Thank God for this great sewing machine! My old sewing machine was operated by a foot pedal and it sewed the bags well. It felt like I had gotten a present from God and this helped to stimulate my hope and faith. That sewing machine became my friend, weird but true. The only true friend I had at that time was Jesus, but I loved my sewing machine. Sometimes when I was sad, I just sat next to it and thought about His great love and mercy. I knew that He was with me at all times.



Foot pedal sewing machine

Finally, I moved from that place and looked for temporary shelter. I moved into a house of the female staff of CCC (Campus Crusade For Christ) intending to stay there for a month. I soon had more customers and earned enough to pay rent. So I moved out and rented a small room. Because of the size, there was only room to sleep and no room for my sewing machine. I had to leave it with a Thai missionary family, but it felt good to be independent. I also had the opportunity to share the Gospel with students in an English class at the Baptist Student Center (BSC) for 2-3 days a week. By being involved in Christian activities and camps, the general public became aware of my sewing skills. As a result, I got more bag and Bible cover orders. I began making more money than ever before. However, I was working so hard, sewing and more sewing. I often went to bed late, so I had no time or energy to continue my studies at the University. Also, my income was not really steady. I could not rely on it, as sometimes I had customers, sometimes not.

But I thanked God for my ability to sew because it changed the status of my life. I now felt creative, capable and worthy. In the summer term, a group of students came to Thailand from the United States (summer project team of CCC). I was kept very busy with orders from American and Thai students. I now had the opportunity to learn English because when the American students ordered bags, they asked for different styles and colours. So I started to learn some English through an interpreter.

Chapter 8

Outreach To The North

After the group of American students left, I had some money from the sales so I travelled to the North with two other people, Lek and Bim. We went to the Northern Thailand province of Nan, to a village called "Baan Wang Kom." The hill tribe living there were called "Yao." In cooperation with the local church, we went to the village to tell the children the story of God. We had to travel up the hill to Ban Wang Kom by local transport, a truck. It was difficult for the big truck to climb up the high hills, especially when it rained, but we finally got there. In the small village we lived as they

lived. We slept in a hut, bathed in the stream and caught fish for food as well as helping them work in the cornfield. We taught the children to sing, told them God's story and did a puppet show which they enjoyed. Everyone had a good time. In the village school, there was only one male teacher. We helped to teach and gave them some healthy food as supplements. We made soya milk for them to drink and sometimes I made popcorn for them on the wood fire.



Left: Elementary school – Bim and I taking children's weight and height (Lek took the picture).
Right: Me teaching Thai to Yao kids.

Working with the Yao children was good and we enjoyed their company. Children are much easier to talk to than adults (the adults only spoke Yao). It was a blessing for all of us. The children were learning Thai as a second language, which would be a great benefit for their future education because they would need to speak Thai in the city schools.



Bim and I in Yao costumes.

Because the adults did not speak Thai, and we didn't speak Yao, each time we witnessed or prayed we needed an interpreter for every single word. Sometimes we visited families of believers who spoke some Thai. We used to visit and pray for an old woman who was 100 years old and blind. I was amazed at how she still lived. She was eating the same food every day, rice and boiled vegetables.

We learned many things in that village, especially about the pressures of three people living in those conditions. We did not have a comfortable lifestyle because there was no running water, no telephone and no electricity. We had to rely on candles and flashlights at night and we feared cobras which we had seen everywhere. Our guest cottage was a covered platform about half a metre off the ground. Sometimes at night we heard strange noises, which someone said was a cobra laying eggs. We were concerned about that and many times we used the flashlight to check it out. We had to be careful how we used the flashlight as the batteries would go flat and there were no shops in the village. To get new batteries, we would have had to travel all day to the city. On top of that, we had little money for these things. For this one-month outreach, we only had about 1000 baht each (\$34). This money was for transport, food and general living so we had to be very careful about how we spent our limited funds. With all these things, we had to learn to be patient with one another and make God the centre of our thoughts.

Early one morning I was walking along a pathway spending time alone with God, when I saw a large python lying in the stream about 3 metres from me. He was on my side of the stream. I was so shocked that I couldn't move my feet. It was a huge snake! I had never seen a snake this big before, except in the zoo. It looked very powerful and was big enough to swallow me easily. This was an exciting experience and it's something that I will never forget. In addition to cobras and pythons, we had to be aware of other dangers as well. Our friend Lek got stung by a poison insect and had a serious allergic reaction with swelling.

Another problem was that there were often cases of malaria from the many mosquitoes. Some of locals got malaria, which they believed was actually a ghost within them. The village shaman (witchdoctor) used to chase the ghost away by throwing stones. He also used to heal people by burning them with a hot stick from a fire. Sick people had to be in a very bad condition before they were taken to the city hospital. Some survived, some did not. After a while, Lek got malaria even though we had taken malaria tablets in advance. He was very sick for a few nights. We didn't know he had malaria until he acted very weird. We took him to the hospital. After a few days, he improved. By then we had run out of money and decided to go back to Bangkok. These experiences taught us about planning and preparing before going to live in unfamiliar, remote areas. The important thing is that we needed to ask God for divine guidance.

Back In Bangkok

I went back to sewing and got a few customers. I still made enough money to rent a room for a while and used every opportunity to share the Gospel with Thai students at the Baptist Student Centre (BSC). I volunteered to advise the students how to apply for English classes and introduced them to the Christian programs. In this way, I built relationships with them.

At this time, I was also inspired to improve my dancing skills, after such a long break from performing. I learned some sign language from the local deaf school and peeked into a ballet class to learn some moves. I combined these two and created new movements. I practised with Thai songs and a few English songs like, 'You Gave Me Love' by B.J Thomas. I loved this song as it reminded me that God cares for and loves me very much. I used to practice by myself. Some people told me that I lived in a fantasy world. But I never gave up my dream of dancing believing that it could be a good tool to attract people to God's story. Thank God for His understanding and allowing me to perform on stage several times. Many were impressed and sometimes people from other churches asked me to teach their youth, which I was willing to do. In the meantime, I wanted to go to a Christian dancing school to further improve my skills.

Later, through my Pastor, I met an American actor named Randall. His performance was similar to mine, but he used more facial expression. I saw his performance and loved it. I had an opportunity to chat with him. However, there was a communication problem because I could not speak English very well. After returning to America, he sent me a leaflet about his dance team, which was going to perform in Israel to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. He invited me to join the team. But after I considered the costs and my limited English speaking skills, I had to stop dreaming and just leave it to the Lord.

My income from selling bags was now less and some customers even refused to pay the full price for bags that they had ordered. I did not have enough money to pay rent and became discouraged. I had doubts and was asking God why He was not blessing me with new orders so I could have enough money to pay for rent and food. I was upset with God and I had to stop sewing. Later on, I got a cleaning job and accommodation with BSC. As a cleaner, my routine was to work from 6am to 2pm for 2,200 baht a month. The money was not enough to meet my living expenses. But on the bright side, I had the opportunity to witness to students, to give them information about English classes, and invited them to the Christian programs.

Even though I had to clean dirty toilets every day and give service to the students, I had peace with God and enjoyed my work. I was now proud to be able to do this kind of job. I could see the advantage of having Jesus Christ in my life. I felt that with Jesus I could do anything. I also now understood the feelings of people who cleaned toilets.

Once, one of the toilets had faeces splattered everywhere, all over the floor, the walls and into the next toilets. It was almost dry and smelled awful! I didn't know where to start cleaning and was so angry. I had to fight to calm myself and prayed for God to give me peace. Thank God He did! After becoming calm and peaceful, I could see positive things in the job. I was now able to clean the dirty bathrooms easily. After it was all clean, I felt so proud of myself. I thanked God that He had helped me to overcome my pride. As a cleaner, God continually gave me peace, hope and joy.



Me at BSC preparing the lecture chairs for the students.

Chapter 9

God Answered My Prayers.

I was at a church member's meeting when I heard that the church was in debt. I prayed to God with tears saying, "Dear Lord, I would like to help to pay the church debt. I would like to give ten thousand baht, but I don't have the money. You know my salary, as a cleaner, is only 2,200 baht per month. Please help me make some money. I have the skills to design and sew bags, so perhaps someone will pay me to teach them. Then I can give you the money." After my prayer I was thinking about who would possibly be interested in paying me to learn how to make bags. I thought, "What a dream!" and then forgot about it.

Two weeks later, I got a call from a woman who wanted to learn how to make backpacks. She wanted to know if it would be possible for me to teach her and how much would I charge. I was surprised and found out that she got my work phone number from one of my Christian friends named Cak. He was carrying a backpack that I designed. When she saw the bag, she wanted to learn how to make it. This young woman was the owner of a travel shop, which sells all kinds of bags and backpacks. Later I went to her shop and met her mother. I didn't know how to start talking business, so I shared the Gospel with her mother and told her how God had given me the ability to design and sew bags and backpacks. She asked how much I would charge to teach her daughter. I quickly thought about how much I wanted to give to the Lord and how much I wanted for myself. I thought that if I said 20,000 baht, then she might bargain for 15,000. Then I would have 10,000 for the Lord and 5,000 for myself. So I said, "20,000 baht," and she said, "Deal." I was surprised that it was so easy, with no bargaining. I was very happy that God had answered my prayer. When I got the money, I gave the church 10,000 baht plus 2,000 for my 10% tithe. This left me with 8,000 baht for myself. It was more than I expected and I sent some to my family. I also got a passport, a suitcase and some clothes for my performance as I still dreamt that some day I would go overseas to join a dance group.

Thank God that He is able to use little people like me. Although I had no money to offer Him, He made it possible for me to help the church. I will never forget His answer to my prayer. It made me feel good as it was a miracle to me and it increased my faith. I wanted to tell everyone of the greatness of our mighty God. When I shared what God had done for me, Christians had different opinions. Some suggested that I should have thought about it more as I was poor and needed money. One woman was encouraged by what I did. She said that I was like a starving person who got a big cake. Although I needed the cake, I gave more than 50% of it away. She was delighted with what I had done. But the truth is that I was not thinking of myself, I was focused on God. When I first prayed for the money, I promised God that I would give 10,000 baht to the church, so I had to be honest and do that. He honoured my prayer by getting me the money, so I had to honour Him by giving as I said I would. God does not lack anything and does not need our money. He owns everything on the earth and in heaven. What He wants from us is to love Him with all of our heart, soul and mind by being humble and obedient in our faith.

I continued to work as a cleaner and was always excited to witness to the students. I now felt more confident in sharing my faith. The BSC was a good place to meet people and there was freedom to share the Gospel. However, I wanted to do something better than cleaning. I also wanted to learn English so that I could have a better future. I did try an English class with a Thai teacher, but it was difficult and not challenging at all. Also, the class was no fun. I thought about learning from native English speakers who taught at the BSC. But in order to study in their classes, I had to pass an English foundation test. Without passing the test, it would be impossible to join the class. Also, although registration was not expensive, I had no money. I tried talking to native speakers but found

it very hard. So I thought that it was impossible for me to learn. It was just too difficult. All I could do was to continue cleaning and giving service to the students and teachers by preparing equipment in the classrooms. Sometimes I dreamt that one day I would be an English teacher standing in front of the class, confidently speaking English. I would be a very good teacher and the students would enjoy my class very much. However, it was just a dream.

Chapter 10

It's Hard To Walk By Faith

I worked as a cleaner at BSC for nine months. However, my true desire was to do something else. So I stopped work and started fasting and praying about my future. I told God that I wanted to do what I loved most of all, dancing. At that time, I dreamed about going abroad to join a Christian dance team. I knew that God could make it happen if it was His will for my life. But I did not see any sign that it would happen because there were big obstacles, like my poor English and no money. It was only a dream.

I went back to sewing bags and faced the same issues with housing and income uncertainty. During the day, I put my sewing machine in the space under the house of the Thai missionary family. At night, I had to find a place to sleep. Sometimes I volunteered to clean and look after their house when they went away. At other times, I had to ask a female friend if I could stay with her overnight; sometimes she allowed me and other times not. I learned to accept the fact that I was homeless. The funny thing was that I did not feel like a homeless person or poor at all. I felt that each day was an exciting challenge because I didn't know where I was going to sleep that night.



My space under the Thai missionary's house.

This is how my life was and there was no hope of finishing my studies at the university. Another problem was my health. It was not good as I suffered from migraines, gastritis and severe menstrual pains. More than once, I fainted on the bus. At times, I thought that it was the end, but thank God I survived. A Christian couple once took me to the hospital where I got treatment that cured my gastritis. Later, I got an ulcer that was probably due to not eating enough. My abdominal pains were frequent and I was often hungry, but God was always with me. He helped me to stand firm in Him, even in my poor condition. Sometimes I was encouraged when some Christian friends would invite me for dinner or bought me a pack of fried rice. I felt really gleeful and my stomach was very happy. I still witnessed and did volunteer work to help the students with the Friday night programs at BSC. The nice thing about doing volunteer work was that it always came with a free meal. Also, on Sunday at church, they provided a free lunch. I appreciated all these meals.

This was my life of walking by faith with Jesus. I didn't know how other believers lived, but this was my condition and I was used to it. I thought that there might be some people who were worse off than me. The nice thing about having Jesus in my life was that He was always there for me. He gave me strength, peace and hope. I always had confidence that one day my life would be better. I believed these difficult conditions were testing my faith to keep me holding onto God. The Bible has many stories of people who fought with hardships; men like Job who was a wealthy man and the mighty King David. Even Jesus' disciples, who had lived with Him and seen His miracles, faced many hardships and had to live by faith. In James 1:3-4 God says, *"...because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and compete, not lacking anything."*

An outcast

One night I was able to sleep in the room underneath the house where I put my sewing machine. The owner said that whenever the room was available, I could stay there. I was so glad to have found a place to sleep. But the next night, a man who sometimes drove for the owner of the house suddenly came to Bangkok from up county. When he arrived, he knocked on the door and chased me out of the room. He said, "This is my bedroom!" He angrily went into the room taking all my personal possessions throwing them out of the room. Then he told me to sleep outside! I could not believe this had happened to me. Being expelled from the room made me feel confused and worthless. How could he make me move out of the room to where it wasn't safe for a woman? I had a mosquito net, but it was not mosquitoes that I was worried about. There were four houses in the same area sharing one fence and one gate. Anyone could walk underneath the houses because the entrance gate was not locked. I was so afraid that someone might harm me that I was shivering and crying. I was in a very dangerous situation because it was late at night and I had nowhere to go. Then I prayed to God and told Him I was really scared. I asked for His protection and peace, which He gave me. Then I calmed down. I was encouraged by Psalm 34:4 which says, *"I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears."* After reading this passage, I felt warm and confident. It was like He was speaking directly to me saying, "You are not alone. I'm here with you." This allowed me to sleep till dawn safely. Thank God for His protection!

From this experience, I realized that fear was a thief. When we fear, the peace of God is stolen away from us and causes us to worry. God is our refuge in times of trouble, so we have to rely on Him only.

The lowest life

I was so poor that I needed to eat rambutans instead of normal food. This red spinney looking fruit was only 7 baht for one kilo and that was enough for three meals. I was embarrassed about my condition and did not want anybody to know. I feared that my situation would not encourage others and may become a burden to them. When without food, I would tell myself, "This is a great opportunity to lose weight." However, my situation became worse when I was sick and alone.

Once I had severe menstrual pains and was too exhausted to combat the problem. I lay still with a high temperature and was soaked with sweat. Later I felt cold inside my body and the back of my hand had turned pale yellow. I thought it might be a symptom of dying. I did not have the strength to breathe properly or to move my fingers. I prayed to the Lord requesting my life, asking Him to heal me and not let me die alone. I suffered like this for almost two hours. Then God gave me peace in my heart. Slowly the pain decreased and I had enough energy to drink from a water bottle. I was happy that, through the Grace of God, I had finally overcome the situation. In fact, with this problem, I should have gone to the doctor for an injection. But God healed me and I thanked Him

for His power of healing. Psalm 118:13 encouraged me saying, *"I was pushed back all about to fall, but the Lord helped me."*

Often I had to find a place to sleep, sometimes late at night. Thank God I finally found a room to rent for the night. It was a good price at only 20 baht per night in Sri Sokparaj market at Saphan Kwai. Inside the room there was a very dirty closet and an old ceiling fan. But because of the dust, I would not use the fan even though it was very hot. In addition, there were plenty of cockroaches, but I did not have the stuff to clean the room. I was not surprised by the poor condition of the room because the rent was so cheap. I had to look for a clean spot to sleep each night. The big advantage of this room was that I would not be expelled. I still remember being very tired that night with a migraine and stomach pains. I felt very lonely and desolate. I prayed to God for true love from another person. I wanted my Prince Charming to come rescue me! But I knew that in reality there was no Prince Charming. Only God could give me comfort and care in my poor condition. I should thank Him as 1 Thess. 5:18 says, *"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* Thank God that I have a bed each night and am protected from all harm. I forgot about Prince Charming and told the Lord that if He wanted me to serve Him as a single woman, then that would be okay. But I wanted to have a mattress, clean sheets, a thin blanket and a soft pillow to sleep on. All I had to sleep with was a thin cloth on the floor, a backpack as a pillow and towels as a blanket.

