



Short-Term Mission Teams

30-Day Devotional

Agape International Missions

Special thanks to Lyndsay Wilkin, Lana Harrison and Paul Menefee
for volunteering their time to make this project happen.

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Introduction

Day 1: Mission v. Pilgrimage

"Imagine a team from France calls your church and says they want to visit. They want to put on a VBS (which you have done for years), but the material is in French. They have heard about how the U.S. church has struggled and want to help you fix it. They want to send twenty people, half of them youth. Only two of them speak English. They need a place to stay for free, with cheap food and warm showers if possible. During the trip, half of the group's energy will be spent on resolving tension between team members. Two people will get sick. They'd like you to arrange some sightseeing for them on their free day. Do you want them to come?"¹

This isn't said to discourage you but to let you know that great teams don't happen by accident. Great teams happen because they are spiritually prepped, educated on effective missions' strategies, and culturally competent. AIM has had great teams come that help move forward what God is doing. AIM has also had teams that come and hinder and damage what God is doing. This will be a tough, no-nonsense, 30-day devotional because we desire for teams to be thoroughly prepared to serve in Cambodia, and we want to limit the possibility that a team could hurt God's efforts to rescue and transform the abused. Take this devotional seriously and allow the Holy Spirit to change you over the next 30 days.

¹ Anecdote from Darren Carlson, "Why You Should Consider Cancelling Your Short-Term Mission Trips," The Gospel Coalition (2012), <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/06/18/why-you-should-consider-cancelling-your-short-term-mission-trips/> (accessed February 4, 2013).

As you begin, consider the following question: Are you embarking on a mission or a pilgrimage? A *pilgrimage* may be defined as a journey that you undertake as a quest for some religious purpose, whereas a *mission* is the work or calling of a team to fulfill some purpose on behalf of or with another group of people. The key feature of a pilgrimage is that it is focused on your own spiritual growth while a mission is focused on the fulfillment of a calling on behalf of others. There is a time and place for pilgrimage – this is not to say that it is wrong to seek your own spiritual growth – however, this trip must be about mission lest you hinder the work that God is doing in the lives of the Cambodians you will encounter. Are you embarking on a journey that will fulfill your own spiritual needs or on a mission – to serve others and to glorify God?

We are preparing you for a mission, and if you are signed up for a pilgrimage, this trip is not for you.

Are you embarking on a journey that will fulfill your own spiritual needs or on a mission – to serve others and to glorify God?



Spiritual Preparation: Addressing Motives

Day 2: Wrong Motive - Adventure

There is no doubt that mission trips, both short and long, offer the allure of a grand adventure. The prospect of removing yourself from your typical environment and drinking in the sights, smells, foods, and customs of another culture are what draw millions of people into cross-cultural tourism every year.

Do a simple Google search on missions and see how many websites advertise adventure as being a part of their trips. There is a reason they do this. While adventure will play some role in missions, it can dangerously be the primary reason that many find themselves wanting to venture to the mission field in the first place. It is easy to find yourself thirsting for a retreat, to get out and away. And while a vacation might not be justifiable to your pocketbook, getting your hands a little dirty on a mission trip is. Does this sound familiar?

Adventure is by no means a bad thing. Neither is a desire to fully delve into the culture in which you are ministering. However, your perspective and expectations going into any endeavor will greatly influence how you actually experience it.² If your primary focus for the trip derives from your excitement for adventure, then you risk the possibility of being sorely disappointed or prevented from fully participating spiritually as well as effectively aiding in the long term ministry already underway in Cambodia. Long days working at the same ministry site will likely mean less of an opportunity to explore as much as you want to. And looking forward to your free day and down time every day could prevent you from being spiritually focused and present in the primary mission.

² David Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 48.

The right motive when participating in short term missions is a concept you will explore in greater depth in the days to come. But before you get that far, it is important to first address what the current motives of your heart really are. Let us make one thing clear: *Your participation in the ministry being done in Cambodia is not about adventure.* Your primary focus and heart must be that of the spiritual nature – to share the love of Christ as a team and as individuals and, in doing so, to aid in the work already being done in Cambodia. You must have no illusions that this will always be a fun and easy task. It is important and helpful to look to the ministry of Christ and his disciples as an example.

Check out Matthew 10. When Jesus sent out the Twelve, we have no record of Him telling them of all the amazing and fun adventures they would encounter in each city. Instead, He warned them of dangers, difficulties and hard work that would be required of them. Another good example to consider is the difference between motives of many Western missionaries and that of others who find themselves in more dangerous situations that do not offer the luxury of a safe adventure.

"[The] fun-filled, adventurous mind-set is quite a contrast from the thousands of young, aspiring missionaries in China who are ready and expecting to die for the gospel during their mission sojourns. In their words, 'The Muslim and Buddhist nations can torture us, imprison us, and starve us, but they can do no more than we have already experienced in China.... We are not only ready to die for the gospel, we are expecting it.'"³

Cambodia is not a nation hostile to Christianity the way China and Saudi Arabia are. But in advancing the kingdom of God, you will undoubtedly come up against the forces of evil that seek to prevent lost lives from being reached with the love and healing of Jesus Christ. Although you might not be physically threatened, it is important to go onto the mission field with the same spiritual focus, tenacity and passion these Chinese missionaries exhibit.

Sometimes, a wrong motive is unconscious. It is therefore important to take some time to discover what is in your own heart and mind. Here are some questions to ask yourself. Answer honestly before you continue on. Do not answer according to what you know to be the "right answer". It is imperative that you have an accurate understanding of your own current heart condition so that wrong motives can be adequately addressed.

You participation in
the ministry being
done in Cambodia is
not about adventure.

- Am I more excited about sharing Jesus and lives being saved than the food I will eat, the sights I will see, and the souvenirs I can buy?
- What stories am I already anticipating telling my friends and family when I return home? Are they mostly stories of ministry or tourism?
- Am I willing to joyfully serve in Cambodia even if it requires exhaustion, long days, submission to authority, and not being able to see and partake in all the aspects of culture that I want to?

"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few!"⁴ Let not your desire for adventure keep you from being the laborer that brings in a bountiful harvest.

³ Ibid., 52.

⁴ Matt. 9:37-38 NKJV

Day 3: Wrong Motive – Poverty Tourism

We have all seen them. They break our hearts, put smiles on our faces, make us think it was all worth it. They are the stereotypical trip photos made into Facebook profile pictures and decorating church PowerPoint presentations. And they usually take the form of a missionary posing with an impoverished local child, swallowed in clothes two sizes too big, their dirty faces standing in contrast to their beautiful eyes and brilliant smiles.

But here we must again return to the concept of motivation and explore a notion that people might be less inclined to admit to . . .

Poverty tourism.

Who would want to do that? Who wants to be a tourist in unclean and poverty-stricken streets? Isn't tourism what you do in lavish and luxurious places like Italy and France? This is certainly not what you do on a mission trip! You're right – it's not. Or rather, it shouldn't be. But let's think about what you do on a tourist vacation. You take pictures of all the famous sites you visited, maybe snapping some of yourself with local street performers. Essentially, you visit that country to use it for what it has to offer you, telling stories to your friends at home of the excellent hotel service, food, or how awful the transportation systems were.

Cambodia is not like Italy or France. While both experience poverty, it is safe to say that you will not be travelling to Cambodia to stay in fancy hotels, and the people you will be working and interacting with are NOT sites to see the way the Eiffel Tower is either. They are NOT trophies to be used to exhibit your love and compassion when you return home to tell your friends and family members about your trip.

They are people. They have equal value to those of us who are fortunate enough to experience a higher standard of living. To treat them otherwise would be exploitation. It is hardly expected that you would travel to Cambodia with such a malicious purpose. You do, after all, have some amount of passion for those who are being rescued out from under the evil and oppressive hand of sexual exploitation.

But just as using missions as an avenue to achieve adventure is often unconsciously done, so too is holding the attitude of poverty tourism. How would you feel if a foreign missionary came to you and your family's home, picked up your children, and started snapping pictures of them? Poverty tourism stems, ultimately, from an attitude of pride.

Let's look at the attitude Jesus had toward those He worked with and ministered to by checking out Mark 6. After Jesus told His disciples to retreat to rest after a long time of ministry, the people would not give them a break and went ahead of them. Jesus "saw

a great crowd, and He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd."⁵ Indeed Jesus had compassion. But it was one that was marked with a love that compelled Him to work in the trenches, to rebuke the arrogance of the Pharisees, to both heal and challenge the destitute and the sinners.

That's what I am here for, you say. But let us also look at Matthew 18. "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them and said, 'Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'"⁶

The key here is the *humility* to which Jesus calls His disciples. You might be willing to serve day and night, or to carry the grimy bodies of little children, but are you doing so with a heart of humility toward those whom you serve?

Taking pictures is not inherently a bad thing. And it is natural if you experience a level of culture shock at the poverty with which people live in comparison to your own standard of living. But be careful not to let material pride keep you from walking humbly and instead lead you into poverty tourism – into using the circumstances of others merely to gratify your desire to do something good.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I willing to dig in the trenches, even if I never get to see the fruit of my work?
- Am I willing to leave my camera at home to prevent me from exploiting the circumstances of the local people?
- How would I feel if our trip's shopping day got canceled?
- How do I truly view the lives of people who are materially less fortunate than me, and how does this compare with the attitude and life of Christ?
- Do I want to go just to see what it is like for other people to live in poverty?
- Is my bleeding heart simply defined by pity, or a genuine, Christ-like love?

Ask the Lord to convict your heart of poverty tourism you may have exhibited in the past or as an attitude you might have now.

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8 (ESV)

⁵ Mark 6:34 ESV

⁶ Matt. 18: 1-6 ESV

Day 4: Wrong Motive – What God is Going to Do in My Life

Have you seen the latest consumer reports? According to the Department of Labor's 2011 Consumer Expenditures Report, the average American household spent nearly \$2,500 on entertainment in 2011. "Over 40% of American families spend more than they earn" and "carry, on average, \$8,400 in credit card debt."⁷

We see a culture that is fueled by a desire to satisfy self and live extravagantly. These attitudes and behaviors aren't just relevant to the secular world, but are very much a part of the Western Christian culture as well. Unfortunately, the same "me-centered" consumerist patterns exhibited in the United States spill over into our spiritual lives and can play a detrimental role in Christian world missions.

This isn't just about money. This is, once again, about perceptions and expectations established before going onto the mission field. Recall what we addressed the last couple of days: the wrong motives of adventure and poverty tourism. In discovering how these motivations might have played a role in your decision to serve in Cambodia, it might not have been too hard for you to change your thought processes and begin to think about how you can align yourself with the right motivations.

But this "me-centered" phenomenon that says, "My life is going to be changed," or, "I can't wait to see what the Lord is going to do in my friends and me during this trip," might be harder to overcome because it really does feel right to us in the first place. It seems like the good and spiritual thing to desire after all – far better than merely looking forward to what souvenirs you can buy or the awesome pictures you can take with your new camera. But going on a trip so that God can touch your life is still self-centered.

In a sheltered culture, convicted by our own ignorance of the world, "people are convinced short-term missions are one of the most effective ways to expose American Christians to the needs of the world."⁸ Parents send their teens on trips with the local church youth group in order to open their eyes to the challenges people face in other parts of the world,⁹ and we often use the spiritual highs and enlightenments we expect to experience as catalysts for our own little spiritual awakenings.

Consider these scenarios: You have been spiritually dry, lacking revelation and insight, and you know that travelling to another country and encountering the work of Christ's kingdom is just what you need to bring you to the next level in your relationship with

⁷ "Consumer Debt Statistics," Progressive Consumer Debt Relief, <http://www.progressiverelief.com/consumer-debt-statistics.html> (accessed Oct. 20, 2012).

⁸ David Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 53.

⁹ Ibid.

God. Or maybe your spiritual cup is overflowing and you know from experience that serving in Cambodia will keep it that way.

Even though these might seem like right motivations, they are not. THIS TRIP IS NOT ABOUT YOU. This trip is about God receiving glory through transformed lives in Cambodia.

Of course we want God to work in our lives, to refine us and reveal Himself to us. And more often than not, serving others in the setting of a mission trip will bring spiritual growth and refreshment and make us more aware of the needs in our world. And again, these are not bad things in themselves. But spiritual self-centeredness, as a motivating factor, can have the same distracting effect as that of seeking adventure or poverty tourism. It can pull us away from the lasting spiritual and physical impact God wants to have on the Cambodian people and the established ministry being done there. It can essentially become a "spiritual vacation" as focus becomes internal instead of external – as we become something other than the tools in the hands of God that we were meant to be.

Modern Christians are not the only ones with this "me-centered" mentality.

Read Matthew 20:20-28. The mother of disciples James and John asked if her sons could sit at the right and left hand of Christ in His kingdom. She too was concerned with what her sons could get by being part of Jesus' ministry. To this, Jesus responded, "Yet it shall be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as ransom for many."¹⁰

Here, Jesus clearly identified the mother's motive as out of line and provided an alternative that stood in blatant contrast.

Take a moment to search your heart and see if you have fallen to this "me-centered" mindset, and remember that Christ says that "whoever desires to save his life will lose it."¹¹ Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Am I willing to serve in Cambodia even if it means I will get nothing out of it – no sense of satisfaction for doing a good thing or spiritual revelation?
2. What am I truly looking forward to the most about this trip?
3. Is my heart that of a servant who desires to dutifully serve his master, or gain something for myself?

¹⁰ Matt. 20:20-28, NKJV

¹¹ Matt. 16:25, NKJV

Day 5: Right Motive – Servant's Heart

"After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. . . So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.'"¹²

Thus far, we have addressed some possible wrong motives that may have led you to want to participate in AIM's ministry in Cambodia, or in any short-term mission trip for that matter. In reflecting on these past couple days, hopefully you have already begun to discover what the right motives ought to be.

The above Scripture gives us a clear picture of the mission of Christ on this earth and to what He has called His disciples in His absence and preparation for His return. You are probably familiar with this passage; it often serves as the inspiration for modern feet-washing ceremonies done symbolically in churches today. Understanding the historical and cultural contexts of this strange event and command of Jesus can further illuminate the kind of lives we are meant to lead every day and on the mission field.

