

A LETTER FROM THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE KINGDOM OF

# CAMBODIA



PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: TROY ZIEL

## What is Your Mission? *by Austin Wilson*

First, I want to sincerely thank the individuals who helped fund my trip. If it were not for all of your gracious love and support, I would not have had the opportunity to experience a new culture; serve the Lord in a foreign field; increase my faith; and spread love to others. Many wonderful people have played a key part in helping me get to where I am today, for which I am forever grateful. At the end of the day, all glory goes to God.

Only my 2nd time to fly, since age 13, I was excited to go overseas alone, hitting 3 International airports, before being immersed in a new culture for a month. Honestly, I was nervous, and needing God's guidance, I turned to Psalm 37:23-24 "The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand!"

Since the summer of 2013, I have had the desire to visit Cambodia. This would not be a vacation, but rather a trip that would give me a true taste of foreign work; to experience the emotional highs and lows of the work. This trip has definitely done this. The Edwards had me in their home for the majority of my stay. I am very thankful for their wonderful hospitality; their strong, encouraging faith; and their love for spreading the gospel to a land, new to Christianity. The personalities of Gabriel, Evangeline, and Penelope, has been uplifting to watch them as they grow in the Lord has been intriguing. I also am grateful for my short stay with the Ballard's. They are a couple that has encouraged me in my walk with God, on many levels. Their engaging, sincere, and tender hearts are something that I believe every Christian should portray. Their example and love for the Church, His work, and others has inspired me greatly. Both families have taken a stand for Christ's church and are working heartily for Him - Colossians 3:23-25 "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you

will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ' Are we truly serving the Lord Christ in our daily lives? They are doing something I have never seen done before, and I highly commend them. Being this far away from family, friends, and Christian brethren is definitely challenging, but they have met the challenge with a selfless attitude that is awesome to see in the Lord's church. Both families being here together in a culture that is completely opposite from the United States is necessary, as I now fully understand that they need each other's support. Living with these missionary families has been a great blessing in my life, and I will always be grateful for this experience. I want to encourage my fellow brethren to make sacrifices by stepping out of your comfort zone for the church's sake, like these two families have done. Every work is a foreign work, and if you are never able to go overseas, you still have the opportunity to spread the gospel to those you encounter every day, either with your words or actions. I Peter 2:12 "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." If you have the opportunity to travel abroad for mission work, I highly encourage you to do so, as we have many brethren who are supportive, desirous for the Lord's vineyard to be filled with more workers.

We need young Christians and their parents to focus on what the Lord's church needs, and organize a plan to make it happen. Attending a strong congregation that supports the Lord's work is vitally important for a young Christian's spiritual growth. We must ask ourselves: Are young Christians, the future of the church, engaged and surrounding themselves with those who pro-actively encourage the furtherance of the gospel? Or is our focus elsewhere? Something to think about.

## PRAYER NEEDS IN CAMBODIA

Please consider the following in your prayers.

(B)=Ballard's request; (C)=Chan's request; (E) Edward's request

- ◆ wisdom for the next step in our work here (B)
- ◆ safety and success in our summer trip home (B)
- ◆ better health for Vanny's mom (C)
- ◆ funds for schooling for his brothers (C)
- ◆ success in our Myanmar trip (E)
- ◆ strength and energy to carry on the work (E)

THE FERVENT AND EFFECTIVE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILS MUCH.

## The Worst and Best of Times

*by Michael Bolton*

*Romans 1:11 "that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."*

**IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES** On May 12th I arrived in Phnom Penh, after having bid my wife good-bye for a month. This is the 3rd year in a row I have made a trip to Cambodia to assist in the Lord's work there, and saying "good-bye" is always hard.

**IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES** For nearly a year, the Edwards and Ballard families have been strengthening believers and following leads in this poverty stricken country. Though we have been visiting this country for 3 years, this is our 1st time to work here together. We all were excited, and I have not been disappointed.

