



## LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Dear Fellow-laborers for God,

I am high in the mountains at a small village called Baan Wat Chan (*Temple of the Moon Village*). All the people living in this small village are members of the Karen tribe and most have been living in these same mountains for generations. I am here researching a location to bring five Emporia State University undergraduates who have volunteered to teach computer and English to hill tribe youngsters this coming summer. As I mentioned in my last letter, this is a joint project between Legacy Foundation and Emporia State University (ESU) in Kansas and will take place in July this year.

Dr. Dusti Howell and his family will also come in June for a Sabbatical leave from the university which they will spend serving at Legacy Institute's Leadership Training Center (LILTC) in Chiang Mai.

These mountains are simply beautiful and off the beaten track even for Thailand. I think I passed only one car while driving the 60 some kilometers up through the pine, bamboo and teak forests from the main road. I even passed a natural hot spring creating clouds of steam as its boiling waters poured into a small stream.

Earlier this morning I visited several royal projects started by King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit. These projects which the king and queen initiated a number of years ago are very helpful because the mountain people can learn about organic gardening, fish farming and other very useful skills to help them become self-sufficient. They also learn how to preserve the forest. This is very important because the forests of northern Thailand are quickly disappearing due to illegal clearing.

Every year at this time (February-March) there is very little rainfall in northern Thailand, so land poachers use the dry weather to clear forest land by burning so they can plant corn, cabbages or some other plantation cash crop. Last year around this time health officials issued air quality warnings in Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son and Chiang Rai provinces because there was so much smoke in the air created by forest fires and illegal land clearing.

It is one of the great tragedies of modern Thailand that, on the one hand the king and queen are trying to preserve the forests and the watershed areas the forests protect; and on the other hand unscrupulous and greedy businessmen are trying to steal the valuable trees and burn what is left. There is even a controversial government plan to build a dam that will inundate the last original golden teak forest in Thailand!

While on the journey from the main road into the mountains on the way to Baan Wat Chan, I saw no forest fires or illegal clearing. It appears that the king and queen's projects have been successful in educating the local Karen people to take care of the forest – at least in this part of the northern mountains.

At one of the king's projects, I met a young Karen man who worked for the king's organic vegetable farming demonstration project. He was about 30 years old. I asked this young Karen man if he was happy working for the king's project. He said yes – but he didn't make very much money. But that's OK, he said, because it was good to be helping the king. I told him that if he was happy doing what he was doing and if the money that he made was sufficient for his needs, he should be content.

The young man was basically happy, but not really content. Yet here he lives high in the beautiful mountains breathing clean air and engaged in a vocation that teaches poor people how to better their lives. Shouldn't this bring contentment?

This young man is not an isolated case. There are millions of young people from the mountains and rural rice farming areas of Thailand that are flooding into Thailand's urban areas looking for jobs and what they hope to be a higher standard of living. Ten years ago, over 60% of Thailand's population was engaged in agriculture. Today it is less than 40%. Why? What are today's young people looking for in their lives? What is missing? Is it only about more money? What does it take to be not only happy – but content? And can making more money bring contentment?

Young people today are not content. It doesn't really matter where one lives. Around the world, more and more young people have access to more and more physical things. The world is becoming more connected than ever before. Fewer and fewer people in the world live in isolation. Even high in these mountains of northern Thailand, the hill tribe people have radios, televisions, cell phones, computers and even satellite internet!

One would think that all the modern conveniences and materialistic possessions would make people happy – but they don't!

What is wrong about our modern world and why does it produce so much discontent?

This young Karen man is a Christian. In this remote mountain region, the Karen people are mostly Buddhist or Christian. There are still a few Animists in the distant areas, but they are very few now. As a Christian, he should be able to turn to the Bible to find the answer to contentment.

So let's turn to the Bible!

What brings contentment?

It is a paradox that the more young people are exposed to the materialism of this world, the more discontent they become. One would think this should not be true. The more we have the happier we should be – RIGHT??

Once we have enough food, clothing, shelter and a chance for improvement through education, shouldn't we all be content?

I remember a very important lesson I learned as a servant of God. After I was fired from my job as a minister and pastor in America because I disagreed with sweeping doctrinal changes, I decided I would go to Thailand and use all my connections to be a businessman and somehow continue to serve God. I had the idea that, if I could make a lot of money, I could take care of my family and use the profits to help preach the Gospel of the Kingdom in Thailand and neighboring countries.

This idea sounded good, but there was a serious flaw in my thinking. Business is not easy. It took all my time and hard work to try to make money. There was no time for God's Work. My faith in God was less and my troubles more. I was unhappy and discontent. I should have read my Bible.