It is, first and foremost, a call to service and humility. It's safe to admit that this is a hard concept for the Western Church, where service often looks like participating in the local church's homeless ministry a couple times a year. And even these good deeds can be driven by the wrong motives that we have talked about in the past few days. But the actions Jesus models for us in washing His disciples' feet are far more radical than we might initially estimate.

Foot washing was the business of servants. It was the dirty work of the lowly as they cleaned the dusty, and no doubt gnarly, feet of others who had trekked miles in shoes that weren't quite as well-made or protective as shoes are today. Think of a fairly nasty job you would deign to do. That is essentially what Jesus was doing. But it wasn't just about foot washing, it was about humbling Himself before others, about denying Himself and disregarding the majesty and glory due to Him and putting others first. Jesus adopted a lowly posture before others to demonstrate His love for them, and to give us an example of how we are to treat other people.

It is easy to think that we can be both servants and seek out our grand adventure. Love people and get something in return. But what Jesus did in this act was to eliminate all of

those pre-conditions and posture Himself in the most lowly of ways. He indeed "came not to be served but to serve."¹³

On this trip you are called to serve:

- God: The purpose of this trip is to glorify God through your service.
- AIM staff: Your team should serve and support the work that the AIM staff is doing, not the other way around.
- Cambodian people: You are to be a reflection of Christ's love to the country of Cambodia – not merely when at a ministry site, but when you are at your hotel, restaurant or market.
- Your team members.

Challenge yourself to model your life after Christ's, to consider what He would do and how He would serve. Consider the uneasy task that was set before Him – to bear the sins of the world amassed over thousands of years – and how He faced it with love and courage and self-sacrifice, and considered everything else a loss that He might accomplish this goal. A physical cross might not be yours to bear, but the same motivations that prompted Jesus to give His life are what ought to drive you in this ministry. Whether it is to serve the Cambodians, the permanent in-country staff, or your teammates, let not your pride, your personal motivations, your weariness, or even your fear keep you from selflessly extending yourself to others.

As Paul writes in Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV): "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Consider the following questions:

- In honest self-evaluation, how much have you typically been willing to serve in the past, and how does that compare with the example of Christ?
- What are some obstacles (spiritual, emotional, physical and mental) that might keep you from denying self and giving to others?

This is just a brief look at what the model of service Jesus gives to us. Take some time to look elsewhere throughout Scripture to see how else Jesus demonstrated this. In understanding His nature and character, it becomes easier for us to understand how we are to be conformed into His image.

¹² John 13:5, 12-15, NKJV

¹³ Mark 10:4, ESV (emphasis added)

Day 6: Right Motive – Glorify God

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."¹⁴

In six days God created the entirety of the world. The birds of the sky, the depths of the ocean, the heights of the mountains, the plants and animals that sustain human life, and later humans themselves were imagined into being and created by an all-powerful God. He demonstrated His justice by sending out a flood to rid the world of unrighteousness and demonstrated His faithfulness and love in saving Noah and his family. He led millions of slaves out from under the hand of oppression in Egypt and parted the waters of the Red Sea. He established a nation, punished a nation, and rescued a nation over and over again. He showed Himself the master planner and ultimate lover in sending His son to save those whom He loves and to restore all things unto Himself. All of nature proclaims who He is and His invisible attributes are made known to all in what surrounds us. The efforts of kings and philosophers to blot out His name have not prevailed. And He has established the largest, longest-lasting kingdom the world has ever seen.

This is a God who surely deserves all the glory.

And your motivation as a short-term missionary is to, above all, give Him the praise and glory due His name. Every other right motivation finds its place under the supremacy of this concept or will come from your commitment to fulfill the same.

Jesus, who is one with God the Father, understood this well. The Gospel of John particularly emphasizes Jesus' deity and oneness with the Father, and it is this that drives His dependency on the Father in all things and serves as the motivation to do the Father's will in all circumstances. John 5:30 says, "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (emphasis added). Jesus' ministry was marked by a deep connection with the will of the Father. All of His teachings and healings on earth were derived from this dependency and desire to fulfill the heart of the Father.

If this was the driving force behind Jesus' ministry, should it not also be that which motivates you in the ministry you are about to begin in Cambodia? To bring glory to God in the work being done should be the primary focus. It isn't about you, or even about the people you serve or are working with. It is about giving the praise to the one

who enables you to do this ministry, who is the very reason for this ministry, who brings redemption and salvation and healing to the world.

Paul made this clear in his letter to the Colossians. "Whatever you do, in word or deed," he says, "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."¹⁵ This point is expanded upon later in Colossians when Paul describes what the behavior of slaves ought to be before their masters. "Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁶

This is not necessarily a support of slavery, but rather it is an exhortation to people to live lives that are glorifying to the Lord in whatever circumstance they happen to be in. As slaves, you can imagine this might be quite difficult. But Paul encourages them that their work is not done unto man, but should rather be done to the Lord, to glorify Him and point to Him in all ways. As Ephesians 6 points out, we are slaves to Christ.

"Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3:17 (ESV)

Glorifying God on the mission field need not only be demonstrated in the specific works of the ministry. It is to be done in all circumstances, whether you are providing medical care, shoveling dirt, serving a meal, or in the way you respond to being sick and having to stay back in your hotel.

Doing work first and foremost to the Lord is what keeps us on track. It prevents things like pride, self-service, and other wrong motivations from creeping in as we focus on the one who deserves and has called us to our labor in the first place. We find our purpose in the Lord, and thus it makes sense to glorify Him in everything we do. In our labors and efforts there is a certain comfort and clarity of direction too, when we find our true purpose in serving God. Pressures of man, fear, insecurity and disappointment all come under the submission of someone greater.

It is from this place of praise and worship unto the Lord that other motivations find root. Service and ministry are the ways in which we demonstrate our ultimate desire to glorify the Lord. As John 15:18 says, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and

¹⁴ Gen. 1:1-3, NKJV

¹⁵ Col. 3:17, ESV

¹⁶ Col 3: 22-24, ESV



so prove to be my disciples." Indeed, we demonstrate who we are and whom we serve by our love¹⁷ and the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control¹⁸ flow from our devotion to the Lord.

Our desire for adventure, to feel as if we are doing something good for others, and to love other people must come from our willingness and core desire to serve and glorify God, from whom all things flow and find their meaning.

Identifying if this truly is your primary motivation can be difficult. Sometimes other motivations cloud our clarity of understanding. Ask yourself the following questions to help you understand what lies within your own heart:

- How would I respond if I didn't get to do the kind of ministry I was expecting or hoping to do?
- What if no one sees the work that I will do or I myself don't see the fruit of my labor?
- Do I often find myself striving in my own efforts, or do I more often depend on the Father?



Day 7: Negative Perspective – God Complex

The Western Church is extremely fortunate in the abundant amount of opportunities it has to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ. In many cities, churches of various denominations dot every corner, multiple ministries exist on the same street, and pastoral and personal counseling are available for those who seek it. The average church member could visit their local Barnes & Noble bookstore and find more choices on study Bibles and books giving life advice than anyone could consume in years. Readily available knowledge and wisdom from ancient as well as modern thinkers has made this society a rather informed one in comparison to a global community in which "[e]ighty-five percent of churches . . . are led by men and women who have no formal training in theology or ministry."¹⁹ Combine this knowledge with the tremendous amount of wealth and resources at the West's fingertips, and it seems we have the answer to life that everyone else is obviously waiting for.

It sounds a little presumptuous, doesn't it?

Perhaps the thing that most excites you about travelling to do ministry in another country – a poor country – is your ability to help other people. You can't wait to lend your skills, your service, to share your deep store of knowledge, to bring the glorious message of Christ to a dark world. That is wonderful. But just as many of the other "good" motives that we discussed earlier have lurking evils, so does this perception of ministry. As missionaries from places or cultures like the West, it is easy to think that we have it all together. We have the knowledge, the wealth, the tools, and the ability to bring the good life to populations that just can't quite get their act together. This can be exhibited in both a material and spiritual sense.

¹⁷ John 13:35, 1 John 4:18

¹⁸ Gal. 5:22-23

¹⁹ David Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 41.

However, when we do this, we place ourselves on the throne that belongs to God; we have a god-complex. We set out on missions thinking that we are saving the world through both our knowledge and our stuff.

The Western Church especially views material things – whether wealth or superior resources – as a sign of success, and thus as the answer to most problems. However, this mindset is especially potent when working with impoverished peoples and can actually be a hindrance to the very communities you are trying to help, as well as to your own spiritual health. In fact, "[o]ne of the biggest problems in many poverty-alleviation efforts is that their design and implementation exacerbates the poverty of being of the economically rich – their god-complexes – and the poverty of being of the economically poor – their feelings of inferiority and shame. The way that we act toward the economically poor often communicates – albeit unintentionally – that we are superior and they are inferior."²⁰

The reality is, despite the abundance of resources and knowledge, wealth and counseling, the Western Church is still in need of Christ's saving power as much as churches in less-developed nations worldwide. We don't have it all figured out. In fact, our tendency is to put stock solely in ourselves and our capabilities instead of relying on the God who has provided them, and who is our creator and sustainer.²¹ No tool of ours can "fix" the world. Instead, our ministry to the global community should be an invitation to show who has, and who is continuing to fix us. Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert put it well in their book, *When Helping Hurts*:

Our relationship to the materially poor should be one in which we recognize that both of us are broken and that both of us need the blessing of reconciliation. Our perspective should be less about how we are going to fix the materially [and spiritually] poor and more about how we can walk together, asking God to fix both of us.... We must do our best to preach the gospel... but part of our striving is also to fall on our knees every day and pray.

One of the greatest tragedies of missionaries with god-complexes is that they believe they are bringing Christ to Cambodia. *Christ is already working in Cambodia*; God has long been working to establish His Church that currently exists in there. Local disciples

²⁰ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 62.

²¹ Ibid., 92.

have already been made and the work of the kingdom is underway. With that in mind, Western missionaries should be aware of the fact that although they may be equipped with valuable resources, they are not God's superior blessing to Cambodian believers. Yes, you can provide care and knowledge that might not otherwise be available, but your great privilege is that you get to partner with what Christ has already started in Cambodia.

Wealth and resources are vital to the advancement of the kingdom, but don't allow those resources to give you a god-complex. Remember that God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things to shame the mighty,²² and the poor to be rich in faith.²³ And the body of Christ is not made up of separate entities with some better than others. Rather, "[T]here is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."²⁴

In doing ministry in Cambodia, it would be helpful to be aware of a possible god-complex, and to consider and live out the words of Paul in his letter to the church in Philippi: "In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."²⁵

Here are some questions you can ask in order to prepare yourself to come alongside the ministry being done in Cambodia:

- What areas can I identify that still need refinement in my life?
- Do I view those who are economically less fortunate to be spiritually inferior?
- In what ways might I offer service to local believers and staff members in a way that is humble and helpful to existing ministry?

²² 1 Corinthians 1:27.

²³ James 2:5.

²⁴ Ephesians 4: 4-6, NKJV.

²⁵ Philippians 2:3, KJV.

Day 8: Negative Perspective – Paternalism

Babies are dependent. They rely on others for food, shelter, clothing, and protection. Without adults, babies would die. Some parents prolong the infancy phase, treating their children like babies, when they can easily begin to do things for themselves. Imagine if parents of a teenager still continued to spoon feed, clothe, and bathe their teenager when the teenager was perfectly capable. You would think they are bad parents for stunting their child's development and potential. Good parenting resists the urge to keep children dependent, and lovingly trains and instructs them on how to eat, clothe, clean, and protect themselves.

This concept of over-parenting can be seen in the mission field as well. It's called "paternalism": Doing things for people that they can do for themselves, or doing things for people without involving them in the process. With good intentions, Christian missionaries can come into a community that has challenges, and as they do their best to fix those challenges, they sometimes exacerbate the problem in the long term through paternalism. Let's explore this through a hypothetical example.

There has been a large flood in Cambodia and a rural village is in desperate need of rice. A Christian missionary team comes with a container full of rice and provides it to the village that had none. Praise God! The following year, that same team comes back and they bring an additional container of rice, even though the village is starting to produce a small amount on its own. This container of rice floods the local market with cheap rice as the villagers resell some of the excess rice they have received. Praise God? This excess rice brings the local rice price so low that the local farmer has to sell some of his land to survive and he doesn't have enough income to replant for next year's harvest. On the third year, the team comes back and brings a container of rice to the village. This time the village needs the rice because there is a shortage. The villagers come one-by-one and take the bags of rice with thankfulness, but what the team doesn't realize is that they caused this year's rice shortage through paternalism.

Missionaries will often heroically enter into struggling communities and do building projects or institute programs without the involvement of the local community. And while this might make Western believers feel like they are giving a free gift and doing something good, they might actually unknowingly participate in a negative cycle.

There are several different types of paternalism that we will explore in the days to come: resource, managerial and spiritual. In all of these is the story of one group of people coming to do something good for another group of people. Despite admirable intentions, however, the efforts may only temporally help the latter and could potentially leave them in a state worse than they started. Paternalism does not help a

local population learn for themselves and build their own community. It says that others will be there to do it instead. It creates dependency.

Let's journey back to this hypothetical situation in Cambodia and see how this missionary team might have done something different.

Year one: The mission team brings a container of rice to help with the famine and they look to see if there is a local pastor with whom they can build a relationship. They find a pastor and distribute rice together. Praise God! Year two: They go back to the village to support that local pastor they met on their first trip. While working, the pastor informs the team that there are two families in the community who are in need of rice. The team decides to buy rice from the local farmer. They have the local pastor give the rice to the families in need and the families come to church because of their thankfulness to the pastor. Year three: Six months before the trip, the missionary team contacts the pastor and asks what training he would like to see for more effective ministry. The team formulates the trip around equipping and supporting the local pastor.

In this second scenario all the same needs have been met without the negative ramifications of paternalism. The reason is because this team didn't do things for others that they could have done for themselves; they did things with local resources and with the intention of empowering those local resources. These trips have employed the expertise and experience of local people to best institute spiritual and material development.