I received a bonus this trip, as Austin Wilson was also visiting. He has expressed desire to be a leader in his local congregation at home, and I found him to be a serious-minded young man, with the potential to fulfill his expressed desire. I also had the pleasure to meet Brother Vanny, a young Khmer man baptized in water for the remission of his sins by Jonathan. Vanny is an able interpreter and a boon to the work. *continued on page 3*

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# sowing AND WATERING



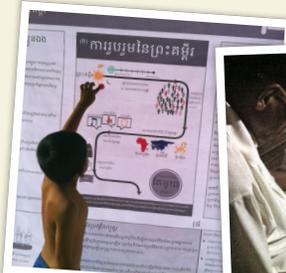
## A Degree in Dependency

by Bradley Ballard

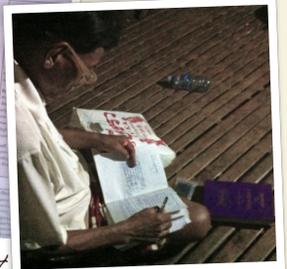
As a school orchestra director, I found myself in an ironic predicament: I was teaching my students to not need me. I trained them to understand a common musical language that would one day render myself obsolete. Although standing in front of an orchestra is one of my absolute favorite places to be, I was always most proud of my students whenever they were able to play without me. Whether they were performing a simple duet on their own, or performing as a string orchestra, watching them act out the subtle gestures and nonverbal cues necessary to perform in a uniformed manner always brought me a particular happiness. Whether the apostle Paul

was building up faithful Christians,<sup>1</sup> or reprimanding those in need of correction,<sup>2</sup> there was always an intent that local churches and their members grow and develop in his absence. The only type of dependency Paul, or any other apostle ever promoted, was a dependency on God.<sup>3</sup> As I do this work in Cambodia, I find that my present circumstance is much like that of a teacher, parent, and the like; I endeavor to help teach the word of God to a people to whom it is unfamiliar. I strive to instruct and guide them, with the goal of nurturing self-sufficient, mature Christians whose only dependency and confidence is in the word of God.<sup>4</sup> If we can do this adequately as Christians, like the conductor, we can one day set down our baton, and watch the Word as it works mightily in the hearts of those whom we have taught. What a joy to work

alongside, and even learn from those who we once taught sharing as joint heirs with them, and with Christ.



Becoming a student



Becoming a teacher

Footnotes:

1. I Corinthians 1:4-9 & Colossians 1:3-8;
2. Galatians 1:6-10; 3. Luke 4:4; 4. I Corinthians 2:2

## My Work for the Kingdom

by Chan Vanny

May have been a beautiful month with the blessing from God. Mr. Michael Bolton and Austin Wilson come to visit us and have joined in the trips with us. It been an awesome time that we spent with them. It was great opportunity to hear the encouragement from our older brother, Mr. Michael. Thank God for the great time He has given to us. I am very happy that got to know them. We went to the provinces on the 14th-17th; the first place we went to is Baray (Mr. Seng's house) where we had 1 study. At Pum liev we had 3 bible study. Then we went to have lunch with Mr. Lim Heng and drop off the mp3 of bible story with 2 sister. After lunch we went to Mr. Heng's house to drop him off and spent some time to share the gospel with his wife. After dinner, Jonathan and Bradley have some discussion with Mr. Seng. The next morning we went to have the bible study again at Pum liev. After that we leaved for Stung Trng. This is the place that we all enjoyed staying there, because we had many bible study and i can lead the study by my own that i prepared by myself. The most enjoyable thing is over there we have a new soul born into the family of Christ! Grandma Sied is 84 years old, she decided to put her faith in Jesus. She told her son, Mr. Theara that after she heard the bible study it touch her heart and she want to become one of us. Her daughter in law, Ming Yari explain her that if she want to become a Christian she has to get baptize so that her soul will be secure. On Sunday, after the service, we went to a place that has plenty of water to baptize her. That was my first time to help bring a soul into the kingdom of God! Mr. Michael, Austin, and Bradley were witness of her soul; and that she did this with her heart, not anyone force. She confessed that Jesus is the Son of God. After that we came back home to Phnom Penh. We had another meeting at Bong Brad's house on Tuesday and went to Battambang on Friday the 22th. Thank God for the month of May. May God bless you all.

## My experience in the Provinces: 5/14-18 Austin on the work in Cambodia

At 5 AM on May 14th, it was time to head out to the Provinces - what the U.S. calls states. I had been looking forward to the trip ever since Jonathan gave me the itinerary for our 4-day trip. I was asked to take on the role of an observer, and was happy to be instructed by the wonderful leaders with whom I traveled: Michael Bolton, Bradley Ballard, Vanny our translator, and Jonathan Edwards. Gabriel also went, which was awesome.

