

November 2020

Called to Cambodia

Stories of the adventures of Jeff Henneforth as he responds to God's call to live among, serve, and love the people of Cambodia.



Have You Eaten Rice Yet?

As if 2020 did not have enough challenges already, the flood season this year was one of the worst Cambodia has experienced in a long time. One missionary who has been here for over 30 years said he had not seen this much flooding during the whole time he's been here. Many parts of the country were deluged and displaced a lot of people.



Flooding on National Road 5

Many deaths have been reported, and sadly a lot of those were children who were unable to escape the rising waters. Poipet, the city where I live, was largely spared. Over the last year, drainage systems were improved through the city and we saw less water through town than usual. However, the river that serves as the border between Cambodia and Thailand significantly overflowed its banks. While not affecting the majority of Poipet, it did hit one area very hard – and that is the poorest part of the city. It's an area that used to be a garbage dump and was settled by many impoverished

people – the poorest of the poor. Much of it was under water to overhead levels. And many people had to leave their homes.

During the height of the flooding, I went with some of the people from the church to visit the area and see how we might be able to help. While we were there, we saw that the government had set up a temporary shelter at the train station and was feeding and housing many of those displaced by the flooding. But we also found out that the shelter was at maximum capacity and there were still many families who had stayed in the flooded areas. Those who stayed live in shack-like houses built on stilts in the traditional style, which were designed like that as a way to stay above flood levels. Many of these families have had it especially hard this year. Because of the Covid pandemic the Cambodia-Thai border has been closed and that has impacted the ability for many of those living in this area to earn a living.



MMF School under water

Seeing that the government already helping some, but unable to assist everyone, we asked a Christian woman I know who lives in that area what she thought would be the best way to help those who were still struggling in the area. And the answer was simple – help provide the people with rice. We had done this back in March and April, but had also provided some cooking supplies as well. This time though, it was just rice – I guess if the flood rose higher, the people would need something they could grab and take with them. So with financial help from back home, we bought rice – a lot of rice – 150 bags at 25 kilograms each – that's a little over 50 pounds. I'm told that a 25 kilogram bag of rice can feed a family of four for about a month. People eat a lot of rice



Teachers giving out claim tickets for the rice bags



Contact Info

(+855) 12-548-540

(949) 945-7380

Email:

jeffhenneforth@gmail.com

Have You Eaten Rice Yet? (continued)

here. In fact, a common friendly greeting is to ask, "Have you eaten rice yet?" which for the people here means have you eaten any food yet? It took a few days to get the rice together, and during that time we organized a system to meet those families in need and give them claim tickets so they could come and pick up the rice when we brought it. There's a Christian school in the area run by MMF that was also under water. The teachers were able to help us and went through the area handing out the claim tickets. We set some priorities, desiring to first look out for the body of Christ by targeting the handful of Christian families that live in the area. But we also wanted to assist any elderly who might be on their own. We try to help the families with children that go to the Christian school – many of whom are not Christians yet. And we also had a heart for those with physical impairments. Finally, I wanted to have a few extra bags on hand that we had not given out claim tickets for so that we could let the Lord bring anyone who didn't have a ticket but really needed help.



And on the hand out day, we had beautiful weather. We had been praying that the rain would ease up and it had. The flood waters were down, and all the people who had claim tickets showed up. I had the privilege of letting them know that God loves them and so do we. That we've been praying for them and this rice was the Lord's gift to them – totally free. God cares for them and wants them to know Him. We encouraged them to talk to the teachers and other Christians in the area and were able to introduce them so they could follow up. And then before giving the rice, we prayed for them. It was a blast handing out the rice. They were so happy. Many of them were saying "Thank You Jesus" as we gave them the rice – in Khmer of course. It's been a tough year, but being able to serve like that makes it a little bit better.



A chance to share God's love

Helping Cambodians Learn God's Word

I love God's Word and believe it has the power to change lives. Recently I got excited when one of the girls from the Poipet Happy Home recently asked for some help because she wanted to study the Bible. In case you aren't familiar with it, the Happy Home is a Christian children's home that my home church, Calvary Chapel Pacific Hills, has been supporting for a long time. In fact, it was on a short term trip to come and help at the Happy Home back in 2006 that I was first introduced to Cambodia. I've had the chance to see many of the kids in the Happy Home grow from small children into young adults. They have been coming to Calvary Chapel of Poipet for many years. And so, they have a really special place in my heart. They are like family.

The young lady who asked for help is named Ahpuang. Over the last few years, she has served here at the church in children's ministry. She graduated high school last year, and over the last several months has been attending the discipleship training school at a YWAM base here in Poipet. During her time at YWAM, I've seen her open up with a new excitement for following Jesus. It's awesome to see one of the young people you care about catch on fire for the Lord. One of the follow up programs at YWAM is a three month class where the students learn how to do in depth inductive Bible study. It's a really great way to get into the Word. And this program is pretty intense. During that time the students read through the entire Bible once. And they also read through fifteen books of the Bible five times and study those books. They go to classes during the day as well. During those three months they are in the Word from the time they get up in the morning until the time they go to bed. It's a lot of work!

