



ignite

A NEWSLETTER OF LIGHTBEARERS MINISTRIES | APRIL 2009

inside:

- > Opportunities for travel, *pg 5*
- > Project profile, *pg 5*
- > The Gospel of Fanta, *pg 6*



JOURNALS FROM A JOURNEY

A three-man team from Lightbearers visited Southeast Asia in March with a three-fold purpose: One, to examine work funded by Lightbearers as a means of accountability; two, to explore potential project opportunities; and three, to expose the team, and Lightbearers by extension, to the needs in that region and to the Buddhist worldview. In order to spread the impact of this two-week journey as broadly as possible, each team member wrote a testimony of his experiences. May God ignite your hearts for the cause of the Gospel as you read each one. >>





KEVIN McCOLLUM:

Appease but never pleased

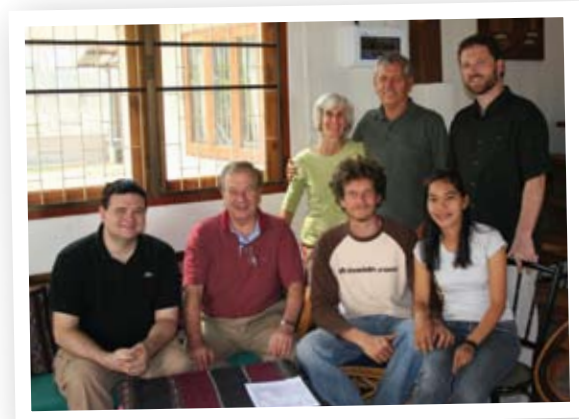
Southeast Asia is a beautiful and diverse region. In appearance, the people are as beautiful as the landscape. Neatly dressed and always jovial, they are a natural attraction for anyone who enters their land. Their exterior, however, masks an inner struggle that finds no relief in a syncretistic faith that covers their animistic roots with a veneer of Buddhism.

I saw this firsthand in a shop in a market near our hotel. A well-dressed shopkeeper displayed an altar in the corner dedicated to her hybrid-Buddhism. Each day she offers “appeasements” on the altar hoping to erase some of her sin and increase her odds in the afterlife. The gift that day was a strawberry Fanta with a long straw, a plate of garlic, and a small bottle of milk. Each, she believed, somehow helped her find her way toward salvation. (Who knew God liked strawberry soft drinks?)

She looked puzzled when I explained that Jesus made an offering for us once-and-for-all. Her response came as a question – “Jesus?” – and she shrugged her shoulders. I asked her if she had heard of Jesus Christ. She said, “No.” When I told her we were Christians, she seemed excited to hear it and, pointing to her altar and then to me said, “Same-same.”

This wasn’t the only evidence of their pursuit to appease sin in hollow ways. Ornate altars cluttered with incense sticks and other indulgences litter the yards and shops across the country. The poor villages proudly display expensive temples to impress Buddha. A barrage of young monks make morning rounds down every street and path, collecting offerings from their desperate neighbors. The offerings and the temples: Shallow appeasements.

It broke my heart to see money, livestock, and other offerings wasted by people who could little afford their cost. All this to appease for sin, yet neither God nor man is pleased.



“It is so encouraging to have people like you visit, see, and pray with us. Thank you for coming!”

– SE Asian partner

MIKE BEDFORD:

Seeing God’s Word alive

Looking back on the mission trip with Kevin McCollum and Jason Buschlen, I’m amazed at how many ministries we were able to observe.

I gained a deeper appreciation for Lightbearers as our small team had dinner in the remote village home of young missionaries (money for materials to build the home came from Lightbearers.) This young couple so impressed me as they invested their lives to bring their village to knowledge and faith in God through Jesus Christ.

In another village, we saw the computer (provided by Lightbearers) used to translate God’s Word into a language that had no alphabet before the missionaries began working in the tribe 30 years ago.

We visited with a medical missionary physician who trained “medics” to minister to an oppressed people, many of whom had been persecuted as Christians for many years. Gaining entrance to serve these people was not legal; still, they went, seeking to meet the medical needs and providing for spiritual nourishment. Lightbearers funded this medic training.

Continued

We attended a small village church. Two Christian village men led the teaching. One of the village ladies led us in singing as we praised God. We shared together in celebrating the Lord's Supper with rice and water – it was all they had.

Another missionary, a Ph.D. in inorganic chemistry, had designed and was manufacturing a low-cost water filtration system for rural villagers. As the people drank purified water, their health improved! Now they were interested in hearing about the Living Water, Jesus Christ. The village had accepted this missionary family, treating them as extended family. We had no idea we were spending some of the last few days of his life with him. The same day we got home, the 43-year-old missionary died of a heart attack. Only days before, he had told me with conviction, "I will spend the rest of my life in this place, serving these people."

Finally, we attended an urban church on the last Sunday before we left. It was a large church, and they brought in extra seats as the room filled. The people were happy and committed to weekly evangelism. There was joy and celebration as we listened to the message, translated and piped through headsets. The pastor knew the joy of the Lord, having previously experienced hunger and hardship with his wife and child under an oppressive regime. Once given the opportunity for permanent residency in the United States, he chose to invest his life in this crowded, dusty, polluted city.

The Word of God is going forth. Lightbearers is on the cutting edge of projects that are making a difference. I'm thankful to be a small part of God's work through this ministry.

JASON BUSCHLEN: Into the enemy's camp

I'm late writing this right now. I'm late mostly because it has been really difficult for me to process everything I saw, heard and felt in Southeast Asia. I knew in my mind that we were headed into the enemy's camp on this trip, but, truthfully, I really wasn't prepared.


