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Hello, Friends!

My home church opens with this psalm every week, and I have found it immensely helpful in orienting my heart for worship. The grateful refrain of Psalm 100 rings out:

*“Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!*

*Come into his courts with presence with singing!*

*Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his.*

*We are his people and the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise!*

*Give thanks to him; bless his name!*

*For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.”*

*Praise the Lord* for the 2 months he gave me in Angk'jeay Village! I write today at 30,000 feet over the Pacific Ocean as I leave many dear friends behind. In my final newsletter, I hope to share the blessings and challenges that come with spending a season as a missionary to southeast Asia.



*Watana, Monica, John, Leeda, Taypee, Hanah, and Lisa*

*Praise the Lord* for Luke and Sokha and what they taught me. I am grateful to them for welcoming me and my fellow interns Hannah and Caroline into their ministry, into their home, and into their family. We prepared food together, prayed together, ate together, and scrubbed dishes together. We hung our laundry, taught English classes, chased chickens, and worshiped together. As a result, I got an intimate picture of their lives dedicated to sharing the gospel in their community. I learned several things from them.





I learned that ministry is relationships. Missionaries should be faithful pastors, astute translators, and wise teachers. Relationships, however, are often the most impactful piece of their ministry, and most clearly demonstrate the gospel we preach. Our students are difficult to love when they get offended over petty wrongs and give their offender the silent treatment. Other missionaries are hard to love when we live and work in such close proximity. I was difficult to love when I disrespected locals, left a student out, or made an abrasive joke. The way we as missionaries seek reconciliation with each other, with our students, and with our village neighbors is a witness to the Gospel. Cambodians, when wronged, avoid conflict. They neither admit wrongs nor ask for forgiveness. I had to confess that what I did was wrong and ask for forgiveness several times this summer. This came as a bit of a shock to some students who had never received an apology before. The hope is that the scripture we faithfully teach and the lives we faithfully live will show our students the great God we worship.

Praise God for language tutors! Remember how frustrated I was not being able to speak Khmer? After a few weeks of classes, I could walk down to the market and haggle with the locals selling their produce. Last time, one of the ladies even threw in some hot peppers for free! It is really fun to try and piece together sentences with the few words I know. Some of my favorites:

Hael no                                      A common phrase in our province is “Are you hungry?”

Knom chong gnam bye                      “I want to Eat Rice.”

“Eat rice” is synonymous with “eat” since you don’t have a meal without rice.



*Cheese filled Hot dogs, a delicacy*

One of my favorite memories was buying ice. Ice is sold in huge blocks, and we needed some for our outside ice chest. I asked some of the 5<sup>th</sup>-grade boys if they could walk over to the market with me. They came, and so did the rest of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes! On the way over, they taught me how to say “Ice please.” I practiced with them as we walked, and thought I had it down. Apparently, I needed some more practice, because when I walked up to the shop and asked, “Som Tuk ta gau?” The kids erupted “KAUUUU!!” We had a long laugh over my hopeless pronunciation and ran back home together through the rain hauling 5 big blocks of Tuk ta kau.

When I was feeling discouraged at the beginning of the summer, Luke encouraged me that kids would forget what I said, but they would always remember how I made them feel. Boy, was he right! Some of the kids crying the hardest during goodbyes hardly understood English.



*Reaksar*

This is in a similar vein to what Laura Ambrose, a missionary who runs a home for trafficked girls, told me. I had tried hard to be friends with our high school girls, but I sometimes found it frustrating and tough to navigate culturally. When we visited Laura, I asked her what our high school girls really need from an older Christian guy. She told me that many of them don't know a single decent guy. Many of them are hit on by their classmates, men in the village, their teachers, and sometimes their own fathers. Better than a friend, they need to see an example of a trustworthy Christian man who speaks to them respectfully and humbly serves with care.



Praise God for the time I spent with our students this summer! I played round after round of ninja or zombie tag with the young boys. I taught the 6<sup>th</sup> graders Bananagrams, and that's what we played when they got tired of badminton. The older boys love basketball and volleyball, and the older girls like doing older girl stuff. Above all, the kids just want to be around you, and games are a great excuse.



Some of my favorite memories are of rainy days when we huddled inside with the students eating spicy Ramen and doing puzzles. One afternoon, Reaksar and Srey Mao, two of our older girls, taught me how to shred a coconut to make a delicious warm banana-coconut pudding. Another day, I sliced my finger open while thinning bamboo and got stitched up by the village midwife. I biked to the high school for lunch to eat \$0.75 noodles with our students. The high school boys took me to a nearby lake where we sat in hammocks, drank sugar cane juice, and watched a storm roll in. We went on bike rides, mooed at water buffalo, and watched the sun sink over the rice fields.

Praise God for the privilege of spending time with the Khmer staff (Kakrona, Heng, Kunthea). We serve, teach, and cook alongside them during the week. One of my fondest memories was on the way back from our staff retreat with them to Siem Reap. After a busy two days visiting epic temples, we spent a slow morning in Brown coffee together. Kakrona was preaching on Psalm 45 that Sunday, so we spent an hour reading and studying the Psalm together. It was a sweet, unrushed time to spend with each other, to read, to think about, and to discuss God's word.



*Wade, Kakrona, Heng*

Heng took me snake hunting, fishing, and showed me around by bike. When we visited Phnom Penh, he bowled a turkey (3 strikes in a row) holding the ball backward. Go figure. We shot zombies in the arcade, raced cars, and I introduced him to Air Hockey. He taught me to string rubber bands into a slingshot, cut a coconut, and I taught him how to check the empty coolant tank on his moto.

During the two months I called Angk'jeay home, God taught me so much about missions, relationships, and Southeast Asian culture. I loved the people I served and the community that adopted me. So, am I going to be a missionary? It's a question I was asked numerous times along with, "When will you be back?" As much as I savored the taste of Missions I got in Cambodia, I'm pretty sure God has other plans for my life right now. I believe God has greatly gifted me as a Manufacturing Engineer, and I am going to spend the next year helping a factory run more efficiently. I don't think this calling is any less holy, and let me tell you what I'm excited for:

I can't wait to host a missionary on home assignment and know all the questions they are dying to be asked.

I can't wait to go on short-term trips armed with the knowledge of how to humbly support a missionary.

I can't wait to worship in my own language again.

I can't wait to support Luke and Sokha out of the abundance I have been given. I want to provide the students a way to maintain their motos. I want to help them replace their tired, old kitchen knives with durable knives to help prepare food for the 40+ people they host every Sunday lunch. I want to help them find a solution that filters their calcium-ridden well water which clogs and corrodes the sinks and showers.

I can't wait to support Kakrona as he finishes his pastoral internship and moves to plant his own church in another village.

I can't wait to serve my church by helping decide how to best send teams in the future.

I can't wait to build the kind of community in my own neighborhoods that I enjoyed in Angk'jeay. I can't wait to share meals with neighbors and their kids.

I can't wait to build a marriage that humbly reflects God's epic purpose for his people in eternity.

And finally, I can't wait to get a call from one of my students inviting me to their Christian wedding. A Christian wedding is a huge, countercultural leap of faith for our students, and it is evidence of God's work in their lives. I'll hop on the next plane to celebrate with them!

Sincerely,

Wade Herren





*Pana*



*Chetra*





*Planting rice with Heng and Kakrona*



*The emergency room- stiches*





*My afternoon class*





*Asut praying with me*