



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Dallas, Texas

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Dear Friends,

Gloria and I are in Texas. We have decided to sell our house here and move “lock, stock and barrel” as they say, to Thailand. There is just too much work to be done in Asia. This decision was long (and hard) in coming, but I think we were headed this way all along. When I went to Thailand 7 years ago, it was to do business. I had lost my job in the full-time ministry and I thought I could do well in business because of my many connections in the countries of Asia. “I need to make a living, after all,” I told myself. But God had other plans for me.

Business was not why I was led to go to Thailand.

Once I arrived, I began to find scattered brethren of the Karen tribe lost, abandoned, confused and desperately trying to hold on to the true doctrines they had been taught. At first, I tried to sidestep my calling. “They are not my responsibility,” I said. “Someone else will surely show up to help them,” I said. But no one took responsibility and nobody came. I found God’s sheep crying out for help. Yet, I was actively avoiding doing anything about it. I felt like Jonah trying to escape a calling God had given me. I was ashamed. It wasn’t long before I found myself comforting, encouraging, uplifting, nurturing and teaching God’s Holy Word again.

Soon I discovered that there was a group of 300 Kachin tribesmen in Upper Burma calling themselves the “Kachinland Church of God.” They were led by a lay pastor named Lazum Brang. He had been evangelizing and teaching God’s Word throughout this mountainous border region for over 7 years. They shared most of the doctrines we were taught. But, the astonishing thing is that this Church of God fellowship had been raised up all by itself, *apart* from contact with brethren or ministers of the WCG or it’s offshoots, and nobody knew they even existed. I was amazed!

Lazum Brang had been educated in a Seventh Day Adventist school, but had somehow come across some old *Plain Truth* magazines which challenged him to search out the Truth of the Bible. Once convinced that he had been given precious new knowledge of God’s Word, he felt compelled to teach it to others. Soon, the Holy Spirit was actively changing the hearts and minds of a *people we had never heard about* in an area of the world many would be hard-pressed to find on a map! How unfathomable are the Works of the Almighty God!

I visited a small group of these people in a remote village in Kachinland during January of 1999. Lazum Brang was living in extremely poor conditions. He was working in the rice fields for 30 cents a day. His mother and sister sold wild herbs in the market to scrape together a few extra “Kyats” (the currency of Burma) to mail out a few more Sabbath tracts. They met for the Sabbath in Lazum Brang’s house on a bamboo platform over a dirt floor. They all were very poor, but the Spirit of God

was rich and very active. It became quickly obvious to me that they were, in truth, brothers and sisters full of God's Spirit and eager to learn more about God's Way of Life.

One thing they did not have was an understanding of God's Annual Holy Days. Somehow it came up in a Bible study, and I was soon bombarded with questions. I had taken along several booklets, including one on the Holy Days. I gave them the booklet and Lazum went through it with them over the course of several days. The next Sabbath, we gathered together to worship God. They came to me and told me they had studied the doctrine of the Holy Days carefully in their Bibles. They had come to the conclusion that, since it was clearly in the Bible, they would start keeping the Annual Sabbaths. They sounded like the Bereans. It is truly wonderful when one sees the Spirit of God in action!

The timing of my visit is really very interesting. A few days before my telegram arrived, informing Lazum Brang of my visit; he and his wife had been fasting and asking God to show them if they should take a job that had been offered to them in the city as a hotel manager. It was a real temptation because work of any kind is scarce in Burma. The problem was that the position would require his full attention and they would not have the time to concentrate on the Work of God. They were torn. But God had already sent me with the answer. I was able to leave Lazum Brang with \$300. That was enough to feed his family for an entire year. This way he could devote all his time to evangelistic efforts.

But he had another problem. He was not ordained. He had been asking Baptist and SDA ministers to baptize new members of his flock because he did not feel comfortable doing it himself. You can imagine that it was difficult finding pastors who would oblige his request! The solution was glaringly obvious. Before I left, I ordained Lazum Brang. It was clear to me that God had, for 7 years, ALREADY put His stamp of approval on Lazum's ministry because of the fruits. Now, he was empowered to freely evangelize, baptize, anoint the sick, and marry the young people of God's little flock in Kachinland.

