

Some Significant Points to Ponder

By Ron Myers (God's Word for Isan: www.IsanBible.org)

Greetings Once Again In the Name Of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Over the years that we have served the Lord in the foxholes, on the front lines of spiritual warfare across Gospel-parched Northeast Thailand, I have formulated some significant thoughts concerning the Lord's work, such as that in which we are involved. Actually not just our work, but all cross-cultural church-planting missionary work in general among the unreached masses.

Concerning whose work it is: First and foremost, it is God's work, not ours. The Lord finds it necessary to gently realign my focus on that fact from time to time. Case in point: a few weeks ago I was bemoaning before the Lord that *no one* seems to be interested in the vital, groundbreaking work we are involved in—obviously an overstatement, but I was feeling frustrated, and making a point. Without hesitation, the Lord impressed my heart with, *"I'm Interested, Ron."* I stopped mid-thought...

Wow! The Creator of all Heaven and Earth is personally interested? How reassuring is that? I immediately sensed His calming presence flowing over my being. It really doesn't matter if no one else seems all that interested, because the God of all creation is! I still have a sense of awe about that: The Lord, the Great I AM, is interested in what I am doing for Him, in obedience to His Great Commission. Therefore, what is there that's worth being troubled about? Absolutely nothing, since Christ is Lord over all!

Concerning speaking the language: I often smile when I get asked whether I speak the language—usually in the context of doing Bible translation. I assure them that I do. Mastering both the national language, and any local-area language and culture is an essential for every serious-minded missionary! Befriending the people and speaking their heart language is of vital importance, and there are no shortcuts. It may require years of extra time, yet the rewards are great in terms of opening doors of acceptance, including their openness to accept the life-changing message we bring them. Conclusion: Being fluent in the local language is absolutely mandatory!

What is the primary job of a missionary? All other issues aside, I believe 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 (*including the foundational Creation-to-Redemption story*), clearly and accurately, in the heart language and cultural setting of the target audience.

What *isn't* the job of a missionary? Some well-meaning people may refer to missionary work as "saving souls." Not so! Actually, saving people is *never* the job of the missionary, nor can it *ever* be! That's God's department! Our task is to deliver the Gospel message in a clearly understandable fashion. God immediately saves and forgives everyone of all their sin (*past, present, and future*) who responds to that message as they exercise *"...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ!"* (Acts 20:21)

What does it mean to plant a church? We often conjure up thoughts of people coming for a relatively brief period to help the missionary erect a simple structure called a "church." Now, there's nothing wrong with doing that—would that actual church-planting was that easy. However, the Greek word for "church" is *ekklesia*, which means "called-out ones." The Apostle Peter refers to the church as living stones, i.e., believers, built upon the Chief Cornerstone—the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4-5). Thus, establishing churches refers to planting the Living Seed of the Word of God (*the Gospel*) in the hearts and minds of the hearers. Then nurturing, cultivating, guiding and protecting it as it grows into a living, breathing, self-sustaining organism—like the great tree that began as a little mustard seed, of which Christ speaks in Matthew 13:31, referring to the Kingdom of God in parables. Consequently, buildings are structures where churches meet.

A brief recap of our ministry: Cheryl and I began our work as pioneer church planters in Thailand's Isan region in 1973. God expanded our ministry in 1981 to include Bible translation, and otherwise expand our outreach. Presently, there is only one book left to translate before completing the entire Isan New Testament—Matthew! Also known as Northeast Thailand, the Isan region comprises one-third of Thailand's total population and landmass. Today, the 23-million-plus Isan people *still do not have* the Word of God in their own heart language, apart from the translation work the Lord has us doing! Each New Testament book, when completed, is then printed and distributed to churches throughout Isan, both to give it wide exposure and to invite feedback.

Lastly, what is "God's Word for Isan"? Is it a Church-planting ministry? An evangelism ministry? A leadership and discipleship ministry? A teaching ministry? A ministry that produces relevant materials for both teaching and evangelism? Or, merely a Bible translation ministry?



The answer is, it's actually all of the above. Not just translation. Not just church-planting, or evangelism, or teaching, or encouragement, or equipping, but all of the above-mentioned, and more, as the need presents itself—and *there is an inexpressibly-great need!* It's delivering the Word of God to the spiritually-thirsty and starving souls who call themselves the people of Isan.

Case in point: As a guest speaker at a remote Isan church, I was teaching on the foundational truths of Ephesians—in the Isan language. It was super-hot under the low tin roof and noontime had long passed. Even though they were still very attentive, I suggested we break for lunch and continue later. I vividly recall one Isan lady's response. She had been hanging on every word and practically fell out of her seat as she exclaimed: *"You place a drop of cool refreshing water on our dry, parched lips, and now you take it away again!"* That's how much the Isan people hunger and thirst for God's Word in their own heart language!

By God's Strengthening Grace,

Ron Myers

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In closing, we cherish your continued help in taking God's life-giving Word to the People of Thailand's Isan region, and those beyond, through the ministries of *God's Word for Isan*. I'll be returning on November 10th to finish translating the Book of Matthew. Next comes review, editing, rechecking, more proofreading, etc., before any final printing is possible. After that, I hope to translate all Old Testament verses that speak of God's power and majesty in Creation—perfect for those who are ignorant of God, like the People of Isan.