#### **Matt 6:24**

*"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."<sup>1</sup>*

It was a very harsh lesson for me. *"Making a lot of money so that you can use it to serve God"* sounds noble and selfless. But the reality is that *you can't leave God to make money so that you can serve God!* It can lead you down a never-ending path AWAY from God – NOT toward God.

Serving God is an act of faith because one must step out and rely on Him to supply all one's needs. We must all learn to TRUST God instead of money. Even if one becomes very successful and rich, the chances are that faith in money will replace faith in God and it is impossible to have faith in God AND faith in money!

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<sup>1</sup> NKJV throughout unless otherwise noted.

One of the problems young people face is the constant advertising on radio, TV, internet, music videos and all other media that sends them a powerful message that they cannot be happy or content until they are able to buy a certain kind of soap, shampoo, shoes, cell phone, eyeglasses, clothing, motorcycle, music DVDs, TVs, computers, I-pods, etc., etc., etc.

This barrage is endless and even attacks our sub-conscious thinking. As media reaches into the high mountains – so does this kind of brainwashing that you cannot be happy or content without lots and lots of money so you can buy lots and lots of things. Not only that. You have to have the latest model and style! The pursuit of all that advertising tells you that what you **MUST HAVE** is endless. So chasing after more money to buy more and more things **NEVER STOPS!**

### **Luke 12:16-21**

*”Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: ”The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ’What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ’I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ”Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”” But God said to him, ’Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

This man was intent on accumulating more and more riches – more and more physical things. He was building bigger and higher barns. He was putting all his time, energy and resources into accumulating more and more wealth. But whether one is rich or poor the **END** is the same. Death comes to all men and then what will a person do with all his riches?

### **1 Tim 6:6-12**

*“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and **pierced themselves through with many sorrows.***

*“But you, O man of God, **flee these things** and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.”<sup>2</sup>*

**God wants us to follow a different path and He wants us to pursue entirely different riches!**

The riches God wants us to chase after are the riches of the Kingdom of God: **righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness.**

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<sup>2</sup> *Emphasis mine throughout*

The pursuit of these **TRUE RICHES** is what leads us to happiness and contentment.

The pursuit of money puts a young person on the wrong path. It is not a path to the Kingdom of God, but a path to unhappiness and, ultimately LACK of contentment.

### **Luke 18:18-25**

*"Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' So Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but one, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

This young man GAVE UP the chance for becoming a student and potentially an Apostle of Jesus Christ Himself because he placed too much trust in his money and the security HE THOUGHT it gave him!

**The path to the Kingdom would have brought him contentment. But he chose the path to physical accumulation of more and more wealth which never brings contentment.**

The pursuit of the Kingdom of God brings contentment. But it takes FAITH that God will take care of us and provide all our needs – *and even sometimes a few of our WANTS!*

God does not want us to worry about the physical necessities of life and what we need to take care of our families. Instead, He wants us to trust HIM – have faith in HIM and PURSUE THE TRUE RICHES of the Kingdom of God.

### **Matt 6:28-33**

*"So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"*

*"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**"*

It took me being over 50 years old and going through a lot of heartache before I finally learned this extremely important spiritual lesson. And I still have a lot more to learn about pursuing God's Kingdom. But I have to say that my life has changed since God finally got this lesson through my thick skull!

Now there is nothing intrinsically wrong with having wealth. Father Abraham was a very wealthy man. But what comes first? Is it the Kingdom of God or is it the pursuit of that wealth?

Legacy Institute has been built on faith and God provides our every need. Every year we need new volunteers to come teach in Thailand. Every year we wonder where they are going to come from! Every year God provides the teachers we need, some years more – some years less.

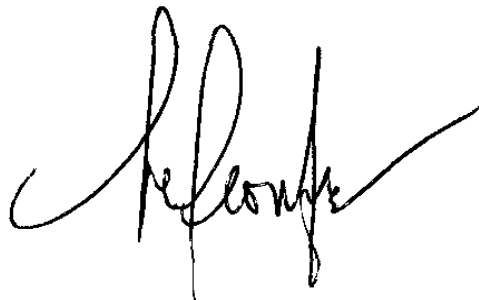
Every month we need donations to keep things running. We need to maintain and repair our present buildings and need future funds to build dormitories. We have monthly operational expenses we must pay, both in Thailand and in the USA. We need to pay the salaries to our employees in Thailand. On and on it goes.

We have many needs. But God continues to supply our “daily bread” so that we can continue the ministry **HE GAVE** us to do! He has done this now for over 8 years!

I am sincerely grateful to God for His constancy and faithfulness to me personally, to Legacy collectively and to all of God's people who support Legacy and are striving to **SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD!**

As things get tougher and the price of oil and other necessities of our modern society keep climbing, may Almighty God continue to supply your every need until that blessed day when Our Lord and King returns.

Until that day,  
Your fellow-laborer,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', written in a cursive style.

T. Leon Sexton

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