

Thai Tidbits

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Khon Kaen Bible Institute

I am happy to report that KKBI has graduated 108 students. Ninety-nine are Thais and nine Laotians. The last three are Bon, Nes, and Cream. Bon is an aircraft engineer and is planning to pursue his career in aircraft either in Bangkok or Singapore. Both Nes and Cream are working in Khon Kaen and will continue their education by attending college.

There were eight schools of preaching in Thailand. Four closed because of a lack of teachers, a lack of students, or not enough churches to hire the graduates. In America, the purpose of schools of preaching are to produce more preachers because Christian colleges and universities cannot graduate sufficient numbers of men to fill the pulpit. In Thailand we have more small congregations that cannot afford to hire a preacher and not enough large congregations to support preachers.

Schools of preaching have become less practical nowadays. We produce more preachers than the churches can hire. I estimate that there are probably two hundred graduates from all of the schools of preaching in Thailand and we have only about 100 congregations. There are around fifteen churches that can fully support their preacher and another fifteen preachers who receive support from the States. All those who have no support are self-supported. We might have around another fifteen vocational preachers who hold two jobs—vocational work to pay the bills and preaching.

An oversupply of preachers has become the problem of the four schools of preaching in Thailand. There are fewer students who want to give their life to work as full-time preachers. To spend two years of their lives with no future of being a full-time preacher has reduced the number of prospect students. Most of the students now are those who really want to know God's Word without an intention to serve full-time. They will be the strength of the local church and will do well in teaching Bible classes and maturing Christians.

New strategy: We must change our system in the Bible school. Instead of requiring a two-year residency at the school to train preachers, we should have extension schools. We should also have a Saturday and Sunday Bible School for those who are interested. These people will not have to quit their jobs to come study at the Bible School for two years but can attend on weekends.

We are preparing the extension school studies through video so we can send each student the courses that they want to study. Making a good clear video for the classes takes time

and skill. I see that these two methods of extension will become more popular among the brethren than the residential two-year program we patterned after the school of preaching in America. We will continue having the full-time residential classes for those interested in attending but there will not be great numbers of students like we've had in the past.

Laotian Sister—La

Last month in April, a fifty-one-year-old Lao sister, married to our Thai brother, Noi, became Christian. She lived in Savannakhet in Laos.

La and her husband, Noi, a student at KKBI, plan to move to Laos after he graduates. La said that she wondered why Noi always read his Bible and was in deep thought all the time so she wanted to know what he read so intensely. After attending the church about a month and being taught by our Christian brethren, La decided she wanted to be born again.

Tragedy at April Camp

We have had summer camps for about twelve years. The camps got bigger and bigger—from 80 up to 450 campers. Then God let an unexpected tragedy happen at the



Chaiyaphum Camp. April 5, Moo and Pang's 6-year old son, Gow, from Udon Province, drowned in the camp's River Chee. He was playing with the group and no one saw him go under. Gow was rushed to the hospital but it was too late. We stopped the camp and held the funeral the next morning. Gow was buried in the church cemetery there.

I personally know the young father well because he graduated from our Youth Bible school, which we had about eight years ago. The only comforting word I could say was, "God must love Gow so much to take him when he is so young." The father, Moo, said that he, his wife, and 4-year old son will continue to come to the camp every year, and it will be a family occasion to visit Gow's grave.

Revelation 21:4 "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."