Over the next several days, I did not get what I asked for from God. But I was not disappointed because He had given me joy and hope all the time. Bible verses which encouraged me were Romans 5:3-4, *"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and character, hope."* When I was in difficult situations, I was thankful that the Word of God always encouraged me at the right time. I learned to appreciate the little things. I believed that He was always with me and that He would not let me stay in this condition forever. Whenever I opened the Bible, I was encouraged that He would meet all my needs. The Lord said to me, *"But the needy will not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the afflicted ever perish"* (Psalm 9:18).

My condition did not worry me any more as I had peace and hope in God. He taught me to adapt to any situation without thinking about being poor. I never revealed my poor condition to anyone. God was always bringing joy to my face because I was excited and had hope in Him at all times.

Later, I began to earn more money through selling handbags and backpacks again. Suddenly I had enough money to pay rent for a better room. Also, sometimes other Christians would give me money for costumes for my Gospel dancing. Sometimes things were good and other times they were bad; sometimes I sold bags, sometimes not. When feeling depressed, I would look at the products that I had designed and remember how God had inspired me to make them. Then I would tell myself that God made me able to do this work and I must believe that He would do great things in my life again.

After six years, my living conditions had not improved much and it made me wonder how much longer I could continue to survive like this. When will the sky be blue for me? Although my life was not strewn with rose petals, it was filled with hope, esteem and peace in Him. Whenever I had any disappointment, I learned to trust Him more and ask Him to sustain my life in the faith. I knew that God was my best friend in times of difficulty and He never insulted or humiliated me. His love is true love. Facing poverty was a great experience, as I understood people more, especially those living in poor conditions. I am not afraid of being poor again. In fact, I am quite adept at survival in

starvation and living from day to day with Him. Psalm 16:11 says, *"You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."*

Chapter 11

Blue Sky Days

In late 1989, a lady who was going to Singapore offered to take me with her to work with the Thai Good News Christians and be part of their Gospel programs for Thai workers. I accepted the offer immediately as the group in Singapore were going to make all the arrangements, including accommodation and buying me a ticket. I was very excited but I had to go ahead of her, by myself. I prepared my testimony and performance in both Thai and English. Leaving the country was like a dream come true and it would be my first flight since I got my passport. I remember being so excited when I saw my name in English on the ticket.



At first, Miss Thailand was invited to go, but she refused. So I was going in her place. I had to dance to Christian music and give my testimony. I thanked God for choosing me to go. I had wanted to go out of the country for such a long time.

This chance to go overseas made me think of Isaiah 40:31: *"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles."* This was my flight like an eagle.

When I arrived at the Singapore airport, I saw the missionary who had come to pick me up as she had her name "Sally" on a sheet of white paper. I had never met her before. She spoke Thai very well and that made it easy for me. She took me to her apartment at Sophia Court. It was a great place to stay, everything was so clean, the scenery was beautiful and it had all the amenities. When I looked out the window, I saw a swimming pool below; full with clean water and behind the pool there were saunas. All around, everything looked so clean that I could not compare it with what I was used to. It was extremely different. Before I went to bed that night, I thanked God so many times for the soft mattress, blanket, pillows and the clean air which made it easy to breathe and sleep well. I felt like I was in heaven and slept right through until morning. When waking up, I thought I was dreaming because everything seemed so unreal. It took me a while to get myself back together again. I was in the middle of a group of new Christians and I had to learn to communicate in English, which was not easy. I thanked God that Sally spoke Thai well and was very nice to me. She was a humble woman with a warm heart, making it comfortable for me to be with her. Also, the Singaporean group of Christians was very friendly and kind to me.



Me dancing to Christian music

Next evening, the programs started at the Luther Land Church. The Thai lady who brought me to Singapore preached of God's Gospel story. I danced and gave my testimony. Thank God everything went well although there were not as many Thais as we expected. Some say it was probably because of the rain. But it was still an exciting experience for me and it gave me a sense of belonging.

During my time in Singapore, I saw the grace of God beyond comprehension. Although my English was poor, my testimony somehow encouraged other Christians and I got good feedback. I was only supposed to be in Singapore for one week. But the team there encouraged me to stay longer. So I stayed another week, until my visa expired. I then had to leave Singapore and go to Malaysia with two friends, Leeling and Phillip. We stayed with Leeling's family for a while and then I got a visa to go back to Singapore for another two weeks. I had the opportunity to witness and share with some churches, home groups, the Salvation Army and a deaf group. I met an Indian Christian woman (a nurse) who worked with the lepers. She took me to their camp to perform and give my testimony. I also had the opportunity to do the same thing at a Vietnamese refugee camp. After visiting all these different groups, I went back to working with the Thai Good News Christians at the Golden Mile Complex. I was introduced to many people and met many brothers and sisters in Christ such as Joseph, Adam, Eve, Mary, Sally, Francis and others. It was such a good time and I was very encouraged by God through the people who were filled with warmth and care. When my visa expired, I had to return to Thailand. After being in Bangkok for a few days, the Thai Good News team invited me to come back.



Joseph, his wife and I in their house



Me doing a Thai dance at the wedding feast.

When I returned to Singapore, I went with the team on a retreat. We stayed at a guest house where the atmosphere was warm. I felt the comfort and love of God through them. Everyone was so nice to me and it made me feel very special. During that time, I became attracted to a man on the team called Bob (not his real name). He showed very clearly that he liked me a lot. At first, I was very happy that someone liked me. But later on, I was not so happy and did not feel anything special for him. He made it very obvious that he liked me and this made me feel uncomfortable around him. No matter where I was or what I was doing, he was always there, even when I needed to go to the bathroom. In the afternoon, when the time came to catch a taxi home, he was there and wanted to come home with me in the taxi. He would call me every day to check my schedule. I began to feel that I had lost my freedom. At times, when I wanted to go somewhere alone, I had to keep it a secret from him. It was hard to tell anyone about this as I thought that no one would understand and I might destroy friendships. It was frustrating and sometimes stressful. I had no idea what to do. But, because I was getting bad migraines, I decided to tell Bob the next time he called me on the phone. I explained to him that I liked him as a friend, but did not have any special feelings for him. After that, he was lost in silence for a while. Then he came back, making me feel uncomfortable once

again. I was worried more than ever, so I decided to seek God for help. I prayed to God for a solution to this problem. After I prayed, God provided a resolution in a timely manner.

Sometime later, a fellow Christian in the group found a way for me to stay in Singapore without having to worry about my visa expiring. In order to have a visa to stay in Singapore for a long time, I had to be a student. There was a Christian school that was about to start a new course called CDTS. A doctor in our home group gave me a check and others offered cash. Thus, I had enough to register for the course. I even received some pocket money. It was really amazing how things happened like that. I did not understand why people in Singapore were so concerned for me. They were generous in giving me money and helping in so many ways. This certainly must have come from God. By myself, I would never have been able to come to Singapore twice and do this course. I came with no money; all I had was a suitcase and my testimony. I was amazed how God had taken me from being homeless and cleaning toilets in Thailand, to the luxury of residing in Singapore. I didn't feel like I deserved such a reward. I was very glad to be living in Singapore, as it was such a safe place. In addition, I had the love and warmth of Christian brothers and sisters in Christ. Sometimes I did not want to go back to Thailand.

Chapter 12

Move to New Accommodation

Later, I moved out of Sofia Court to the school, which was far from Bob. But he still tried to contact me. In fact, he visited me once but could not find me. I never heard from him after that.



Shaw Plaza 1991. The school facilities and accommodation were upstairs.

I was staying at the Shaw Plaza for the Crossroads Discipleship Training School course (CDTS) which was designed for adults. While there, I met many nice people and made many new Christian friends from different countries. There were some seniors in the class also. The school provided me with a roommate who spoke Thai. Her name was Mariette (Swedish). She was a missionary to Thailand. It was a blessing to have her as a roommate as we shared the love of God. She asked me how I became a Christian and I shared my testimony with her. Mariette was very kind to me and had a good personality. She was like an angel.

Once, while praying and sharing our faith in a small group, I saw Mariette crying. I didn't know why as, at that time, I did not understand English very well. Later she gave me a piece of paper with a picture she had drawn of a person wearing a hat, sitting on a tree stump and surrounded by blueberries. I asked if it was I sitting on the stump and wearing the hat. She replied, "No! You are the tree stump." She told me that the person wearing the hat was a hiker who was tired from his long trip. When finding the tree stump, he sat down to rest and eat the blueberries for strength to continue his journey. I thanked her for that and said, "Wow! I'm a stump. This means I'm a very useful person." Her explanation made me feel very good. Thank God for Mariette and her encouragement which reminded me that I'm important in God's ministry. Mariette said my witness was encouraging to her. It had given her greater hope and faith in God. She asked me for several copies of my photo to send to family and friends (see the pictures below). The picture on the right was taken just before I came to Singapore the first time. The photo was taken while I was still in Thailand. I had made the bag I was carrying. On the bag were the words 'Hallelujah' and 'Thank you God'.

Once Mariette told me that I should marry. She said I needed someone and believed that God would provide a good man for me. Mariette thought that God might even send him to meet me here in Singapore. She was so sweet. I thought she was trying to encourage me to make me feel good about myself. I knew it would be hard for me to find my true love as, from my experience, no one but God could be my true love.



Mariette is wearing a Chinese hat. I am on the left. made.



Me in Thailand with the bag I

Later, before the CDTS course finished, Mariette told me about the next course, Discipleship Training School (DTS). This course was especially designed for young people. She told me that this course would be better for me. Mariette said, "Who knows, in this course you might find the one God has provided for you?" I said that I didn't have any money to pay the course fee. She said not to worry, as she would support me after getting back to Sweden. She said that she would find a job to get the money to send me. I asked if she was serious about paying my school fee and she said yes. So I thanked God for her because I was worrying about going back to Thailand where I had no place to live. I was no longer worried and wanted to live in Singapore as long as possible.

God always showed His love and kindness through the people in the school. They allowed me to sew to earn some pocket money. I sewed curtains, upholstered cushions with sofa fabric, and did other sewing jobs for the school. On my birthday, a nice lady named Irene took me out for dinner. I felt very special. Her son from America was visiting her in Singapore. When she prepared meals for

him, I was sometimes invited. I was very impressed with her kindness and must admit that her cooking was delicious. I had the opportunity to meet her son. Unfortunately, he did not talk much and my English was limited. Life in Christ was exciting in all circumstances.

Speaking in tongues and being filled with the Holy Spirit

During the CDTs, there was a woman in our class called Esther (from Brunei). She was a nice person and we talked and shared our faith. She said to me that I needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. My understanding was simply that we were filled with the Holy Spirit when we believed and accepted Jesus Christ into our life. I believed that after being saved, because of our human nature, we might sin. This happens when we try to control our own life instead of being led by the Holy Spirit. The Bible says that we must be filled with the Holy Spirit and follow His leading. How do we do this? By confessing and repenting of our sins and allowing the Holy Spirit to be in charge of everything in our life. Galatians 5:22-23 says, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."* And when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will have power to do things that we thought were impossible. For example, like the time when I was very poor and God provided a job so that I could give 10,000 baht to the church.

The subject of speaking in tongues is found in Acts 2 and in the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 14. I felt very confident about what I believed. At the time, I thought that speaking in tongues should not be the main objective in the life of a believer. The main things to seek and hold on to are faith, hope and love. Currently, many people seemed to be more concerned about speaking in tongues than the truth. I thought that they were seeking the supernatural to feel good and also so that they could fit in with others. I had experienced in churches where my brothers and sisters in Christ were speaking in tongues all at once and they prayed in strange tongues at the same time. I didn't know what it meant and it was so noisy. Some fell to the floor. Others acted weird when the preacher laid his hand on their heads and pushed. They immediately fell backwards with someone behind to catch them. All this strange activity frightened me and I lost my peace. I did not feel comfortable with what I saw and heard. I had to leave because it was hard for me to breathe and my heart was beating faster than usual.

I was not sure that this was from God. I don't see the need for believers to speak in tongues at all. 1 Cor. 14:22 says that, *"Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers: prophecy, however is for believers not for unbelievers."* The unbelievers being referred to were Jews. They had rejected God by failing to listen to warnings from the prophets to turn from their sins, and later by refusing to accept Jesus as the Son of God. Thus, speaking in tongues became a sign of unbelief. God's judgment was on them because they continually failed to listen to the truth from the prophets and had rejected belief in Jesus.

Our God understands what we say. He is not a complicated God. That's what I believed. I prayed to God, as I didn't want to make her feel bad when she tried to get me to speak in tongues. She believed that everyone should have this gift in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Anyway, I knelt at her request and she prayed as she laid her hand on my head and started to speak in tongues. She asked me to follow. I knew in my heart I could make her happy by copying her, but I couldn't, as I believed in being truthful. I stopped and looked up at her face with a big smile. I told her that I believed that speaking in tongues was a gift that I didn't have and didn't need. I felt OK doing this as I already had experienced God in my life and felt His Grace and Love all the time without communicating in a special language. I was happy that way and thanked God she accepted it and never tried to get me to speak in tongues again.

I met an old friend

One day while I was still living in the Shaw Plaza apartment, I was introduced to Ben from Holland (not his real name). He was one of the students, on a different course, living in the same apartment. We met in the elevator. After he found out that I was Thai, he said that he had a Thai girlfriend. Then he opened his Bible and showed me a picture of a Thai woman. I cried out, "That's Jill, my friend who I had rented a house with a long time ago. She let me borrow her backpack to learn how to sew them." Ben was very excited as well. Not long after, Jill visited Singapore. So we were able to meet again after more than a year. I found out that she was getting married within six months. She was so excited! They showed love toward each other and I believed that they would make a nice couple. I have to admit that I felt a little jealous about Jill having a boyfriend, but I was pleased for her. When we had the opportunity to talk, I asked her how she knew that Ben was the right man for her. Jill said it was because God had answered her prayer that the man who would be her partner would be the one who proposed to her at the basketball court in the Christian camp. She said that Ben must be the one because he did propose to her at the camp. When his parents had come to visit in Thailand, they accepted her with a big warm hug and love. Jill also told me about a past experience that she had with a man named Bill. They both loved each other and were praying, seeking God's will in the matter. Then Bill's parents came to visit them in Thailand. They expressed their dislike for her telling their son not to develop a relationship with her. She was disappointed and hurt. But after that, Ben came into her life. She felt that God had given her Ben in place of Bill. After Jill returned to Thailand, Ben completed his studies and then they went to Holland and got married.

Before the DTS course began, I met with a preacher. We chatted and I shared my dream about performing and dancing. He recommended a Christian dance school in Hong Kong and gave me the school brochure, which was very interesting. The teaching and learning were the way I liked. I had a dream that after I finished the DTS course I might apply to the dance school in Hong Kong. I would then have the opportunity to travel to many countries with the dance teams and share God's story and my testimony through the shows. I would be with the team and would not have to return to Thailand. But when I saw the registration fee, my dream was shattered. The cost for one year was far too much for me. However, the preacher told me not to worry because the tuition was a little thing for God. He said that I should pray and ask God if He wanted me to go to this school. He said that if it were God's will, He would provide everything. I did pray and knew in my heart that it was not His will for me to go to the dance school. I didn't have peace. My limited English speaking skills, plus my age at 29, was a barrier. So I stopped dreaming for a while thinking there must be another way for me to serve the Lord.

Chapter 13

New Class and New Friendships

When the new class began, I met students from many countries. There were ten students from Singapore itself and the rest were from America, Canada, England, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Australia, Malaysia, India and one from Thailand, me!

The new classroom atmosphere was different from the previous time. In total, we had about 20 young people and we got along with one another very well. Another job for me at the school was cutting hair in my free time. One time I cut Timothy Sim's hair and later we became friends. Timothy taught me how to do dance by jumping and clapping my feet together in the air. He learnt ballet as a little boy. We had so much fun together.



The DTS classroom with Jenny on the left.

