



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Mae Sai, Thailand

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Dear Fellow – Laborers,

It is with a great sigh of relief that I write this letter! Once again, the Almighty God has intervened and pulled us through! Gloria, our son Bronson, his wife Chanisa *and our new little granddaughter Manorah*, are in Mae Sai, directly across the border from Tachilek, Burma.

For the last several days we have been praying and working feverishly – and praying some more – to get our 2007 graduating students home to Burma. It is a long story, but I believe it is important to share with you, our fellow-laborers, some of the obstacles we face in conducting the Work of God in the border areas of Thailand and Burma.



Commencement Speaker Dr. Jan Karlik with graduates – L to R: Za Lian, ZaTinDim, Seng Raw, Pa Lian, Lu Nan, Lal Lian, Haung Dau

God never said it would be easy. In fact, He tells us the opposite. When I get discouraged in doing the Work of God over here because of the many obstacles we find in our paths, I only have to read from the Book of Acts. I find that the obstacles we face are small when compared to those faced by God's servants who have gone before us.

"Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."
Matt 7:14 NKJV

I have been coming to Thailand since 1973 and living full-time here since 1997. I think I know Thailand well. I speak the language. I understand the important customs, studied the history and have many Thai friends who help Legacy. But I have discovered that I still have a lot to learn in understanding how things really work here. Everyday is a new learning experience. Every day I wake up to a new set of circumstances that have to be dealt with.

God created the universe beautiful and orderly. Satan rebelled and that creation became chaotic. God's way is order and reliability. God never changes and therefore He is absolutely reliable. He is the same, yesterday, today and forever (**Hebrews 13:8**). However, Satan is god of this world (**2 Cor 4:4**). He is the author of confusion and chaos. His ways keep people off balance and confused. He wants them to remain in darkness.

God's Gospel is a Gospel of Light. Darkness hates the Light! We must petition God regularly to help us wade through all the corruption and confusion in this world. God hears our prayers. We can rely on Him! Getting our graduating students back into Burma was no easy task. Once again, God had to intervene and smooth the way for us.

Three years ago, a group of new students from Burma arrived in Thailand to come to *Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center*. They had no passports, so they waded across the river illegally into Thailand.

Now, I need to explain to you that, as practiced in Thailand and Burma, the words "*legal*" and "*illegal*" share the same patch of gray area most of the time! There is the written law – then there is how it is applied and practiced. Laws change regularly and even the officials expected to enforce such laws are in the dark! If you add to this the high level of corruption (*especially under the previous government*), you get a seething caldron of confusion and uncertainty.

This is the world in which we live and carry on the Work of God.

Once the new students arrived at Legacy, we took them to the local district office and got them alien work permits. It was a long and costly process, but it allowed them to stay in Thailand and study at Legacy legally.

Now after graduation they needed to go back to Burma. This is where things began to get confusing. We were told one thing by immigration officials who were supposed to know, but quite another thing by other immigration officials who were also supposed to know.

First we took our grads to have their work permits cancelled at the labor department. Then the district office prepared travel permits for them to be taken to the border. Chanisa, our son's Thai wife who helps us at Legacy, called the immigration office at Mae Sai and asked them what was needed to process them to cross the border. They said to just bring them up and they would take care of it. So we thought that all we had to do was get them to the Mae Sai immigration police office and then all would be easy. As it turned out, it wasn't to be that easy at all.

On Monday, February 26, we loaded our grads into a bus to Mae Sai with Rhonda Saurbaugh and Stacey Seelig (two of our volunteer teachers) and sent them to the Thai-Burma border. In the meantime, my family and I went on ahead to prepare for their arrival and processing at the border immigration office. Well, things did not go as expected. We were told by the immigration officials at the Mai Sai border that the paperwork we had processed for them at the Chiang Mai district government office was not

correct and we *would have to take them all back* to the Chiang Mai Immigration Police station and re-do their paperwork. We were also informed that, if they were stopped on their bus journey to the border, they could be arrested!

Well, as you can imagine, we were in a difficult situation. We immediately called Rhonda (*she had a cell phone*) and told her to take our students off the bus at the Chiang Rai bus station one hour from the border. We met them there and put them on the next bus BACK to Chiang Mai!

