

December 2022

# 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.



## New Video Project

The rainy season is finally over here in Poipet, Cambodia. And with the new season comes some new opportunities. While I continue to pastor the church, I've also been working on a new project that I am excited to share with you.

One of the things God put on my heart when He called me into the mission field was to help raise up indigenous leaders in the church – especially by training them in the Word of God. Helping people understand the Bible has always been one of my top priorities. When I came to Cambodia, I noticed that there are a limited number of resources available in the Cambodian language, known as Khmer. There are a handful of different Khmer Bible translations available, but the translation that is most widely used uses a vocabulary that is not common today and is difficult for many people to understand. Other translations are available, but some are not very good. Let me give you an example. Several years ago, I was preparing to teach a devotion on Philippians 4:13, which states, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” I was learning the Cambodian language and was talking about the passage with my translator, who told me that the translation he was using was a little different. When we looked at the version he had, the verse said, “I don't have to be afraid of anything because Jesus is with me.” That's not a good translation of what the verse actually says. Over the years, I've found that a lot of Christians here do not have a strong working knowledge of the Scriptures. Many would rather be taught than study and learn for themselves. While the literacy rate is fairly high, most people don't read a lot. Reading tends to be more functional – signs, menus, forms, text messages, etc. But books are not frequently read. Which may be why there are not that many Bible study resources available in the Cambodian language.

While there may not be many resources available, many Christians still ask questions about the Bible and the Christian faith. Their questions tend to be very different from the kinds of questions we usually hear in Western countries. That's because their culture is heavily influenced by other Asian religions. For example, I have been asked, “How are we supposed to pray as Christians?” When I started to explain the principals of prayer from the Bible, the people asking the question stopped me. They did not want to know how to pray in a theological sense, but in a physical sense. They wanted to know if they had to put their hands together, or were supposed to bow down. Was there a specific time of the day that they were supposed to pray? Things like that. The kinds of questions that get asked in apologetics are different too. Western Christians will deal with questions of origins or the reliability of the scriptures, but Cambodians don't tend to think about those things. Instead, they are more concerned with the challenges they face from Eastern religions. And so, they wonder about how to answer questions like, which religious leader was born first? Because people in this culture think that is important. Or did Jesus come back again as a Korean? There is a Korean cult that has sent people here that says He did.

Few resources are available to Cambodians who have questions about the Bible. Many Cambodian pastors have very little training. Very few commentaries and Christian books are available – especially outside of the capital city of Phnom Penh. While Bibles are readily available, the average Christian in Cambodia has very few ways to learn more other than reading the Bible and going to church. And reading the Bible can be even more difficult because the translation may be older, the topics are unfamiliar, the places and the cultures in the Bible are different than what they know here in Cambodia.



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## New Video Project (cont.)

What I've noticed though is that most people here have smart phones. Facebook and YouTube are very popular and used all over the country. Cambodia like much of the world went through lockdowns during the Covid crisis. During that time, many kinds of groups were not permitted to meet in person, including churches. At that time we began holding our services online using Facebook live. We ended up reaching more people than I expected, getting views from all over the country. The lockdowns ended about a year ago, and since then we've been able to meet in person again. But we've also continued to broadcast the services online. And we continue to hear from many people from other parts of the county who watch the services.

Many people in Cambodia are using their phones to get content online. This newer technology is wide open and very accessible. Once they have a phone and a Wi-Fi connection, they can download videos for free. And so, I'm working to start a YouTube channel dedicated to help people in Cambodia understand the Bible better. I want to help answer the kinds of questions the people here ask.

I want the videos we post on this new channel to look and feel completely Cambodian. But to also feel really well produced. To achieve the goal of having the videos feel completely Cambodian, I've decided not to be in the videos myself. Instead, I've begun working with another Cambodian pastor named Chean who I've been friends with for a long time. Chean is a pastor at another church in Poipet, and he also works for Mercy Ministries



Foundation as the principal at their school in the slums. Chean will be presenting the teaching. There won't be any English – the videos will be completely in their own language. Each week, Chean and I are working together to prepare the material for the videos. We've spent some time coming up with a variety of topics that Cambodians will genuinely be interested in. Each week, we discuss a video topic in depth, so we can make sure we both understand not only the subject of the video, but also the things that Cambodians may need to know more about. After that, I prepare and organize the background material putting together a short write-up where I organize and explain the ideas for the video and then send the write-up to Chean. That write-up is not the script, because the way I would explain things is still very American. After Chean receives it, he then takes it and uses it to prepare the script for the video.

By the time of this newsletter or shortly thereafter we'll begin posting our first videos. We've been doing a lot of work to prepare for this. In addition to meeting to go over and prepare the material, we've been getting a lot of the practical needs taken care of. We've already set up the YouTube channel already to reserve the name. The channel name is in Cambodian and translates to something like "Helping Understand the Bible," which might sound a little weird in English, but has a better ring to it in the Khmer language.