I really enjoyed the company of the new group. A couple of weeks later, a young man from Holland joined our class. It was hard for people to say his nickname so they called him the Dutch guy. He was a quiet, shy person and always sat at the back near the exit. I liked to sit up front because I had to listen to the English very carefully. This way I learnt English and God always provided someone who could speak Thai in my class. Jenny, whose parents were missionaries in Thailand, spoke Thai fluently. Before she helped me, I did not understand the lecturer very well.

In small groups, we shared and prayed for each other. Steve Green, from America, asked us to pray for his migraine headaches because he could not sleep through the night. He said the person sleeping above him turned and flipped around all night and made a lot of noise. I asked who was above him. He said it was the Dutch guy. I did not know what he looked like, but I knew he sat at the back of the class. I told Steve that he should tell him and we should pray for him not to turn so much at night, then Steve would be able to sleep well. In my thoughts, I hoped that I would not marry this kind of person who turned around in bed all night. I went to church on Sunday and had the opportunity to meet with this Dutch guy. I found out that he was good looking. He greeted me in a friendly manner but my attention was not on him as I was so excited with new friends in the group.

Later, we found that his nickname was Thalwin. He began to be friends with Timothy as well, and we got to know each other more. He knew that I was Thai, so he tried to speak a few words to me in the Thai language. He said that his sister-in-law was also Thai and had lived in Holland since she was a teenager. He loved Thailand and had just returned from there and Indonesia. Then he showed his photos including pictures of his entire sister-in-law's family in Thailand and the places he had been. He was so excited about it and I felt that he was not as shy or quiet as we thought. He asked me how I had become a Christian. Because I loved to give my witness about God, I had the opportunity to share my faith with him. I told him how God had changed my life. By His Grace, He had brought me here to Singapore twice, and made it possible for me to join the school. I don't know how much this Dutch guy understood. Later, he told me that I was the first real Thai Christian he had met. He began to befriend me and we were more and more open with each other, no pretending.

After that, we met more often. I asked him about Holland. He said his country was very beautiful in the spring. At that time, the tulips emerge from the ice-covered ground. Then I imagined what it would be like to see a real tulip. I was reminded about the story of Dutch people eating tulip bulbs instead of potatoes during the World War II food shortages. I also remembered the Jewish family of

Corrie Ten Boom hiding in their attic to escape capture by the German Police (Gestapo). I used to read the book called *The Hiding Place*, written by Corrie Ten Boom. It was her life story of how, during World War II, her family helped Jews by hiding them in a small upper room in their home. These Jews were able to avoid being put into concentration camps by the Gestapo. Later her father, sister and herself were arrested and imprisoned in a concentration camp where her sister and father died. Her testimony has encouraged many believers around the world, including myself. I was impressed by her faith and how God helped her in the midst of the terrible conditions in the camps. She was a role model of hope, love and faith. I wished that I could visit her house museum one day.

Later, I noticed that Thalwin was showing more interest in me because, whenever we went out as a group, he was always with me. I thought that it was time for me to take action before it was too late. I let him know that I was older than him and he was not my type. I needed to stop the relationship before it got any deeper. I had three reasons for it:

1. I already had someone I admired.
2. I didn't want someone younger than me.
3. If I loved him, then later I would certainly have a big problem learning Dutch.

So, one day I invited him to MacDonald's where I talked to him with a friendly, smiley face. I was talking about my age and asked him to guess how old I was. He guessed wrong, so I showed him my passport to confirm it. He had trouble believing that I was older than he had thought. I think he was a bit disappointed, as after that, he kept his distance. I felt free and more comfortable after I had let him know the truth of my age. It was over and done with, but we were still friends. We continued to enjoy our time together with the groups. After class, our groups would meet together to talk and share about friends, families and countries. Sometimes, we ate out and had outdoor activities. We also went to different churches to do programs and share our testimonies. My time in Singapore with YWAM was the best time in my life.

But I began to worry about the course ending. I would soon be travelling back to the reality of Thailand. I would have to live alone without a true friend and would again have the problem of finding accommodation and enough income to live. However, I believed that it would be better this time because I had gotten new strength from God during my stay in Singapore. I had so many blessings to count. This made me believe even more that God would provide everything I needed.

One day Thalwin invited me to eat out. He told me that it was not a date. As friends, we would share expenses (going Dutch). I agreed because this would be the last time to see one another before we went to our separate teams. This was the first time we ate out alone and it gave us the chance to talk. We both had so much fun. After eating pizza, we had some ice cream and sat together outside the restaurant with hundreds of Singaporeans surrounding us. We looked up to the sky and saw the stars. I said to him that if I had the chance, I would like to learn English in America because I was fond of my American Christian friends. Thalwin said that if he finished his studies, he would become a computer engineer. In the future, if he got work in America, then we could see each other there. I just wanted to give him a hint that I didn't like the Dutch language, but it seemed that my hint didn't work.

The time had come for us to go on a one-month outreach to either China or Indonesia. Thalwin decided to go on the China team with Timothy because he had never been there. I chose Indonesia as it cost less and the Indonesian language was easier to learn. Later, the school advised Thalwin to join the Indonesian team because he had to leave before the end of the outreach to get back to Holland to prepare for further study. It was easier and quicker to get back from Indonesia.

Chapter 14

Travel to Indonesia (Outreach)



The Indonesian team (There are three people not in this picture).

We departed from Singapore on the evening bus and travelled through the night to arrive at Penang at dawn. We stayed one night there and then travelled to Medan by boat. We had a smooth trip but still many of us were seasick. I was seasick the whole trip with a bad headache. Many of us went outside to get some fresh air. I didn't know what to do and I must have looked so weak as one of the female passengers, not from our team, gave me a pill for seasickness. Thalwin took good care of me also. Thank God for His care through Thalwin and the person who gave me the pill. A while after taking the pill, I felt much better and was able to enjoy the trip. Finally, we arrive at Medan, the Northern capital of Sumatra. Then we travelled several hours by bus to a village and stayed at a local hotel. Thank God for a safe trip. We stayed there for two or three nights and then travelled to other places.

We rented a van to go Lake Toba. During this trip, we had a lunch break in one village where there were shops and restaurants beside the road. Most of the local food was Indonesian curries and large pieces of deep fried tuna fish. There was also traditional Indonesian fried rice called Nasi Goreng, which was my favourite food, served with shrimp, crackers and small fried fish. Another snack food, called Pisang Goreng (deep fried banana) was similar to a Thai snack. I quickly learned these new words, Nasi Goreng and Pisang Goreng.

To use the bathroom, we paid 300 Rupia (almost one baht). When I used the bathroom in one restaurant, I opened the door but didn't see any toilet in there so I thought I must be in the wrong place. I asked the owner if it was the bathroom and she said yes. So I went inside the room again and saw lots of things stacked on top of one another, as it was a storeroom as well. I noticed that in the corner on the left there were two pieces of stone placed alongside a long shallow groove that went outside the bathroom wall. I imagine that this was typical of the toilets around there. When I told the others about this toilet, I found they all faced the same issue in different shops. Thalwin warned us not to drink anything with ice because he found that ice cubes were stored in the bathroom. After that, we all drank directly from bottles and cans. This was a strange experience. People from other countries such as Germany, America, Australia, etc. would find it difficult to understand these conditions but I was familiar with living this way from my experiences in Thailand.

Finally we arrived at Lake Toba and stayed in the local hotel, which was not far from the lake. It was a large freshwater lake as far as the eye could see and was surrounded by hills. It was very beautiful with crystal clear water and an island in the middle. Parts were so deep that divers could not reach the bottom. I thanked God for the opportunity to see this volcanic lake as I had never seen anything like it before. We went swimming together and I ended up with a group of Indonesian kids without knowing it. I was swimming with them when suddenly I was in deep water and I panicked because I could not touch the bottom. I could not swim and cried out for help. Unfortunately, no one understood or paid any attention to me because I didn't know the Indonesian word for "help". I tried to keep my head above water looking around to find someone from our team, but no one was nearby. I could see them but they couldn't see me. I panicked, thinking I was going to drown. I asked God to help me by giving me a peaceful mind. God calmed me down and gave me peace to relax so I was able to float. Suddenly, I had hope when my feet touched a stone and I pushed myself to the shallow water. Thank God for His help! I was very relieved. After this event, I would not swim alone. I made sure there was a good swimmer with me whenever I went into the water.

During that time, the relationship between Thalwin and I developed to become more than just friends. Sometimes, I got mixed feelings about our relationship. I was not sure about how to act, as I didn't have much romantic experience. Sometimes I told myself to beware of falling in love, as love is blind. I also feared that things could change quickly and I might get hurt. Therefore, I was scared to trust anyone. The only person I could really trust was God, as He never changes.

Our team stayed at the lake for several days. We walked around to different areas and prayed at various points. Then we left to travel in our van to the port. We travelled for 12 hours in a relatively modern boat to Nias Island. Upon arrival, we took a bus to a local hotel and relaxed after our long journey. We stayed there for several nights.

On Sunday we went to worship with a local church, not far from the hotel. Worship there was different. The seats were divided into two sides, men's and women's. Even though the local congregation did not mix, we sat together as a team. A lady gave the sermon which we did not understand but we worshipped and prayed in silence.

One time we went to visit a children's home for orphan boys. We spent time with the children and entertained them with our performances. We covered the top of our bodies in large paper bags with drawings of eyes, noses and mouths and looked like dwarfs. The children laughed and thought it was strange as we danced to the music.

The next day, we left our suitcases behind and just took our backpacks with basic needs and drinks. We had to travel by foot to a village which was in the jungle. We passed through other villages, streams and groups of local people. Being new to the area, we did not know how far we had to go. We felt very tired from walking up hill on the narrow pathway but it was well worth the inconvenience. The natural scenery was very beautiful and we had a good time together. Sometimes we had breaks on the way and we found a very tall wild durian tree. In one village, we ate some orange skinned bananas, which tasted great.



The chief's house where we stayed.



Village of the Nias tribe

Finally, in the late afternoon, we arrived at our destination of the Nias' tribe village. We stayed overnight in the house of the chief which was the largest house in the village. It was big and very high with no stairs so we had to climb on large tree trunks to get upstairs (see picture). The house had no bathroom or toilet. When we needed a bath, we had to go to the stream with the villagers.

When we took a bath in the stream, I taught the women in our group how to use a sarong so they didn't have to bathe naked. It was common for the village females to bathe topless. The clear creek was cold and I could see big schools of fish. In the evening, the owner of the house cooked us a fish curry, pork and steamed rice. I was amazed at the way they cooked so simply on a wood fire. The food was so good, especially the fish curry. I didn't recognise the fish, but it must have been the same kind of fish that we saw in the stream. After our dinner that night, many people came to meet us, both children and adults, but mostly children. We distributed some drugs like paracetamol. Venie was a nurse and she cleaned the wounds of some of the children.



Venie cleaning the wounds of the children.

That night we praised the Lord, prayed and sang together with the guitar we brought with us. A small boy aged 6 or 7 years old played the guitar. Although the instrument was too big for him, he somehow played music. His talent surprised us all. After the people went home, we all went to bed. The men slept outside and had plenty of room but our bed was uncomfortable. All seven of us

women slept in the one bed, which was too small for all of us to lie on our backs at the same time. Still, it was fun. When needing to turn or change position, we had to do it together like teamwork.

Early the next morning, there was a cloudy white fog covering the village making it hard to see. Later while walking down a hill, I noticed a high pile of rocks stacked in the shape of a pyramid with a flat top. I thought that it might be an altar for sacrificing something to an idol. I later found that it was a jumping stone for young men. It was a tradition for the young men of this tribe to jump over the rocks to prove their manhood and impress the girls. I had a funny thought about the men on our team; I didn't think any of them would try to prove themselves to be a strong man by jumping over these stones.



We left that village next day to go back and get our suitcases. Then we continued our journey by bus to another village by the ocean. We fully relaxed there taking in the islands breathtaking views and natural beauty. The seawater was crystal clear and I thanked God all the time for giving me this opportunity. We worshipped God at the beach. Almost everywhere we went, we prayed.

After two or three nights, we travelled back to Sumatra in a medium sized boat with many local passengers and a few other foreigners. The boat was used to transport goods for local use and trade. We slept on the boat overnight in beds that were raised wooden platforms, close to the roof. The area below our beds was used for animals and storage of goods. Some of the locals slept there also. In the morning, we all met together. Thalwin said that a big rat (30 cm) had jumped from the ceiling onto his chest. I was surprised that there were rats on board with us. We all went up to the boat deck. The open sea was blue as far as the eye could see. I saw a school of flying fish jumping out of the water, flying into the air, and then going back into the sea. It seemed like a big fish was chasing them. I was amazed as I had never seen flying fish before. I again thanked God for giving me this chance to travel and see so many different things. Without God's help, it would have been impossible for me to join this trip. Of course, He works through the hearts of people but everything I had experienced was due to His grace, and I will never forget that.

We finally reached land safely and travelled to the bus station. Three people on our team needed to go back to Singapore before us. It was also time for Thalwin to return to his country. I was saddened by his parting and didn't know when we would see each other again. It was hard to say goodbye. He had tears in his eyes. But I didn't cry as I was not sure how long he would miss me. When he got

back home, I was afraid that he might soon forget me. Anyway, I thought about what Mariette had said, "God might send someone here to see you." He may or may not be the one for me. God knows best.

After splitting up, our team travelled by bus to another village. The bus was so crowded that they needed extra chairs to sit in the passageway. I had a severe stomach ache, which pain killers didn't help. So I failed to appreciate the beautiful, natural surroundings as we travelled. I was suffering in pain for hours, but got better later on. We arrived safely and thanked God for His protection. We stayed in a local guesthouse. There was a rocky stream running through the village with crystal clear water. The scenery was very beautiful, like the background scenery my father used to paint for performances. I noticed that there were not many tourists in this village. One of locals asked me where I came from. When I told him that I came from Thailand, he was so excited. He told me that he was wearing a T-shirt made in Thailand and said that Thai products were the best quality. I thanked him for the compliment about my country.

We stayed there for 2 to 3 days. Then we travelled by bus to another place, eventually arriving in Banda Aceh, the provincial capital and largest city in the province of Aceh, on the island of Sumatra (this was where the tsunami struck in December 2004). Banda Aceh is a strict Muslim community. We were told that some Muslims were killed there as soon as they changed their beliefs or became Christians. Foreign Christians would not be harmed but it was forbidden to share the Gospel in this city or convert anyone to Christ, as it would cause big trouble. We were in the middle of this Muslim city where they prayed five times a day with loud speakers. Once we went to the market where a local man came to me and asked where I was from. He grasped my right arm, but I pulled it back. He wanted to know what the scars were on my arm. He said, "Did you cut it? Are you using drugs?" I told him that I hurt it in a bus accident a long time ago. But he seemed not to believe me and was very rude. I didn't like the way he was talking to me and was looking for back up. Fortunately, our team leader showed up and the man walked away.

During that time, our team stayed with a Christian family. One day, we went to an English class where the students were polite and friendly. We were allowed to give our testimonies and I had the opportunity to give mine as well. Most students were interested. They asked me why I changed my belief from being a Buddhist. They had several questions, which I responded to. I told them that when I was a Buddhist, I did not know whom Jesus really was as I was taught that He was just a man and a Prophet of the Christian faith. But when I really got to know Jesus personally, I found out that He is God and was born as a man in the world. I said that He died on the cross for our sins, was buried in a tomb, and on the third day He rose from the dead; He is our God and if we believe and trust in Him, then we shall be saved and have eternal life. We would also have a new exciting life with peace and hope. I continued on telling them that before becoming a Christian, I had an accident in which one of my schoolmates died. I was 16 at the time. It made me afraid of dying and I worried about death all the time. I was not happy and tried to find answers through my Buddhist religion. I tried to behave as a good, moral person. But this didn't help and I still felt hopeless and worried about life and death. But after I accepted Jesus Christ and trusted in Him, my life changed. I did not worry about death any more. I now had new life, new goals, and new hope. And I know that immediately after death, I will go to heaven to be with Jesus.

Chapter 15

I Feel Like I Have Found My True Love

Once when I was with our team leader, he asked me about my relationship with Thalwin. He asked if I loved him. I very confidently said, "Yes, I do love him." He asked what would happen if he goes back to Holland and meets someone else? I replied that maybe he will, and if he does then I will respect his choice. I would be sad at first, but I didn't want to put a claim on him; I wanted him to come back by his own will. I was surprised at myself for feeling this way and the team leader said, "Good for you."