Reconciliation is not accomplished by doing things for people. Rather, its purpose is to help them be all that they were meant to be; to restore them to the right living and right relationship with God that was broken with the fall of Adam and Eve. That is what Christ came to do through His death and resurrection, and that is the mission and message that ought to be proclaimed throughout the world by those who call themselves His followers. We are to humbly come alongside others in material or spiritual poverty and involve them in the process of restoration, recognizing our own brokenness and need for continuous refinement.

Jesus Christ could have been paternalistic with His ministry, choosing to do all the work Himself, because He was the only one truly equipped for ministry. Instead, Jesus spent His time training others and slowly passing on the responsibility of His ministry to the disciples.

Take a moment and consider whether your ministry plans in Cambodia could be paternalistic in nature. How might they be modified to support the community in a way that promotes reconciliation, edification and long-lasting change?

Day 9: Negative Perspective – Resource Paternalism

When you arrive at church there is a cardboard box at the entrance. Church members are coming together to donate some new and gently used clothing which will soon be packed and taken by the church mission team on their trip to Cambodia to be given to those that are less fortunate in Cambodia. Great idea, right?

Little does the church team know, Agape International Missions (AIM), the host organization in Cambodia, has been doing job training for the last two years with a former victim of sex trafficking to help her open her own garment and tailoring shop. She has just opened her shop and all the clothes your church has collected will be distributed in the community she's working in. These clothes may be a blessing to some, but they will be a curse to her and her dream of opening up a tailoring shop.

It would have been far better if the church's mission team had considered these questions before moving forward with their clothing drive: Did the host organization in Cambodia ask for these materials? Could these clothes be bought or made in Cambodia?

Yesterday we discussed the broad topic of paternalism: doing things for people that they can do for themselves, or doing things for people without involving them in the process. Today we want to talk about resource paternalism: bringing in resources that are already available in the host country, or bringing in resources that haven't been asked for.

Western missionaries often bring in a lot of resources that are readily available in host countries that were never asked for. For example, they bring in large supplies of rice, medicine, and clothing without thinking twice about what it might do to the local farmer, pharmacy, or tailor. In an attempt to be compassionate and generous with our resources, we can inadvertently undercut legitimate business in the community we are trying to bless.

What is important to understand is that AIM works in communities where it is imperative to build up legitimate business if there is to be long-term sustainable change in these communities ravaged by sex trafficking. Many of the communities that AIM works in are economically driven by sex trafficking; the main industries are brothels, drugs, gambling,

and alcohol sales. For God to restore these communities, these businesses must be shut down and replaced with legitimate profitable businesses. Knowing this, you can begin to realize how devastating it is when a mission team, which has come to stop sex trafficking, undercuts the legitimate businesses through resource paternalism in the community they came to serve.

The best way to avoid this is to buy and use resources that are available in the host country you are going to visit.

Here is a real case scenario of what another mission team has done to avoid resource paternalism and to transform the community they were working in:

A medical team from the US planned a trip to offer medical and dental services in Svay Pak, Cambodia. Instead of bringing their own medicine from the States, they bought their medicine at a local pharmacy in Cambodia. Instead of bringing Power Bars and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, they bought noodles from the local restaurant for lunch in Svay Pak. Instead of bringing their own scrubs for the medical mission trip, they planned ahead and asked a former trafficking victim, who was a new owner of a tailoring shop, to make the scrubs for the team. This small decision provided three months of salary for that young woman. This team used the local resources available to them and, in doing so, blessed the Cambodian business owners who have rejected being part of the sex trade and extravagantly blessed an amazing survivor as she started her own business. If this team would have brought their own resources, they would have hurt the local pharmacist's business, and passed up an opportunity to support a local restaurant and the young tailor.

As you are preparing for your trip, begin to think strategically about the resources you will use while on the trip and ask the following questions:

- What are ways your team can avoid resource paternalism and utilize more resources in Cambodia?
- What are ways that the Cambodians you will be serving can participate in the miracle, not just see it?
- What are some of the underlying biases and assumptions we have that lead to resource paternalism? What is the truth that overcomes those biases and how does this change how you view the community you will be working with in Cambodia?



Day 10: Negative Perspective – Managerial Paternalism

If you know anything about rust, you know how destructive it can be. In an industrial world that relies heavily upon materials that are subject to the permeability of rust, great measures must be taken to maintain pipes, cars and building structures. Rust can transform something that is extremely functional and useful into a destructive problem, or something beautiful into a wreck. Rust cannot just be painted over and ignored. And in fact, it can be a hidden menace, lurking unknown beneath the surface of a structure until the damage has already been done.

Paternalism operates in much the same way. It is a fairly simple concept really, but one that can be applied in so many different ways and circumstances so that, like rust, it pervades a culture and a community in a degenerative way. We have already discussed resource paternalism and we will later discover how spiritual ministry can also be affected by paternalism, but today, we will take a look at the effect of managerial paternalism and how that might best be avoided.

Managerial and resource paternalism overlap in many regards. They both involve community and poverty alleviation projects. But managerial paternalism does as much to hinder the psyche of the community as resource materialism does in terms of the economy. When it comes to short-term mission trips in which time is of the essence, to come into a community and crank your projects out as fast as you can and leave with a sense of satisfaction and completion seems like the best route to take. With valuable skills and a heart to serve, Western missionaries might think they will do the most good by taking control of a project.

In reality, while managerial paternalism might produce a good immediate result, it does not contribute to the overall health of the community and can actually produce a society that is less sustainable when the missionaries are gone. Taking control and sole responsibility for projects, albeit often done with good hearts, negatively accomplishes a few notable things:

- 1) Locals develop an inferiority complex that submits to the authority of wealthy foreigners and prohibits them from being productive when missionaries are gone.
- 2) The community becomes dependent on outside leadership and resources, and is unable or unwilling to initiate change on their own for future endeavors.

- 3) Missionaries undertake projects that locals actually understand to not be the most effective or beneficial to their society.²⁶

No one would realistically want this to be a result of something they are intending to flourish and produce community vitality, but it can be hard for missionaries to let go of their managerial styles and "get it done" attitude. But "process" must be put ahead of "production"²⁷ in order to sow good seed and establish firm roots in a community.

Consider Matthew 7 and the parable of the builders and foundations Jesus gives. However heartfelt and genuine it may be, to engage in managerial paternalism would be like building a house, or a community rather, on sand. When the winds and the rain come, that community will not have a solid foundation to stand upon. The initial life-giving projects will last for a time, but will be devastated because of the community's inability to maintain and replicate them independently.

Instead, missionaries ought to use their skills and abilities to help enable locals engage in and complete projects themselves. Take, for example, a construction project. Hiring local construction experts and laborers to work alongside willing mission workers would give the community a sense of ownership that would have a more positive and far-reaching effect than just raising a building. Dependency would be replaced with confidence, independence, and a tangible example of what the community can do for itself.

Missionaries must also be aware that participating in this sort of community engagement may mean that the project is not accomplished in the time frame or manner in which they would like. Adhering to a culture's collectivistic tendencies, perceptions of time, and public customs, might be difficult when it comes to finishing a project as planned, but doing so will have a long lasting impact that outweighs potential concerns.²⁸ Even where a project is not completed during a mission team's visit, permanent local staff might be able to continue the work and finish the project on their own.

Unlike the shaky and false foundation built on sand, a firm and lasting foundation is laid when the community is involved in its own development and restoration – one that will not be so easily corrupted by rust and decay.

Missionaries ought to use their skills and abilities to help locals engage in and complete projects themselves.

²⁶ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 113.
²⁷ Ibid.
²⁸ Ibid.

Day 11: Negative Perspective – Spiritual Paternalism

Probably one of the first things a child must learn when they leave the "me-centered" environment of home and start functioning outside of it is how to listen. School teachers, other children, Sunday-school teachers and friends' parents all vie for their attention and the children who are most praised are those who figure out how to close their mouths and listen to someone else for a change. But at some point in the transition to adulthood, this lesson is often forgotten.

The Western world is one in which everyone fights for a voice. Whether this voice is found in a blog, the success of a business or as a professional speaker, in a large society that values individualism and recognition, listening can fall to the wayside. While owning special knowledge and controlling the ability to share it with others is valued in Western cultures, this is not the best way to bring about spiritual growth and independence when doing missions.

What many might call "sharing knowledge" or "enlightening the ignorant," should actually be labeled *spiritual paternalism*. Like resource and managerial paternalism, spiritual paternalism can have honest and good intentions, but may stem from an underlying attitude of superiority and have a negative long-term impact on recipient cultures.

At the root of spiritual paternalism is a sense of superiority. One group or person feels they have knowledge to share that another group lacks and believes they are the best ones to carry the message. Of course this isn't entirely untrue; different people have unique insights or greater access to certain areas of knowledge that might be quite useful to others. Many forget that it is a two-way street, however, as well as that knowledge may be of use in one context but not in another.

When travelling to a developing country like Cambodia where poverty is pervasive, it is tempting to think that missionaries have the key to spiritual prosperity. They may indeed have insights or spiritual resources that will prove valuable to Cambodians, but missionaries must also learn to employ their sense of hearing and listen to what Cambodians can teach them as well as what new spiritual knowledge would be most effective in doing ministry in Cambodia.

Evangelical tactics used by Paul to the highly philosophical Greeks and Romans might not have produced the same results had they been utilized in Jerusalem. Similarly, marching in with a system and structure that has proved to be tried and true in the Western world may fall on deaf ears in a culture that values different things or views concepts with different imagery than those of the West.

And while mass evangelists have certainly reaped a great harvest and thus become valued in places like the United States, ministry in Cambodia must be developed primarily on a local level in order to produce a healthy and thriving body of believers. Thus, it is important that missionaries not take ministry solely upon themselves. They ought to work alongside, and be purposeful to include, local pastors and believers. Teaching and preaching on a two-week trip sounds great, until you are gone and the community is left without the hype and "great knowledge" of the Westerners. Instead, it would be better to listen and work within a cultural framework and incorporate local believers into the ministry.

This is not to say that foreigners don't have something new and valuable to contribute. Of course they do! But the ability to communicate it in an effective and enduring way that strengthens the community will make all the difference between seed planted in good soil and seed planted in stony places, where the hearer of the word receives it gladly but establishes no root and soon falls away.²⁹

Is the ministry you are doing enabling and preparing the local church body for future success when you are gone?

Take, for example, doing house-to-house evangelistic outreach. You might bring along a Cambodian believer to translate for you as you speak to and pray for the locals in their homes. This might seem like it is avoiding paternalism because you are working with another Cambodian. But instead of using this person merely as a translator, you ought also to have him pray for the family himself, from Cambodian to Cambodian – not from foreign missionary through Cambodian. A long-lasting relationship might be built between the Cambodian believer and the family as he receives honor and respect in their eyes for being asked to pray. By doing this, you are serving and ministering as well as helping to enable a network and community of local Christians.

Spiritual paternalism might be harder to recognize and thus more difficult to address because you are not dealing with projects and tangibles as you would with resource and managerial paternalism. And it is possible to begin classifying many types of ministry that are actually healthy as paternalistic. The important question is this: *Is the ministry you are doing enabling and preparing the local church body for future success when you are gone?*

Before you leave, consider habits of ministry you may have that might not work effectively in Cambodia. Pray for a heart that is receptive, for ears that hear, and hands that humbly help build a strong and durable spiritual community.

²⁹ Matt. 13



Day 12: Positive Perspective – Humility

"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained," writes the psalmist, David, "What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor."³⁰

If there is any doubt as to the inferiority of man in comparison to God, this passage of scripture clears it up well. We serve a great and powerful God who alone can grant honor and glory to men. But unlike the world of men in which inferiority breeds hurt and pain and jealousy, an acceptance of humility before a deserving God fulfills the best in us personally and enables the best kind of ministry in a way that our own arrogance and pride cannot.

Perhaps in the studies on paternalism the last few days you have begun to form in your heart and mind a positive replacement for notions of paternalism that too often accompany foreign missionary service. But to make sure there are no weak points in your foundation, know that the hole that the absence of paternalism leaves must be filled with something.

And that something is *humility*.

This is at the core of doing effective ministry – both spiritually and materially – in Cambodia, and thus the reason humility is addressed more than once in this guide. Dealing with different economic markets, worldviews, leadership styles and cultural expressions of time and commitment can be frustrating to a foreigner. To successfully navigate cultural barriers and demonstrate the best love you can to the people of Cambodia, you must embrace an attitude and heart of humility.

In her book, *Brokenness: The Heart that God Revives*, Nancy Leigh DeMoss outlines characteristics of prideful people compared to those who walk in humility. Since pride is at the root of many manifestations of hurtful ministry, it is imperative that prideful attitudes be uncovered and substituted with humble ones. Below are a few points she makes that are poignant in their application to your ministry in Cambodia.

*"Proud people feel confident in how much they know. Broken people are humbled by how very much they have to learn."*³¹

Whether it is your knowledge of economics, construction, or theology, you will probably want to share. And to desire to do so could be of great use in certain ministry settings.

³⁰ Psalm 8:3-5, NKJV.

³¹ Nancy Leigh DeMoss, *Brokenness: The Heart that God Revives* (Demoss, 2005), 66.

But a failure to listen to locals and understand cultural context could render your advice unheeded or disallow a community from building for themselves. Being willing to listen and learn could enhance your knowledge and help a community, both economically and spiritually, even more.

*"Proud people are self-protective in their time, their rights, and their reputation. Broken people are self-denying."*³²

Short-term missions make it so that time is of the essence to prideful missionaries who want things done a certain way. Humble missionaries will lay down their plans and way of doing things for the sake of being true servants of God and His people. They are willing to include locals, listen to permanent staff members, and use wisdom that might previously have been unknown to them.

*"Proud people desire to be known as a success. Broken people are motivated to be faithful and to make others a success."*³³

Home churches might want pictures and statistics to justify their financial investments in their mission teams, and team leaders crave positive testimonies to report every day and confirm progress, but this is not to be the heart and core of ministry. Humble missionaries will put the needs of the people and guidance of the Holy Spirit first, recognizing that fruit may not become evident until they have returned to their own homes. This is not to say that ministry tactics shouldn't be evaluated and adjusted, but they should not be judged purely on a Western definition of success. Instead, missionaries should mark success by how much the ministry enables the community for future progress.