That was 2 ½ years ago. Today, Pastor Brang is getting as many as 100 visit requests per month! He is building a school in his home village to educate young people in God's Word so they can help teach others. He has found a group of people on the China border eager to learn God's Truth and is seeking to purchase a small church compound to build a meeting hall and house those brethren who are homeless. He is printing and sending out literature in the Kachin language at a rate that is astonishing. He wrote me a letter recently. In modest words he told me that, "*The Holy Spirit is very active in northern Burma and the China border region.*"

That is how Legacy Institute got started. God's people needed help, both spiritual and physical. I put out the word that help was needed, and God's true servants responded. The work of Legacy Institute began to take on a life of its own. Now 7 years after I went to Thailand to "become a businessman," I look back and see that coming to Thailand was what God had planned all along.

The Holy Spirit is active and unstoppable, and there is much work to be done. We recently received letters from a group of 6 new Karen families living in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border. They are now keeping the Sabbath and not eating pork. They are asking for literature in Karen language so they can learn more of God's True doctrines. Two of these families were previously Animists who worshiped spirits! One of our members in Thailand recently visited them in the camp and told me they were sincere and eager to obey God.

That's not all.

In India, Legacy helped a group of 30 people in Madras keep the Feast last year. We will help sponsor their Feast of Tabernacles site again this year. We are also preparing literature to be translated into Tamil and Tegalú so that they can study God's Truth in their own Bibles.

In Sri Lanka, a country that has seen seemingly endless racial warfare, there is a small remnant of faithful who have had no Feast for several years. Sri Lanka used to have a thriving church of over 100 people. Today they are scattered and without a shepherd. But there remains a faithful few, perhaps 30 persons, who have not abandoned the Truth. We hope to sponsor a small, local Feast of Tabernacles in 2002, God willing.

Asia is not the only place that the Holy Spirit is active. Recently, we were informed of a group of 3,500 brethren in Portuguese speaking Angola who are keeping God's Word under very difficult circumstances. Angola is one of the many tragic states in Africa torn by years of civil war. Yet God has been actively calling thousands to the Body of Christ. They are very poor, scattered all over the country and have few Bibles in the Portuguese language. But they have a dedicated ministry of 43 elders busy doing the Work of God. Recently we came in contact with a Sabbatarian fellowship in Portugal called the Universal Church of Jesus Christ. They were formed in 1931 and possess most of the true doctrines we also believe. They have an unpaid ministry. One of their elders travels to Angola regularly on business. He agreed to buy Portuguese language Bibles and get them to the Angola brethren. Legacy made these funds available.

I recently received an email message from the UCJC elder that he had successfully visited the Angola brethren and had given them 70 Bibles and also monies to buy more locally as needed. The UCJC also chipped in funds for this effort. I received a very nice thank you letter in the mail from the Chief Pastor of the Angola church. Too bad I can't read it because it is written entirely in Portuguese!

A few days ago I received news that a small Church of God fellowship in Nigeria, numbering about 150 brethren, was recently devastated by a flood. Twelve of their mud and thatch houses were washed away. Legacy was asked to help. It costs \$85 to rebuild one house. We are sending enough to rebuild all 12 houses.

A lot has happened since Legacy Institute was formed. But we have only just begun. We are finding more and more people in more and more far-flung places than anyone could have imagined. Some are a remnant, called as a result of the seeds planted by the ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong. Others sprang up all by themselves. They all need our help. What they need most are our prayers and the knowledge that they are not alone.

Some have felt that, with the death of Herbert W. Armstrong and the breakup of the WCG, God was pretty much finished with preaching the Gospel, or that the blood, sweat and tears shed were all for naught. Nothing could be further from the truth! What I have experienced over the past several years is telling me that God is just getting started! The fields are ripe with harvest. The Holy Spirit is more active now than ever before.

We believe that we have been given a Legacy. We are compelled to carry on.