I was grateful to God that I had someone who loved me and made me feel that I was special. I loved him too. It was funny how I realised this more now that he was gone. I had no reason not to love him because Thalwin was a gentleman, strong, humble and always careful not to do the wrong thing before God. He was sincere and warm hearted and I felt safe with him. If my love was not returned, then it does not matter as I have had a memorable experience with him. If it didn't work out, then it would be fine and I would return to my original lifestyle. My faith and hope were in God. I would leave Him in charge.

After we returned to Singapore, I received a letter from Thalwin telling me about his return to Holland. I was pleased to hear that he had let his parents know about our relationship. I was very happy and replied to his letter at once. Then I prepared to return to Thailand. It felt good to be going back to Bangkok again. I did not worry about facing the same problems of housing and income, as I believed that God would prepare the way for me.

Back to Thailand

A few friends, including Timothy Sim, came to the airport to pray for my trip and accommodations in Bangkok. Upon returning to Thailand, I rented a room at The Victory Monument location. It was a small room above a beauty salon with a place for my sewing machine. It was not too far to walk to church. Thank God for this place and the space for my machine. For the first time, I had my sewing machine in my lodging and I got back to my job of sewing.

Most people at church did not know that I had been in Singapore for a year. People started to order bags and book covers. I made just enough money for food and rent. It felt like I had woken up from a beautiful dream and was now back to my real life. I stayed alone in the narrow room and was living day to day. However, this time I had come back as a new person who had more hope and faith in the Lord. I could not stop sharing the love of God with people. Sometimes, I didn't know how to tell my story about the things which happened to me in Singapore. It seemed unreal to me how God had provided and lifted me up. In fact not many people were interested in my story. As far as I knew, they saw me as a cleaner who sometimes performed and made bags. But no one knew that I was homeless. I hoped one day I would be able to tell them all about how great God had been in my life.

Thalwin and I still communicated with each other through the mail. Sometimes, he sent tape recordings to me or called long distance. Later, he sent me a letter to propose marriage and I said yes. I agreed without hesitation. I believed in my heart that he was my true love and I was ready to live with him. I sent a letter to Mariette who knew about my relationship with Thalwin. I told her that we were going to get married. She was so happy for me. Not long after that, Jill and Ben were married in Holland and Thalwin went to their wedding. Jill sent me some of her beautiful wedding photos. She gave me some advice about the lifestyle in Holland and how I should prepare myself to go there.

I wrote to my parents and told them that I was going to marry a farang (foreigner). They replied that I was old enough to decide for myself. I said that Christians don't have the dowry money tradition and I asked if they would accept that. My father said not to worry about dowry money. They were happy for me to have someone to be with for the rest of my life. My father said, "May your God bless you both." Thank God that even though my parents were not Christians, they had an open mind on this issue. I felt so relieved. Normally, Thai parents who lived up country would ask a lot of money from foreigners who wanted to marry their daughters. Most Thais think that all foreigners are rich. They would show their neighbours how much dowry they had gotten for the marriage of their daughter.

I remember on one occasion, before I got married, my mother asked me if a Christian could marry. I had to explain that most Christian women want to get married, but some stay single so that they can serve God fully without being busy with a family. However, my mother didn't understand what serving God meant. I explained to her that it was the full time work of spreading the story of God, the Gospel, and teaching people all about the Bible as well as training new believers to follow Jesus and live by faith.

Since I became a Christian, I had tried to share the Gospel with my parents many times. They said they could not change their belief as they worried too much about what others would think. They would never leave Buddhism. However, they supported the idea that young people should have the freedom to believe in any religion that brought good luck or wealth. I think that this is one of the reasons why it is so hard to lead the young generation of Thais to Christ. They are willing to change religions if they see a greater blessing. Sometimes they might accept Christ into their life but at the same time they hold on to other beliefs as well. You never know what they really believe in.

Chapter 16

Travel to the Netherlands (Holland)

In mid December 1991, I travelled to Holland where Thalwin and his brother Edward met me at the airport. I remember that it was so cold. We went to Edward's house to meet his parents and then we went to Raalte to stay in Thalwin's parent's house. Thalwin's family believed in God and greeted me warmly. I slept in a special room, which had a washbasin. I remember the first night was very cold, -15 degrees Fahrenheit. I had trouble breathing in bed as I had thick, heavy blankets to keep me warm. It took me a week to get used to those blankets. Also, it was a big cultural shock for me to fit in with Dutch customs and culture. The nice thing was that the family atmosphere was open and warm and this made it easy for me to adjust to all these changes. The whole Hulsebos family, especially Thalwin's parents, accepted me. They were very kind and took good care of me when I was ill.

Not everything was easy. I had been used to living alone and it was hard to adjust to my new family, new traditions, and my future partnership with Thalwin. Things were not as easy as I first thought. Before, when I was by myself, I was independent and made my own decisions. Now, I had to adjust to completely new conditions. I must admit that my love life was not like the romantic movies. We were not yet married, but already fighting about all sorts of little things. Before, I had confidently made all of my own decisions. But now, I had lost my independence and had to negotiate with Thalwin even over simple little things like choosing goods for our future house. Thalwin sometimes disagreed with what I chose and tried to explain why, but I would not listen. I thought I knew better, especially with things for the kitchen. So there was constant anger and fighting.

It is the tendency of Thai people to be silent and refuse to talk when they get angry. I was like that. But when Thalwin got angry, he showed his temper and sounded like someone in the movies. I did not like that and it was hard for me to accept his kind of personality. Likewise, it was hard for him to accept me when I turned away from him in anger. We had a communication problem. I began to think that breaking our engagement would be better than divorce. We could not continue to live together like this. And besides that, I was an independent person and did not need a partner. We were two different people from two different worlds. Our different cultures and language was a huge barrier. I cried out, "Oh God, this is difficult, help me please!" I could imagine the future problems in our marriage. It seemed to be impossible for us to live together. What should I do? Break up with no wedding and go back to Thailand? But Thalwin would not accept giving up that easily. So I would have to be prepared to explain my reasons if we were to get along together. I walked around in the bushes at the back of their house struggling with what to do. I almost wanted to hit my head against a tree. Then I prayed to God asking for His help. I was very unhappy with no peace and no one to talk to. Only God understood me. I kept praying and praying until He calmed me down. God showed me I was wrong and helped me to understand that my pride was the problem.

The Holy Spirit showed me my error from the word of God in Galatians 5:22-23. I was now ready to go home to apologise to Thalwin, but he gave me an apology first. I learned humility from him and I apologised as well. This was the lesson we learned before the wedding. Thank God that this incident occurred. The lesson was for both of us and for our future whenever we would have conflicting opinions. God would be with us always to teach us to accept each other's shortcomings and to adjust to our different backgrounds. We learned to be considerate, thoughtful, and not to assume too much. Once we accepted these things, we loved each other even more. We desired to be together, but did not want to live together or be intimate until we were married.

After six months, Thalwin had completed his study and we got married. In Holland, marriage is in two steps. First, we got officially married in the city hall with friends and relatives as witnesses. Then we had a Christian marriage in the church. Jill and Ben were at our wedding. After the church ceremony, we went to a restaurant to celebrate our marriage.



We rented a flat that was not far from Thalwin's parents. My life was very different in Holland than I had experienced in Thailand. Everything was very comfortable with their modern lifestyle, social welfare and health care. However, the cold throughout the year was too much for me. Even the summer was still cold but the love that I received from my husband and his family was great.

Sometimes I sat and thought, "Who am I that the Lord of all the earth picked me up from a faraway land and had me standing right here?" God was so good to me. He loved me so much through my

husband and his family. I knew it had all come from Him. He is a true friend who is at my side at all times and in all situations, whether they are times of happiness or suffering. All this drew me closer to Him. His blessings were beyond understanding and I wanted to do something more for Him. I wanted to tell others about how good it had been to have God in my life. So I kept asking myself what I could do for God in Holland. Since language was a big problem, I wondered whom could I share the Gospel with? Thalwin's sister-in-law, Saakon, was Thai and had lived in Holland a long time. She knew many Thai people here. I might be able to tell them the Christian story. I knew that most Thais did not believe in God. So I thought that if we invited them to a Christmas party at our place, then I could share the Gospel on Christmas day telling about the birth of Jesus.

After having this thought, I immediately started to paint pictures of the birth of Jesus on cloth. Although I had never done this before, I remembered how my father painted by first drawing with a pencil. I did the same thing and copied a picture from a book, asking God to help me. I did a little each day. When completed, it did not look professional, but it was good enough to explain the story.

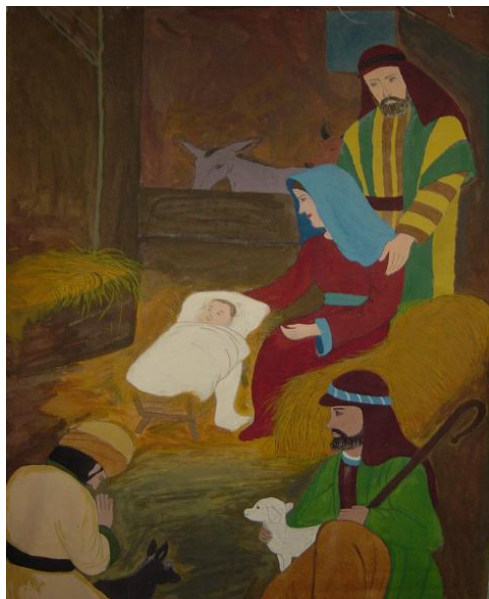


Photo of my Christmas painting - 1992

I had the painting hanging on the door so that I could tell the story about Christmas. Not many people came. Jill and Ben came with their two-month-old daughter along with a missionary who worked in Thailand. We all enjoyed the meal and I talked about Jesus' birth and death on the cross to save the world. I was happy to have had this opportunity. I learnt about being better prepared before sharing the Gospel. I also learned that sharing the Gospel with Thais in another country is not as simple as you would think. Because their new life had become so comfortable, they didn't see a real need for God. Believing most of their material needs were met, they had no real desire to believe in Him.

I have to admit that I did not like the Dutch language at all. My Dutch was not improving much and this diminished my motivation to learn it. Thus, I only spoke English with Thalwin and to most other people.

However, I did make an effort to learn the language by formal training. After a year of studying the Dutch language, I had not improved very much. I remember being in a class with a Thai woman named Eid. I used to help her because she could not read Thai. Her English was not good, making it even harder for her to learn but she was very confident about herself. She married a Dutchman and

had her daughter from Thailand living with her. I tried to get to know them and the Thai community through her. I wanted to tell them the story of Jesus Christ so that they could be saved like me. But when I really got to know the group, I was disappointed because they were only interested in talking about money, gold or other riches. But I wanted to tell them about God who could give them abundant life now and eternal life after death. However, when I tried to share with them, they quickly changed the subject. Thus, I did not have the opportunity to share these things with them.

I began to lose confidence in sharing the Gospel with Thai people in Holland. Finally, I thought it would be better to focus on other hobbies. Thus, I began sewing children's clothing to sell in the summer market.

Often Thalwin would ask me to tell him a story when he had insomnia from stress at work. I told him the story of my experience of faith in the Lord and of God's blessings in my life, such as the ability to design and sew things without anyone teaching me. Another story was about my learning to dance to Christian music. It was not a big deal, but God used it to take me to Singapore twice where I learned a lot. My faith and trust in God grew there and I experienced the love of brothers and sisters in Christ from other countries. I told Thalwin it was a great experience for me as I found him there, my true love. I thanked him for loving me. I told him, that through these experiences, I appreciated the grace of God and wanted to do what He wanted me to do. I wanted to tell the people in Thailand about God so that they could come to know Him also. When I told Thalwin these stories, he would always listen and then sleep well. However, I usually had trouble sleeping as I was thrilled by my own stories.

God was encouraging me to have faith and to declare His story to the Thai people. Many were poor like I was and faced life without a goal. Thais think their lives are just fine. They are pleased with what they have but are really stuck in a hole. They follow after the values of the world, which is never enough. The Thai people don't know that the Great God can fill their lives with joy and give them peace. All they would have to do is just believe in Jesus and accept Him into their life. He is the real treasure for their lives.

Sometimes I thought that I could just leave the Thai people the way they were, but my conscience would not let me ignore them. God loves them just as much as He loves me. Therefore, I felt it was my duty to tell them. God loves all men no matter who they are or what their religion is, and He wants everyone to repent. Also, God commands all Christians to testify about Jesus. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gave this command, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Thais can be saved and become part of the kingdom of God just like me. Our mission from God is to tell the Gospel in every way possible, whether or not they believe the story. I did not really know how to reach the Thai people. However, I thought that if I had a project providing jobs and an income for them in Thailand, I would have a better opportunity of sharing the Gospel.

One project I had in mind was making bags. I discussed this issue with Thalwin and he said that it was a good idea and was very interested. However, he wanted to stay in Holland for one more year to finish his second degree in management science. We thought that this might be helpful for him to find work in the future.

Chapter 17

Love Started to Fade

After two years, Jill started having problems with her marriage. Sometimes, I spent the night at her place and I noticed that she was not satisfied with her married life. I tried to encourage her by pointing out positive things in Ben. I said she should learn to accept that it was not always possible to change people to the way we want them to be.

Once when she was unhappy, she came with her baby to stay overnight with us. I tried to understand their problems but couldn't. Thalwin said that when two people have a fight, they are both wrong. He also said I should listen to both sides before I judge who is right or wrong. Proverbs 18:17 says, *"The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him."* I agreed and encouraged both of them to forgive and love one another. They reconciled for a while but later divorced. It broke my heart to see Christian friends divorce. It made me think of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. This scripture teaches, *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres."*

Once I asked Jill if she really loved Ben before marrying him. Jill said she was not quite sure. She thought after getting married, she would come to love him more. I asked about her particular prayer to God for the right man to propose to her on a basketball court. At the time, she thought that Ben was the answer to that prayer. But now Jill told me that she felt as if that answer came from the devil and not from God. This experience helped me to see that Christians must not make demands on God for particular prayers, but rely on divine guidance. I believe that if we have a good personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we will know the truth and make the right decisions.

I have to remind myself of this whenever I want to make a decision. I believe women rely on their emotions much more than men. Women are the weaker sex, more sensitive and open to being deceived. In Genesis 3, it was Eve who was targeted and deceived by the snake. She then put the blame on the serpent (verse 13) rather than admit her mistake. We must not be like Eve. We should listen to God's voice and make sure that our decisions do not come from our own emotional desires.

Chapter 18

Travel to Thailand in 1994

After Thalwin finished his study, we made our final decision to go to Thailand. Thalwin had two degrees now, Computer Engineering and Management Science. At that time we didn't have much money for the trip so we sold our furniture and some jewellery. We had about 70,500 baht (\$2,500). We were going by faith without any financial support. We packed our suitcases and were ready to go. Our plan was to try this mission trip and if it didn't work out then we would come back to Holland after one year.

Before leaving I contacted the Baptist Student Center (BSC), a non-profit Christian language School, where I used to work as a cleaner. They made an agreement with us. In the terms of the agreement, Thalwin would work as an English teacher and the BSC would provide a work permit, accommodations, and basic living expenses.

Upon arriving in Thailand, we shared accommodations with other Christians at a house, which the BSC provided. Thalwin had to begin teaching English right away. If I remember correctly, Thalwin didn't get any money for the first 2-3 months because they said the paper work needed to be done first. The BSC gave Thalwin a free meal at work but I got nothing. Later he received 5,600 baht per month for our basic needs. Thalwin was not happy with the situation as he thought it was too little for the two of us. Also, he didn't understand why he got a free meal and I got nothing. Their normal policy was to provide a meal for the teacher only. I understood this but when I tried to explain it to Thalwin he would not accept it. I had to leave it to God to help him to understand the Thai system. After observing the local markets for quite a while, I began sewing sample backpacks, bags and Bible covers to sell to Christian organisations.

The project started

I travelled back to my old village where I once shared the Gospel and was forced to leave by the village chief. That was nine years ago and that chief had since passed away. I went to visit my family to tell them what I wanted to do and show them how to make bags. I wanted to help the village people to get jobs and have an income to support their families. I was so glad that they were interested. My parents were very excited about this new venture too. My younger sister knew how to sew bags as she and her husband had worked in a bag factory in Bangkok. They wanted a career and income as well. I was glad to be able to help people there, as they would no longer have to go to Bangkok to find work. But I told them that the project was not funded and that I would start it with a small budget from our own money.