*"Proud people have a feeling – conscious or subconscious – that 'this ministry is privileged to have me and my gifts.' They focus on what they can do for God. Broken people have a heart attitude that says, 'I don't deserve to have any part in this ministry'; they know that they have nothing to offer God except the life of Jesus flowing through their broken lives."*³⁴

This is perhaps what points most directly at the heart of what often defines foreign ministry work and what ought to define it. Remember who did the real work of salvation: Jesus. It is Christ who prepared good works in advance for us to do.³⁵ who

"Broken people... know that they have nothing to offer God except the life of Jesus flowing through their broken lives."

³² Ibid., 65.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ DeMoss, 65-66.

³⁵ Ephesians 2:10

strengthens our hands and minds and puts breath in our lungs in order to be able to give and serve. These are gifts given to be freely poured out in recognition of the power, love and grace of the gift giver.

Your skills and knowledge may find a place of use in Cambodia. Or they may not. Are you prepared to just do the dirty work? Are you prepared to learn and adapt and admit ignorance? Are you going into ministry with a genuine heart and plan to serve the Cambodians according to their needs, or according to what you desire? Do you think you can do it on your own?

If it is God who will enable you to effectively minister to His broken people in Cambodia, so long as you are a humble and willing vessel. You were and are in as much need of restoration and redemption as those who you will minister to. You are a tool in the hands of God who does the real work of bringing the dead to life and restoring individuals, communities and humanity unto Himself.

Day 13: Positive Perspective – Teachable

Jim and Elisabeth Elliott were a young couple who did ministry among the indigenous people of Ecuador. They, and several other couples, were instrumental in bringing the gospel to some of the most remote tribes in that part of the world. And while Jim's ministry was powerful yet short due to his martyrdom at the hands of a tribe that would later become believers, Elisabeth has remained on this earth to tell their story and write numerous books offering spiritual lessons from a woman who knows much about the trials of life.

In her book, *Be Still My Soul*, Elisabeth gives a brief account of her time spent among the Auca Indians:

When I lived with the Auca Indians for two years, I learned more about servanthood than I had known from my Christian upbringing. . . . The women would go out into the fields as soon as they had taken care of the babies and fed the small children and had eaten whatever might be left over for them. At the end of the day, an Auca woman would come home carrying her fifty- or sixty-pound basket of manioc and plantains . . . She would walk into her house, stoop down to drop the basket behind her, and set to work stirring up the fire, cooking the food, very calmly and quietly doing the things that needed to be done before the family went to bed. Sometimes far-away Westerners, who had little idea of the actual situation, commended me . . . There were others . . . who condemned me . . . [But] I became reconciled to my situation by watching the Indians, serving each other and me untroubled by the relative value of their work, free of the pressures of competition and comparison.³⁶

We find in this account a willingness to learn, to adjust and conform to the Auca's daily life – to be teachable. She found in the Auca way of life something valuable and refreshing in comparison to the cultural practices from home. No doubt Elisabeth had much to adapt to and overcome as she transitioned from a Western lifestyle to the seemingly simplistic, but perhaps more laborious one of the Auca Indians. Despite the criticism she received for bringing her children into such an environment, she was nevertheless willing to abandon her customary way of life and trade it in for another for the sake of the gospel. She did not enter the Auca community expecting to transform every aspect society. She may have had much to teach them spiritually, but that would come in time. And there were some things that did not need to change. Superior technological knowledge and ideas about efficiency may very well have been on her side, but whereas other missionaries often come in with blueprints and plans characteristic of their cultures and ways of life, Elisabeth recognized the value of setting all that aside for the sake of meeting people where they are.

³⁶ Elliot, Elisabeth. *Be Still My Soul* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2006), 100-101.



Day 14: Positive Perspective – Flexibility

Staying and working in Cambodia will be not be as dramatic an experience culturally as Elisabeth encountered in Ecuador. But just as Elisabeth was a student of the Aucas, so too must you become a student of the Cambodians as well as the local staff. She held the keys to the kingdom of God in her hand, but the way to teach those people was not like that of an army storming a city and claiming it *de facto* and with mere banners.

You have much to say. There is a passion and a desire in your heart to bring heaven to earth, to show the world who God is and what He has done. There is a time and a place for that to happen in Cambodia. But it must also be important to you to learn what you can from the Cambodians, to go before them in humility and listen with open ears and open hearts. This is not just a formality, a way of being culturally sensitive. Rather, it is an avenue for you to better serve those whom you have come to minister to as you learn to operate within their culture and be salt and light to them in a way that they will best understand.

Cambodia comes with its own dirt, decay and underlying community issues that differ from those that you might find in your own area. Customs are different and ways of communicating might be strange. The ebb of history has formed and shaped this country and its people uniquely.

Do not let pride convince you that you are infinite in your knowledge and all powerful in your ability to teach. Omnipotence and omniscience belong to God alone. The rest of us always have much to learn, forever students of the kingdom of God and of one another.

"He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit."³⁷

Omniscience and omnipotence belong to God alone. The rest of us always have much to learn, forever students of the kingdom of God and of one another.

Maybe you have a co-worker, a friend or a family member who, well, likes things to be a certain way. Organized to a fault, they approach the day with daily planner in hand, dutifully checking things off their list. The plan must be adhered to, time is of the essence, and putting it all aside for a spontaneous movie and popcorn is audacious. We all know someone like this, or we will at some point. They are the "choleric" personality, the type-A, if you will. They have much to offer, but their way of doing things isn't always conducive to the circumstance or group they are operating in.

Imagine if your entire missionary team was like this. Actually, this rigid sense of mission and time is all too common among Western missionaries. It's quite characteristic of the Western culture, really; they like to get things done quickly, make the money and do it the easiest way. There is some value to this, of course. Much prosperity has indeed come, at least in part, from assertive and focused people who blaze ahead. *But the mission field is not actually a project to be completed.* You may make deadlines, but there is no real deadline other than the one God has set for the last days, and not even the Son knows when that is.³⁸

To approach the mission field like a raging type-A personality is unrealistic and perhaps destructive. This is not to say that plans and organization are superfluous and unnecessary. The contrary is quite true. Managing and leading a group of people in a foreign country over a short period of time absolutely requires a great deal of planning. To leave everything to whims and spontaneity could indeed be a costly and ineffective experience. But like most things in life, we must be careful not to hold onto these schedules and expectations with a closed fist.

Flexibility is the name of the game here. To adhere to a rigid, unchanging, and often break-neck schedule might leave you and your team members in a frenzy for a couple of reasons.

- 1. The Cambodian culture varies from the Western lifestyle.** We will delve into cultural differences in the days to come, but understand that Cambodians operate differently than Westerners. Many other cultures are slower-paced, less inclined to Western ideas of timeliness, and what they say might mean something other than what you think. If you arrange and plan according to your ideas about time and efficiency, you might be sorely disappointed or frustrated.
- 2. The work of the Holy Spirit is not confined by human time-tables.** Think about Paul. He was doing his own thing – a very different thing than God wanted – in his own time. These plans were fortunately severely disrupted. For most of us, a

³⁷ Proverbs 17:27, NKJV

³⁸ Mark 13:32

blinding light will not suddenly halt our vans and change our plans. But you must have a mind and heart open to change what the agenda is and meet a different need than was originally intended for the day.

Being flexible is a balancing act of sorts. You must learn as you go. Make a plan, approach it with an outstretched hand, all the while being willing to adapt and change, and then reflect to make future adjustments, knowing full well that strategies and time might change again. You must be neither too urgent nor spend too much time getting everything together to be just right. Rather, "having the attitude of a humble learner throughout the process is far more important than having comprehensive knowledge at the start of it."³⁹

It is important to remember that a local staff already works in Cambodia every day. They understand how things work, but even they must work with different circumstances as they are handed to them.

We can see flexibility even in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Let's visit Mark 6, when Jesus and His disciples fed the five thousand. This wasn't really in the plans. Jesus had intended for them to withdraw to a "deserted place" after some intense ministry. But the crowds couldn't give them a break and Jesus was "moved with compassion." So the plans changed, and a miracle happened.

This is not to say that being purposeful and intentional is wrong. But your ultimate purpose must be to advance the kingdom of God and serve Christ and His people. Sometimes, that might look a bit different than what you were expecting.

Venturing into the unknown and having your day or your next hour look like uncharted waters can warrant feelings of fear. Control no longer feels like it rests in your hands as you struggle to re-orient yourself around a new circumstance.

Look at what Jesus said in Mark 8 to His disciples after the five thousand were fed. He told them to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." They thought He said these things because they had forgotten to take bread with them on their journey. He asked, "When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" "Twelve," they responded. "Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" It was seven baskets that they collected.

... "having the attitude of a humble learner throughout the process is far more important than having comprehensive knowledge at the start of it."

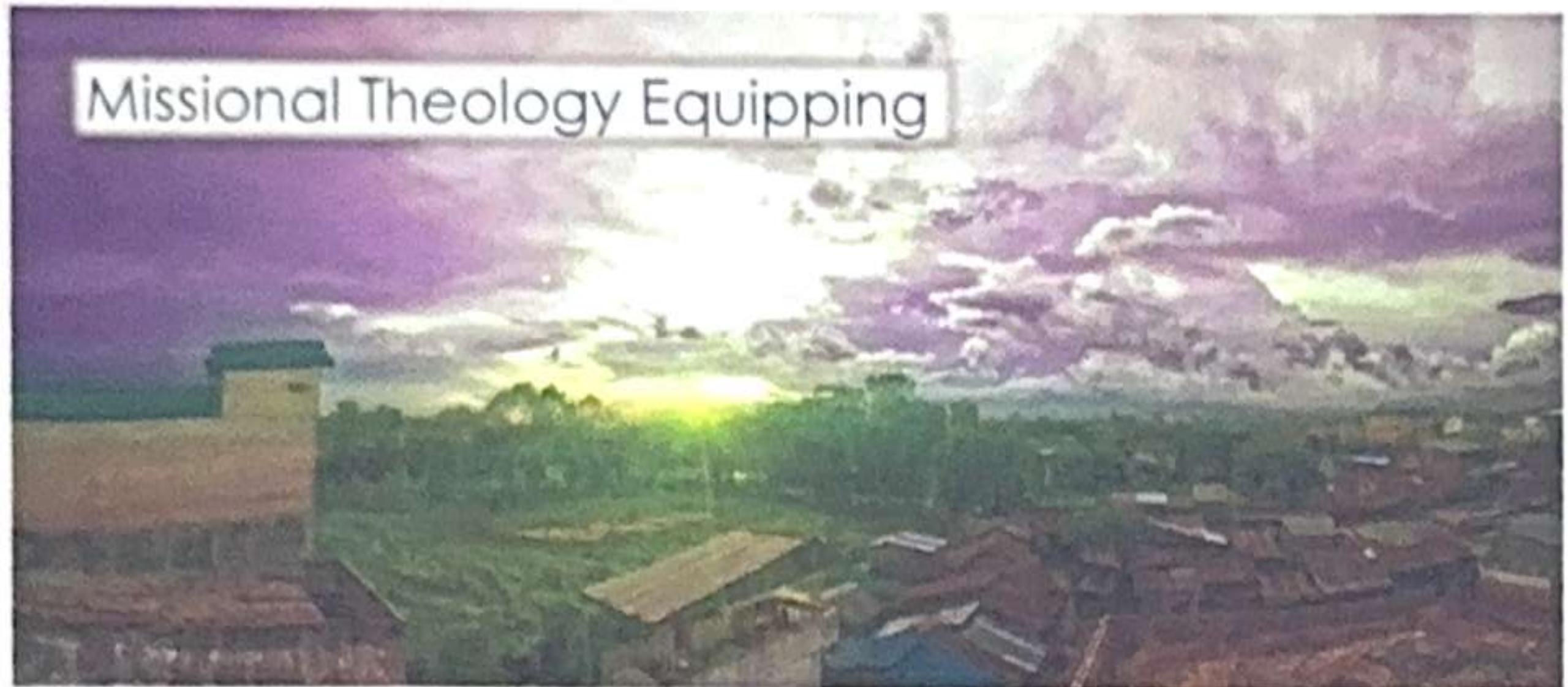
Here we see that Jesus operates outside of our finite and earthly way of thinking. We are quite concerned with the way things ought to be, with what we think of as reality. But Jesus understands circumstances differently. He sees matters in an eternal light and limitations as somewhat relative. *Changes in plans do not prevent Him from working.* Sometimes they are the very evidence that He is in fact doing something marvelous in the lives of people. Jesus is our powerful and able God who takes that which does not make sense to us, that confuses and frustrates us, and he turns it into something that demonstrates His love and glory and brings about His kingdom.

Take some time to think about how attached you are to Western ideas about action and ministry. Honestly, how tightly do you hold to your perceptions of time or how ministry ought to be conducted? Do you have a sense of fear at the prospect of really not knowing what your day is going to look like? Begin to truly understand your own level of flexibility, how that might need to be adapted for the Cambodian mission field, and how you can confidently surrender your fears into the capable hands of the Lord.

"We must not live as if God's mission is somehow contingent upon our plans and strategies. God remains on the throne and continues His redemptive work with or without our frantic sense of urgency."⁴⁰

³⁹ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 216.

⁴⁰ David Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 66.



Day 15: What is the Problem?

You have a friend who has been sick for many years. He's a quadriplegic, so he can't move around on his own, and he has to rely on his friends and family to care for him. You and the rest of his friends care deeply for him and have long been hoping that a cure or treatment would be found to help him, but his health has been fast deteriorating and it doesn't seem like there are many chances left for him.

Now, in assessing your friend's situation, what would you say is his greatest need? A cure? A new medication or other form of treatment?

Presumably, the friends of the paralytic man in the Bible would have said the same. Read Mark 2:1-5. There are so many people gathered together to listen to Jesus preach that the friends had to literally remove the roof from the building to lower their friend down into the center of the room. They probably expected Jesus to heal their friend from his illness; how strange it must have been to hear Jesus' first words to their friend: "My son, your sins are forgiven!"

