



"Holding Forth the Word of Life..." Philippians 2:16

"Communicating Jesus Christ to the Unreached Millions"

Greetings Again In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ,

"Communication." What does it mean? Dictionaries tell us it implies the imparting or conveying of information or knowledge. Communication can be divided into two main categories: successful *versus* unsuccessful. Successful communication occurs when the recipient receives (or perceives) the same information that the presenter sought to impart, thus producing the intended results. Conversely, unsuccessful communication occurs when the recipient does not receive (or perceive) the same information that the presenter attempted to impart, thus *failing* to produce the intended results. Effective or successful communication can be a challenge, even among people of the same culture and language—let alone across cultural and language barriers, which most missionaries face.

Sound a little confusing? Allow me to clarify things. What if I told you there was a sizable inheritance waiting for you, kept safely in a certain bank, in a certain faraway city? However, in my attempt to communicate this good news to you, I was a bit sketchy in the details, *assuming* that you knew what I meant. Meanwhile, you also "presumed" you knew (or perceived) what I was saying. Yet, your thoughts immediately went to your own hometown bank instead, where you have always done business—where your parents and grandparents also did business. (So, we see here how assumptions and misperceptions can come from both directions.)

In other words, some important information was lost in the communication process, and some extraneous or unrelated information was inserted in its place. Bottom line, you interpreted what you thought you heard in the light of your own understanding, which was not correct, according to the intended message... the new bank, *versus* your old bank.

This same communication impasse happens all too often in Thailand. In evangelizing the Thai, missionaries often fail to address the two-way presumption scenario (above). Assuming the Thai listener understands, they leave out missing foundational information—that of origins, that Jesus is their Creator, including all nature around them, which the Thai all love and admire. Lacking this vital information, the Thai see no connection, or need for Christ. They wrongly assume they hear an invitation to abandon their beloved Buddhism and embrace a lesser foreigner's "religion," Christianity having arrived 500 years after Buddhism. Thus, they never really hear the Gospel, due to: ^{a)}inadequate communication on the part of the missionary; and, ^{b)}close-mindedness on their part.

- So, what is the job of a missionary? The primary job of every Bible-believing, cross-cultural missionary is to communicate the changeless truths of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, in its entirety, clearly and accurately, in the heart language and cultural setting of the target audience—including the vital missing link: the foundational Creation-to-Redemption story.

- What the job of a missionary is not. Saving people is never the job of the missionary, nor can it ever be! That's God's department! He alone can save and forgive anyone and everyone of all their sin. This occurs immediately when one responds to the Gospel message by exercising "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ!" (Acts 20:21)

- What is the Gospel message? The Gospel message addresses the helplessly and hopelessly-lost human condition, and the gracious provision of a loving and merciful God, who offers salvation by grace, through childlike trust in the Person of Jesus Christ, who paid for all sin in His death, and rose again. Therefore, forgiveness of sin is given through God's love, by faith in Christ alone, without being earned or aided by human effort of any kind! (**Thot:** *The Gospel is God's free gift of love. Through it, He immediately forgives all of the recipient's sins, transforming him or her from sinner to Saint, and giving a new life and future. Only God can save!*)

- What the Gospel message is not. Promoting a works-based religiosity is not the Gospel! I once looked on as a well-meaning Christian businessman and his wife witnessed to a business colleague. The core of their message was, "*Stop cheating your customers, stop gambling, drinking and carousing around, and follow Christ.*" This approach may sound good, but it is not the Gospel—rather, a message of religious works! (**Thot:** *Religion is like painting an old car, right over the rust and dirt. Like a cheap paint job; religion cannot save you! Whereas, the Gospel gives you a "shiny new car"*)

I trust this helps enlighten you as to some of the challenges of the great task that we cross-cultural missionaries face, as we endeavor to faithfully "*Hold Forth the Word of Life.*"

In closing, Cheryl and I want to sincerely thank all of you who have continued faithful in your prayers and financial partnership over the years. As believers, we are all admonished to *occupy* till He returns... i.e., to finish strong as we cross the finish line into His presence.

By God's Enabling Grace and For His Eternal Glory,

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