On Wednesday the 28th, we took them to the Immigration Police station in Chiang Mai for processing. Each of our graduates was interviewed, fingerprinted and photographed. They were then loaded into an immigration police truck and transported back to Mae Sai, and we followed.

Most things NEVER work out the way you expect. This was no exception. About 45 minutes outside of Mae Sai, a heater hose blew off the engine of our pickup truck. We had some repairs to the truck done a few days earlier and the mechanic didn't put on the correct hose clamps. We had to stop by the side of the road and find a repairman. By God's grace, there was a repair shop only a kilometer away. A very nice young man soon arrived and fixed the hose. We sped off on our way again.

Then we received a cell phone call informing us that we needed to get to the Mae Sai Immigration post as soon as possible or they couldn't send our students over the border. So we sped up to get there as soon as we could.

But then a second hose blew off and we didn't know it! Our engine overheated and we had to pull over only a few minutes from the Immigration post. Chanisa and I grabbed a small taxi pickup called a "song tau" and headed for Immigration. Bronson stayed with the truck and Gloria took care of our granddaughter.

Meanwhile, since we didn't show up in time, they put our graduates in an immigration police "holding tank" with other Burmese detainees!

Soon after we arrived, we were ushered into the Police Captain's office. He informed us that it was not safe to take them to the border that day and they would have to stay overnight in the holding cell. We had a lot of questions and he tried to answer as well as he could. The safety of our Legacy students was foremost in our minds and we were most concerned about his statement that it was "NOT safe for them to cross the border that day!"

He explained that the Burmese Police at the immigration post on the other side of the river could potentially cause trouble for our students by any of the following means: extort money; take their belongings; detain them or even arrest them for leaving Burma "illegally". He explained that the Burmese police could potentially imprison them for a year! He said we would have to wait until the next day but assured us that he would make sure they got to Burma safely.

Our prayers to God were that He would make sure that our students got back home safely. The "how" was up to Him. Our students were frightened and humiliated that they had to stay overnight in an immigration "holding tank". They felt that they were being treated like prisoners.

We explained that they were being held for their own safety and that we must rely on God to work things out. The Thai immigration police allowed us special permission to see them after regular visiting hours and we were able to bring them water and snacks. Gloria left her cell phone with the girls. I had already loaned the boys a Legacy cell phone.

We did our best to comfort them and then the police asked us to leave. Gloria and I felt very uncomfortable having a bed to sleep in that night when our students were sleeping on the bare floor. We petitioned God to take good care of them overnight and get them back across the border safely the next day.

By the way, we found out that our pickup truck's engine had seized up and would take three days to fix! It seemed as if "someone" was trying to create as much trouble for us as possible.

The following day at 11 AM, we were finally given permission to visit our students and bring them breakfast. The previous evening before they had been given fried rice, but it happened to be pork. So they gave their food away to the other inmates and ate the snack food we had given them. They were very grateful for the chicken fried rice we brought along for them! But they were still scared and apprehensive of what would happen next.

The Thai Immigration captain once again assured us that he would arrange for them to go across the border safely at the right time. We had also planned to cross the border into Tachilek on a day pass to wait for our students, but he cautioned us that it would be a mistake. If the Burmese secret police saw us with our students, they would come and extort money from them after we left to go back to Thailand.

The captain commented to us that because our students were well dressed, well groomed and were polite and courteous; he had his men treat our people with special favor. We were grateful. This says a lot about the kind of graduates Legacy Institute is turning out.

We continued to pray and the students also continued their prayers. Finally we got a call that the students were being taken to the border. We waited anxiously to get a phone call saying they were safely across. Since we were not allowed to go with our students and the Thai police to the border, we waited and prayed.

Finally we got the call we were waiting for. Our Legacy graduates made it safely across! But what a report we received! We found out that their crossing was not what we expected. We thought that the Thai police would take them to the bridge and lead them over to the Burma side of the border. As it turned out, the Thai police took them to a Thai army outpost near a river crossing some distance from the bridge – let them out and told them, "run, run, quick, go across the river!" They had to wade across in chest deep water! One of our graduates who had polio as a child had to be carried across on a Kachin soldier's back!

Nevertheless, they were safe! God works in ways beyond our understanding. We went through the entire lengthy process of red tape to try to get our students back home legally. But they ended up being forced to cross the border back to Burma the "illegal" way anyway! It was beyond our control, and scary for our grads. But it was the SAFE WAY! We give thanks to Our God because of His mercy and kindness to our Legacy graduates who prayed and trusted in Him.

