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GOD'S WORD FOR ISAN NEWSLETTER

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A Faith-based Ministry Sustained Through the Prayers and Partnership of God's People

By Grace You Are Saved, Through Faith; An Urgent Plea for Prayer for My Friend Gui

By Ron Myers

Greetings In The Matchless Name Of Jesus,

These verses in Ephesians are probably some of the clearest, all-inclusive Scripture passages that both encompass and parse salvation (vv. 8–9) from service (v. 10), the Christian life as God has ordained for every believer to walk in (Colossians 2:6-7).

I'd like to introduce you to my Thai friend, Gui, whom I love in Christ and for whom I carry a deep, groaning burden (Romans 8:26). Gui (pronounced *goeey*) received Christ during my Nakhon Phanom city ministry and expanded village outreach. Of ethnic North Vietnamese stock, he was born in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, the provincial capital where our ministry is headquartered. Gui's grandfather had migrated there with his family as refugees in 1954, as did myriads of other North Vietnamese families, seeking to escape the *Điện Biên Phủ* confrontation between French colonialist forces and Ho Chi Minh's *Viet Minh* revolutionaries—precursor to the Vietnam War

Gui first caught my attention at a local dirt-track motorcycle race where he was competing on Suzuki's Thai factory team. I later met him in person at his father's large motorcycle dealership where he worked. Introducing myself, I congratulated him for his racetrack performance. We then conversed a bit; whereupon, out of curiosity, Gui asked what I did. Explaining that I translated *ancient manuscripts* into the Isan language, I invited him to our home for a visit. He came later that day, driving his new Toyota diesel pickup. I showed Gui my office where I conducted the translation work, pointing out the Genesis creation account in the Isan language on the computer screen.

Why start with Genesis? The reason being, people in far-eastern cultures have an abstract or metaphysical worldview that does not include Judeo-Christian values, creation, or any knowledge of God. So, to introduce the Gospel effectively, the missionary *must* begin in the Book of Beginnings to fill in all the blank pages by establishing God and world origins. Otherwise, meaningful cross-cultural communication is not possible—like trying to play baseball (their ingrained culture) using football rules (the missionary's viewpoint), so to speak.

While reading the Genesis text on-screen, Gui looked up and exclaimed "*Where did you get this? I've never seen anything like it before. There's something about these words that really impact me!*" Note: I've been privileged to have witnessed that same response many times as the water of life pours over their parched and thirsty souls—never before having seen or read God's living Word in their own heart language.

I took the opportunity to tell Gui how the *ancient manuscripts* I was translating tell us about our Creator God, that He made the world and all things in it. That He is presently watching over everything and everybody. That He is the only true God, not a man-made object to be worshiped, or religious Guru whose bones are in a grave somewhere, where people go to pay homage. That everything was perfect, with no evil or sin, and no man-made religions. That Satan caused man's disobedience which brought on God's curse. Note: this follows Paul's message about the unknown god to the educated heathen in Athens, Greece. Paul began with creation and ended with Christ's resurrection and judgment (Acts 17:22–32).

I went on to explain the Gospel message and the true identity of Jesus as God's Divine Son who came down from Heaven in human form. That He did not come as some religious leader, but came specifically to save us from our sin and God's impending judgment. In doing so, Jesus took upon Himself the judgment and punishment we deserved by pouring out His own blood as a sacrifice; the required price for sin being death. Done on our behalf because of God's Love for us. Jesus then came back to life, exiting the tomb bodily and very-much alive again, demonstrating His power and victory over Satan, sin, and death—a living witness for all to behold and believe. Gui listened intently, taking it all in.

Many days passed. We spent a lot of time together, taking trips in his new pickup, riding around on our motorcycles, eating at local restaurants, or just *hanging out* and talking. Both my sons (David and Danny) took a liking to Gui and he to them. One day Gui paid me an unexpected visit, saying he needed to talk. We sat at our dinner table as he explained how he felt convicted of his sinful condition and wanted to receive Christ. Not fully realizing the immediacy of his desire, I explained how he could trust Christ anywhere and at any time. "*Now,*" Gui replied, "*I want to do it right now!*" With that, he bowed his head and poured his heart out in repentant prayer. In short, Gui thanked God for His love and forgiveness in



sending Jesus as a sacrifice, dying for his sin. In ending, he said that he believed. Note: I realize it sounds like I'm embellishing Gui's words here, but they're practically verbatim. Based on Gui's repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21), which I witnessed, I believe Gui is a saved born-again child of God, according to the promises in God's Word as seen in John 3:15-16.

