



# The Khmer Chronicle

The Cambodian Ministry Newsletter  
of George and Shary Frahm  
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377+

Three hundred and seventy seven hotels (and counting) in this little city makes it often seem like it could be bursting at the seams. A good ratio of these hotels have a capacity of two thousand rooms or more. Oh, by the way, that doesn't count the guest houses sprinkled all over the city, nor the varying short and long term apartments nestled into the oddest of spots. Got an estimate of room count in your head yet?

Last year we were introduced to a very modern, newly established greeting center into Angkor Wat. At that time we noticed the beginnings of construction around that area, which now hosts mammoth hotel structures offering all inclusive 'deals' to capture the tourist market, including its own open air atmosphere of goods and services at one's fingertips. For something like this you'd never have to come into the 'city' to see the real local life that we see day in and day out, nor have to go outside of 'their zone.'

So we've been listening to many of the locals whose livelihood is here and imbedded into the character of this city, Siem Reap. There are over 2,000 tuk tuk drivers alone eking out a living here to provide for their families. The competition is stiff, and by all accounts, could get dire with the current trend of inclusiveness. The food and retail sector I am sure is just as full.

Years ago we visited Novgorod, Russia, where much of the same thing was happening. No, this was not a prime tourist destination like Siem Reap, but there was one sole bread factory that provided employment, if one was so fortunate to be employed there. The locals lived off the goods

and services of each other to survive. The community at large struggled, much like the slippery slope I see coming here.

Back to what we are seeing here in this city at the moment. (Our interest is intense on this topic as our Pastor is one of these tuk tuk drivers btw). It is high season right now and there are hundreds of huge buses going thru town shuffling tourists from one spot to another. Tuk tuk drivers clamor for any business they can get. Some offer rock bottom prices to get a client.



On days we head out to the villages, we pass thru a major line of huge hotels. In the daylight those hotels blend in so well that their massiveness is a bit shrouded into the city. But what caused the guts of this article is last Saturday we returned after dark and everyone had 'their lights' on advertising the best of their establishments. At that point I remembered a song that gripped my soul "I am but a stranger here, heaven is my home." I wanted to change the stranger to tourist because at that point I was looking around and seeing like one.

But I'm not a tourist and I must admit I've fallen in love with these people and it grieves me to see the tough road they are facing. Sure, some will acquire hotel jobs as those establishments spring up. But what about all the others? I hear that our own President has made the statement to 'make America great again.' I pray he makes a good run on that promise. Yet I don't see that coming around here, the fact to protect the livelihood of

the common Khmer worker.

We are here to provide opportunities to save souls and share the good news. In doing so we build relationships across cultures to love these people. We get to feel their pain too as days go by. We get to see their joys too when it comes. We laugh together. We pray together. But my heart cries just a bit inside for each of their challenging lives to get thru this life. We are all strangers on a journey aren't we? A journey with a goal of proclaiming 'heaven is my home.' We pray that God continues to show each of these folk His path for their lives as He does / is doing for each of us.

## Testing Our Faith

Many of you know about our entry into the international mission field with a phone call to go to Indonesia to teach and the subsequent refusal by the Indonesian government to renew George's work permit. An invitation to come to Cambodia was issued by an LC-MS pastor to "see what the Lord is doing here," resulted in the Holy Spirit moving in our hearts to come to where we are now. But, this is not the story we want to tell today.

When we first came to Cambodia, we entered the country as LC-MS GEO missionaries, and as members of that program, we were obligated to undergo missionary training at LC-MS headquarters in St. Louis. At that training, we would look around the room, and notice that most of the people in the room were young adults. They were enthusiastic to redeem the lost and bring justice to the oppressed. They were young adults with huge hearts to do something radical for Christ and the world with great health and vigor. But, today, we look around our ranks and notice that many of them were not able to follow through with their initial impulse of becoming a full time missionary. For those that we have caught up with, the problem they faced was exhaustion, dejection, and in a couple of cases a loss of faith.

One of the reasons for this exit lies with doctrinal differences, even among members of the same mission. We expect these differences to occur when we minister to Muslims, Buddhists, and atheists, but not with our co-workers. But, battle lines get drawn on issues of practice, the inerrancy and sufficiency of scripture, God's revelation, even the nature and mission of the church, the message, and the means of proclaiming the Gospel. Add in the biblical qualifications of the people involved, the sovereignty of God and Christ's lordship, and we develop a mission that focuses on the existing and exciting culture, our idealistic passions, immediate community needs, and creative approaches. There are times that we see whole mission teams doggedly uniting around these emphases.

This develops an attitude of, "If it works, then it must be God's will and true." We settle for a minimalist approach to doctrine to fuel our impatience with the slow work of planting seed and the even slower work of forming disciples and training up biblically qualified local leaders and pastors. It becomes difficult for us to explain why even more people are not following Christ when people look for results and weigh them against their local humanitarian needs.

The need for results commonly shortcuts the tiresome labor of training local pastors to be mighty in their use of the bible, making the bible either unused or misused in the proclamation of the bible. Defective scriptural views employ methods of "reaching" people that do not command repentance and submission to the Triune God and teaching people that they have to leave their native religious structures or adopt western religious texts.

As missionaries we have learned that we must rely upon the Lord, and especially the Holy Spirit to move hearts and minds. We learn to rely on the Lord for all our needs, methods, and opportunities so that the lessons we teach are not quickly forgotten.

We need your encouragement and support, emotional as well as financial. Although long term missions such as ours can be a place of excitement and adventure, it is also a place of adversity and conflict. It is a constant cycle of learning to laugh at ourselves and learning to think, reason and even dream in a new language and culture. We need to bond with this new culture and give up our families to some extent as we discover God's love and mission.

Missions is a case of learning to rely on the Lord, and your spouse as His voice in your life. It is a case of learning and implementing the three solae of Martin Luther and shouting as we have heard in chapels over here, "By grace alone; by faith alone; and by scripture alone." To some, our lives here in Cambodia may be lives of romance and adventure. But, our lives have also been at some points lives of heartbreak and loss.

In the upcoming month, we will be stretched as some new opportunities come our way. We will be seeing all of what is discussed to this point. Please pray with us that God will sustain us to make His glory known. Pray, no plead, with the Lord of the Harvest to send more laborers into this field to assist in the spread of the Gospel as well as the resources to sustain the faithful. Thank you!

**Welcome to Phil and Carrie who arrived last Thursday from Shanghai.**

**Stay tuned for updates as the remaining team members arrive in two short days to share time with us, and especially with the locals in Snor, Kok Kreul, Svey Chet, and Bantrey Srei. Each village has its own personality and makeup, giving to us its individuality as a community and a church of its own.**

**These team members will assuredly embrace, love, and benefit by their sacrifice of time and sharing of gifts and talents into each community at large. Thank you for sending them to Cambodia.**

## Knee Thoughts



### Prayers:

- 1 Teams visiting in March that they shine Jesus to everyone.
- 2 Funding to continue serving in Cambodia in the future.

### Praises:

- 1 The established young church of Siem Reap we share life with.
- 2 Our prayer warriors and financial partners.
3. Safe travels for teams from Lockwood, MO and Palatine, IL.



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