Jesus knew the man's greatest need, and it was much deeper than physical healing, though He dealt with the man's physical needs later. How often do we step back and ask ourselves, *what is the problem in this situation? What is the greatest need?*

We have a tendency to view problems through a lens of financial and material dilemmas, believing that if we just give enough money, buildings or other resources, then we have helped the poor. Not everything is as it appears at face value, however, as poverty is not solely about lacking financial or material resources.

There are different types of poverty, which are certainly not mutually exclusive and more often operate in tandem one with another.

- **Spiritual poverty** refers to the absence or lack of knowing Jesus, lacking a personal relationship with God, or worshiping a false god such as money, power, prestige or other material things. Each of us experience spiritual poverty in different seasons of our lives when we lose sight of Jesus and allow the temptations and the worries of the world to creep in. What are ways that you experience spiritual poverty in your own life and where do you need to return to Jesus for His guidance and provision?
- **Internal poverty** has to do with individuals' views of themselves – whether they have low self-esteem, self-hatred, shame, pride and/or a god-complex. This type of poverty is influenced by people's relationships to themselves; do they think too highly or not highly enough of themselves? How can you and your team come alongside others to help them have right views of themselves?
- **Community poverty** refers to illness within a community that allows depravity to persist. Community poverty may take the form of the persistence of exploitation and abuse, whereby community members, even "good ones", stand by as women and children are bought and sold for sex. In Svay Pak, Cambodia, for example, there were many "good" people who were not buying or selling children and who were not participating directly in the abuse. However, they knew exactly what was happening in their neighborhoods and behind closed doors; yet they did nothing to make the problem stop. This is a problem of self-centeredness, whereby community members are not willing to put their own necks on the line to address wickedness within their community.
- **Material poverty** is probably what is most commonly referred to as "poverty" – the lack of finances, resources or other material things. There are times when what a person needs is food to feed her family, some start-up capital to launch a business, or money to pay for schooling or medical care or other needs.⁴¹

Just as the paralytic's need for physical healing was real, so too are people's material needs. When you go to Cambodia, you will see dire material poverty: people who are physically hungry, need medical care, and who are struggling to get by making \$15 a month working at a brick factory. It will be easy to focus on their material poverty as the problem at hand, but it is important to ask first: what are the other underlying forms of poverty and, more specifically, what are the problems God has you there to address?

People working in the brick factories in Svay Pak are confronted with a combination of material poverty, spiritual poverty, and community poverty in their lack of education and opportunities to work in better conditions. While it may be tempting to "rescue"

⁴¹ Definitions of four types of poverty loosely adapted from Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), chapter 2.

children by buying them out of the brick factory, if these children aren't simultaneously receiving education and opportunities for other work, they will end up back working in the factories. AIM conducts outreach to the brick factory workers every weekday, providing showers, naps, clean clothes, food and educational programs to their children and medical care and discipleship for their parents (see page 29 of the Appendix for more information about the Brick Factory Outreach). In approaching their poverty from a holistic level, AIM has been better able to serve them and address their problems.

It may be that you are there to help build a new housing facility for the girls being rescued from trafficking, but it may also be that you are there to give words of encouragement to the AIM staff, to build them up so that as they continue the work going forward, they are reenergized to keep fighting for exploited children day in and day out.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What are my preconceived notions about what "the problem" is in Cambodia?
- How would I feel if the problem God is calling me to address during my time in Cambodia is that one of the AIM staff is feeling discouraged about the work and needs to hear words of truth and encouragement?

Spend some time in prayer to ask that God would open your eyes to the problems and the types of poverty that He would have you work on, both within your own life and during your time in Cambodia. Ask that you would be ready and willing to do the work He calls you to do, even if it is not how you initially imagined it might be.

Day 16: Understanding the Difference Between Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, hundreds of people were without power, without shelter and without food. Countless volunteers and aid workers swooped into the area to provide them with food, places to stay and blankets to keep warm.

On Tuesday evening, a young mother and her child come to your church. She has just lost her apartment because she couldn't pay the rent, and she needs a place to stay and food for her child. Your church has some money set aside to care for people in her situation, so they give her a bag of groceries and take her to a nearby shelter for the evening.

In both scenarios, the needs seem to be the same, and yet the response should be different. There are three primary types of providing aid and assistance. Read the following and consider how these types of interventions might apply to the scenarios.

- **Relief** is the "urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a natural or man-made crisis."⁴² Economic conditions plummet, and help is needed to "halt the free fall."⁴³ Relief may also be applied on an individual level: On the first night when a child is rescued out of being exploited by traffickers and pedophiles, her immediate needs may be a safe place to stay, medical care, and food. Counseling, therapy, schooling, etc. come later.
- **Rehabilitation** begins as soon as the immediate needs are met, and "it seeks to restore people and their communities to the positive elements of their pre-crisis conditions."⁴⁴ Importantly, while relief was largely assistance provided to helpless people, rehabilitation works with victims of disaster to empower them in participating in their own recovery.⁴⁵ For the children being rescued out of trafficking, this step may be the process of counseling and therapy whereby they begin to understand their trauma and, more importantly, understand who they are in Christ Jesus. This is the bridge between relief and development.
- **Development** is the "process of ongoing change that moves all the people involved—both the 'helpers' and the 'helped'—closer to being in right

⁴² Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), chapter 4.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

relationship with God⁴⁶ and dealing with all of the forms of poverty we discussed yesterday (spiritual, internal, community, and material). It is a process that people do with each other, not simply for each other.⁴⁷ This is the process not simply of rebuilding, but of helping impoverished people become productive such that they can care for their own needs and the needs of others. It is the process of discipleship that makes a new believer able to lead and disciple others to know Jesus; and it is the process of working with a child sex trafficking victim to be an empowered individual, whose identity is in Christ and who is able to contribute and give back to her community as God planned for her.

In the Hurricane Katrina scenario above, the aid workers were providing relief. In the weeks and months that followed, they continued to show up, but this time to help with rehabilitation. In some cases, the people in New Orleans and surrounding areas participated in the rebuilding. At other times, they let the aid workers do the work. With the young woman and her child, the church provided relief, but they also had the opportunity to intervene to help her avoid this situation in the future. This would have required getting involved in her life in a more substantial way, which takes more time, more energy, and can sometimes get messy. Maybe she needed job skills training, or education to finish her high school degree. Maybe she needed childcare to have time to go to work. Perhaps she needed a mentor to help her understand budgeting, or maybe she needed somebody willing to open their home to her as a family.

One of the greatest challenges in the Church today is that it too often applies relief when rehabilitation or development are the more appropriate actions. Why do you think this is? What is more gratifying – coming home from a mission trip and telling your church that in the two weeks you were in Cambodia you helped provide food for more than 2,500 people with the money and provisions they sent over, and that you built a brand new house for a family, or that you spent two weeks training an AIM staff person on how to input numbers into an Excel spreadsheet. One certainly makes for better pictures and stories, doesn't it? One also requires a different type of emotional energy and a different kind of time.

Read Luke 5:3-11. Peter was the disciple upon whom Christ chose to build his church. Yet in his first interaction with Jesus, he told Him, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). Peter knew that he was not worthy of being in the presence of God, and yet, Jesus said to him, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men" (Luke 5:10). Peter didn't hesitate; he dropped everything and followed Jesus.

But Peter's exploits certainly didn't stop there, and his was a process of training and discipleship that prepared him for the ministry ahead. Read Matthew 14:22-31, 16:21-23.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

John 18:1-11, and Luke 22:54-62. It was Peter who began to walk on water to meet Jesus but faltered when he lost sight of the Lord. It was Peter who tried to stop Jesus when He foretold His death and had to be rebuked. It was Peter who rushed forward to strike the right ear from the high priest's servant in the Garden of Gethsemane, and it was Peter who denied Jesus three times after He had been betrayed and arrested.

Peter was a man of zeal who was constantly screwing up, and yet, Jesus chose him as a disciple and constantly poured into him to prepare him to be the rock on which the church would be built. We see his discipleship in bringing Peter to witness the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-13), and most tenderly when Jesus forgave and commissioned Peter after the resurrection (John 21:15-19). It would have been so much easier for Jesus to have done things Himself, just as it would be so much simpler for God to not involve us in His plans.

AIM's work reflects each of these types of interventions. They work with police in Cambodia to provide relief and rehabilitation to children brought out of brothels immediately after their rescue through the Agape Restoration Center (ARC, see page 20 of the Appendix for more information), and they participate in the development of both the community and the lives of individual young women through the Agape Training Center (ATC). ATC demonstrates the empowerment, growth and discipleship of young women in communities plagued by sexual exploitation and abuse. At ATC, these young women are trained and employed at a higher wage than what they would be making in karaoke bars (see Day 24 for more information about karaoke bars), they receive mandatory education each day, and there are childcare and counseling staff on the premises (see page 22 of the Appendix for more information).

While it would be easier and more lucrative for ATC not to provide these additional services, they are vital to the development of these women in that they are not only making a living, but they are also being given the tools to rise above their situations. Similarly, it may be far simpler for you, when you go to Cambodia, to see a project or a need and to simply fill it – but it may be that it would be far more beneficial to the people to help train them, support them in their work, and to patiently walk alongside them so they are empowered and equipped with new skills and new confidence.

Spend some time thinking through the following questions:

- Why is it more difficult to provide development rather than relief?
- What kind of sacrifice does "development" require of me and what would it look like to participate in the development of people in Cambodia for the long-term, even if I am not present in the country?
- Am I willing to give the time, energy and resources to be part of long-term development work, both in the lives of people in my own community as well as in Cambodia? What holds me back?

Day 17: Money—How We Can Do Great Good or Harm

Read Mark 10:17-31. What must the rich young ruler do in order inherit eternal life? Jesus cuts to the chase: sell everything, give it all to the poor, follow Me.

The message here isn't necessarily that every one of us is supposed to sell all that we have and live as ascetics following Jesus. No, the message is that we are to love Jesus more than our money and, if we are called to do so, that we would be not only willing but joyous to sell all that we have to follow Him. We should not view our money and resources as our own at all, but as God's, and we should steward His resources accordingly.

The following subsections discuss two key aspects of stewardship as they relate to your partnership with AIM and your work in Cambodia.

Stewardship Part I

In Cambodia, how you steward your money can lead either to great harm or great good. After the Killing Fields (see Day 22 for more information on the Killing Fields), an organization with significant financial backing went to Cambodia to bless and empower the Church. For one month they asked pastors to come and submit their requests for funding. However, when people realized that the organization wasn't there for the long-term, wasn't going to provide accountability, and wasn't going to check up on their stories, they began to invent churches, orphanages and other ministries in order to get some of the funding.

Through this well-intentioned effort, people learned that they could manipulate wealthy donors and get easy money. This practice is still a challenge in Cambodia today.

When you go to Cambodia, it may be that a pastor, staff or other individual will ask you for funding. While the request may or may not be ill-intentioned, we do not want to ever promote this type of behavior or create temptation for our staff or partner church ministries. It is always best to have a structure of accountability through which to give. If you want to promote the mission of AIM and the work that God is doing through their staff, please give to AIM directly, trusting that the staff know how best to steward and allocate your donations given their experience with the country and their work on the ground.

We should not view our money and resources as our own at all, but as God's and we should steward His resources accordingly.

Stewardship Part II

Now imagine that you are part of a small church in a rural community. Another church from overseas contacts you and says you can choose between them sending a mission team to put on a VBS at your church or giving you the money it would have cost to send the team. It will cost them about \$30,000 to send over their ten team members for the two-week VBS.⁴⁸ Your church has been praying for \$20,000 to repair the heating and air-conditioning unit that hasn't been functioning properly for months, and the remaining \$10,000 would more than triple your typical VBS budget. What do you think your church would do?

You have no doubt been raising money or have been paying out of pocket no small amount in order to go to Cambodia. The above anecdote is not designed to make you feel guilty about the cost to go and to serve, but it is meant to challenge you to consider what this short-term experience will mean.

You have the opportunity to see first-hand what God is doing in the lives of Cambodians through AIM's ministry. You have the opportunity to serve alongside practiced staff, to love children who desperately need to know they are loved and cherished, and to give of your time, your energy, and your resources to live out God's call on all of our lives to serve the helpless and the oppressed.

Some people view short term missions as an unwise use of money. Some believe it's an appropriate use of money. It all depends on how you follow through after the two weeks you get to serve in Cambodia. If your trip prompts you to consistently give of your finances and time in prayer upon your return, then it was a good use of your time. But if it was solely for a two-week personal experience, it was an unwise use of God's resources.

The rich young ruler left Jesus disheartened because the wealth that he had was great. He did not understand the promise of riches from which he was walking away – that material blessing is worth nothing in comparison to the greatness of walking with and following Jesus.

Spend some time in prayer in thanks for the blessings God has bestowed upon you and ask how He may be calling you to steward His finances.

⁴⁸ Anecdote adapted from Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), chapter 7.

Day 18: This is Not About You Doing Something New

"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."⁴⁹ You have probably read or heard this passage before. It is commonly shared at Easter services, highlighting Jesus' last moments in prayer on the night He was betrayed. What is surprising about this passage?

Jesus had one purpose in coming to earth as a man: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."⁵⁰ What is remarkable about Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His betrayal was that His will was NOT to fulfill the will of God. He did it not out of desire to bear the sins of the world or die on the cross, but out of obedience to the Heavenly Father. God the Father sent Jesus into the world as part of His perfect plan; it was not about Jesus creating something new but about fulfilling the calling God placed on His life.

Just as Jesus lived out of obedience to the will of God, so too must we as we seek not to do something for God or on behalf of God, but to join Him in the work that He is already doing. Your role as you go to Cambodia with AIM is to build on what God is already doing through the ministry and the staff, not to create something new.

Think back to earlier days in this devotional in which we discussed paternalism in different forms and humility. There are doubtless people on your team, maybe even yourself, who are visionaries – people who see potential in problematic situations – and your work is to try to find solutions. You might come up with great ideas about how to help the people of Cambodia. However, your role first is to look around you, to ask how God's plan is being worked out through AIM staff and through His church in Cambodia, and to understand how you fit within that plan.