This fall, just before the Feast of Tabernacles, we are planning to hold a one-week leadership-training program in Thailand for men that are already taking the word of God to their people. Our goal is to provide them with better tools to evangelize their own people and take care of the small flocks God is already calling to the Church. We seek to empower them with confidence and a new zeal to carry forward God's work in Asia when they return to their own people. None of these men are able to go to the US or some other Western country for training. The "mountain must go to them" as they say.

Three Karen men from Thailand will participate. One man from India will come. Lazum Brang will join us from Burma. We will give them presentations on doctrine, public speaking, pastoral counseling and church organization.

We realize that one week is not enough. But we must do what we can. They need it now! There is no room for hesitation. People are being called. Fellowships are gathering together, in spite of the lack of trained men to lead. We must not hold back. We must move forward in faith. The clock continues to tick. God is not stopped nor is His Hand shortened that He cannot give them the power and grace to do the job. The Work of God has always been a Work of Faith! The fields are *ALREADY* ripe! Please pray that God provides the workers needed for the harvest to come.

I am reminded of the *modus operandi* of the Apostle Paul and his team. They would go into an area, preach the Word of God, baptize, train and appoint leaders from the local fellowships, and then move on. We believe this is a practical model for areas like Asia and Africa.

Our job is not to control these people. Nor is it to try to bring them under the “umbrella” of one of our existing Western church organizations. God has already given them His Holy Spirit and is working with them. He is doing this without (and sometimes, in spite of) the control of any Western parent church. Our job is to *SUPPORT* what God is *ALREADY* doing! Our goal is to *EMPOWER* them to carry out the Work among their own people. We do this by teaching, encouraging and providing seed money for evangelistic efforts and any immediate physical “daily bread” needs they might have. We will not seek to *CONTROL* them. We do not seek to “legitimize” them. We are their brothers, not their fathers. They already have a Father and an Elder Brother who will supply all the spiritual tools they will ever need, and legitimize them by the stamp of approval of the Holy Spirit.

God does *WHAT* He chooses to do, *WHERE* he chooses to do it, *HOW* He chooses to work and with *WHOM* He chooses to work. A cardinal principle of Legacy Institute is to seek out where God is *already working*, and support what God is *already doing* as demonstrated by the active fruits of the Holy Spirit. This takes recognizing that God is in charge and has the prerogative to work with whom He pleases, when He pleases and how He pleases. It reminds me of the incident in the Bible when Aquila and Priscilla came across Apollos. He was preaching the gospel with zeal. But he was not a part of Paul’s team. He came out of nowhere. Did they reject him because he was not a part of “their group?” Absolutely not! They had the humility to recognize that God had chosen Apollos as His instrument. They recognized the power of the Holy Spirit in action with this man. Instead of trying to control him, they extended the hand of brotherly fellowship and taught him in areas where he was lacking knowledge. This is what Legacy seeks to do.

Another principle is to help these brethren become self-sufficient. A few already are. But most are not because of their circumstances of extreme poverty or lack of official status (such as our Karen refugee brethren.) Legacy provides seed money to help them get their evangelistic efforts off the ground. It is our firm belief that, since God is the one who selected them in the first place to carry the Gospel to their people, He has the power and responsibility to see that they are provided with the resources to carry out His Divine Will. Some of the most important things they lack are training, Bibles and literature translated into their own languages. This is where Legacy bridges the gap. Our goal is to provide them with better tools to evangelize their own people and take care of the small flocks God is already calling to the Church. We seek to empower them with confidence and a new zeal to carry forward God’s work in Asia when they return to their own people.

Most of the men we are working with have little or no incomes. They lack vocational skills. To help our brothers and sisters on the road to self-sufficiency, Legacy funds their education. In Thailand, Davidson and David Mya Maung translate literature into Burmese and Karen. Jack is learning computer skills. He helps translate and typesets Burmese and Karen by computer. Elizabeth, his wife, is studying weaving and sewing. Maung Maung Cho is taking a driving class so he can get a driver's license. We have scholarship programs for Karen children so they can have an education. We are funding several educational scholarships for a few Kachin COG teenagers in Burma who want to spread the Truth of God's Word, but lack education to support themselves. All this is done with the goal of eventual self-sufficiency.