Later my mother said that the project should have its own place. My older brother's house was about to be repossessed. He had not paid interest for many years and would not be able to pay in the future. She said that if I had enough money it would be better to get the house before it was taken over by other people. We could pay the debt off and let him transfer the house title to my name. I asked what would happen if he refused to transfer the title after I had paid the money. I was afraid that I could lose both the money and the house. My mother and sister-in-law guaranteed that he would do as promised. I believed them. I was excited and discussed the idea with Thalwin. Even though we would have to use all of our money, Thalwin agreed to do it. We got the house and extended it to have room for the sewing machines and equipment. We could use the home for accommodations also.

Then we started the project of making bags. My sister was a good seamstress and was in charge of all the work. The project started quite well. I was excited about what we were doing and it was great to be helping the people to make an income in their own village. This project could be a good tool to share the Gospel with the local people. It also encouraged the women to have local careers and be with families instead of having to leave their children with grandparents.

I felt happy and satisfied with my work of designing and making sample bags to send to the village. I travelled back and forth once a month between Bangkok and the village. Sometimes Thalwin went with me. We provided equipment and materials from Bangkok and sent it all by mail or I would take it to the village myself. Travelling to the village with all the material was very inconvenient as I had a lot to carry and relied on public transport. I had two big backpacks full of stuff, one in front and one on my back. Also, I had two boxes to carry, one in each hand. Thalwin said I looked like a Christmas tree. It was a very long way to go with many transfers from taxi to train to local bus and then a truck to the village. I would only stay for two nights to work with the team. Then I would take the finished products back to Bangkok to sell. It was hard work but it did not bother me as I still hoped that one day we would have our own car and get some financial support from somewhere.

Often while waiting for a train at the station on way back to Bangkok, I would think about the other people there. After the rice harvest, there were many other people waiting for the train. They were mostly young people with children and babies. They carried big sacks of rice. I imagined that most of the young people were going to Bangkok to find work and make some money to send home to their families. I felt pity for them and wished I could reach them with the Gospel and show them the love of God. The song by Steve Green, People Need the Lord, came to mind. I wished I could stay in the village for longer periods and have more time to share the Gospel. But I couldn't.

Life in Bangkok was so busy. I had to do almost everything by myself: marketing, designing, and preparation. Every month I needed to make sure I had enough income to pay the sewing team in the village. We also lived within a limited budget, which was hard for Thalwin to adjust to. It was a big change for him. Sometimes he was very depressed and was suffering from culture shock as well.

Later, we had some bad news from the village. My older brother refused to transfer the house title to my name! Instead, he used the house as collateral to borrow money from the bank. In the end, we had to move out of the house. Our money was not returned and I was very disappointed with my older brother. It was not fair. Why had this happened to us? I did not understand it. We were doing this project to help people in the village, not for our own benefit. If we had known this in the first place, we would not have used our money for the house. Instead, we could have used it for the project. My parents felt sorry for what happened and gave us a block of land as compensation. Thalwin was not really happy with what had happened either.

The attitude of the Thai people to foreigners

Most Thai people in the villages think that Thai women who marry foreigners (Westerners) become rich and have money to buy things or build a house for their families. Some people in the village asked me to find a Western man for their daughters or nieces to marry without love, just to help raise the family. Some Thai women think they are very poor and want to marry Western men to have a better life. While I was in the village with Thalwin, we often heard people cry out "Oh! You have a foreign husband. Can you give me some money or some liquor?" It surprised me, as I was not that close to them. But everyone in the village seemed to know about me.

Besides that, I had been asked some very rude questions. I really don't understand why since I dressed like the other people, simple and appropriate with no make-up. One time when we travelled by local transport, some men asked me what the difference was between Thai husbands and foreign husbands. I could not believe my own ears when I heard those words. And besides that, the questions came from total strangers. I replied that I did not know as I only had one husband. Another asked if the price of porn videos was good where Thalwin came from. He said there was a girl in my village that also had a foreign husband. She brought a lot of porn videos when she visited Thailand. She would sell them and make good money. "How about you?" he asked. I said I don't know as I was not interested in porn movies and I shook my head. I was so angry but didn't show it. This became an obstacle in my witness to the local people.

In addition to this, one of my brother in-laws asked me to do business by setting up a resort with prostitutes. He said that as I had a foreign husband, I could invite others to come to Thailand and I could make good money. I could not believe my ears when I heard this. He already knew that we were Christians. This indicated that he did not understand the difference between non-believers and believers. It seemed to him that there was no difference. So I told him that we were Christians and do not do that kind of thing because it was against the Bible which does not support sex outside of marriage.

These things should make it clear how most Thais think. Foreigners are a symbol of money and are in Thailand for sex business. It is not easy to share the Gospel with Thais if you have a foreign husband. From my understanding, many Thais think that believing in Jesus is believing in both the Western culture and their religion. They need to know more of the truth of Christianity. In fact, most Thais, rich or poor, inside or outside of Thailand all have the same mindset: money always comes first. I have met different groups of Thais and they all want money. The poor need money to get a better lifestyle and the rich want more so that they don't lose their comfortable lifestyle and power. They never seem to have enough money and never find peace in their hearts. Money is power and genuine happiness to them, but in fact, it is not true happiness. True happiness is only in Jesus Christ. We cannot buy that with money. The Bible teaches us to *"Keep your lives free of the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave; never will forsake you'"* (Hebrews 13:5). Life in God is abundant and a real pleasure. He can give us peace, hope, love and true happiness. Oh! Dear Lord, how do I tell them about Your love and Your salvation?

To bring the Gospel to the local people while having a foreign husband is not that simple. Not only that, Thalwin also faced the problem of adapting to Thai culture. He found that he did not like the attitude of the Thai people toward foreigners and was not comfortable with going to the village with me. At this time I began to see the necessity of having private transport. With a car we could escape from people staring at us all the time and it would allow us to transport materials to the project.

Hard time

We had a lot of difficulty in the early years. Thalwin had a problem adapting to the culture as he thought that the Thai people were not straightforward and did not communicate clearly. But he enjoyed teaching English at the BSC and Thai students were happy to study in his class. We also had a lot of money pressure as we had to fund the projects in the village each month.

I worked very hard marketing the bags to customers, preparing the materials for sewing, designing and packing materials to send to the villagers. We both had a lot of pressure and stress. I was also trying to help Thalwin to adjust to a simple Thai life style in order to help reduce our cost of living. He was trying hard to eat Thai food but he had diarrhoea. Also, the weather in Thailand would make him sick for months. Since he began teaching English in Thailand, he had coughing spells, which lasted for long periods of time. Later, he had an accident when he fell off a footpath and injured his ankle. He couldn't teach for a few weeks and I was his substitute.



Thalwin broke his ankle and had to stay in the room all day.

This was the beginning of my wanting to teach English. I thank God that while he had a broken ankle, he was able to do some programming at home. He sold it to a computer shop so we got enough money to buy a TV and video. We even had some money for the village project. Later, Thalwin did programming for a student admission system for the BSC. They increased his income to 11,200 baht but it still was not enough to meet our demands. And he was still stressed, not at all happy with the situation. I tried to understand his condition, but my experience with God was different from his. I had a hard life of poverty and was alone most of the time. I had lived from day to day with Jesus for many years, learning to rely on God alone. But Thalwin came from a different background. He was not poor or alone and had grown up in a developed country with living standards that were much higher than mine. He also had two graduate degrees, which could earn him a lot of money if he got normal work. Thus, he felt like a poor man or a failure in his present condition.

Once he did not have enough money to pay the bus fare, 3.5 baht (10 cents), so he had to get off the bus and walk home. Whenever we bought a hamburger, we just got one to share. This situation was not at all usual for him. I thought it was an exciting experience as I was used to living this way. It reminded me of my good old days with the Lord but for him the struggle of living each day like this was not exciting at all. This was not the kind of excitement he wanted to face. He thought about our situation and decided that we had sacrificed enough and should have better conditions. He wanted us to rent a house so that we could have privacy as we wanted to start a family and the project needed money each month. We were under a lot of pressure. Sometimes we argued and got angry at one another, but we were never angry at each other overnight. We always reconciled as God was with us.

Sometimes I felt guilty and blamed myself for all our troubles because I was the one who made him come and journey in my fantasy dream about helping people and sharing the Gospel. I could only give him an apology. But he said that he made the choice, it was his decision to come. He said that it was not my fault at all and I should not blame myself as he agreed with the project of helping the village people. He thought I was doing a good job. When I heard this I was very encouraged, thank God.

We were looking forward to what God would guide us to do next. I have to admit that this project made me very tired sometimes. I had to deal with all kind of issues, people, production and management. Also, I was too focused on designing, marketing and sewing bags for customers and making sure that the people in the project had enough work to do each month and got paid on time. It was hard for me to make a time to be with the Lord to pray and ask for His wisdom to do things or to share the Word of God to people. It was a hard thing to serve the Lord and to make money at the same time.

Thalwin was trying to find a way to increase our income to support the project, but working as a teacher made it impossible. Even though he was happy with the English class, we still struggled with finances. He decided to stop working as a teacher and try to get a job in the computer field as he wanted this most of all. Later, he got a job offer at a computer company immediately at Sukhumvit Steet, Soi Thonglor. His pay was much better and we were able to rent our own house.



Photo: Thalwin (left) with other teachers at the BSC in 1995.

Chapter 19

We Rented Our Own House

We rented the house of the family where I used to put my sewing machine five years ago. I also slept under the house sometimes until the house owner's driver expelled me and then I had to sleep outside. I couldn't believe that I was returning as the tenant of this house. I cleaned up the room where I used to sleep and used it as a spare room and for storage.



The house we rented. I used to sleep and have my sewing machine under this house.

Now we had our own place and Thalwin had a better income so we had enough money to buy a motorcycle, which Thalwin used to get to work. We thanked God for that simple and wonderful little motorcycle to travel around Bangkok. It was very useful and cost saving.

Later, the project got more work. Because Thalwin got a new job with much better pay, we decided to register as an official company. We named the company "Local Care Thailand". This was a good

name for the project as we focused on helping local people to find work. Also, because Thalwin had increased his income, we had enough money to buy a car for cash.



Our car and Thalwin with local Thais

We use this vehicle to transport materials to the village and bring back the products. It made travel much more convenient. We started to produce more bags, backpacks and Bible covers. We made sales to stores in Bangkok as well as in different provinces and sold Bible covers to a local Christian bookstore. God gave me the wisdom for designing and sewing the bags. I was very excited about the project, as we were now the market leader!

I got a few orders to make jackets and gun holsters for the Air Force Special Operations SWAT teams. I always enjoyed designing new things and I was proud of my achievements. Thalwin made a website called "Local Care Thailand". We sold to overseas customers through online orders from places such as Netherlands, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Germany. The local Christian bookstore ordered Bible covers and various products.

I have to admit that I worked too hard, but I enjoyed it. One bad thing was that there was not much time to share the Gospel or follow up new believers. I was **just** too focused on creating new items. Because of the hard work, I sometimes had accidents while using the fabric-cutting machine. Once, I cut the tip of my thumb and had to run to the clinic to get five stitches. It was very painful because it affected the nerves. I suffered for a long time but never gave up because the project needed me.

When we started to produce more products, I needed an assistant in the Bangkok office and this added to the costs. I was not worried because the project always got support from Thalwin's income. However, no one understood that we did not have a lot of money. I tried to explain things to people, especially those in the village, because they said that we should pay them more. Also, my parents warned me about some dishonest workers in the village project. I tried to be positive and hoped that the situation would improve.

Bringing some of the family to know Christ.

Finally, we were able to share the Gospel with some people, including family, and take some to church. My two nephews, Meng and Neng, and one of Neng's friends accepted Christ. A long time ago, I used to look after them and believe God brought them to me. We supported both nephews by giving them a scholarship to study at the University. Thalwin and I also encouraged them to join a group with Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC). We supported various Christian organisations as well as a niece in the village. We felt great to be part of supporting these people. Later my nephew Neng

graduated from the university and worked as a servant of God at CCC. It was a blessing to have someone in our family serve the Lord full time.

We rented a bigger house

Later, we moved to a larger home, as we needed room for staff accommodation and project storage. We needed to develop our marketing because our customers were too limited. Production costs were relatively high and we were trying to save money. I had never been paid since the start of the project. I did everything myself whenever possible, to save costs. I tried to be dedicated, patient and hard working. I wanted to set a good example for everyone by being satisfied with what I had and showing others how important it was to have God in our life. It was a struggle, as we often had to sort out problems between the workers. In addition, some of our customers didn't pay on time. Even worse, we found that two workers were unfaithful. They were dishonest about the hours they worked and stole our materials to produce and sell products on their own. They had become our competition! Besides that, the sewing team in the village worked for them behind my back! Their production costs were much lower than ours, so they could sell cheaper. The bookstores preferred to buy from them also. I didn't understand why this happened to me as all I was doing was trying to help others and bring them to know God. Still, I couldn't do much, only pray and wait for the next step. I loved this project and didn't want to quit. I always thought that God had given me the gift of designing and making bags, and I wanted to use this gift to serve Him. Thalwin said that unless I found a good Christian partner to work with us, then he didn't want to continue financing the project. I did pray to God for a Christian partner so that the project could continue, but found no one.

Later we made a decision to move the company out of Bangkok as we could not afford the rent. Thank God we still had a couple, Prayet and Eeng, who were honest and hard working. They never took advantage of us. I loved them very much. We wanted to keep the project running for them so that they would have an income to support their family. We decided to move the company to the province called Udon Thani (North East of Thailand). This province was close to the project sewing team in the village. Prayet and Eeng looked after the project while we not there. I still hoped and waited for someone who had the same burden to share the Gospel while helping the locals financially through this project.

I was very disappointed with what happened and so sad. These things are intended to undermine our faith. Sometimes, I cried so much because of my disappointment. We had kept the project going for eight years and it was so hard to see the work decline. I had many questions. I asked God several times, "Why did this have to happen to me?" With all my strength I had sacrificed myself for this project. In return, people had disappointed me, even some of my own family. It was not fair! The Word of God in Psalm 56:8 encouraged me: *"Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll – are they not in your record?"* I must learn to accept the fact that not everything we try to do for God will be smooth all the way. However, we must trust God in every circumstance. We must also believe that He allows things to happen for our good and to learn from it.

After living in Thailand for eight years, Thalwin was fed up. He said, "I have had enough of living here and trying to help these people by sacrificing myself, my strength and my money. I have done a lot already. I want to see Thai people helping one another and their country and not just doing things for their own benefit. So it's time for me to stop supporting the local care project. If God wants this to continue, then He will make it happen. I would like to live in a Western culture that I am familiar with." I agreed with him that he had sacrificed enough, both financially and intellectually. He had good intentions to help the Thai people through our mission, but the results were unsatisfactory. I also thought it was time to give up my dream. We had given eight years of our

time to the project, but it was not working out. It was time to stop and turn our attention to our own lives. We decided to immigrate to Australia, a country where English is spoken. It would be good for both of us.

Chapter 20

We Moved to Australia

In 2002, we immigrated to Australia. Because Thalwin was a computer engineer, he was considered to be a skilled immigrant. We selected the state of Queensland as the place to call home. After living there for about a year, we adapted to our new country and environment. It was much easier for me to understand church services in English than it was in Dutch. It took a while for me to adjust to the Australian accent. We got to make many new Christian friends at church. We found that Australia is a country where we would like to live forever.

During our first year in Australia, I went back to Thailand four times for the Local Care Project. We still had overseas customers who had ordered our products online and we still had plenty of products in stock. Each time I went to Thailand, I stayed for up to three months until delivery was completed. Thalwin didn't like it at all. I was disappointed with the project that I had started to help the local people make an income. At the same time, I had wanted to share the Gospel with them. However, my discouragement did not stop me from sharing the Gospel with other people of different nationalities any time I had the opportunity. God is the true Mighty God, full of love, kindness and Grace; how could I keep His Grace to myself? I knew God wanted us to tell everyone about His salvation. People need the Lord, the real God. There are many gods in this world but our Lord Jesus Christ is the real God.

On one occasion during a flight, I sat next to a student from the USA named Rebecca. I had the opportunity to witness to her. She was travelling to Thailand during a summer break from her studies in Australia. I introduced myself to her. At first, we talked about Thailand. Later, I asked her about Jesus. She remembered just a little bit from when she was young, but now did not believe in any religion. I thanked God for the opportunity to have spoken to her and gave her some Gospel tracts. I encouraged her to seriously read and study the scriptures from God's Word, the Bible. She promised to do so. When we were arrived in Bangkok, I invited her to stay overnight in our friend's house. I guided her around Bangkok the next day. This was the first time I had witnessed in English and my first time to witness in a plane.