Around that time, there was a large meeting at a Christian camp near Pattaya Beach. I knew the main speaker, a Thai pastor friend who was an accomplished expositor of God's Word, so felt it was a great opportunity for Gui to attend. There, he would hear God's Word taught and meet other Christians. Upon inviting him, Gui said the Thai government had restrictions on North Vietnamese of refugee status from traveling long distances without special permission, adding that they were usually lax and only checked occasionally. In seeking God's wisdom, I sensed that Gui needed to attend. So, I took him with me and our family in our old VW van. The Vietnam War had just ended but there was still a lot of ethnic tension and suspicion. It's different now; tensions are gone and the North Vietnamese refugees have Thai citizenship—including Gui.

Many Thai Christians were in attendance. Gui felt out-of-place at first, but he soon adapted and grew quickly as he listened to the Word of God being taught. Pastor Kiatisak was also there—from Grace Baptist in Bangkok. Kiatisak was originally from Nakhon Phanom, growing up near Gui's home, so they became quick friends as Pastor Kiatisak shared his salvation testimony. Gui also new Kiatisak's younger brother, who received Christ while there. It was all so much of the Lord's doing. Gui was literally on fire for the Lord; so, I began to mentor him personally when we returned. Being from a prosperous upper-class background, there weren't any Christians there whom he could identify with, or they with him, due to wide socio-cultural ethnic divide.

We had been on the field for six very productive years by then, after having a productive five-year first term. These were two long and successful terms where we saw God bless and use our lives—long by today's short-term standards, but we weren't tired in the least. From there, everything went downhill. Through a series of events beyond my control I had to return home for an extended period of time, which unfortunately left Gui an orphan in the faith with no one to guide or encourage him. He later married Ming-Kwan, an attractive and highly intelligent Thai girl of dual Vietnamese-Chinese stock and of a similar prosperous upbringing as he. They bought a second home in Bangkok where she already had a successful travel and tour business. Being Gui's father in the faith, I had (and still have) a burden for his spiritual well-being, but couldn't do much about it from a distance, except commit him to the Lord for safe keeping.

A few years later, when I was finally able to return, I made it a point to look Gui up in Bangkok. He was elated to hear from me again. We had a great reunion time where both Gui and his wife, Ming-Kwan—whom I also knew from Nakhon Phanom—invited me to stay with them while in town. Ming-Kwan told me that *"Gui is a Christian and really needs to go to church; so, take him to church with you, please."* That was reassuring news, in that she recognized Gui as being a believer, which he didn't deny. I did what I could to hook him up with the church that I usually attended when in Bangkok. Upon my asking Gui how things were going, he assured me all was fine.

I returned to our Nakhon Phanom headquarters each year for two, two-month stints or four months per year to work towards the completion of the Isan New Testament (finished June 2016), teach, mentor, and speak at the church groups we had started. Each time, Gui and I got together over lunch and reestablished our friendship. Each time, I'd ask Gui how things were going, whereupon he assured me all was fine, and not to worry. But I did worry, and spent as much time with him as possible. Before Gui's business-mogul father passed, he divided his businesses between his children, two daughters and three sons, Gui being the oldest. They now have prosperous gas stations, car dealerships, and motorcycle dealerships—with a branch motorcycle dealership in each of the nineteen provincial capitals throughout Thailand's Isan region. Today, Gui owns two Suzuki car dealerships, one in Nakhon Phanom and the second in the adjacent Mukdahan province that his grown son manages. Financially well-off, it's increasingly evident that Gui is not at peace.



Each December, I would celebrate my birthday in Nakhon Phanom where I would invite close friends, both Buddhist and Christian. I always included Gui, who would readily accept and sit at my side. Now, without going into detail, it is increasingly apparent that Gui's life is being influenced more by this world's system and less by his Christian faith. I fault myself to some degree not being more proactive, and the unfortunate circumstances that kept me away from being able to teach and mentor him to become strong, mature believer.

What to say? As a fellow-believer in Christ Gui desperately needs your prayers. He is obviously backslidden and away from the Lord, and needs mature fellow-believers to come alongside and encourage him in the faith. We communicate on occasion through email or face been where I have sought to encourage him. I know Gui received Christ. I sat as his side as his prayed repentantly, confessing his need for forgiveness as he trusted and thanked Christ for dying for his sin. I saw him grow and persevere and later, I had listened as Ming-Kwan (his unsaved wife) spoke of Gui as being a Christian who needed to attend church, asking me to help him.

As Christians committed to support getting the Gospel to the unreached, I ask that you join me in praying for Gui on a regular basis. The completion of this huge God-given task of world evangelism *can* be a reality. Yet it can only be accomplished, not by missionaries, but by strong, national mentoring Christian leaders. I'm not saying that Gui will become one of them; and yet, it is *not* beyond the realm of possibility, given the encouraging and empowering ability of our wonder-working God to transform Gui into a noteworthy *man of God* as well. Amen!


Ron Myers
God's Word for Isan