I realize I still have a lot to grow in, concerning knowledge of scriptures, and how foreign work takes place. I was excited and ready to learn what topics to address to these families, and how to teach them with a spirit of love. After visiting Barray, Phum Lio, Kampong Sdaach, and Stung Trng, I was humbled, blessed, honored, and appreciative to be a part of such an experience; in seeing the Lord's work in action. As I sat criss-crossed in homes and villages, not only did I witness how to reach out to the Khmer people, but I was edified by the topics delivered: *Authority for Religion; Galatians Expository Study; Buddhism vs. Christianity; Seeking the Kingdom First*; and more. Although I had the opportunity to preach at the Phnom Penh congregation twice, on this trip I was the student. I was able to gain insight into how I could, potentially, one day, take on the role of teaching in a foreign field.

What humbled me the most, was seeing some of these people hear the name of Jesus for the first time. Growing up in the "Bible Belt" of the United States, some may take the name of Jesus for granted. Sitting there, seeing people learn that Jesus is a man who lived on this earth like you and me; a man who loves everyone enough to die on a cross for our sins. It was humbling to witness.

Finally, I was uplifted greatly from my stay with the Ken family in Stung Trng. They showed such a great desire and diligence in searching the word of God that motivated me in many ways. The family was always willing and ready to study the bible. It was great to see this family worship in spirit and in truth on Lord's day morning, and to do so in a self-sufficient way. I was happy to worship with them, as well as witness a baptism - one of the most uplifting experiences of the trip.

After much reflection on my trip and myself, I have been humbled, encouraged, and edified by the work in Cambodia. It has been a great privilege to visit the missionary families here, and spend precious moments with them. Please keep praying for our missionary families; the Lord's work to be fruitful in Cambodia; and for the babes in Christ to grow in knowledge of the scriptures. They live a completely different life from their Buddhist peers, and need our encouragement and prayers. Thank you for reading my report. May God bless you and your congregation in spreading the gospel heartily.



Grandma Sied



taking the "right" stairway



Grandma Sied's baptism



Another victory for Christ!

## Bridging the Gap

by Jonathan Edwards

When we moved here last June, I knew that we would be isolated and self-reliant in ways that we had yet to be tested. Through the past year, we have adapted to living and working with a church where we are unable to "bear each other's burdens" in the same way that we did in the States. Bradley, Vanny, and I have formed a nucleus of leadership that we hope to foster and nurture, and this does give me peace of mind. However, we lack the unity and peace of sister congregations that are as plentiful as in the States.

May brought Austin Wilson (Denton County, TX) and Michael Bolton (Kennewick, WA) to join our work. Austin came primarily to observe and encourage, while Michael came as both a supporting evangelist, and a source of encouragement. With Austin in his early twenties, and Michael in his early forties, I stand between them, bridging the gap between two generations of observation and experience.

I am grateful Austin was willing to learn. I had a set of books for him to read as a crash course introduction to foreign evangelism. With only 4 weeks, he dug in to learn about topics that have been valuable to our work: *Comparing World Views, Buddhism, and Christian Teaching from the Old Testament*, among others.

Austin, Vanny, Bradley, Michael, and I were able to do an extended study

on expository preaching. It is my belief that as Vanny and Austin begin to use their "preaching pen", they should see the method, the art, and the science of organizing sermons that are expositions of Scripture. Austin was able to see that the glitz and glimmer of foreign evangelism does fade, and that the routine and rhythm of the work requires perseverance. I am grateful for his energy and encouragement. He has embodied our home congregation at Denton County, so every time we hugged him, it was like hugging our spiritual family at home.

I have been grateful for Michael's presence this month. As I have talked his ear off, I am sure he will be ready to leave! It has been great to have a fellow evangelist in the house. He has been a sounding board with whom I

can discuss Scripture. He, Marissa, and I have spent several breakfasts and dinners around the table talking about the Bible and spiritual matters.

Having him join our two provincial trips was a great time of unity as well. For the two years when Americans were visitors only, it had been either Jonathan and Bradley OR Michael. However; now we were able to have Jonathan, Bradley AND Michael. The people in the provinces love brother Michael dearly, and I was so glad we were finally able to work and study together.

While we are always thankful for the peaceful, quiet times that our home affords, when we are alone, I am certain that when these brothers depart for the US that our children and we will be sad to see them go.

The Worst and Best of Times continued from page 1

**IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES** Our first trip to the provinces was somewhat disheartening. I must commend Brothers Jonathan, Bradley and Vanny for their patience toward these infant congregations. It appears at this time that the seed was sown on rocky, thorny or feeding-ground-for-the-devil type soil. These three congregations, Battambang, Kampong Sdaach, and Baray display a disturbing lack of concern about spiritual things. Jonathan, Bradley and Vanny are keeping their foot in the door, in hopes of reviving spiritual life.

**IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES** Our first Lord's Day was spent at Stuong Treng. The brethren here are some of the most humble, hospitable and sincere Christians I know. During our stay with the Ken family we continued our tradition of sleeping in the hammock. Sister Yari's care was consistently refreshing and plentiful. The brethren here displayed knowledge and zeal by leading the worship. It was encouraging to simply be a part of the worship in Spirit and Truth. They also demonstrated their hunger and desire to serve God by studying on their

own and with their relatives and neighbors. As a result of their work we were privileged to witness Brother Ken's 84 year old mother being baptized in water for the remission of her sins.

In all it has been a productive stay. The Christian hospitality displayed by the Edwards is exemplary especially in a culture and land so far removed from "normal". I am grateful to get to know Jonathan and Marissa, Bradley and Brandi; they surely are a blessing to the work of the kingdom here.

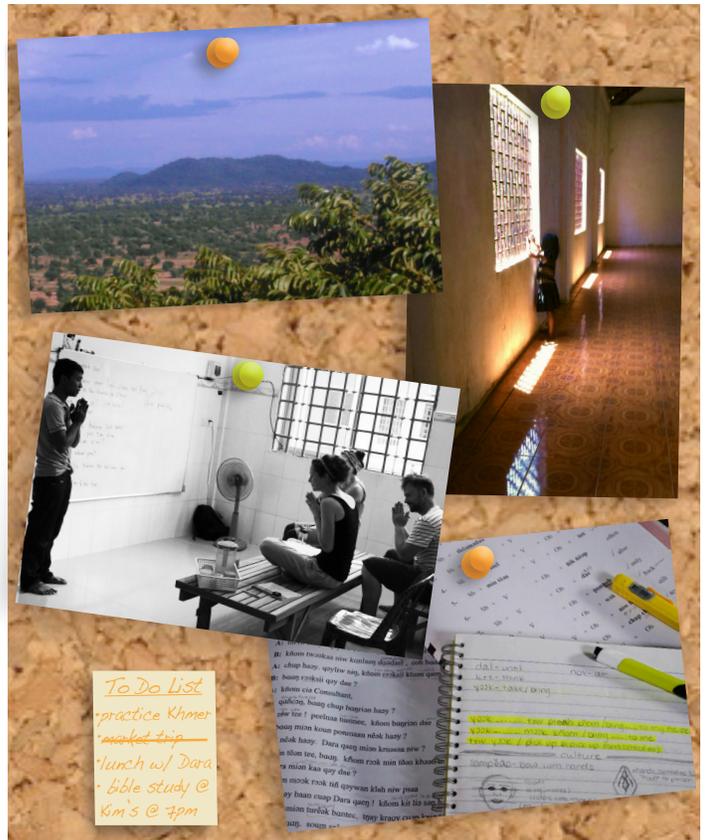
# AMERICAN HANDS IN CAMBODIAN SOIL

## One Word at a Time

by Marissa Edwards

In high school, I had to enroll in a foreign language class. As I was not a fan of speaking much, even in my own native tongue, I chose sign language. I loved being able to communicate without having to venture too far into that 'danger zone' of opening my mouth in front of people. I thought I had dodged the language bullet until Jonathan and I were told that there was a good chance of us going to South Korea. We began Korean classes at a local college, and my worst fears were realized. It was super challenging and uncomfortable for me, but as time went on, speaking became easier, as my nerves settled. Then plans changed: forget Korean, now its time to learn Khmer. "What? Is that even a language?" Jonathan began an online course that proved too difficult, and therefore decided to focus on the language and customs once we arrived in Cambodia. Brother Vanny began tutoring our group in a fast-paced,

vocabulary-rich Khmer class, held in our home. After many attempts with new sounds and confusing words, we began to see a new world open up, and yet we were all still struggling. Our remedy: hire a private tutor who had previously created a curriculum for Embassy workers. Mr. Socheat was impressed by the amount of vocabulary we already knew, but not by our grammar. Since early this January, Jonathan and I take 3 lessons weekly, and it is amazing how much a person can learn in 5 months. Vanny opened the door, and Mr. Socheat pushed us out into it. These two men have given us the words we need and the know-how to use them. Eleven months ago I was confused, lost and insecure when it came to speaking the language, now I can greet and have a small chat with most anyone who wants to be a patient listener and maybe repeat a word or two for me. Learning Khmer is a constant reminder that even when days feel normal or uneventful, we are working to serve The Lord and the people here.



To Do List  
- practice Khmer  
- market trip  
- lunch w/ Dara  
- bible study @ Kim's @ 7pm