Helping Cambodians (continued)

Many Christians in Cambodia don't know the Bible very well. There are pastors here who have not read the Old Testament. It's one of the things the church in Cambodia as a whole is severely lacking. So when I hear about Cambodian students who want to learn the Bible and are willing to work hard to study, I get stoked. That's why when Ahpuang asked for some financial help to be able to attend the program, I immediately knew it was something I wanted to do. She had already raised some money and only needed a couple hundred dollars more.



Ahpuang in class

I know the leaders at the YWAM base and have become friends with them. So I went over there to get a little more info on program and get the exact amount Ahpuang would need. While I was there, they mentioned that they had several other Cambodian students who also needed to finish raising the funds and asked if I could help. As a group, it was \$1500, which would cover food and living expenses, class materials, and travel expenses for some outreach opportunities. I told them I would talk to some people about it and we would see what the Lord would do.

Because of how things changed this year with the virus, I have been able to join the Tuesday morning men's group at Pacific Hills online over the last several months. It's been so good to connect with the guys. And I wondered if they would be interested in helping too. Ken and Jerry, the pastors that lead the group, graciously let me share about the request Ahpuang made for support. I let the guys know about the total need for all the students too. And the guys totally stepped up and covered the whole amount. I was able to get the money to YWAM, and they were so thankful. So a big thank you to the Tuesday morning men's group at Pacific Hills!



Inductive Bible Study Class – in Khmer

Fast forward a little and I'm glad to share that all of the students completed the course. I was invited to join them for a graduation dinner they had, and celebrate with these young Cambodians who truly love the Lord. I got to hear some amazing stories too. I'll share one quick example. One of the other students in the program is a girl who only has a second grade education. The level of study in the program is pretty high. She had done well during the initial discipleship training, and really wanted to learn more about the Bible. Just a few days into it though, she wasn't sure if she'd be able to do it because it was really hard. But she really wanted to learn. So she prayed and asked for the Lord's help and then studied really hard. She ended up being one of their best students. I'm so thankful that we were able to help these young people and can now send them into the churches of Cambodia to help others grow in their relationship with the Lord.



Graduation Celebration – She's so excited!

Church Services Online, People Being the Church Offline

We often say, "Going to church." But the truth is that church is not something we go to. It's something we are. The church is not a building. A church building is just where the church meets. A church service is not the church. It's just a time when the church meets together. And those differences have been important distinctions over the last several months.

Until just a few weeks ago, the government here had prohibited a number of different social gatherings, including worship services for all religions. And so, like so many others, we began holding our Sunday service online. And that has gone really well. The government began allowing worship services to resume, but with some limitations. One of those limits is that a worship service be limited to thirty minutes or less. That includes any time for singing. We've chosen to respect the government's direction – especially since it does not actually require us to choose between following God or following man. But since we really need more time for the service, we've chosen to remain online. But we do recognize that it is important for the church to meet together as a body of believers. And thankfully, even though services have been online, we have had quite a few opportunities to meet in ways that the government does allow.

Church Services (continued)

Before the rainy season began, we had several times to go out and provide both meals that we prepared together and food supplies to many of the poor who live near the border. Because the border has been closed for several months, many of the poor who's income is dependent on cross-border work have been especially hard hit. Being able to serve them food in the name of Jesus has been a wonderful opportunity for God's people to show God's love. We've had other social opportunities to gather, including a house dedication and party for one of our church families and also attending a wake to mourn together with a group of related families that come to the church. I turned 50 back in June, and the church got together for a birthday party at the Pizza Company since restaurants are not closed. And just a few weeks ago, we had a BBQ at one of our church family's house. And there's a Christian who runs a Tai Kwon Do School there and the students in his school were able to join us even putting on a demonstration. Many of them are not Christians, and so it was a wonderful opportunity to share some good news with them while enjoying a meal together. Interestingly, sports programs have been allowed to resume for a while now over here. We are looking forward to the time when we can have a regular service in person, but until then, we plan on continuing to be the church.

Some of Our Offline Activities



A holiday getaway



Bike ride on a rainy day



CC Poipet BBQ with Tai Kwon Do school

Prayer Requests

- For the church in Poipet to be able to start having in-person services again.
- That we would see the opportunities we have to show and share God's love to people and that they would come to know Him.
- Wisdom in leading the church, teaching the Word, and encouraging God's people.
- Wisdom for making good health choices.
- That I would be close to Jesus every day. I'm so thankful the virus hasn't hit Cambodia very hard. Please pray for God's continued mercy on Cambodia during this time.

Financial Support: [donations are tax deductible]

Missionary financial support for Jeff can be made as a one-time contribution or as monthly support. Please make checks payable to: Calvary Chapel Pacific Hills with "Cambodia-Henneforth" in the memo. Mail to: Calvary Chapel Pacific Hills, 24481 Moulton Parkway, Aliso Viejo, CA 92637
If you have any questions about making a donation, please call (949) 362-7475