I've spoken privately with a few friends about this new project and been encouraged by how they are excited for it and have wanted to help in various ways. For example, when I was in the United States earlier this year, I met some friends from Calvary Chapel Pacific Hills, my home church, and shared what I was planning. They were excited and wanted to help by funding a professional logo for the channel. They hooked me up with a Christian graphic designer they had worked with before. We began working on the logo a couple of months ago. I made sure to include Chean and our church staff when looking at the design ideas to make sure that even the logo feels very Cambodian. That process is finished and we love the new logo.



## New Video Project (cont.)



*Ting and me more than 10 years ago*

I've also received help locally by other young Christians who are doing video work. One recommendation was to get really good lighting. The person who made the recommendation showed us the lights she used, and even helped us order them from Phnom Penh. Now, we are set up with a couple of great LED photography lights. Another Cambodian who is helping is a graduate of the Happy Home named Ting. Ting attended our church and helped on the worship team, and since graduating has been working with a local ministry. He's grown a lot in his musical ability and is helping us with some intro music for the videos. Ting will also be helping us put together the thumbnails for the videos, so when we post them on YouTube, they'll look really good.



*Ting now*

Also, when I was in the US, I picked up a green screen so we could change out the background. The goal is to help the videos feel well produced and not like they are just being recorded in someone's bedroom. After I got back to Cambodia, we were able to get a steel frame made for the screen for only about \$20. We've set up the green screen and the new lights in a room that we've been using for storage at the church, and it is starting to look like a studio. During the pandemic, I picked up a lapel mic system for the church when we began broadcasting online. It connects to my iPhone and works really well and we are able to use that for the YouTube videos as well. But it's a learning process. Last week, we began recording the first video, and while the room was fairly quiet, we realized we could still hear a lot of noise from the street. Now we're looking into some options to try to insulate the sound in the room a bit more. I'm not sure if I can get cardboard egg crates, which would help a lot, but we may do something as simple as getting a mattress or two to put over the window to minimize the outside sound.



We are hoping to begin releasing videos this month. Our plan is to put out one video each week and build a video library over time. I am not a video professional, and while I've done some minor video work for a couple of small projects in the past, I still don't have a lot of experience with it. But we're learning as we go. And I'm sure we'll get better with time. Please pray for us as we feel that this is a great way to help a lot of people in Cambodia.



## Planning a Beach Retreat for the Youth

Earlier this year when I was in the States for a visit, I shared with a number of people about my desire to have a beach retreat for the youth at our church. During the Covid lockdowns and the time since, our kids have not really had a chance to get out of Poipet. And a lot of people I talked to were very encouraging and supportive of that idea, so I want to give a brief update of where we are at with it. I knew when I got back to Cambodia that it would be the rainy season, which runs from May through November. The plan is to take the kids to the city of Kep, which is a beach city that is about 12 hours away from Poipet. I was initially looking at the time between Christmas and New Year for the retreat. When I first spoke to our leaders, they thought so too, and we began making plans for that time. Since then, we have had to slightly postpone that plan for three reasons. First, is having enough leaders able to go. Sadudee who leads the children's home (the Happy Home for those of you in the know), just went to Thailand for a couple of months to have her first baby – he was just born in November – and she won't be back in time. Rose Martinez was going to take Sadudee's place, but since one of the goals of the retreat is having time to connect together as a family, having Sadudee be gone would be a missed opportunity. Additionally, Sadudee's husband, Somearn, is also my translator on Sunday mornings. Somearn took time off from his normal job to be with her in Thailand for the birth, and he won't have the ability to take off more time at the end of the year to help with the retreat. Somearn also drives the Happy Home truck, which we would use to take the kids down to Kep. Second, the facility we are planning to stay at is a training hotel, but will still be transitioning back into normal operations following the Covid shutdown. And third, even though the rainy season is over the weather in December is on the cold-side (well, for Cambodia). After discussing it more, we have decided that we are going to wait until April, which is when the Cambodian New Year takes place. The kids will be out of school, the weather will be a lot better for going to the beach, the facility should be fully available, and our leaders should all be able to go with us. Even though the timing is different than what I was originally thinking, I think it is going to work out a lot better this way. Thanks to everyone who has provided support for this trip! Until then, please pray that the Lord would bless it and use it to encourage these young people to follow Him!

## Prayer Requests

- Pray for us as we start our new YouTube channel – wisdom, clarity, and helpful for the people here
- Pray for our youth beach retreat – planning, leader and facility availability, and a blessing to the kids
- That my teaching would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to connect with people in a meaningful way that helps them grow closer to the Lord and follow Him more faithfully.
- To make wise choices for the church.
- To share God's gracious love with those nearby that they might come to know Him also.

## Pictures from our Christmas Decorating Party



### 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

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