This is not to discourage new ideas, but your first mission is to do work that will benefit the host organization and the long term missionaries on the ground, rather than creating a project upon which you and your team can put your name. It may be the

Just as Jesus lived out of obedience to the will of God, so too must we as we seek not to do something for God or on behalf of God, but to join Him in the work that He is already doing.

case that you will be able to assist on a project that has a discrete beginning, middle and end, it may be that you construct a new building or help to launch a new program, but it may also be that you won't ever see the fruit that your individual work in-country produces.

Regardless, God has a plan that He is working out in a mighty way in Cambodia, and you have the privilege to be part of that work. Even amidst the poverty and the moral depravity, you won't have to look far to see God's work among His people. God has been raising up pastors through AIM for the past twenty-five years throughout the country – in the cities and in rural villages. There are daily outreaches to brick factory workers, and the Svay Pak kids' club serves hundreds of children each day who work in those factories, giving them showers, food, clean clothes, and a safe place for nap time. AIM staff are also working with the brick factory owners and their families to get their children enrolled in school. Church services are ongoing in red light districts, new believers are being discipled, pimps and traffickers are being saved and brought to the Lord, young women are leaving karaoke clubs to receive better opportunities through Rahab's House in Siem Reap and the Agape Training Center, and the list goes on.

People are being saved, the kingdom is advancing and God is at work! There are two perspectives you can have coming into this environment; one is thinking how you can create something new with your own fingerprint on it, and the other is thinking how you can recognize quickly what God is doing and support it.

Consider the following prayer:

Lord, show me your fingerprints in Cambodia, the evidence of your workmanship in lives all throughout the country. Teach me to partner with what you are doing first before I ask for your blessings on something I'm dreaming about. Teach me to pray the prayer of Jesus, "not my will, but yours be done."

⁴⁹ Luke 22:42, ESV
⁵⁰ 1 John 4:9-10, ESV

Day 19: People and Process, Not Projects and Products

In thinking through solutions to human trafficking, it can be tempting to reduce the problem to numbers. Human Trafficking 101 tells us that there are three primary parties involved: the demand (johns and pedophiles), the supply (trafficked children and women), and the facilitators (the pimps and the traffickers).

Basic economic theory would argue that if you reduce demand, supply will also decrease or, if the supply decreases, prices will go up such that demand will decrease to align with supply. Finally, if you eliminate the facilitators, maybe there would not be any supply at all. This means that we have to rescue the girls out of sex-trafficking, arrest all of the pimps and traffickers, and arrest, or at least scare away, all of the pedophiles and johns.

Simple, right? Particularly for people who are numbers-oriented, it can be so tempting to reduce problems to equations and to look for the perfect number that will help us solve for X. However, just as an economist will tell you that this works in economic theory but that it gets messier in practice, when you are dealing with people and not simply widgets, suddenly the equation gets much more complicated.

Sokunthy was well-known in Svay Pak for trafficking young girls. He made thousands of dollars each month through sex-trafficking. He was notorious in the community, but each day, he attended the Lord's Gym in Svay Pak where he was prayed for by the staff, heard the truth about the evil he was perpetrating against these girls and his community, and was invited to attend church.⁵¹ One day, however, AIM was called to help two very young girls Sokunthy had brutally raped.

Though AIM tried to pursue legal action with the correct authorities, nothing was moving forward. What should AIM's response have been? It could have been judgment and hate. It could have been to ostracize him, to condemn him for the evil he had committed. But it wasn't.

When he didn't show up to the gym the next day, AIM's pastor went and said to him, "You know we hate what you did. But the truth is, the gym is the Lord's gym. And no matter what you've done, He'll forgive you. We want you to come back."

It is tempting to see arrest, prosecution and condemnation as the answer for human trafficking. In many circumstances, it may be part of the solution. However, in a culture in which one stands to make thousands of dollars per month by trafficking children

compared to fifteen dollars per month working in a brick factory, the sad reality is that even where a trafficker is arrested, another will take his or her place.

After the pastor visited Sokunthy, he came back to the gym the next day and agreed also to go to church. At church he stood up and publicly proclaimed, "I know what I was doing was wrong, and I am never going to do it again." AIM started to disciple him and helped him to get a new job, where he now makes fifty dollars per month.

Thousands of dollars compared to fifty dollars per month. Those numbers don't add up except where God is at work and His people are willing to sacrifice their time, their energy, and even their anger at injustice to demonstrate agape love to His children who need to know it most.

You may live in a consumer and results-driven culture where it is common to quantify results and transformation: "We led fifty people to the Lord and built five new houses." In fighting human trafficking, it can be tempting to seek X number of arrests of traffickers, X number of rescues, and X number of pedophiles who will no longer abuse children. The problem with these numbers, however, is they don't reflect people whose hearts have been changed or communities that have been transformed.

When you go to Cambodia, resist the urge to quantify your results. The change that came in Sokunthy's life was not the result of arrest, not the result of a perfect VBS program, and not the result of being offered an "honest" job for fifty dollars per month to replace his livelihood as a trafficker. Rather his transformation came from the moving power of God, working through the lives of the AIM staff and pastor at the Lord's Gym who consistently poured into and prayed over Sokunthy's life.

Though it is good to set goals that are measurable and time dated, this should not be our mindset when it comes to a mission trip or the question of how effective you were. Truly, the question should not be "How effective were we?", but "Were we serving Christ whole-heartedly and loving those around us like He would?"

When we begin to ask about our measurable quantifiers of effectiveness, we take the focus off of Christ and take the power of changing people into our own hands. We begin to look at people as projects and products; we forget that changing lives is a process that only the power of the gospel makes possible.

Truly, the question should not be "How effective were we?", but "Were we serving Christ whole-heartedly and loving those around us like He would?"

⁵¹ See page 33 of the Appendix to learn more about the Lord's Gym.



We must remember that God works in His own perfect time and that it is up to Him where He might use us in His work. In Bill Hybels' book, *Just Walk Across the Room*, Bill talks about a close friend with whom he had shared the gospel multiple times over many years, but the friend still had not accepted Christ. One day, however, his friend took Bill's youth group and one of the youth group's sponsors out on his sailboat. While out on the boat talking to the sponsor, the friend accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. At first Bill was a little upset since he had spent over a decade pouring into this man's life, but Bill realized that God had used him to show this man the love of Christ and to plant a seed, even if he wasn't the one to see it first begin to grow.⁵²

Remember that your time in Cambodia is to be about people and process, not projects and products. Spend some time in prayer to ask God that He would prepare you to be a blessing in the community and an encouragement to the staff, however that might look. Ask that He might show you where He is already at work, that you might be used as a tool to deepen relationships, build stronger community, and be a tangible reminder to staff on the ground that God is indeed at work.

Day 20: Trust and Respect the Staff on the Field

A short-term mission participant gets in the van to head out to Svay Pak, excited to see the town and the people for whom she has long been praying. As she pulls into town, she reaches for her camera and begins to take pictures from the van window. The van stops, the door slides open, and the hot humid air rushes in. Her heart beats with excitement as she steps into town, camera in hand. She is ready to capture amazing moments, images of Cambodian men at a coffee shop, children running and playing in an alley, and street vendors bartering over prices.

After taking a few pictures, however, an AIM staff member approaches her briskly. "Put your camera away," he says firmly.

"I was told by someone else at AIM that it was okay to take pictures in Svay Pak," she replies.

The AIM staff member grabs for the woman's camera and says in a firm, almost aggressive, tone. "I need you to put your camera down and get indoors right now!"

The young woman walks away, frustrated that she wasn't allowed to take pictures and taken aback at the staff member's abruptness. Hadn't she been praying and preparing for months to come and serve the people of Cambodia, giving of her time, energy and finances?

Given the situation, how should the staff member have responded to the young woman? What could the young woman have done to improve the situation?

Maybe the staff member should have been kinder in his tone. Maybe he could have explained why he wanted her to go inside. All the answers that you may give to the above questions are based on your understanding of what was going on in the scenario. However, there may be much more happening behind the scenes.

Read the story again.

Two hours before a short-term mission team is about to arrive in Svay Pak, the AIM staff member spots a trafficker and two young girls for whom the anti-trafficking police had been searching the last few months. The staff member discreetly follows the trafficker to a home where he is hiding the young girls. The trafficker locks the young girls inside and sits down on a chair outside the home to stand guard. The staff member finds an inconspicuous spot to keep an eye on the home, just far enough away to avoid scaring the trafficker into running away with the girls and to call the anti-trafficking police to get a warrant and rescue the girls. The staff member sits in a chair, watching, praying, and waiting, and he's very excited about the potential of seeing these precious young girls rescued.

⁵² Bill Hybels, *Just Walk Across the Room* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

While he waits, the van full of Americans pulls up and one young woman starts taking pictures of the alley he is in. The trafficker stands up nervously and begins to debate whether he needs to run to a different location with the two trafficked girls. The AIM staff member briskly approaches the young woman taking the pictures and says, "Put your camera away."

To his extreme frustration, she replies, "I was told by someone else at AIM that it was okay to take pictures in Svay Pak."

Knowing that the police are on their way and that these girls might not have a second chance, he grabs for her camera and forcefully says, "I need you to put your camera down and get indoors right now!"

As the young woman reluctantly and slowly obeys, the AIM staff member turns around to see that in the time he was talking with the young woman, the trafficker has fled with the two child victims.

The saddest part of this scenario is that it is a true story. We were never able to find those two young girls again.

Knowing the full details of what was going on, how would you now respond to those same questions? Given the situation, how should the staff member have responded to the young woman? What could the young woman have done to improve the situation? Now that you know the details, maybe your answers to this question have changed.

Here's the reality: You will not know the full details of what is happening in every situation on the ground. You may not know that the reason an AIM staff member asks one of the young men on your team to do a menial task instead of a home visit with some of the other women on the team is because one of the girls at the home was abused by a Westerner. You may not know that the reason that an AIM staff member cancels an outreach is because police are trying to do an investigation. You may not know that the reason you are not permitted to take pictures on a given day is that tensions are high on the streets because two gang members got in a fight last night.

You may not know, but *you must trust and obey the staff*. Understand that rules or plans may change for reasons that are outside what you need to know. They are not being made simply to test your flexibility or patience, but for your own good or for the good of those you are there to serve.

We cannot stress this enough. *You must trust and obey the staff on the ground without hesitation*. Questions can be asked on van rides, at the hotel, or over lunch, but if you're on a ministry site and a staff member asks you to do or refrain from doing something, trust and obey immediately.

Day 21: Confidentiality

Could you ever imagine that you might exploit a child sex-trafficking victim? Never in your wildest nightmares, right? However, there are ways you might exploit one of the children in Cambodia without realizing it. The most common way this occurs is by taking her story and/or her picture and sharing it with others.

This may not sound like a big deal, but the exploitation is real and may be very damaging to the child. *Exploitation is the unfair treatment or practice of taking selfish advantage of another person or situation, usually for personal gain*. Many of the children you meet have previously known nothing but exploitation. Their parents may have sold them or may be selling them to traffickers or pedophiles to earn money, they may be employed under horrendous conditions for minimal pay at a brick factory, or they may have had community members turn their backs on them by refusing to help end their abuse. The first time they may have met someone who didn't want to use them for their own personal gain was when they met an outreach worker from Rahab's House in Siem Reap or a church member from Svay Pak.

When you go to work with the AIM staff in Cambodia, you may become privy to information that is highly confidential. One of the children you meet may choose to share her story with you, you may learn something or see something that clues you in to both the horrendous abuse and some of the miraculous transformation that has taken place in the lives of some of the people you will meet. Their stories are precious and they belong to the people whose lives they are about.

If you take their stories to share them with people back home, you are furthering their exploitation...
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If you take their stories to share them with people back home, you are furthering their exploitation because you have taken something that belongs to them and are using it to your own benefit while no benefit goes back to them. Sharing one's story, particularly when it involves abuse, is very vulnerable for a young woman or child, and allowing their stories to go beyond yourself and your team may lead to her detriment.

Read James 1:26-27. Consider the harshness of James' words. Your mission in Cambodia is to love, to serve and to glorify God in the way that you interact with everyone that you meet. This mission carries beyond your time in Cambodia to when you come home. You are called to ongoing protection and care for "orphans and widows in their affliction," and to do nothing that may add to it.

