



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Bangkok, Thailand

Dear Fellow-laborers in the fields of the Lord,

I just returned to Bangkok from Yangon (Rangoon). For over 6 months we have had 3 new young people waiting in Burma (Myanmar) to come to Legacy School. Two are being sent by Lazum Brang; Miss Hkawn Din (25) and Mr. Lunu Nan (19); and I personally accepted one young man from Yangon, Andrew Na Chiang Tung (24). All 3 attend COG congregations in Myanmar. November 30th we finally received notice from the Thailand Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they had sent a telex to the Thai Embassy in Yangon requesting special non-immigrant visas for each one.



Several of the Myanmar COG evangelistic team meet in Yangon. L to R: Lazum Brang, David YeGyan; U Myu Zaw, Leon Sexton

Nothing is ever easy in this part of the world. But God gives us more grace to accomplish the assignments He gives us. Part of the problem we faced was that under the previous **THAI** government, we were stonewalled each time we tried to apply for these visas. It is not easy to

get this visa if you are a Myanmar national. Under the repressive military dictatorship in present day Myanmar, there is little hope to find work and, if one does find it – to earn enough to live. People are flooding out of Myanmar to find work in Thailand and Malaysia. Therefore, the Thai Embassy in Yangon is reluctant to give more than a 3-month tourist visa.

But God has given us grace and favor. The government changed dramatically after the September 19th military coup to oust former Thai Prime Minister Taksin Shinawatra who is now facing charges of corruption and human rights violations. The “changing of the guard” put people in high places that could help us. We took advantage of the opportunity to pursue getting visas for our next-year’s trainees who were waiting patiently to come.

My wife Gloria flew to Bangkok and met with Queen Sirikit’s private secretary at Chitralada Palace. We have known her for a long time and she is always so kind and willing to help us if she can. She wrote a letter to the new Minister of Culture. Gloria then went and met with her. Her staff was very helpful and prepared the necessary documents and letter of recommendation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Gloria then took the letter of recommendation from the Culture Minister and the letter from the Queen’s secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We knew the new Foreign Minister. He used to be Thailand’s Ambassador to the United Nations. At the time Gloria went to meet him, he was in Brunei on a state visit with the new Prime Minister. However, Gloria got to meet his personal secretary, who prepared the necessary documents to telex to the Thai Embassy in Yangon.

Once the telex was sent, I was able to fly to Yangon, meet with our patiently waiting trio, and complete the process of obtaining their non-immigrant visas. And that is another whole story. Please read on!

God is gracious. He wanted all three of them to come to Legacy Institute in Chiang Mai all along, but in His own time. This is a lesson in patience. We must learn to wait on God. He has His reasons for doing things in His own time and according to His own way. Now they will be ready to study at Legacy for the upcoming year.

One of the hardest lessons to learn as a Christian is that we are not the center of the universe – God is! We cannot always have things our own way and in our own time. Everything unfolds according to His plan and His time frame. I remember the story in Daniel 10 about Daniel who humbled himself and prayed to God 3 full weeks, waiting for God to reveal the future to him. He waited and waited and nothing was happening. Finally he saw a vision and Gabriel came to him. Gabriel said:

*"O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. **But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of***

Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come." Dan 10:11-14 NKJV (Emphasis my own.)

For 21 days (3 weeks), Gabriel faced spiritual warfare against the demon "Prince of Persia" and had to get the Archangel Michael to come and help him overcome this powerful evil spirit who was stopping him from delivering God's message to Daniel!

There can be many reasons why we don't get what we want – when we want it! There is much more going on than we can see and know. God has a plan. He continues to carry out that plan. The plan INCLUDES us – but we are not the focal point of that plan.

I was picked up at the airport by David Ye Gyan, Pastor of the COG 7th Day in Yangon and church deacon U Myu Zaw. I spent that afternoon and part of the evening preparing the visa documents. The next day we went to the Thai Embassy at 7 AM to make sure we got a spot in line. There were already several hundred people lined up waiting for the visa section to open at 9AM. Soon more and more people came. By 9 AM I did a rough count of approximately 500 persons waiting for a chance to get a visa! And this happens every day that the Embassy is open!

We waited until 10:30 AM and still the line was barely moving. Finally, the door-keeper told everyone that they would have to come back tomorrow. I explained to him that I needed to get in because a telex had been sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He wouldn't budge. Fortunately, Andrew talked to another guard at a different gate. He agreed to take my Legacy Institute I.D. card and the telex reference number to a Thai official inside. We waited patiently. The guard soon came out and told us we could come back and see a consular official at 1: PM – but we needed to make a call for an appointment. We then went back to U My Zaw's house and made the call. An appointment was given to us for 1:30 PM.