In the Brunei airport, I witnessed to an elderly Indonesian couple who lived in the Netherlands and spoke English well. We were waiting for a few hours to transfer flights. They were believers and I asked them about their life in Christ. They said that they believed in God and went to church, but that was about all. I had the opportunity to testify about my own experience with God. I told them what happened to me after I had God in my life. After sharing my testimony and the story of the love of God, I felt very good. They were surprised at how excited I was about how God had made a big difference in my life since believing in Him.

Deciding To Move On

During my time in Thailand, I was surprised at how much equipment, stock and products we still had in storage. We had put a lot of time, money and energy into the Local Care Thailand project. Our dream was to help the people financially and spiritually. But after nine years, we decided to quit, as it was too much for us to handle. We had waited for some Christians who had the same burden to partner with us on the project, but it did not happen. It was time for me to close the Local

Care Thailand Company. But I still cared for Prayet and Eeng, the couple who were so honest with us. I found a new job for them in Bangkok and they were very satisfied with it. Sometimes I went to visit them and found that they were making a good income for their family. They were good people and no company wanted to lose them once they saw how honest and hard working they were.

Living in Australia

While in Australia, I turned my attention to family life and relaxed much more. I thanked God for being able to live in a beautiful country with clean air, blue sky, nice people and a good lifestyle. Thalwin was looking for work for a year, but couldn't find any. Later, he got a job offer in Thailand. So we went back in 2004 and he worked for the same company. He worked there for one year and then said that he didn't want to live in Thailand any more. Thus, we returned to Australia. He still could not find work with a company. However, he became a consultant for overseas customers. I worked as a volunteer in childcare at church and did some part time babysitting. I sold artificial flowers and stone jewellery at a market on the weekends. I didn't make much money at this endeavour. But I had lots of fun and met many people in the market.

We had a good, comfortable life in Australia. Everything around us was great. We had good friends and a good environment. Whenever I went to Thailand, I would buy artificial flowers and jewellery to sell at the weekend market in Australia. I enjoyed the new life style, but sometimes felt that I was missing my real calling to share the Gospel and my testimony. Sharing the Gospel with Australian people was difficult as they had a different cultural background than mine. It was hard for me to understand how to approach them. Also, I did not feel confident with my English.

Chapter 21

Back to Thailand Again

Thalwin wanted to go back to Thailand. He thought it would be a good idea to live in our apartment there for a while because the cost of living was much cheaper than in Australia. There was also more chance for him to get work. So we went back to Thailand in 2006. Later, Thalwin got a job as a MIS Developer and I started to do some business selling things online. We started up an online business called "buydozen.com". I began to sell products such as different kinds of silver and stone jewellery. I sold to some friends from the market in Australia where I used to sell before.

After a while, Thalwin got stressed out from his work, which caused health issues. He would get very sick. Once I had to look after him for three or four nights. Unfortunately, I got sick after he got better. My sickness was a balance disorder. I felt like my head was spinning (BPPV). It got so bad that one day Thalwin had to rush me to the hospital. The treatment I received didn't help at first. Later, I got some medication that stopped the feeling of my head spinning. I was suffering for four nights and was not able to lie on my back. I needed to sit half up in order to get some sleep. My head was so sensitive to movement that even bending my head down to shampoo my hair was a problem. It felt like the room was turning around and going upside down. I had to use my hands to hold the wall and stabilise myself. It was scary. I prayed to God all the time asking for His help. The more I prayed, the closer I felt to God. I got better slowly. After three months, the head spinning was gone. Because of this illness, I thought that my time on earth might be limited. I now wanted to serve the Lord more and had a bigger passion to share the Gospel. So, I stopped doing business online and went to the BSC as a volunteer. I helped students by giving advice about what English classes to take. I also introduced them to Bible classes taught by native English teachers. I shared my testimony with them and invited them to church. Some were interested and some were not.

At BSC, I had a good opportunity to meet many people and share my experiences with God almost every day. The more I talked to people, the more understanding I had of what they wanted and what motivated them to study English. After giving my testimony to so many people, I soon got a good idea whether or not someone was interested. I learnt how to read people and how to approach them in a positive way. But the problem with sharing like this was the limited amount of time I could spend with them and the fact that I might never see them again. I thought that if I was an English teacher, then I might get closer to the students and be able to spend more time with them. With additional time, I could better explain the Gospel as well as teach English. I knew many Thai students who were not ready to study with native English speaking teachers, as it was hard for both students and teachers. I thought that if I was able to teach these groups, then I might be able to help students who had no basic English. A majority of these students came from low-income families. Most Thais are really afraid of losing face when they make mistakes in speaking English. They feel embarrassed about their English speaking ability and don't want to continue studying. It is easy for them to give up. In the past, I was like that myself. Now I wanted to support those who did not feel confident.

With this in mind, I joined the English class to learn how to teach and how to create the right atmosphere. At a seminar, I got trained by an American instructor on how to read English books to children. She showed me a more educated approach to teaching and how to read out loudly and clearly. This helped children to remember the lessons better. I also spoke with other Thai teachers about the lack of motivation most children have towards learning English. They didn't know what to do to help the students to enjoy learning more. I was glad to get all this information. I began to study English seriously, practising reading, speaking and trying to pronounce words correctly. It was not easy, especially when you want to be a teacher. Like most Thai teachers of English, I wanted to avoid mistakes. I was not young any more, but I wasn't going to give up. I had to try it first in order to gain experience to teach.

I sat in on the English class and observed for some time, learning how to teach. After a while, my English improved and I felt more confident. Then I began an open-air English class for children. I prepared material like pictures of objects and songs with motions and games. I taught them vocabulary by naming objects in pictures before teaching them to speak a sentence. It was hard for the children who had no foundation. But after a while, they picked it up. It was fun and the children liked it very much. Sometimes we had problems with too much noise and when it rained we could not have classes.



Some of children from the first group I taught English to.

From teaching these children, I learnt the difference between children from private schools and those from public schools. Those from private schools were more familiar with English. They learned to make sentences quicker and it was easy to teach them, although their pronunciation was sometimes incorrect. The children attending the public schools learned slower because they had a poor vocabulary. I could see the difference between the two groups. I was more concerned with the children in the public schools as they needed more help. I decided to volunteer as a teacher in a public elementary school in Bangkok, close to my home. I contacted the director of the school and was allowed to teach a course which ran for 5-6 weeks. I had to prepare my teaching materials and equipment for the class. The school allowed me to use their copier as well as providing my lunch. I was impressed with the facilities of the school and the teachers were cooperative. I spoke with a teacher who had a Master's Degree in English. She said that she lacked confidence in speaking English. She was afraid that if she made a mistake, then the children would copy her error. Basically she used more Thai language while teaching English. She told me that once the school used to get funding from the government. They hired a native English-speaking teacher to teach grades 5-6. The children learned a little more English from the native speaker. But the Thai teacher's English improved greatly because she had to translate every single word for the students.

I chose to teach three classes. The worst class was Grade 6 as they were not very motivated. But my Grade 5 class was much more motivated. My third class was for slow learners in Grade 1. I decided to choose these three different groups so that I could observe the real issues of teaching different age levels of students. With this knowledge, I could improve my teaching methods and handle any type of student.

Grade 6 was the worst I had to face and I got mad in the beginning. Even though there were about 30 students in the classroom, only 3 or 4 of them really wanted to learn English. They had trouble listening and could not stay still for a second. There was also noise from other classes. To keep them quiet, I wrote some text on the white board and let them copy it. They didn't know much English. Only a few students were able to follow the lesson. I thought the English book for Grade 6 was too advanced for them. I wondered how most of the class would learn anything from the book, as they had no foundation in English. I prayed to God because I didn't know what to do to quiet them down and help them to enjoy the English class more.

Later, I did calm them down by reading a simple English storybook and translating it into Thai. This helped them to understand the story better. Then I gave them a few written questions from the story as an exercise. This way they learnt vocabulary as well as hearing the sound of each word. I was surprised that this method worked out so well. Over time, most children began to show more interest in studying English. Another surprise in this class was from a 14 year old student who had no motivation. He didn't care about anything. After I gave him special attention, he was able to do the English exercises and got more than half of them right. This was not normal for him. The other students didn't want to believe that he did it all by himself. It was a good feeling for me to make some good progress. Sometime later, I found out that there was a boy in this class who was addicted to computer games. A teacher told me that he dressed for school every day but went to a computer game shop and missed school for a whole month. The teacher contacted his parents who seemed to know nothing about this behavior. It was sad because most parents made a living by selling food or other things on the footpath, and they were too busy to know what their children were doing.



My Grade 6 class.

(The boy I have my arm around never came to school for a month because of his addiction to computer games.)

The students in Grade 5 paid more attention and were well behaved. However, they lacked confidence and were a little too serious about studying. I needed to find a solution to help them to relax and enjoy learning. When I first spoke English to them, they were nervous because Thai teachers don't speak English that much. Although they lacked confidence, it was not too difficult to help them enjoy learning because they were so motivated.

The Grade 1 class enjoyed learning even though they didn't know much English. They loved to repeat each word after me and loved to sing. They paid attention when I taught them songs with motions and learnt to say words from my picture cards and drawings. They were not shy, but assertive, and didn't mind when they made mistakes by saying words wrongly. They seemed to like me a lot. Their cheerfulness made me happy. Every time they saw me, some would run to give me a hug. It was hard for me to manage the 30 of them alone. Many days I left the classroom very tired.

Finally, my time of teaching ended as I returned the classes to their previous teachers. I felt that I had learnt enough during this period of teaching in the school. These classes had been my first training ground. I had learnt a lot at this school. Thank God for this opportunity. He made the way for me to learn. Without Him, teaching these classes would have been impossible.

Chapter 22

English Class on Sunday

When I was a volunteer at the BSC providing advice to students who were applying for the English classes, I was inspired to teach English. I had some experience teaching English to children, but now I wanted to experience teaching English to adults.

I volunteered to teach English to adults after church. When the class began, there were about 20-22 students. I was surprised to find that there was a female student who was very good at writing and translating English to Thai. Most of the students knew some basic English. They had some knowledge of grammar and their understanding was passable, but some were not so good. Probably, most of the students had been in another class with a native English-speaking teacher. However,

they were still too shy and struggled with speaking and pronunciation. I encouraged them to speak more by talking about themselves or by giving a speech to the class on any topic. I also tried to figure out a way to make them enjoy the class. Sometimes, I invited American friends to the class so that the students could hear their pronunciation and practice conversational English with them.

Before the end of each class, I taught them Christian songs. I would explain the meaning of the song and share God's story. It was good. I enjoyed the class very much and the students did also. One young female student accepted Jesus Christ into her life after hearing about God's story. She had heard about Jesus many years before while studying at a Christian School. But no one had asked her, or explained to her, how to accept Christ. I shared with her on many occasions until she was ready to follow Jesus and accept Him as the Lord of her life. I did not follow up on her personally. Instead, I introduced her to the Youth Group at church.

I still wanted to improve my teaching technique. I had an issue with different levels of learning in the class. Some students were fast learners, some slow, and I didn't know what to do as I could only teach once a week. It would be nice if I were able to divide the different levels into different classes. This would help the students a lot.

At church, I met a nice lady, Christie. After a while, we became good friends. Later, I taught her Thai. Christie and her husband Greg were studying Thai to work with local people in the provinces and share their love of God. Christie and I used to go to the Pratunam Centre shopping mall where I taught her Thai in the Food Court. Sometimes we went for a foot massage on the second floor. Once I heard the masseuses talking to their foreign customers in bad English. I saw one masseur wearing a necklace with a big pendant on it and asked him what that big pendant was for? His wife told me it was a good luck charm, protecting him from all harm. These charms were popular and many people worshipped the images on the charms. They cost a lot of money too. Then a thought came to mind, "People here need to know the real God and English also." I thought it would be a good idea to combine the two in an English class. I could teach English and share the Gospel almost every day. We could teach about God's morality and His salvation. Great idea! When I shared this idea with Christie, she liked it and said that she would love to help me to teach them English.

I was so excited and thought about it for a week, trying to find a way to make it happen. The chances of making it work were so little. Still, I had such a strong feeling inside that it just might succeed. I shared this idea with Thalwin. He did not agree and didn't like the idea at all. He said to me, "You're out of your mind. How do you think you can do it?" I replied that I did have some experience in teaching and wanted to try. But he said that my grammar was no good. I told him that I knew some students with good grammar and they might help me. He told me to wake up, stop dreaming and to get my feet on the ground. He said that it was impossible and gave me four good reasons:

1. I could not do everything by myself.
2. I was not qualified to teach English.
3. I didn't have money to pay the rent. He was not going to support me.
4. We were only going to live in Thailand for one year and then go back to Australia.

However, these reasons could not stop me from giving up my dream. I still believed it was possible. I told Thalwin that Christie had volunteered to help and she might invite her husband, Greg, and others to teach as well. Thalwin still disagreed and worried about all kinds of future problems. I told him not to worry. If the idea to teach English were not from God, then it would not happen. I realized that it would be impossible to do this project by myself. I prayed to God, asking His direction.

I started exploring areas such as how many people were interested in learning English and how much it would cost to rent a place in the Pratunam Centre. Later, I found out that the rental for one unit was 8,000 to 10,000 baht per month, which was too expensive. Someone told me I should go to the 3rd floor where there were many empty units and rental fees would be a bit cheaper. I went to talk to the people in the rental office on the 3rd floor to negotiate the rental cost. I said, "I'm a Christian and, with my American friends, I want to open a free English class, charging only for worksheets. I want to help low income earners to learn English." I asked them if it would be possible to get cheaper rental. They said that the lowest rental price for two units was 7,000 baht. They also had the condition that I provide a letter from my church stating the purpose of the project. So I discussed the rules and regulations with some Thai Christian friends. They said that if the project were set up free of charge to help society, then there would be no problem with the laws.

But I was still stuck for the rent, which was unaffordable. Without financial support from Thalwin, it would be impossible. There was also the expense for the equipment I would need for the classroom. Where would the money come from? I couldn't imagine how it would be possible. However, I was desperate. So I wrote out the purpose of the project and, along with a confirmation letter from the church, took it to the rental office. In the letter, I told them the truth that I had no money to pay the rent and no income or support from anyone. I told them that my American friends and I were Christians who wanted to teach English for free to support the community so that we could help people develop their English skills. At the same time, we would share the Gospel to tell the story about God and calm people's hearts so that they would do good things for society. I explained that a free English class could be a benefit for the building, as it would bring more people into the mall. I also told them that I didn't have any equipment for the classroom and that I might need management to assist with tables and chairs. If the answer was no, then I would not be surprised. About half an hour after I had submitted the letter, they called me on my mobile phone and said yes! They would allow me to use empty units to open my English class. I was very excited with the news and let Christie know about this. She was also very excited. A few days later, Christie and I went to meet with the rental manager.



Christie and myself at Pratunam Centre, 3rd floor.

They let us use four units for the Pratunam English Class project, with the condition that if someone wanted to buy or rent these units, then we had to move out immediately. Also, we would have to pay our own electricity. So I made an agreement with them under those conditions. The rental office team helped me by advertising on the Internet. They were very helpful. I also got help from a good Christian friend, Moi (BSC), who believed in what I was doing. She helped by creating flyers for

advertising as well as posters to be placed in the building to give directions to the English class. I distributed the leaflets and gave some to Christie to give to Thai people who were interested in studying English for free. We only charged 110 baht (\$3.50) per term, and about 11 baht per hour, worksheets included. In my English class on Sunday, I challenged the students to consider volunteering to teach grammar. One of my students, Bert, volunteered to teach English grammar on Saturday evenings.

I had two weeks to get ready before class registration. I still didn't have tables or chairs, and I kept asking around for someone to donate them. A lady, a future student, donated 5 used chairs. I was so glad and thanked God that I could start the registration with five seats. However, I needed to get the chairs from her place. Without anyone helping, I transported them by tuk-tuk and brought the chairs to Pratunam Centre. It was inconvenient and I began to doubt that it was God's will for me to do this project. Also, one of the chairs fell on my foot. It hurt and I was so angry. I asked, "If this is Your will, then why didn't You send someone to help me transport these chairs? Why do I have to do everything by myself all of the time?" Then I realised that this must be a test from God and I should thank Him for everything. I thought that maybe God was testing my faith to make me rely more on Him. I had to learn to rely on Him for everything.

The rental office allowed me to use one of their spare tables for registration. But they did not promise to let me borrow any equipment for the classroom. I thought that we might get the students to sit on the floor or let them buy their own stools for the start.



The chairs were so heavy. I could only drag two at a time.