I went in with a certain set of expectations: That we would see the hand of God moving mightily, that it

would be clear to me how God would use me and that it would be easy for me to hear His voice and go where He led. Well, words cannot express how God was interested in showing me things that were altogether different from what I expected.

One of the first things that became very clear to me is that taking the shortcut probably will not bring you to the destination. What I mean is that laying the foundation for the Gospel to prosper among people who, in some cases, do not even have a written language does not happen in a year. In fact, one must be prepared to spend a lifetime working and be completely "OK" with being a seed-sower. You need to be OK, as one of the partners is, planting a coffee plant to sustain his village, then waiting like 18 years to make a profit! If I'm honest with myself, I do not possess this long-term view. I don't know what God would need to do in my life to create it.

Knowing that microwaved salvation really isn't an option here, I began asking, "Lord, where do you even begin in a place like this?" The problems are like trying to unravel a tangled rubber band ball. Everything is connected and once you get one tangle loose, you still have a whole ball to undo. Of course, the right answer is to say that only Jesus can undo the ball, and that is so true. Somehow that answer seems too simplistic for me. Really, Jesus takes the ball and untangles it over time.

Becoming a Christian over there is not a magic trick. There still exists a lifetime of Christ regenerating and renewing. I saw missionaries who were making great sacrifices, yet still struggling with the same things I do. I saw nationals who were believers but who were still caught up in the promise of an American life with cool cell phones and loud music. But the fact remains: God is working. Christ is changing lives. I saw it. It was written on their faces. It was the light in their eyes.

A lot of people have commended me for taking the time to go on this trip. It is embarrassing to me. I do not feel special. I do hope that God used me there, and I really hope He will use me here, too. The thing I learned the most is that it was never about an experience for me and what I'd see and do; it was just to simply respond "yes" when he said, "Follow Me." 



sparks

> BRIEF NEWS, BIG IMPACT

Interested in traveling to the 10/40 Window?

Requests have come in from the field for:

- > Barrista
- > Sales Trainer
- > (very) Small Business advisor
- > Tortilla Maker
- > Water Well Specialist
- > Inorganic Chemist
- > Industrial Lubrication Expert
- > Coffee Grower
- > and more

info@LightbearersConnects.com

Deadlines to apply for the Lightbearers' Discipleship Program are approaching. We still have spots available at the University of Arkansas and Missouri State.

Project profile:

<http://www.lightbearersconnects.com/projects/110/>
Manufacturing Equipment in East Asia
Total Need: \$2,000

A business-as-mission partner operates a manufacturing facility in an unreached area, providing employment for the locals and many opportunities to share the Gospel. This partner is opening a new facility in an area they have prayed about for many years. This project will allow them to purchase and transport a key piece of machinery needed for production.





a final word

by Kevin McCollum, *Lightbearers Executive Director*



The Gospel of Fanta

A strawberry soft drink cannot atone for sin. Garlic does not satisfy the judgment of God against our rebellion toward Him, and the burning of incense doesn't lull Him to sleep while we sneak into the afterlife and past His standard of righteousness. This may seem obvious to those of us who grew up in the United States, but it's not so clear it seems in other geographies.

It seemed peculiar to explain these obvious facts to a successful, well-spoken Asian shopkeeper who took pride in keeping these items freshly displayed in front of the Buddha image in her store. "Appeasement," she told us – an offering for luck, favor and forgiveness.

Sadly, I found myself wanting to laugh at the ridiculous nature of her offering. A strawberry Fanta?! Maybe Buddha should switch to a diet drink to slim down a bit! I walked away a bit proud of my own understanding of atonement in Christ, wondering how someone could be so confused. Self-righteousness swelled.

It swelled again a week later while traveling further in Southeast Asia. I was angered to see hundreds of government

and aide workers cluttering the streets with their \$60,000-plus vehicles when they were on assignment to work for the poor and spending donated money. Just five miles outside of the city, the poverty was on full display yet no luxury vehicles could be found. Well-known organizations were involved. Shocking! Corruption!

Strawberry soda cannot atone for sin, and mission trips don't impress God. Robbing donors and oppressing the poor anger God, and so does self-righteousness.

As I reflect on Christ's immeasurable gift of atonement, I recognize how paltry my offerings are in return. He is incorruptible and will not be appeased by my attempts to substitute obedience with cleverly packaged yet smelly garlic.

Another lesson is related to our mission at Lightbearers. Simply put, our work is vital.

For one, we are committed to screening our project requests to make sure every dollar is used directly for the work. We don't keep "hidden fees," and we don't allow them from our partners. In the face of vast corruption, I had confidence that our donors are being protected from it.

Secondly, we are committed to the Gospel. No change is permanent except the redemption of man by God. Social, governmental, and economic structures can topple in an instant, but the Church is His and will prevail to the end. What a joy it was to share a rice-and-water Lord's Supper with a small village church one Sunday and a worship time with more than 300 believers in the city the following Sunday!

As you ponder these things, consider your role in the spread of the Gospel and the purity of your giving. To do this properly you must consider Christ. In light of His ultimate gift, more of what we long for will be revealed as strawberry sodas and garlic; and our only compulsion will be to "gain Christ and be found in Him." ♦

 **LIGHTBEARERS**
ministries

mobilize+connect money prayer manpower

Our Mission: To mobilize and connect renewable resources to projects of Great Commission ministries in the 10/40 Window through residential discipleship and donor development.



*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*

As a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), we are committed to responsible stewardship, financial integrity, and independent accountability.