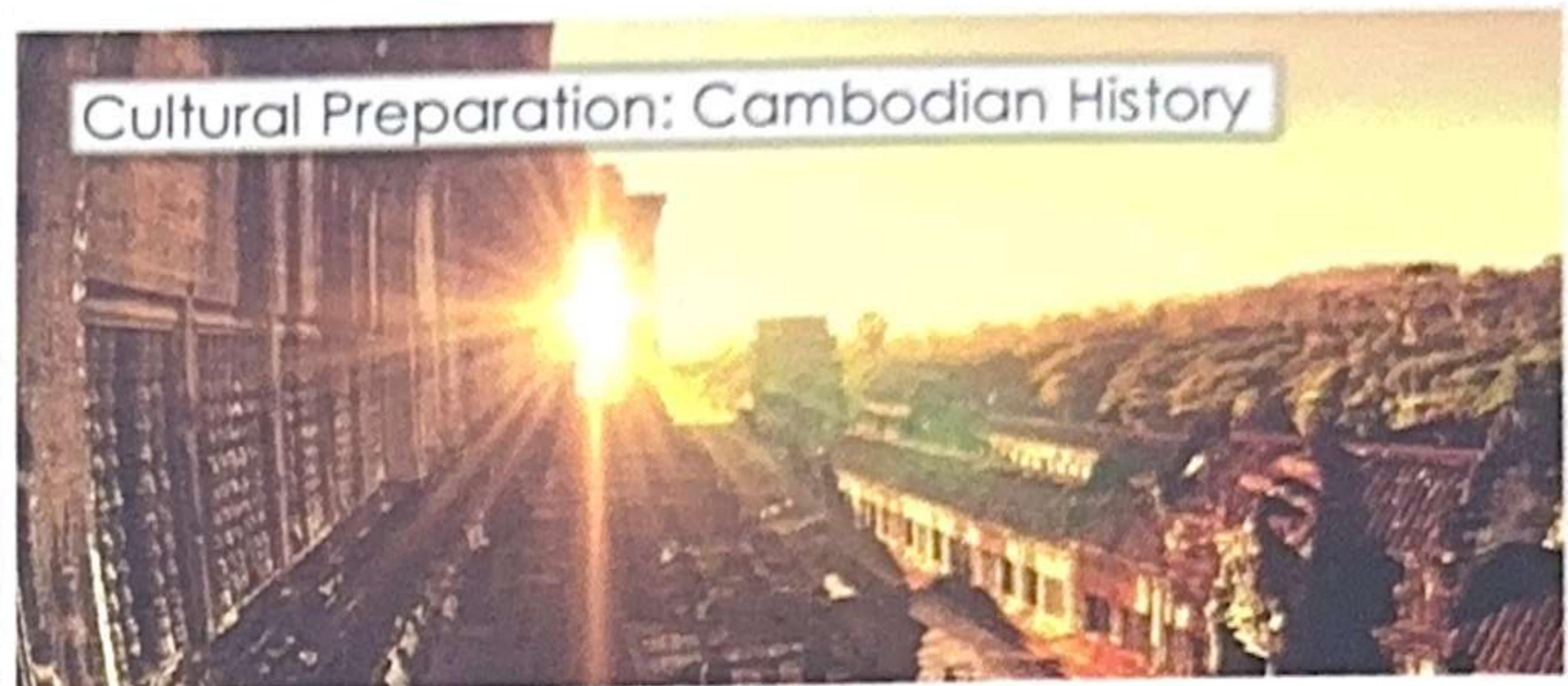
Now read James 3:1-12. Your task will not be easy. Spend time today and in the days ahead in prayer, asking God to bridle your tongue.

You may notice that AIM has occasionally shared stories of different young women and girls, including that of Mien, in The Pink Room. Agape Restoration Center (ARC) is a facility that houses girls who have been severely abused through sex trafficking. At ARC, girls receive counseling, therapy, education, and ongoing love and support from the live-in staff (see page 20 of the Appendix to learn more about ARC). On occasion, a girl may specifically approach the staff about being able to share her story, and after her counselors, social workers and other staff have spent time in consultation and prayer to ensure that this will help in her healing process, she has been enabled to do so. Only under these circumstances are specific stories shared because the ability to share will help – rather than exploit – the young woman.

Reflect on the following questions:

- What might tempt me to break confidentiality and to share the stories of the children that I meet? Why would this be a temptation?
- How may I best be a steward of the stories I receive from the people I meet? Are there precautions I need to take in order to bridle my tongue to avoid telling people back home and risk exploiting one of God's children?

Remember that even as much as you are not going to Cambodia to be a "poverty tourist" and to collect photos of the pitiful plight of impoverished people, you are also not going to Cambodia as a collector of stories to bring back to your friends and family.



Cultural Preparation: Cambodian History

Day 22: Cultural Preparation – Religions in Cambodia (Buddhism and Animism)

Don Cormack wrote, "To be a Christian in Cambodian society was to be a social pariah, misunderstood and ill-treated, a convenient scapegoat for blame and abuse."⁵³

The Cambodian people have a religious system that is made up of many beliefs. Over the years they have mixed together elements from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Animism to form what is now referred to as Folk Buddhism, which has become a part of everyday life in Cambodia.

Although Folk Buddhism is composed of three separate belief systems, Animism plays the largest role and is a major cornerstone for Folk Buddhism. Animism is known as the belief that natural objects, natural phenomena, and the universe itself, possess souls.⁵⁴

The first thing we need to know about Folk Buddhism is that it is saturated in beliefs revolving around spirits. The Cambodian people believe in a spiritual realm that is unseen to everyone.⁵⁵ Followers believe in a constant battle between spirits, rather than one, all-powerful spiritual being. Followers of Folk Buddhism are also very superstitious and ritualistic. Because of this, their faith is practiced in a tangible, practical manner. For some, this may include going to a temple. But for many, a trip to a temple may be

⁵³ Don Cormack, *Killing Fields, Living Fields: An Unfinished Portrait of the Cambodian Church, the Church That Would Not Die*. (England: OMF International, 1997).

⁵⁴ HubPages, Ecoggins, "Folk Buddhism of Cambodia and Southeast Asia", <http://ecoggins.hubpages.com/hub/Folk-Buddhism-of-Cambodia>.

⁵⁵ Cambodia Research Network, CRN Cambodia, 2007 2nd edition "The Peoples of Cambodia", pg. xvii, <http://www.ratanak.org/ICEuploads/Peoples-of-Cambodia-2nd-edition.pdf>.

replaced with a daily walk into their front yard to a personally constructed spirit house. These spirit houses reflect what each individual worships and how they worship. Each house is constructed differently and serves a different purpose.⁵⁶

Sadly in some cultures, Folk Buddhism has absorbed different aspects of Christianity and Catholicism, taking bits and pieces and making them into parts of their own. As such, you may stumble upon a spirit house built around Jesus or Mary. Keep in mind that such a spirit house does not signal the worship of our God, but rather the recognition of His powers, and a plea to help the person who built it. This will open up doors for ministry, but needs to be treaded upon very cautiously.

It is important to understand the cultural and spiritual context in which you will be ministering to understand how your words and your discussions might be perceived. Be careful to continue to take into account where you are, and allow God to lead you in your conversation. Spend time in prayer today that God might speak and work through you in all of your interactions with people in Cambodia—that they may be used for His glory and for the furtherance of His work.

Day 23: Cultural Preparation – The Killing Fields and Their Effects

Cambodia's recent history contains tragedy that has had profound, lasting effects on its people and culture. It is important that you are aware of this as you prepare to set foot in Cambodia, as it will help you to be sensitive and to better understand the people.

Between the years 1975-1979, Cambodia was controlled by a communist regime called the Khmer Rouge, led by the extremely oppressive dictator, Pol Pot. During this time, Pol Pot managed to inflict a massive-scale genocide which wiped out close to two million Cambodians – more than twenty percent of its entire population.⁵⁷

The Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975 and Pol Pot turned the entire country upside down, starting by declaring it "Year Zero". With the goal to transform the country into a Maoist agrarian state that would be completely autonomous, he immediately instituted a program designed to eradicate any trace of capitalism, religion, or foreign influences (specifically Western) from Cambodia. It was a brutal, systematic process: foreigners were extradited, embassies were shut down, and the currency was abolished. Shops and markets became illegal. Private property was absorbed by the regime. Schools, newspapers, and religious practices were forbidden. Anyone who opposed the regime or could be suspected of opposition was murdered: members of the Lon Nol government, public servants, police, military officers, teachers, ethnic Vietnamese, Christian clergy, Muslim leaders, members of the Cham Muslim minority, members of the middle-class and the educated.⁵⁸

Agricultural labor camps the size of soccer fields were set up, and the Khmer Rouge proceeded to force the country's entire population to live and work in the camps. These camps, which infamously became known as the "killing fields," were surrounded by farmland and contained mass graves for around 20,000 Cambodians.⁵⁹ Conditions for inmates were extremely primitive. Families were not allowed to stay together, religious leaders were not allowed to practice their beliefs, large-scale political indoctrination and brainwashing was aggressively instituted, and children were taught

⁵⁶ Yary Livan, "Sacred Expressions," *Keepers of Traditions*, 2007, http://www.massfolkarts.org/object_detail.asp?ObjectID=8080046 (accessed January 6, 2013).

⁵⁷ "Cambodian Genocide Program," Yale University Genocide Studies Program, 2010, <http://www.yale.edu/cgp/> (accessed October 2, 2012).

⁵⁸ "The Cambodian Killing Fields," *The Killing Fields Museum*,

<http://www.killingfieldsmuseum.com/genocide1.html> (accessed October 2, 2012).

⁵⁹ Zoltan Istvan, "Killing Fields Lure Tourists in Cambodia," *National Geographic*, January 10, 2003, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/01/0110_030110_tv cambodia.html (accessed October 2, 2012).



to spy on adults, including their parents.⁶⁰

Within these camps, millions died from over-work, starvation, disease, and execution for punishable crimes. Such "crimes" included not working hard enough, complaining, grieving for deceased loved ones, any expression of religious connotation, engaging in sexual contact, collecting food, and wearing jewelry.⁶¹

On January 7, 1979, after three years, eight months, and twenty days of the Khmer Rouge's terrorizing rule, the Vietnamese invaded and freed the Cambodian people. Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians fled to refugee camps at the Thai border. Their homeland had become a place of nightmares, and many Cambodians chose to immigrate to places like the United States, France, or Australia instead of returning home.⁶²

This genocide and these "killing fields" have left a lasting effect on the people of Cambodia. Those that survived were subjected to working conditions that kept them at the brink of death daily, they saw family and friends die of starvation or horrific violence, and they received no reprieve from the terror. Because of this, many struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or severe depression.⁶³

All of this has led to the breakdown of the family structure, a survival mentality, and a cheap view of the value of life. These three outcomes contribute to a false perception that it is not that big of a deal for parents to sell and traffick their children to ensure that they will never be hungry again.

When you are in Cambodia, do not be surprised by some families' and communities' calloused perceptions of the buying and selling of human life. Pray for the healing and softening of their hearts, that they would not simply bury their pain but that they would find healing and redemption in Christ.

All of this has led to the breakdown of the family structure, a survival mentality, and a cheap view of the value of life.

⁶⁰ "The Cambodian Killing Fields," The Killing Fields Museum, <http://www.killingfieldsmuseum.com/genocide1.html> (accessed October 2, 2012).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Grant N. Marshall, et. al. "Mental Health of Cambodian Refugees 2 Decades After Resettlement in the United States," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 3 Aug. 2005, Vol. 294, No. 5; Shane Carney, "Cambodian Refugees and the Effects of Surviving Genocide," Yahoo News, April 5, 2006, <http://voices.yahoo.com/cambodian-refugees-effects-surviving-genocide-30694.html?cat=37> (accessed October 3, 2012)..

Day 24: Cultural Preparation – Understanding the Different Types of Sex Trafficking in Cambodia

Many people, when they think of sex trafficking, have a limited view of what this form of exploitation entails. One common image that may come to mind is of a small child, kidnapped from her parents or purchased from a rural village in Vietnam, transported over the border to Cambodia and sold to foreign men in a dirty brothel along with hundreds of other girls. While this perception is not wrong, the truth is that it is only one of many examples of sex trafficking in Cambodia.

Today, you will read briefly about some of the most common forms of sex trafficking in Cambodia, but it is important first that you deal with one very common but displaced stigma on women and children in prostitution. Prostitution, in Cambodia and in the rest of the world, goes hand-in-hand with sex trafficking. Sex trafficking, as a crime, exists where a person who is underage⁶⁴ or by force, fraud or coercion, has been purchased and sold for sex—there is no requirement that the person be transported.

This means that not only are kidnapping victims who are bought and sold for sex considered victims of trafficking, but also any person in prostitution who is being controlled by a pimp or brothel owner should be considered a trafficking victim as well. Furthermore, coercion takes many forms—any person who is in prostitution because of poverty, economic coercion, racism, a lack of alternatives because of other stigmas or limitations placed upon her (she is the child of prostitution, a minority, a non-citizen, an orphan, a victim of sexual abuse, etc.) is trafficked. What may appear to be "choice" by a woman or child to sell sex is actually coercion by the circumstances of their lives and depravity of their society.

It is crucial that we avoid placing stigma or judgment on any person we see in systems of prostitution or trafficking because these are the very women and children you are going to Cambodia to serve. Some of them will be easier to love than others, but it is important that you remember the circumstances in their lives that have led them to where they are today.

⁶⁴ The term "underage" means under the age of consent, or the age at which an individual can legally consent to sex. This age varies from state to state and is set by law. For the purposes of this devotional, it is enough to consider at what age you might think your daughters, sisters, friends, etc. are old enough to understand what it means to engage in sexual relations and, in particular, to sell their bodies to others for sex.

Trafficking in Cambodia, as elsewhere in the world, takes many forms. The following are typical examples of a few:

- **Child trafficking:** Svay Pak, where AIM operates Rahab's House I and II, the Agape Training Center, Lord's Gym, and the Rahab's House School, was known as the epicenter of child sex-trafficking in Cambodia. Tourists from all over the world would travel to Svay Pak, about eleven kilometers outside of Phnom Penh,⁶⁵ to purchase the youngest and most vulnerable for sex. Most of the children being bought and sold in Svay Pak came from Vietnam, rural Cambodia, or Svay Pak itself. Most were typically taken through fraud or coercion from their families, though some families may well know what is happening and are complicit in the exploitation. Until about 2005, children were sold out of brothels to pedophiles, but after many of these brothels were raided by police, traffickers developed new tactics. Svay Pak is no longer the epicenter it once was, but trafficking still persists, albeit more covertly. Now, when pedophiles would come into town, a trafficker negotiates meeting places and prices for the child to be exploited elsewhere.
- **Massage Parlor Trafficking:** Many young women and children are also exploited in massage parlors. Most of the young women in massage parlors are older than the children exploited in Svay Pak, and their coercion takes a different form. When customers, both foreign and domestic, come to the massage parlor, prices and terms are negotiated. While the massage parlor may offer massages, other forms of sexual conduct may also be available for customers to request. The women who work at these massage parlors are typically expected to meet customers' requests, regardless of whether they want to or not, because it helps to earn the massage parlor more revenue than basic massage services.
- **Karaoke bars** are now one of the most common forms of entertainment and exploitation in Cambodia. Karaoke bars employ young women to keep customers entertained while they sing karaoke. In most bars, sex doesn't occur on the premises, but customers negotiate meeting places and times with bar managers or the young women. Women are expected to make and keep these appointments, and they have to pay fees to the karaoke bar, their drivers, and often the hotels where the meetings occur. Holding these appointments off-premises allows bar owners to claim that they are not brothels, but in most cases, women are forced by their employers, at times with physical violence, to make and take "dates," even with customers who appear very dangerous.