It is incredible! We teach our students honesty and the moral values of the Bible. And yet, following this world's ways of corruption would have made things so much easier! The difference between the ways of light and darkness was the first thing they experienced after graduating Legacy School!

The next day two of our graduates, Haung Daw and Lal Lian, came back across into Thailand with a day pass and picked up travel funds to get all of our graduates back home. They were relieved and happy that the ordeal was over. They commented that after reflecting on the experience, they thought that God had allowed them to go through it to teach them a lesson. They had everything given to them at Legacy and never had to worry about anything. The night in the Thai police cell taught them that the real world they were returning to was much different than Legacy Institute. They were grateful that God was with them and never left them. I reminded them that Peter, Paul, John the Baptist and even Jesus Himself had been in jail! They laughed and agreed it was true!

The area of the world that God has chosen to place His Name by starting the Legacy Institute Training Center can sometimes be like the Wild West. There is never an end to the trials and dangers we face on a regular basis to do God's Work. But He never leaves us nor forsakes us. He is always there to pull us through – most of the time at the very last minute! It is a real faith-builder to experience these trials. We thank God every day for His grace and protection.

Our Legacy graduates have all returned to their own country. We hope they will take what they have been given and pass it on to others. Each one has changed dramatically from when they came. Each one is better equipped to lead a life of unselfishness and obedience to God.



Swimming lessons: Haung Dau learns the crawl stroke at the 700 Year Stadium Olympic pool.

Here is the text of a speech given by Lu Nan, one of our graduates for her last assignment in Speech Class. Lu Nan talks about some of the things she learned at Legacy:

“My Legacy Experience

“Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I am thankful to God because I have an opportunity to speak in front of all of you. Today, I’m going to talk about two of my great experiences at Legacy School. They are speech class and swimming class. They make my heart mature and give me a new life.

“First, I learned about how to speak in front of people. As we know, to speak in front of people is very important. As for me this is a great experience that I got from Legacy School. This class stirred my emotion because before I came here I never stood and spoke in front of people. I never pray with a crowd. At my home almost every night they prayed and read the Bible. I had opportunity to pray but didn’t because I was fearful.

“But now I am more confident. This school teaches me to speak and inform people, so I am not the same as before. I think I am improving my life. This school teaches me how to speak and how to stay in front of people.

“In this school, when I was going to give the speech for the first time, I was very afraid. I could not sleep well. And I could not eat the food well for about one week because I was worried about my speech a lot. My heart was always beating and painful. My body was shaking a lot. But speech by speech my nervous feeling became less and less. This was one of my experiences at Legacy.

“I have another great experience that I learned from Legacy School. It is swimming at the pool. This class twisted my inside and made me more scared inside my heart. I was very afraid of this class. I know this class is very important for my life but I was still afraid of it. I was worried about it a lot. Before I went to the swimming pool, I could not sleep at night. After I came back from the swimming pool I was just thinking about how to swim. I could not pull out swimming from in my mind. I feel like I was wearing a rock hat on my head because my head was very heavy.

“I prayed to God many times. I believe that God really supported me. He gave me energy for my heart so I could swim because of God. Ajarn (teacher) Gloria was very kind to me. When she wants me to jump into the water, I was scared to jump so I take a long time. I cannot swim quickly but she didn’t get angry at me. She is very patient with me. She teaches us like a baby. Now I can swim a lot, and yesterday I pass my swim class examination. Ajarn Gloria let me pass on my test, so I am very happy. I think it’s only the pity of Ajarn Gloria.

“I have more confidence than before. I also have more courage than before. My heart is stronger and stronger. These blessings are what I get from swimming class. I can do more than I thought. It is amazing! I do appreciate to God for giving me ability to do so. This is my another great experience at Legacy.

“IN conclusion, public speaking and swimming will help me a lot for my future. I am very proud to be a student at Legacy Institute. I have enjoyed being a student at Legacy. I would like to thank God that He has helped me all the time. I would also like t thank all to the Ajarns. Because of them I got knowledge. Also all of my friends for helping me whenever I needed help.

“Here is a quote from the Bible: ‘Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you.’