We left the house a little before 1: PM and returned to the Embassy. As soon as we arrived, we were ushered into a reception room. Soon a young lady came out to help us. She was a Shan girl.

The Shan are a race of people related to the Thais. In fact, the Thais call them Thai Yai or "Big Thai". They are mainly located in what are called the Shan States of northeastern Burma. Each state has its own hereditary princely house. The ruler of each state was called the "Zaobwah" which we would translate as *ruling prince*. In fact, Andrew, one of the 3 new young people coming to Legacy, is a grandson of the last Zaobwah of Chiang Tung who was allegedly poisoned by the Burmese.

It turned out that Andrew knew this young Shan lady who was helping us. She showed us the telex from Bangkok and took the filled out visa forms. Fifteen minutes later, the Thai Consul came out to say hello. She said that there would be no problem giving them non-immigrant visas because of the telex. She asked us to come back the next day and the visas would be ready.

We thanked her and the young Shan lady and left. If we would have gotten through the gate the first time, maybe we wouldn't have gotten the chance to meet the Consul. Now the Consul knows us and we know her. This will help us the next time we get visas for our people. God knows what He is doing!

This is an example of how God has given us grace and favor in Thailand. Going the “normal” route, they would have never gotten visas. But God provided an open door. But it doesn’t happen by magic. We must maintain our contacts in Bangkok and make sure all the paperwork we file is properly filled out and submitted to the appropriate ministry.

Sometimes people do not understand the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes to keep the Legacy school running smoothly and keep all the students’ and teachers’ passports, visas, work permits, etc., up-to-date and legal. Thailand is not like the US. Getting anything done requires a labyrinth of red tape and it takes a long time. Many times it is frustrating.

If I want to get things done, I have to fight a bureaucratic system that seems designed to stop people like me. If I try to do things the “American Way”, I am doomed to failure. This culture has its own ways and its own time clock. An impatient man is forced to learn patience!

Thank God that He intervenes and gives us favor in high places. We are ever grateful for His grace and favor.

December 16, 2006
Monrovia, California

I am at Herb Vierra’s house in Monrovia, California. Herb is on the Board of Directors of Legacy Institute, and he and his wife Ann help Gloria and me so very much. They always take good care of us when we are in town.

A few days ago, Herb took me to see some of the newest “toys” that are available at a truck dealership. They were giant pickup trucks! I was astonished! They looked like semi tractors, but they were pickups! I guess people are getting bored of Hummers, so now they are looking for some new toy to acquire. Then he took me to Costco to pick up some food to take back to his house. I have never seen anything like it! It was a human feeding frenzy with shoppers continually loading their carts with never-ending Christmas purchases.

The reason it is so astounding is that I had just arrived in the USA from Burma! In Burma, everything is bleak and oppressive. The outdoor tea shops are filled with young men who have no jobs. Women work breaking big limestone rocks into smaller limestone rocks to build and repair roads. People are forced into – what amounts to be slave labor – to build an unimpressive infrastructure. Many eat only one meal a day. The money is worthless outside of the country. And I saw over 500 people every day lining up at the Thai Embassy trying to get out of the country to find work to feed their families!

Many Americans have absolutely NO clue how most of the rest of the world lives! We just keep buying more and more and more goodies to satiate a lust that is insatiable. It makes me sad.

God says we are to remember the poor:

“...and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They

desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.” Gal 2:9-10 NKJV

Most Americans are not poor – not by the world’s standards. God promised Abraham that He would give his descendants the FAT places of the earth. He has certainly fulfilled His promise. We enjoy so much abundance because of the unconditional promises God made to the obedient and faithful Abraham!

America is the greatest giver in the world, but many times strings are attached, like donating genetically modified (GMO) grain to Africa. And individual Americans are great givers to charitable causes. But to see and experience the contrast between the availability of physical goods in America versus the poverty of Burma makes a serious impact on me. It always does.

I live in Thailand. This last year the US dollar decreased in value by 13% against the Thai currency. This is happening all over the world. People are losing faith in our American dollar. Nations are making decisions to keep more of their reserves in euros because they see the dollar going down. The dollar is on the decline and the euro is in its ascendancy.

China is rising rapidly to challenge America and Europe’s hegemony in many places around the world. Recently, it has been Africa and the Middle East. China is always on the lookout for more and more sources for natural resources (especially oil) to feed its exploding economy. And their aim is to challenge America militarily as well.

While all these moves are taking place on the international scene, America continues to rack up more and more trade deficit and international debt. People in America seem oblivious to the changes that are taking place, and continue to GET IT ALL NOW by using the fantastic plastic. We are a GET now – PAY later society. We have no patience to wait and save money before we buy – “get it now – worry about how we are going to pay later”. It is the American Disease.