The registration started and I had help from Christie, Bert and a female student from my Sunday class. It was a big blessing when Richard and Linda Blount came to help. They were missionaries working in South Thailand. They didn't know the whole story of my Pratunam English class project. When I asked for help, they just came without questioning. That was encouraging to my faith.



Richard and Linda helping to recruit students.

I had just one week before class to prepare lessons for all levels. We got about 165 student registrations, for a total of 11 classes from Monday to Saturday. Before the classes started, the rental office allowed me to borrow tables and chairs to use for the first three months. I bought a small white board about 12 X 17 inches (A3). I did not have the budget to purchase a larger one. It was good enough to use as a teaching aid, but it was a bit small and I had to flip it over all the time.



My English class for the first week.

Later, Richard and Linda Blount, brought a big desk for my office. It was so good. Finally, I had my own desk. I really appreciated what they had done. It was a very heavy wooden desk, but the two of them managed to carry it all the way from the lift to my office.

The lady who had donated the five chairs had now joined the class. During the first session, she saw me holding my little white board as I taught. The next day, she donated 5,000 baht for the purchase of two large white boards with wheels. It was much better than holding my little A3 white board. After one term, the money from the students was enough to buy 24 lecture chairs and two big tables with twelve plastic chairs. I returned all that I had borrowed from the office. I was so proud. Suddenly I had everything for the classroom and I truly believed that God was with me. He made it happen. I still enjoy looking at the picture below.



I divided the four units into three classrooms and one office. During the first two weeks, people who had agreed to teach were not able to come and I had to teach all 11 classes by myself. I prepared lessons and documents for students of all levels. I also welcomed the students and provided them with their lessons. I soon got very tired because it took so much energy to prepare, teach and then provide after-class help for the students. Sometimes, I was hungry and dizzy, but I did not take time to rest or eat, as I had to prepare for the next lesson. On one occasion, someone (I don't know who) bought me drinks, yoghurt and iced tea. I thought it must be from heaven and it relieved my fatigue. Thank God someone cared. It must have been one of my students. I was encouraged a lot by this act of kindness.

Once I was introduced to Sara, an American woman. We met in the Pratunam building on the second floor. She was also a Christian and later we became friends. Every time when Sara came to Thailand, she brought me some books and textbooks for teaching English, including some for children. Later, I had an English class for children and the English books from Sara helped a lot. I realised that God had always been with me, although at first, I felt all alone. But God gave me one thing at a time, just when I needed it.

Later, Bert came to teach every Saturday evening. Christie came also, followed by her husband, Greg Bennett. This made the English class more interesting as we now had native English teachers. We also had a Thai volunteer teacher whose grammar was good.

I used the classroom to witness, using Christian music and stories that gave ideas about God. I was very happy. More and more people came to study English. Sometimes I had to put all the students in one class because we didn't have enough teachers. Christie taught three classes a week, Greg two, and Bert one. My responsibility was seven classes a week. We didn't do much advertising, but the students kept coming in and former students enrolled again. See the crowded classrooms below.



Myself and Greg Bennett at the Bible class on Sunday afternoon.

Since volunteering to do this work, my English was improving. I loved being in the class talking to people. I soon discovered that doing things full time and alone was hard work. **Since** I didn't get paid and had no financial support in the beginning, I had to be careful with every baht. Sometimes I skipped lunch to save money for the project. I tried to save travelling costs by using minibuses and carrying all kinds of stuff by myself. It was risky carrying so many things and not being able to hold on to each item properly. Even though I was doing this for the Lord, it was sometimes discouraging when nothing was going smoothly. But I always kept my hope in the Lord and prayed for His protection. I was still hoping that one day God would send someone to help me in this ministry. I was always positive when sharing the project with Thalwin.

I believed that God was with me all of the time. A few times I almost fainted in the class while writing on the white board. I would feel very dizzy and ask God to help me continue to finish the class, and He did. He always gave me strength and hope. God also encouraged me through the students. Sometimes they bought me snacks, food and drinks. I must have looked hungry and poor to them. I had the choice of living a comfortable lifestyle, but chose to sacrifice myself for this ministry believing I was doing the right thing.

Greg and Christie Bennett had been volunteers on the project for three terms. However, their time had finished and they needed to move to Northeast Thailand to work. After a while, I had enough

money from student registrations, and some donations, to hire a temporary assistant. I prayed that God would send a Christian to be my assistant, but no one came forward. Then I hired a non-believer, Por, who was also able to teach English. I used this opportunity to share the Gospel with her and invited her to church. At that time, Thalwin had changed his mind and provided the wages for my assistant. It was great! Later, the church began to support me financially and also gave me some materials for the English classes.

Another good bit of news was that Thalwin decided to stay in Thailand for a few more years. I was so happy to have more time to be with my project. I continued to try to find someone to work with me full time. During that time, I shared the Gospel with one of the students, Akdate Ampai (we called him AK). He studied with us almost every day. We invited him and other men and women students to church each Sunday. Once, one of my students, Fook, came to church with us and went to the front to accept Christ. That was a big surprise for all of us. Then we started to have a Wednesday evening Bible group at Pratunam English class. Por, my assistant, was not yet ready to accept Christ. Later she decided to go back to her old job and I hired AK as my assistant.

I prayed that AK would one day open his heart to Jesus. It took him four months. After going to church and watching the Jesus film, he eventually accepted Jesus during a Bible study class led by our Pastor. It was great to have two men become Christians in our Ministry. Both AK and Fook could play the guitar. We started to do more activities for the English program. I began to practice singing English songs. I was not good at singing because I knew nothing about music. I wanted to sing, so I practiced a lot at home. Many times Thalwin asked me to stop. It was funny because he could not handle my voice. He said that I really didn't have a feeling for music like my brother. But I was not going to give up. I still practised in the bathroom where no one could hear me. I kept telling Thalwin, "I want to do something to help Thai people to enjoy learning English. I want to encourage them to learn. I'm also Thai and not young but I am still able to learn and speak English. I want to create some kind of fun program to draw Thais to learn. I know Thai people. They love entertainment." Thalwin said, "You made a good point. You must make a good program and call it 'English Through Entertainment'" Oh! I liked that name, but how would I do it? It would take a very, very long time for me to make such a program. First, I needed to learn how to sing.

We had a male student in my class called Somnuk. He accepted Christ after we shared the Gospel with him and invited him to church. I was so happy to see more men accept Christ. It was hard to believe because most of the students were women, and normally women accept Christ more easily. It encouraged Thalwin to see Thai men accepting Christ. He said that, by nature, both men and women follow male leaders. However, if a woman is leading, then most followers are women. What he said was very interesting. I saw his point. I also wanted to see more men at church. I also supported men leading men.

It was sad when Fook was no longer able to join our activities or go to church after a few months because his parents were against his beliefs. We tried to follow up on him, but had no success. I thought of Mark 4:16-17 where some who said they believed were like seed sown on rocky places. They hear the Word and receive it with joy but since they have no roots, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes, because of the Word, they quickly fall away.

Later Bert had to concentrate on his Master's Degree so he stopped teaching English grammar on Saturday evenings. Thalwin was not happy with my work. He said I spent too much time with the project. Thus, I needed to cut the number of classes. The project was not in good shape at that time. I prayed to find foreign volunteers to teach English. Then we found Chris, a missionary, who volunteered to work with us. We worked together very well and the students enjoyed his classes.

Before his class finished, he would tell a story about God in simple English and then AK would play the guitar. We taught the students Christian songs and explained the meaning of the songs. Once Chris brought some American students (CCC summer project) to join the class and they gave their testimonies. I would translate and many students were impressed with their testimonies.



Chris with students at the Thursday morning class.

Once, in my Saturday afternoon class, some CCC Thai Christians students came to witness. Two teenage boys, named X and Jack, accepted Christ. But after a few weeks, their families got mad and stopped them from coming to the classes. This made it impossible to follow up on them. It was a good lesson for us to see how Thai families could sometimes strongly reject Christianity. It was something I needed to figure out. I learned so many things from this project and I gained so much from these experiences. I enjoyed what I was doing, but felt that my freedom was limited because I was a married woman. My husband was not really happy with the classes. He thought I had no balance with what I was doing. Maybe he was right. I also believed that he would never understand me because we had such different backgrounds in faith and culture. We also did not have the same vision. Thalwin wanted to go back to Australia. As I already knew, he didn't want to live in Thailand. Sharing my testimony about Jesus with Thais was a big deal for me because they were my people and I could easily communicate with them.

But, because I was his wife and loved him, I had to obey him according to the Bible. So, while I was still working in this ministry, I needed to find and train someone to continue the project before I left. It was hard to find someone who was really committed to the English program ministry, and it was hard for me to let go. Some people said to me, "It's not your ministry, it belongs to God. You must let go." For some reason, people like to say things like that. But the Bible tells us that we are co-workers with God. 1 Cor. 3:9 says, *"For we are God's fellow workers...."* I was responsible for what God had laid on my heart and I believed that I had to remain faithful. I loved this project and I knew that God was with me. In fact, in this ministry, I had seen good results in reaching Thais. It was much better than I had done in the past and Thalwin agreed.

AK was a mature man and I wanted to see him grow in faith, just the way I did. He needed a male spiritual mentor, but we couldn't find the right person for him. It was a good thing in one way because he worked with me. I became his spiritual mentor, with help from Thalwin. At first, it was hard for me to guide AK to follow Jesus. Thank God, later he got better and better. Two years later it surprised me to find out that AK had been a former medium's assistant for 16 years. His partner was a medium who could predict the future and help people to come into good fortune. He told me that he had seen supernatural things through her. He commented, "It was so powerful." AK also said, "When spirits manifested in her, the whole house would shake. She was able to speak

languages, such as Indian and Chinese, depending on the spirit." AK said that sometimes she spoke in strange tongues, which he recognised when he was at a Pentecostal church after he had become a Christian.

AK also strongly believed in the spirits he experienced through his partner. He worshipped the many idols that they had in their house, thinking they were great gods. After his partner had died, he held on to these traditional beliefs. He continued to respect and worship idols. When he was feeling down, he would pray and sometimes stare at the idols for a long time. He still believed in worshiping idols for three years after his wife had died of cancer, but his life was not getting any better. He didn't know what to do until one day he saw our poster: "Free Pratunam English Class." He thought that if he studied English, then he might get a job. He went to the Pratunam Centre where I was teaching. He joined the English class. I shared the Gospel with him, but he continued to follow idols even though he was my assistant. I had some conflicts with him a few times. But I had to respect his opinion and wait until he was ready. One day he gave his heart to the Lord. After that, he got rid of all the idols. He was so happy to know the real God and wanted to be with Him forever. It is amazing how God saves people. If I had known about his demonic background, I would not have hired him in the first place.



AK was a former medium's assistant, with many idols.

Experience in making disciples

While working with AK, I encouraged him to build a strong foundation in faith and to witness to people. I encouraged him to get to know God through the Bible and prayer, and also to learn how to have a personal relationship with Jesus. As I was discipling him, I was also learning and growing in my faith. However, it was difficult for me to follow up and train AK because he was a mature man with his own opinions and plenty of experiences in life. After a while, he started witnessing to people. There was a woman named Noi who was selling jeans on the street. AK was her customer. He shared his witness about God and gave her tracts to read. After a month, Noi went to church and gave her heart to the Lord. She was a fine Christian and firm in her faith. That was a blessing.

I always shared with Thalwin about what was happening in the project. He was excited also and supported me in following up AK. He gave advice and encouragement to AK through me. Thalwin would like to see more men taking a greater role amongst Thai Christians and I agreed. I learned much and got more accustomed to working with AK. I learned to be more careful in my behaviour and to be a good Christian model. Learning how to disciple and to train someone to follow in Jesus' steps was a valuable experience.

I deeply supported the discipleship principles of William R. Bright, who founded Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC). I got trained through them and have remained firm in the faith. Through them, I

learned how to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and I have learned to rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance. I also learned from them that men should disciple men, and women should disciple women.

After discipling AK for more than a year, he befriended many of the male students and shared the Gospel with them. The next step for AK was to learn how to be a spiritual mentor. This would be important so that he could follow up on new believers and teach them to be disciples of Jesus. It's not easy. Discipling is harder than bringing people to the Lord. Mentors must be spiritually mature, know the Bible well, and have a strong faith in God.

Later, Thalwin stopped financially supporting the Pratunam English class project. He asked, "Is it OK if I stop financial support of your project? If you believe in the Lord, you must trust in Him. Right?" I said, "That's fine. No worries, I will trust the Lord." But to be honest, I was a bit nervous because I was losing support of more than 10,000 baht a month. I would have to trust the Lord with just the 3,000 baht support from the church. It was a big task for me because I had already reduced the number of classes, but the expenses were still there. I tried to sell some stock from Thalwin's and my business store, like bags and Bible covers. I also tried to raise some funds, but got very little. I must trust the Lord and not give up.

Next, I needed to find someone to continue the English class program while I was back in Australia. AK and I went to a Baptist Church (English service) to find someone to teach English and to share the Gospel. Thank God, after we prayed together with the Pastor, David Cavanaugh volunteered for the job. He would be in charge of teaching and administering the English Class Ministry at Pratunam after I left. That was God's hand in the Ministry. I still had a few more months to be in Thailand to organize things before returning to Australia.



Chapter 23

Time to Leave Thailand

Thalwin was not happy living in Thailand as he had so much stress with his work. He had a lot of pressure that caused health issues. While he was still working for the company, he had cervical arm pain because a disc had ruptured in his neck hitting on the nerves. Finally, he had an operation in a hospital in Bangkok.

His feelings of not wanting to live in Thailand began to increase. He was not satisfied with the system of things in Thailand. He was also frustrated with me at times. He said that foreigners in Thailand had no rights and he asked many questions which I could not answer. He said that foreigners were not treated fairly. He had a visa and work permit but no guarantee of anything. He was paying taxes, yet had to report to the government every 90 days. **But** if he lost or quit his job, then he would **have** to leave the country within seven days. Because he was a foreigner, he paid more than Thais at all the tourist places. **In addition**, he had no right to own even a small piece of land or have a house in his name, except for an apartment.

I understood my husband's feelings, but I didn't know what to do to help him. We didn't have the same vision for working with Thais in Thailand. I let him get rid of his frustration through saying negative things over and over. The love of God made me love him **even** more. I stayed calm with the Lord and always had peace in my heart. If I did not like what he said, then I just didn't **listen**. As a wife, I had to obey my husband because the Bible says in Ephesians 5:22-23, *"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church."* So, when my husband did not want to live in Thailand any longer, I knew it was time to return to Australia with him. All the same, I kept hoping that one day Thalwin would change his mind and come back to Thailand with me to do the English class programs again. I still had the incentive to tell God's story to the Thai people.

Back to Australia in 2009

We travelled back to Australia. **After** a few months, Thalwin got a job at a computer company. I asked him for financial support for the project in Thailand and he agreed. Teaching English in the Pratunam Centre continued without me. Thank God we had native English speaking volunteers, most of whom spoke Thai. David Cavanaugh led the work, together with AK. I was still in charge and gave AK long distance support by communicating with him through the Internet. I monitored, mentored, coached and encouraged AK to walk with Christ and to witness. I saw God guiding him even though I was not there. Student numbers were lower, but AK was still witnessing to them and bearing fruit. AK brought several male students to church. There were three who went consistently to church and did Bible study regularly. Also, there was a young male with a Muslim background who AK witnessed to. That young man accepted Jesus Christ and later he witnessed to his friend. There was a Bible study in David Cavanaugh's class that was good for both AK and the other new believers.

Living in Australia

During our first year back in Australia, we rented an apartment on the waterfront that was in a beautiful location with a great atmosphere. I decided to enrol in a course of providing services to children (Certificate III in Children's Services). I loved children and wanted to learn more about them and to get some experience working with them. I wanted to understand their stages of development, as well as learn the methods used to train them in the English language.

I still dreamed of going back to Thailand to improve the teaching of English to children and to train teachers. In Thailand there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor. There is a minority group of children who are good in English. They come from wealthy families who enrol them in English-speaking schools or they have private school teachers who are proficient in English. Children from low-income families are in the public schools and are the majority group. These children have no chance to learn to speak English even though English is important for their education. If they have no English, then their future is limited. I was concerned with this majority group. I wanted to help those who had no opportunity to go to private schools.

Children are the future of our nations

Poor and disadvantaged children are the future of my nation as well. If we do not help them today, what is going to happen to them in the future? God had given me a heart to help them. I wanted to challenge Thais to support this project financially and to volunteer for the work. It was my belief that we should help our own people to develop mentally and spiritually through God's story. When the population has a low level of education, problems are solved by violence instead of through the wisdom and love of God.