“Lu Nan Marip”

Legacy students learn to be courageous. They learn to be honest. They learn perseverance in the face of adversity. They learn that quitters never win and winners never quit. Our fervent prayer is that God will continue to teach them what He wants them to learn and will use them to further His plan in the areas of Burma they call home.

Recent letters I have received from Evangelist Lazum Brang tell me he is getting worn down. He is only one man, but he is trying to do the work of 5. He has no trained help. Yet, he must take care of growing church congregations in his hometown area of Na Mawn; Taungoo in central Burma; one near the China border region; and one in central Shan States. Besides this, there are 2 other new areas that are showing growth. When you add to this the scattered Church of God brethren all over Burma, Lazum Brang must travel a great deal in service to God. Yet, he has a young wife and 4 daughters to take care of at home. How does he do it? The answer is that he *really can't* do it and sustain good physical health and keep his family content.

Serving God is an uphill battle. There is very little rest for His true servants. There are real COSTS to becoming a TRUE servant of Jesus Christ. Some think that the ministry of Our Lord is about authority and position; or about the praises of men; or even the idea that somehow the minister is more "righteous" with God.

It is not about more righteousness; bigger salaries, bigger houses and bigger titles. The truth of the matter is much different. A true servant of God must sacrifice his entire life and all of his personal pursuits to Our Lord's service.

There is a price to be paid. Jesus said He had no place to rest His head!

Luke 9:57-62

"Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

This person claimed he could follow Jesus *wherever* He went. But was he *really* able to pay the price? Was he able to give up ALL to follow Christ?

Along came more who claimed they could follow: ***Verses 59-61***

"Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."

Each one *THOUGHT* he could follow Jesus. But they were not willing to pay the price! Each one had personal pursuits he wanted to stay involved in. Each one was not willing to give it all up to *REALLY* follow Jesus.

Verse 62: *"But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* NKJV

How much is each and every one of us engaged in the preaching of the Kingdom of God? How much have we given up? How much are we WILLING to give up?

My heart goes out to men and women like Lazum Brang and others who labor in very adverse circumstances to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom to others living in darkness. We have fellow-laborers in Africa, India and other remote parts of the world doing the same. They each have few resources. But their hearts are 100% dedicated to accomplishing the ministries given to them.

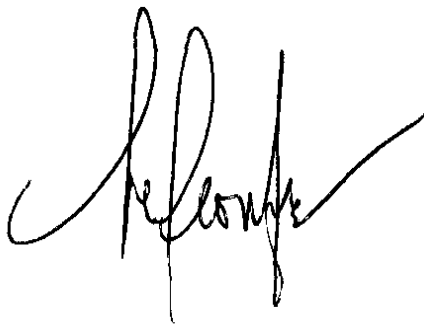
One of the purposes of the Legacy Institute training center in Chiang Mai is to train young people to help men like Lazum Brang. But we cannot CALL people to be full-time servants of Our Lord Jesus Christ! That is God's prerogative. All we can do is lead them in the right direction and pray God will choose them and use them. All of our recent graduates are potential candidates for God's service. Three of them are already baptized members of the Church of God. The other 4 have come to respect the Sabbath and Annual Holy Days and no longer eat pork. But where they go from here, we cannot know. We can do our best to teach them God's truth and the rest is up to God Himself. Please pray with fervency that God will choose to call some of our graduates to His service and do it *VERY SOON!*

Time is short and the harvest is plenteous. Laborers willing to put their hands to the plow are scarce. We at Legacy Institute recognize all of you as fellow-laborers. We see and acknowledge your willingness to sacrifice to accomplish God's Work in Asia and other remote parts of the world. May God bless you for your sacrifice.

Please pray for us. The Work here is only just getting started! We desperately need native workers for God's Harvest Fields. We need young evangelists and pastors and wives who can be sent out to teach! We also need qualified English speaking volunteer teachers who are willing to sacrifice 10 months or even 6 months to help prepare these young people for service. Pray God sends us volunteer teachers for this coming academic year (June 2007 – February 2008) who are willing to help with unselfish and giving hearts.

We thank all of you – our fellow laborers – for your support so that we can – together – obey God's command to carry the Gospel to ALL the world!

Sincerely,
In Jesus' Name,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

T. Leon Sexton

P.S. Gloria and I will be on a speaking tour to the US in May. We will visit the Midwest (Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky area) and also Texas and Oklahoma. We hope to see many of you!