Will we ever wake up? And, if so, *when*?

I read an editorial recently in the *Bangkok Post* written by Joseph Kahn about China’s rising status on the world scene. Here are some quotations from that December 11th issue:

“China’s Communist Party has a new agenda: It is encouraging people to discuss what it means to be a major world power, and has largely stopped denying that China intends to become one soon.”

*“Until recently the shift remained sensitive, and largely unspoken, inside China. For nearly two decades, Beijing has followed a dictum laid down by the late Deng Xiaoping. “taoguang yanghui,” literally **to hide its ambitions and disguise its claws.**” (Emphasis mine.)*

Well, the disguise is off! Recently China promised to give over \$10 billion in aid to Asian, African and Latin American countries! Remember when we used to send foreign aid to them?! China is clearly stepping up its involvement around the world. America is no longer the only “Big Boy” on the block.

Yet, Americans still buy far more goods from China than they buy from the US, thus creating an extremely lopsided balance of payments. Companies are “outsourcing” their manufacturing to China because of cheap labor. Along with the outsourcing goes our technology! I have been to China and I am absolutely astonished at the growth. It is like an exploding economic tsunami!

Let me give you some more information about China from the November 3rd issue of *The Nation* (an English language Thai newspaper). In an editorial entitled, “*How afraid should we be of China?*” Teera Phutrakul comments:

*“Listed below are some of my thoughts on what I learned on this trip and **how we should prepare ourselves for what could be one the 21st Century’s greatest shifts in terms of political and economic power in Asia.***

“It is a well-known fact that China has been displacing the US as the largest export market for an increasing number of Asian countries and the pivotal in boosting intra-regional trade. Listed below are some interesting statistics about China:

- *“A market of 1.3 billion consumers (300 million under 20 years old).*
- *“Volkswagen sells more cars in China than it does in Germany.*
- *“In 2002, China replaced the U.S. as the largest recipient of FDI¹.*
- *“Fastest-growing economy in the world for the past 10 years.*
- *“Foreign reserves of **more than U.S. \$950 billion.***

*“Thus far China has been going out of its way to avoid conflicts with its trading partners, but **soon this may not be possible as China becomes more emboldened and begins to push national interests on a global scale.***

*“By the way of comparison, **I view China as the new Unites States of Asia** in terms of its sheer scale and resolve to get ahead economically without wasting time playing global politics.” (Emphasis mine.)*

Are we too blind to see what is happening under our very noses? America is heading down! Europe and China are on the ascendancy! I don’t need to refer to any prophecies to make my point! All one needs to do is open their eyes and take a good look at what is going on all around them! We only need a visit to Wal-Mart or Costco to see the overwhelming percentage of consumer goods from China on the shelves. This should reveal the future to us if nothing else will!

The same thing that is happening to America is happening in Thailand, just on a smaller scale. China is flooding the market with cheap consumer goods and the Thai people are buying them up like hotcakes. It is like this all over the world.

I pray for America. I wish we would see a return to the values that made America great. Instead, we are turning into a nation of self-seeking, self-centered egocentrics who are forgetting God – who is the source of all the things we enjoy.

¹ FDI (Foreign Direct Investment)

2 TIM 3:1-5

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.” NKJV

I guess the changes I see in American society are more pronounced since I come back only twice a year for a short time. We all need to pray more for America that men of character and moral strength come on the scene to wake up the people of America to the dangers that lie ahead.

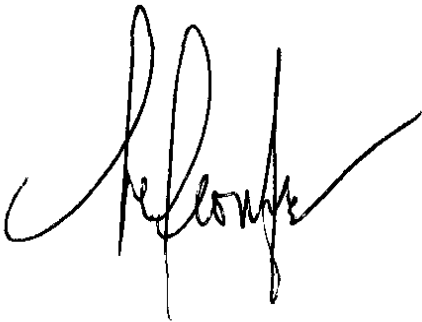
We who are in the Church should already be aware of what is coming because of the understanding of prophecies God has given us in His Holy Word. In the meantime, we have a job to do. God has commanded us to get the Gospel out to the nations. We have an abundance of resources God has given us to do this in a powerful way. But have we lost our resolve?

Jesus told us that: *“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work”* **John 9:4** NKJV

From what I see, night is fast approaching. Pray we do not fall asleep; and, if asleep, that we WAKE UP! And pray for new resolve among our various fellowships to finish the Work God gave us.

I thank you, all my fellow-laborers that you are awake and actively doing God’s Work at the end of the age.

In Our Lord Jesus’ service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

T. Leon Sexton