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Angk'jeay, Cambodia

ជំរាបសួរ (jumreepsua), Friends!

Our great God has spent the last two weeks showing me how big He is and how small I am. My flight was delayed an hour and a half into Tokyo and I couldn't make my connection to Vietnam. Instead, I took a train into town to spend a day with Anna Gardner. It was so sweet to spend a day with my little sister, but I had no idea what else God had in store for me that night.

I went with Anna Gardner to a local church's English club where I was thrown in to lead a small group. Afterward, when we were saying goodbyes, Joeson, a Chinese filmmaker who is investigating Christianity, asked if I was coming back to Tokyo after Cambodia. I told him no, it might just be heaven before I see him again. We had been talking about Christianity, but this brought things home. He asked how could I be so sure? This opened the doors wide for me to share step by step the hope Christians confidently hold in the Gospel.



If God used Japan to show me how big He is, so far He has used Cambodia to show me how small I am. I drove into the village ready to make 20 best friends on my first day. Instead, all the kids stared at me. It took me a week just to pronounce “hello”. It was hard to remember names, and if I remembered, was I pronouncing it right? It was awkward and embarrassing.

Humbled, I went to work with no idea what kids were saying to me or about me. If I had a basketball, the closest boy was going to get a bounce pass. If I had a frisbee, I would make some funny-looking motions with my wrist and soon have a frisbee train going around the playground. I played fierce games of Connect 4, toppled countless Jenga towers, and protested when students played a +4 card just when I had UNO.



Teaching is awesome! My younger class may still mispronounce “axe” at the top of their lungs, but my older class knows what I mean by “let’s boogie” now!

Today, God granted me friendship with one of our high schoolers. I visited Rathana’s home, one of our seniors. He speaks good English and wants to study computer science in college. He greeted me with some of his family’s tasty

coconuts. We spent some time with his family at his home, and when it was time to leave he asked if we could walk back together. It was a healthy distance, and he taught me some useful phrases and some fun ones too. We played some games at the youth building before he asked if I wanted to see the Buddhist temple on the mountain. We grabbed a pair of bikes and headed for the hills.

He told me more about his life as he showed me his high school. His girlfriend won’t come to church with him, and he sometimes struggles to fit in at school and church. We kept riding to the jungle temple. We hiked up to the top and talked about monks, Buddhism, basketball, and why he chose to be a Christian. Rathana’s dad died last month, and he’s figuring out what life looks like now. Before hiking back down, we stopped on the centipede-ridden stairs to pray for our friends and family who do not worship God.



On the way back down the muddy, potholed roads, we stopped for water next to a dam built by the Khmer Rouge. Pol Pot required 12-hour workdays to double rice production but refused to feed workers more than a scoop of rice every day. We could see water buffalo grazing in the shallow rice fields as well as one of the mountains the Khmer Rouge used as a base. We talked about dating, parents, and friends on the ride home. My knees and rear had given up on me by the time we made it home, but I had a new friend! Somehow, achy knees bring guys closer than words alone can.





I praise God for his greatness and my smallness!

Please pray for the students in the village. Most of their families are not Christians, and they choose to spend their time with us. Rathana's story is one of many, and I look forward to learning more next week!

Please pray that I can quickly learn Khmer and remember students' names. I started a notebook where I write words and phrases down, what they mean, and my best stab at pronunciation. Other pages are full of my students' names. It goes everywhere with me.

Habakkuk 3:17-18:

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines,  
the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food,  
the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

Sincerely,

Wade Herren