In times past, we have gone into an area and created a false church economy almost entirely dependent on our Western church organization. We went in and set up an office in an exclusive office complex. The literature we sent out in these countries had to be of the highest caliber with 4 color graphics. Service formats and church organization had to be "cookie-cutter" replicas of what we did in America or Europe. Everyone had to look to "headquarters" for decision-making.

Some would argue that this all was necessary because we had no local people prepared to do the job. I would agree that the intent was sincere, but the methodology lacked foresight. What happened when the budget got cut or the funds just weren't there to sustain the foreign office? We cut back. Sometimes we had to pull out. We cancelled the magazines and stopped producing literature in their languages. We cancelled the radio or TV program in their countries. We said that it was just too expensive to do a Work in their area. Regardless of the reasons for the cut backs, the result was the same. Foreign brethren full of excitement, enthusiasm and zeal to do God's Work wondered around like lost sheep. Or wolves came in and scattered the flock because the people had never been allowed to think and do for themselves.

It reminds me of what happened to the countries of the British Empire when the English pulled out. Much of the tragedy we see today in countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Burma and the nations of Africa are the fruits of this approach.

The solution is to EMPOWER God's local people to develop their own programs to preach the Gospel and feed those called in the context of their own societies and economic conditions. The idea is to teach them how to fish, not just give them fish. We help *them* become fishers of men in their own countries. We want to encourage them to look to God for leadership, not to humans administering from afar.

The problem has not been with the little ones in these far-flung countries. The problem has been with our own perspective. We sometimes mistakenly think that the Work cannot get done without us! But God is showing us otherwise. God doesn't require our Western corporate models to get the job done. He just does it, with or without our help.

Brethren, we have to learn to "think outside the box," particularly in third world countries. We must learn to use the resources already in place, *AND*, that Jesus Christ *WILL* accomplish *HIS* responsibility and *CAN* raise up stones to do the Work if necessary. We must learn to *FOLLOW* the lead of the Holy Spirit. I remember an audience in 1982 or 1983 that Herbert Armstrong had with King Bhumibol of Thailand. I was privileged to be present. Mr. Armstrong was telling the king about how the Americans were such great givers willing to help the needy all over the world. The king agreed. But he said to Mr. Armstrong, and I will never forget his words, "*Yes, Americans are great givers, but one must know how to give.*"

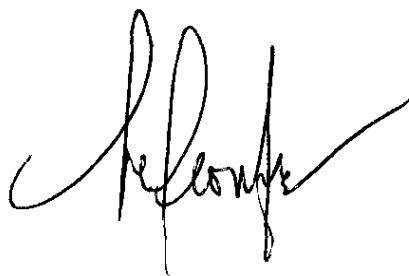
Brethren, we must all learn how to give. God has blessed us with abundance in the richest countries on earth. The resources at our disposal seem endless. We are educated. For the most part, we are all employed. We enjoy palatial homes by the standards of the majority of the people of this world. We have disposable incomes. We drive nice cars and wear good clothing. We have time for leisurely pursuits. *We never go hungry!* And, on top of everything else, God has given us abundant knowledge of His Truth.

We want to give. We want to share. But we must all learn how to give! Our ways, our organization, our traditions and customs and our dominance and control are not what these people need. What they need are the Spiritual Truths God has given us, and the empowerment and training to carry this message to their own people. Most of all, they need our heartfelt, fervent prayers and the gracious hand of spiritual brotherhood.

I would like to tell you much more, but this letter is getting rather long! There are several other very exciting projects in the works that I want to share with you, and I will do so in a future letter. Thank you all for being faithful fellow-workers in God's fields.

Until next time,

*In the Lord Jesus Christ's service,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Sexton', written in a cursive style.

Leon Sexton

**WHAT IS LEGACY INSTITUTE?**

LEGACY INSTITUTE is a non-profit charitable foundation. Legacy Institute seeks to serve and help mankind in the spirit and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. His instructions were to freely give. This means without discrimination and without prejudice. Your donations to Legacy Institute are tax deductible in the USA.