I always dreamed of getting back to Thailand to make this project a reality. I wanted to register a foundation and call it "Local Care Thailand". The aim of the project would be to teach children moral and ethical development and to train teachers. I hoped that we would get financial support from the Thai people and help from foreign volunteer teachers. This all seemed like a dream. However, in Matthew 19:26 Jesus said, *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* I could only wait and hope that God would open the way. But at the time I was still in Australia. On the positive side, we had a much better lifestyle with a welfare system, good hospitals and greater Christian values. However, serving the Lord in Thailand was an exciting challenge to me. There were still many people in Thailand who had never heard about God. I had an intense passion to tell them.

Buying our own home

After I finished the Certificate III course, we decided to buy a house and move to a new home in Collingwood Park, Ipswich. The house had four bedrooms and an area of nearly 900 square meters. We were proud to finally have our own property, along with a mortgage. Thalwin continued working for the same company, but I had to find work. I found work at a Childcare Centre close to our place. I felt so good after getting my first pay check. Finally, I had my own income from work. I really appreciated getting paid as it made me feel that my time was valuable. This was probably because I had done volunteer work for so long and never got paid.

At my work, I learned to understand how to get along with Australian people. I also gained from the experience of working with children. It was great to have the opportunity to use English with children, co-workers and parents. I learnt many different programs that we used to teach and interact with children. It gave me ideas on how to teach English to Thai children and how to train Thai teachers.



Morgan Miller (right).

I don't feel discriminated against when working with the people in Australia. I do not feel like a second-class citizen at all and I have the same rights as everyone else. I have adapted myself to

work well with the children and made good friends with the parents. One family hired me to look after their toddler daughter after work, at our place. It made me feel good because they were putting their trust in me. Her name was Morgan Miller. When I started to look after her, she **was** about one year and three months old. She was a beautiful girl with a unique personality. With her parent's permission, I observed her development.



Morgan Miller (left)



Morgan Miller (3 years) and myself

Working in the childcare centre **was** a great experience. Sometimes I wanted to share the Gospel with the people at work but it was hard as there were lots of rules and regulations to follow. Also, I didn't know how to approach them. Work was not always easy. Sometimes I was up emotionally and sometimes I was down. But God's peace was always with me.

In addition to my regular work, I spent time studying material on how to grow in Christ by William R. Bright. I also translated it into the Thai language. In addition, I recorded a video message for AK as a guide for him to understand the meaning of having a life in Christ. My desire was for him to have a solid foundation for his faith. I communicated with AK regularly because, being alone, many things tested his faith and made him feel down. It was very important for me to continue to be his spiritual mentor. From the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord, we become a main target for Satan. He will attack us every moment of the day. As long as we live in this world, we will have our sinful nature tempting us to sin. However, sin is our choice. God gives us His Holy Spirit so that we can have the power to choose not to sin.

Trials and temptations are given to us to help us to grow in our faith. Therefore, it is necessary for each believer to have a spiritual mentor to disciple him. That is what the Bible tells us to do. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus said, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Chapter 24.

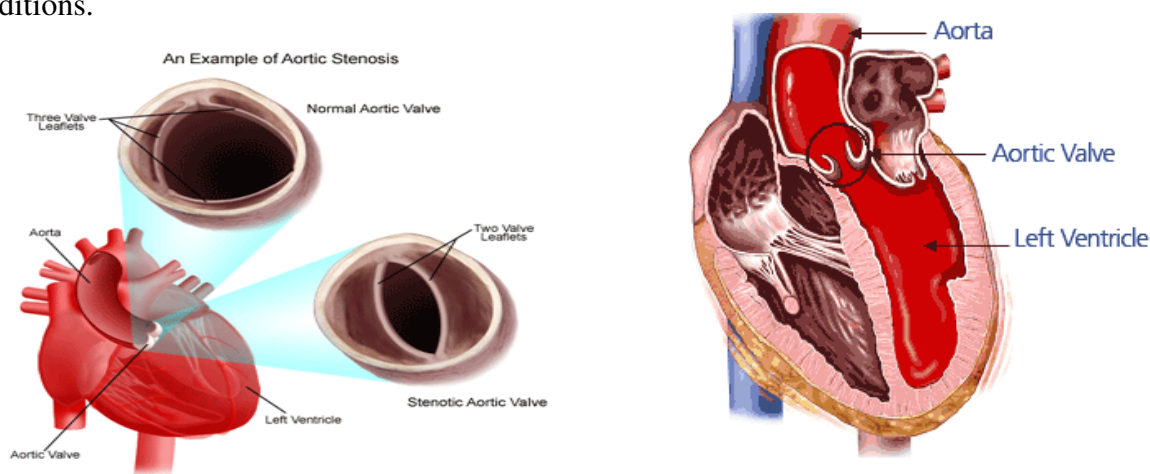
Bad news about my heart

In 2010, everything was going well in our new home. I enjoyed working at the child care centre and was happy with the project in Thailand. Thalwin even said that he was able to handle my singing voice now. I still dreamed about doing an English Through Entertainment program for Thai people.

In the middle of the year, I got a cold for a few weeks. I kept working and it got worse. I went to see a doctor who examined my heart carefully and he asked if anyone had told me that my heart made a strange sound (heart murmurs). I said no. He asked me to do an echo-cardiogram (ECHO) right away. I did not follow the doctor's advice because I didn't realize the seriousness of my condition. After a few weeks, I got sick again. This time I went to my female doctor and she said I must go for the ECHO. I went and the results showed that I had a serious heart condition called "Severe Aortic Stenosis." I still didn't believe the report and thought there must be some mistake. My doctor told me that I might need heart valve surgery so she sent me to a Cardiologist, Dr. Johannes Moolman. He confirmed that my heart condition was serious and I would need a valve replacement soon. I asked why my heart was defective. He explained that I was born with a heart valve that had only two leaflets. A normal heart has three. Because two leaflets wear out quicker than three, Aortic Stenosis occurs at an earlier age. Aortic Stenosis (AS) is a disease of the heart valves in which the opening of the aortic valve is narrowed. In my case it was only opening 0.54 sq. cms rather than the normal 2 sq. cms. The aortic valve is the valve between the left ventricle of the heart and the aorta, which is the largest artery in the body and carries the entire output of blood. The aortic valve may become so constricted (stenosis) that it can open only slightly, drastically reducing the amount of blood that flows into the aorta and throughout the body. In some cases, the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the brain may not be enough to sustain normal brain function. When this occurs, patients may briefly lose consciousness or pass out. Losing consciousness is called syncope.

It was too complicated for me to understand. The doctor explained using a water tap as an example. He said that, over time, rust builds up on the valve in the tap and allows only a little water to flow. It's necessary to change the valve to get the water to flow properly. He said that is was the same with my heart. I needed a new valve to get a bigger blood supply otherwise I would get black outs or have shortness of breath when walking up hills or stairs. I still didn't want to believe it. The doctor told me that my heart was able to handle the condition because I was not tall and not overweight. But he also said that it did not mean I was OK, I still needed heart valve surgery.

I got another ECHO test and the result was the same. The doctor said that my condition was serious. I also started to recognize symptoms such as shortness of breath during exercise, dizziness, heart murmurs and fainting. The doctor advised me about the operation and said that I should be ready for the next steps within a few months. At that time, we were intending to travel to Thailand and visit Thalwin's family in Holland for Christmas. The doctor gave us permission to travel but said to watch for symptoms and be prepared to get help if necessary. It was not nice to travel under those conditions.



Illustrations of Aortic Stenosis

I searched the Internet for more information on Aortic Stenosis and found that the only way to solve the problem was to have valve replacement surgery. On the Internet, I saw a very long scar on one patient's chest. The operation takes some time to recover from and, in some cases, drugs are needed for the rest of the patient's life to reduce the viscosity of their blood. And sometimes another operation is needed after 15-18 years.

I was scared and my faith was shaking. I tried to find a way to avoid the surgery, but found nothing. I was struggling, frustrated and became depressed. I could not accept the fact that I had to have heart surgery. I began to ask many questions. Why did God let me be born with this condition? Why did I need heart surgery? Why was this happening to me? Was it because of my sin? Was God punishing me? What about my dream, my vision, to go back to Thailand to share the Gospel with the Thai people and help them with their education? How about my English Through Entertainment program? Was my time on this earth up? Was I too old for God to use? Doesn't God need me anymore? Why can't I find a way to get out of this?

At that time I was only thinking about me, myself and I. I had lost my peace and hope in the Lord and felt that God had left me alone in this situation. For two weeks I cried almost every night. Then I began to rely on Thalwin who loves me very much. He was sad too and I should have been thinking about his feelings. In the beginning, it was also hard for him to accept. Christian friends prayed and gave me encouragement. Thalwin always cheered me up by telling me how good I would feel after surgery. Later I was able to calm myself down and learn to accept it. Then I confessed my sin to the Lord. I had no right to question, doubt or argue with Him. He is our mighty God who never makes mistakes. He knows everything. His plans are always perfect and He knows us better than we know ourselves. I came to the conclusion that I should thank God for what was happening to me even though I didn't understand it.

Our trip to Thailand and Holland

In the 2nd week of November 2010, I went to Thailand by myself for three weeks. I visited my English class project at Pratunam Centre, spending time with AK and the students. I also visited friends at Shalom church (CCC's group) and shared about my heart condition. I asked the church to pray that I would have peace and be ready for heart surgery in a few months. The leader of the church prayed with a powerful voice: "Dear God by Your power and Your mercy please heal Sunete's heart completely. Let there be no need for heart surgery." I was wondering why he prayed this way because I had asked for prayer to prepare me for heart surgery. But it didn't matter because I liked the request. I thought how great it would be if God decided to heal me.

After my three weeks in Thailand, Thalwin joined me for a week and then we travelled to Holland. I slept very well in the cold December weather. We had a great time with the families in Holland. I had been walking a lot, sometimes fast, to test my heart condition. I was surprised that no serious symptoms showed.

After we returned to Australia I went to see Dr Johannes for an examination. A couple weeks later I did an ECHO test again. The results showed that my Aortic Stenosis was now moderately severe with a valve area of 0.8 sq. cms. Before it was 0.54 sq cms. The doctor wanted to recheck it so I had to do two more ECHO tests and a stress test as well. The results still showed a moderate condition. It was great and I felt more relaxed. I had a big smile in the picture below where I was getting ready for the stress test.



Despite the improvement, the Doctor said I would still need a valve replacement in the future. I could not avoid it. However, I thanked God for the prayers of Christians in Thailand and in Australia. I now have to check with the Cardiologist every six months. The doctor again informed me about being aware of my condition and to learn to recognize the symptoms. He explained that I needed to be ready for the unexpected. Sometimes it was hard to recognise the symptoms because I was so use to being that way.

Chapter 25

My heart was like a time bomb

The doctor told me that until I have heart valve replacement surgery, my life would be under constant threat. It is like having a time bomb strapped to my body as something can happen at any moment. I have to rely on God. I thank God for encouraging me through this time and that the heart valve opening is now larger. It has increased from 0.54 to 0.8sq.cms. Although it is only a few millimetres larger, it means so much to me as it has delayed surgery for a few while, perhaps a few years. My mental and physical health has improved and my peace and my hope in the Lord have returned. Praise the Lord! However, Aortic Stenosis is still my thorn and I want it to disappear. I think of what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9: *"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."* Thank God for His grace and power. Lately I have become stronger and more motivated to continue with my dreams. Yes, I'm a dreamer for my Redeemer.

Whenever I think back, I thank God for His blessing on the Pratunam English Class which started in early June 2007 and continued until June 2011. We had to stop the project because there were no more free units available and also the building needed maintenance. Looking back I can clearly see God's hand in the project. Without His help, it would have been impossible for me to operate for four years as a pioneer with my bare hands and faith. It was a great experience and amazing how God provided everything on time. Even when I was not there, the ministry continued to operate without me.

I would like to thank all the volunteer teachers who helped in the ministry. They all played an important role in teaching English to the Thai people and teaching the Bible to new believers. I

especially appreciated David Cavanaugh, as without his commitment, the project would not have been able to continue until the end. I hope that in the future we will have the opportunity to serve the Lord together again. The following is a list of the volunteers who were involved in the project: David & Becky Cavanaugh, Wanda Stewart, Johnny Damon, Mike & Kim Barnett, David & Cheri Crook and David Johnson. The ministry brought seventeen people to know Christ - twelve men and five women. Four were baptized. Only four stayed in the faith and we are still following up one new believer.



Pictures of the Pratunam building

I learned so much from this great experience. I learned how to listen to the Holy Spirit rather than my emotions and I have learned how to hold onto the Lord at all times. Since the English class ministry has closed down, we have encouraged AK to witness and follow up new believers. We have also encouraged him to attend a university because, from our experience, we have found that an education makes it easier to reach out to higher educated groups with the Gospel. Even though education is important, the most important thing is the Word of God.

I have thanked God a hundred times for being back in Australia and finding a group that seriously searches the truth in the Bible with Mick Alexander. I have come to understand Christianity and its history more, especially after watching a DVD entitled, A Lamp In The Dark: The Untold History of the Bible (This video is free to watch on YouTube). The video shows how the truth of the Bible was hidden from the general public for centuries. It shows how the Roman Catholic Church was formed when Constantine The Great, a Roman Emperor, supposedly became a Christian and made Christianity the state religion of Rome. Constantine combined Christianity with pagan religion and this resulted in a false Gospel of salvation by works. This all began about three hundred years after Jesus died and Satan has continued this work to today. It's a very important truth which we should be aware of.

I also believe that things like Christmas trees and Easter eggs, which have nothing to do with the story of Jesus, came about from Christianity mixing with pagan beliefs. They are just man made symbolic things which came from pagan spirit worship. What happened many centuries ago has had a big impact on the world today. It has drawn attention away from the true story in the Bible. For example most people think of Christmas as tree decorations, presents, Santa Claus and reindeers.

Many people don't know the real story. Thank God for showing me the truth. Before, I used to think how important it was to have a Christmas tree inside my house with decorations to celebrate Jesus' birthday. But now I don't want to have a Christmas tree in my house because I don't want to mix pagan spirit worship and Santa Claus with Jesus' story. In fact, I want to tell everyone about this. I prefer to follow the biblical story of Jesus and not follow the way of the world. Christmas to me is a time of sending cards and giving presents and it is a wonderful opportunity to tell people the story of Jesus our Saviour.

We also watched another DVD called, The Daniel Project. It is a very simple and well made prophecy video focused on Israel and the return of Jesus. Surprisingly, it was made by non-Christians. It clearly shows how Bible prophecy is being fulfilled before our eyes and that Jesus will return to Israel soon. It makes me think, "Is the world as we know it about to end? What hope is there for the future existence of mankind?" It has made me want to work in mission field more and more. The DVD can be found on the Internet.

I thank God for my heart condition. It is because of my Aortic Stenosis that I have been driven to write this book about my faith, my weaknesses and my great experiences in following Jesus Christ. I will try not to worry about my heart problem or my other health issues. Philippians 1:21: *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."* Because I have hope in the Lord, I put it all in the back of my mind and focus on what I want to do for His Kingdom only. Philippians 3:13 says, *"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead."*

I know that my time in this world is limited and I try to enjoy every moment I still have. I would love to use every opportunity to serve for the Lord. I want to help Thai society with children's education and sharing the Gospel. If I go back to continue the ministry in Thailand, then I will need to work on the following areas of the ministry:

3. Financial support from the Thai people and spiritual support from Christians who have the same vision.
4. Following up new believers and discipling them in the hope of eventually starting a new church.
5. Methods of teaching and how to encourage Thai people to be more interested in learning English. (This is why I am creating an English Through Entertainment program.)
6. Create a program to teach English to children and effectively train Thais who want to be English teachers.
7. Through the Holy Spirit, find a good strategy to reach diverse groups of people with the Gospel.
8. Challenge Christian volunteers or missionaries to be full-time workers in this ministry.
9. Establish a foundation called, "Local Care Thailand" so that we can be independent.
10. Seek support from the Thai government to allow our foreign teachers to work for one year without having to report every ninety days - this is impossible but God can make it possible.
11. Seek permission from the government to allow tax-free donations including all stuff from overseas to support child education within the project.

I'm waiting for God to open the door for this mission in Thailand. I am studying Early Childhood Education and Care. I'm not just a dreamer. I am preparing myself for the mission. Day and night I dream of working full time for God without the worry of finances and budgets. I believe He can help me with this. I must have faith and trust in Him and let Him lead me in everything. Romans 8:28 says, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*

A dreamer for my redeemer - Sunete Hulsebos