Many women and girls working at karaoke bars appear to be able to come and go as they please, but they often have pressure from their families to work there in order to send money home. While it may appear that it is their choice to be there, it is important to understand that family pressure keeps them there as well as cultural stigma if they try to leave and seek employment elsewhere.

- **Beer gardens** are essentially bars or clubs where customers come to socialize, drink and party. Similar to karaoke bars, young women are employed to serve customers in beer gardens, and customers often make arrangements with the women or managers to meet off-premises. Like in karaoke bars, the women have little say in refusing customers, and while they have the freedom to quit their work at the beer garden, because of the social stigma placed on them for having engaged in that work, they are often left with few other opportunities. Furthermore, like the girls working at karaoke bars, most of them are there because of family pressure to make money to send home.

AIM does outreach to and works with young women and children who have been subjected to trafficking in each of these different forms. Even where it may appear to be a young woman's choice to remain where she is, it is important that you understand that the coercion and circumstances for why she is there vary. Rahab's House-Siem Reap is located within walking distance of a karaoke bar and was started specifically to reach out to girls in these bars throughout the city. The center holds medical clinics, runs a beauty salon, offers ESL and other types of classes, and provides opportunities for the girls to leave the karaoke bars if they do not want to return (see page 32 of the Appendix for more information about Rahab's House-Siem Reap). The volunteers and staff in Siem Reap are dedicated to demonstrating consistent and ongoing love for the girls trafficked in the karaoke bars, and it has been through this type of consistent presence and outreach that they have begun to make an impact in the community and have seen many girls begin to transition out of the bars.

Read John 8:3-11. It is not your place to pass judgment, nor is it your place to think of yourself as higher than you ought. Remember from earlier days in this devotional that you are not going to Cambodia to rescue, to pity, or to look down upon those you have come to serve, but rather that you are going in order to serve and to glorify God.

Here are some questions to consider:

- What are my preconceived notions about sex trafficking in Cambodia?
- What are my preconceived notions about the people to whom we will be ministering?
- How do I serve and love without judgment or bias and with a humble heart?

⁶⁵ Svay Pak is also known as "K11" or Kilometer 11 because of its distance from Phnom Penh.



Day 25: Perception of Time – Event Time v. Clock Time

In Western cultures, most people have a tight schedule. Breakfast at 8 a.m., work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a lunch break at noon, dinner at 6 p.m., meet with Jim at 8:30 p.m., bed by 11 p.m., and repeat. For the most part we run on an organized day using what is called "clock-time," where everything is, as it sounds, scheduled on an external clock. Our days are thought out, planned, and prepared for "making the most" of our day and being as productive with our time as possible. Western culture is very future-oriented, constantly focused on what needs to be done and by when, in order to keep moving on and to be the most productive.

In Cambodia, along with many other countries, people run on what is called "event-time." In event-time, a schedule would look much more like this: when breakfast ends, work begins. When one feels that he has accomplished enough for the day, it is time for dinner. When dinner is done and he feels ready, he can go meet with Jim, and once he is tired, he will go to bed.⁶⁶ People run their days by an internal clock; they are focused on one task at a time and the present.

In clock-time cultures, showing up five to ten minutes after the set time is considered permissibly late, 15 to 20 minutes after is late, and 30 minutes and beyond after the set time is considered insultingly late. But in event cultures it is considered permissibly late if someone is thirty to 45 minutes after the set time. One to two hours after the set time is considered late, and two to three hours after the set time is considered insultingly late.

⁶⁶ Tamar Avnet and Anne-Laure Sellier, "Clock Time versus Event Time: Temporal Culture or Self-Regulation?," *Social Science Research Network*, (2010): 4, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1665936 (accessed October 5, 2012).

For many who are accustomed to running on clock-time, this concept of running by an internal clock is frustrating. It may seem that people do not care, are being disrespectful, or that they are being unproductive with their time, but that is not the case. Though event-time may not seem to be the most productive, studies suggest that both event- and clock-time have the potential to perform well.⁶⁷

If people are showing up "late" or your schedule is not happening when you exactly planned it out, don't freak out. Take a deep breath. You are going to be okay! Realize that you are not on a mission trip just to accomplish a list of tasks. You are on God's time in a new culture and if you are focused on the ultimate thought of just bringing glory to Him and showing His love, then He will use you wherever you are and through whatever you are doing.

Read John 4. How does Jesus manage His time? Does He run by clock-time or event-time? Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Galilee and stopped to rest. While sitting at the well, He built a relationship with the woman and stayed at the well waiting on His disciples and then again waiting for the woman to come back. Who knows how long that could have been! He was presented with a choice: keep with His plans and go to Galilee or stay for a bit longer and minister to the Samaritans. What does Jesus do? He postpones His plans for TWO DAYS! Jesus knew that, yes, plans are important, but if you are doing the will of God and obeying His commands, then God gives you the time you need to accomplish what He wants you to do, just as in Joshua 10 when God literally stopped the sun for the Israelites to have the time they needed to defeat their adversaries.

Take a moment to consider these questions:

- How will being in an event-time culture challenge me?
- How can I be preparing myself for those challenges?

About a week ago, you looked at the difference between making your "results" people- and process-focused rather than projects- and products-oriented. Remember that your goal on this trip is not to create specific quantifiable results and that transformation happens along relational lines that take time to develop. Just as Jesus operated based on the relational needs of the Samaritan woman and community, be prepared to operate based on the relational needs of the AIM staff, a community member, child, or one of your teammates.

Spend some time in prayer asking God to prepare you for what might change, that when and if the time comes that your plans do not go exactly as you expected, He will give you a peace and be your firm ground.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Day 26: Communication – High v. Low Context

Communication may seem to be very black and white – you either know a language and can communicate with someone, or you do not – but the truth is that the manner and style in which ideas are communicated are entirely different in other cultures, and go far beyond a simple language barrier.

In America, the style of communication typically used is classified as *low-context* communication. In this style, one focuses more on the literal meanings of actual words used rather than relying on non-verbal cues to fully interpret meaning. This type of culture and communication style does well with written words, in which the entirety of the meaning is dependent upon the words themselves to convey a message.⁶⁸

Conversely, Cambodia is classified as using a *high-context* communication style. In this style, groups use spoken words and non-verbal cues to comprehend what is being communicated. To fully understand what the speaker intends, a listener must employ their ability to “read between the lines.” In this style, it is important to listen and observe concurrently, but even someone from a low-context culture who is highly skilled in both may still find it difficult to fully grasp a high-context communicator’s meaning.⁶⁹

In general terms, “high-context” refers to societies or settings that have long-established, deep connections. Because of the depth of connection between the members of the group, much of the communication is understood by implication and less is stated explicitly.⁷⁰ Your family would most likely be a good example of a high-context group. Other examples of high-context situations might be a party of close friends, a small church congregation, or a formal restaurant where the rules of behavior and underlying cues are understood without having to be spelled out.

To most people from low-context communication societies, high-context communication seems to be very indirect. For example, a friend says that he is hungry but cannot leave his work to buy food. For a low-context person, this means that the friend will be hungry until he finishes work, but a high-context person may get the signal that his friend would like for him to pick up food for him. Saying this directly would appear to be overly demanding to a high-context individual, but by telling his friend that he is hungry, another high-context individual will be able to detect the cues and

⁶⁸ Dr. Sangeeta Gupta, “Communication Styles,” A Quick Guide to Cultural Competency, <http://www.guptaconsulting.com/docs/CrossCulturalSamplePage.pdf> (accessed October 8, 2012).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Julie Eshbaugh, “High Context vs Low Context: The Communication Style of Your Story,” <http://letthewordsflow.wordpress.com/2011/06/22/high-context-versus-low-context-%E2%80%93-the-communication-style-of-your-story/>.

will be placed in a position of offering to pick up food.⁷¹ While it may seem that the high-context individual is talking around what he wants, he is actually giving significant signals that he expects the listener to understand.

Learning to understand high-context communication cultures is very difficult and takes years. In the above example, what is going on reflects communication style, but also other cultural preferences. By hinting that he would like for someone to pick up food, the high-context communicator saves face if the friend were to refuse, and the friend has the power to offer or not. Because there are so many cultural influences at work, give yourself grace as you try to listen and connect with people in Cambodia.

If you are a low-context and direct communicator, you must be careful in how you communicate with and perceive things from a high-context and indirect communicator. You may think that they are being evasive, dishonest, can’t take a stand, have no opinion, or that they are increasing tension by not dealing with issues directly. Before this becomes your mindset, however, remember the things you have learned about their culture and ask yourself questions such as, “What is the context behind what they are saying?” and, “What is the point they are trying to convey?”

You must also be careful of what you might be communicating unintentionally. For example, if you are sharing at a church in Cambodia with parents of children who are unable to go to school and you say, “It would be great if someone built a school for all these children,” a Cambodian listener might think you are stating that you want to finance the building of a school.

Read Acts 2. There, years after God chose to muddle the languages at the Tower of Babel, He made it possible for everyone in Jerusalem to understand what the apostles were saying, each in their own native language. Though some remained incredulous, God, through the Holy Spirit, spoke to the hearts of many in the crowd that day, “and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”⁷²

Even as much as God made the disciples’ words bear fruit, God can use your words to bring glory to His name and serve others in Cambodia. As you are getting ready for your trip to Cambodia, know that you will probably make mistakes and interpret something incorrectly in your conversations with Cambodians. This kind of cultural communication adjustment doesn’t happen overnight and in fact takes years. Spend time in prayer today and ask God to give you wisdom and grace as you communicate His love to the AIM staff and all of those you will be ministering to on your trip.

⁷¹ Lailawati Mohd Salleh, “High/Low Context Communication: The Malaysian Malay Style,” Association for Business Communication, 2005, <http://businesscommunication.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/09ABC05.pdf> (accessed October 9, 2012).

⁷² Acts 2:41, ESV

Day 27: Social Paradigm – Collective v. Individualistic

Cultures differ in how people relate to their society and how their identities are defined.

- In individualistic societies, the goals of individuals are valued more highly than the goals of the group. Individuals are rewarded for behaving independently, making their own plans, and working toward achieving their personal goals. In these societies, individuals are hired and promoted largely based on individual achievement and qualifications.
- In collectivist societies, the goals of the individuals are subordinated to the group's needs. In these societies, kinship and group ties are stronger and carry great weight in decisions about hiring and promotion, even if another candidate may be more highly qualified.⁷³ People are born into a group to which they owe loyalty and from which they expect protection. Their relationships and friendships are determined by membership in their respective group. As life progresses, people join other groups; for example, when they start working, they join a staff or group of employees.⁷⁴ Identity is not isolated; it is determined by the collective views of the larger group. Likewise, what a person does and how one conducts oneself is determined by group needs.⁷⁵

Marriage, for example, provides a basic lens through which to understand the differences between collectivist and individualistic societies. In countries such as India or Pakistan, marriages are often arranged and are viewed as opportunities to form family or business alliances. Children are expected to marry whomever the family chooses based on the needs of the family. In other countries where arranged marriage is not common, however, children marry whoever they choose. It is their decision and they choose based on their own preferences, needs and desires. The preferences of the individual take precedence over the welfare and preferences of the family.

Similar examples may be drawn from what an individual may choose to study or work. Students from a collectivistic culture, for example, may be sent to another country to study whatever their government, company or family needs and not necessarily what

⁷³ "Cultural Differences," Iowa State University, June 7, 2011, <http://www.celt.iastate.edu/international/CulturalDifferences3.html> (accessed October 13, 2012).

⁷⁴ Michael Delens, "Partnership in Educational Development, the Cultural Aspect," Network for Policy Research, Review and Advice on Education and Training (NORRAG), January, 1999, <http://www.norrag.org/en/publications/norrag-news/online-version/swapping-partners-the-new-politics-of-partnership-and-sector-wide-approaches/detail/partnership-in-educational-development-the-cultural-aspect.html> (accessed October 13, 2012).

⁷⁵ Michelle LeBaron, "Communication Tools for Understanding Cultural Differences," Beyond Intractability, June 2003, <http://www.beyondintractability.org/bi-essay/communication-tools> (accessed October 13, 2012).

they want to pursue. The needs of the group – whether family, company, or country – take precedence over the individual's desires.⁷⁶

In Cambodia, it is all too often that young women "choose" to work in karaoke bars, beer gardens, or massage parlors because their families put pressure on them to bring home as much money as possible. Even if families know what actually goes on in such locations (refer to Day 23 for more information), and even if young women are abused and do not want to continue, the family pressure is often stronger than the preferences of the young woman, even if it is to the young woman's extreme detriment.

When people from individualistic cultures see these types of practices and coercion, it is easy for the members of one culture to think, "Our way is better." In our ignorance and pride, we tend to see cultural differences in terms of good versus bad, right versus wrong. While it is certainly the case that certain practices are "bad" and sinful – forcing one's daughter into trafficking, for example – it is not the case that all practices that are different from our own are inherently wrong or somehow less than ours.

Instead of judging, we need to understand these differences and their implications for ministry. Because Cambodia is a collectivist society, it is necessary to minister to the entire family unit and community, not just to individuals. In Svay Pak, putting on the children's ministry is not enough to protect the children and to provide for their needs. Unless their families and, indeed, the entire community, also meet Jesus, they will continue to sell their children to pimps and pedophiles each night, and the violence in the children's lives will persist. The ministry in Svay Pak conducted at Rahab's House consists not only of Kid's Club each day but also medical clinics, the Lord's Gym, brick factory outreach, the Rahab's House School, and discipleship, all of which are put on by the church to share Jesus' love with the entire community.

On your trip you may be asked to minister to a church member's drunk uncle, and you may find yourself asking, "I thought I was here to stop sex trafficking." What you may not realize is that in sharing Jesus with the drunk uncle, you are rescuing his nephew or niece from being trafficked each night.

Spend some time in prayer that while you and your team are in Cambodia on your short-term mission, God would use your work, even if seemingly indirect, to carry out His larger plan to rescue His children from sex trafficking. Ask that you would be prepared to be His hands and feet to Cambodia, to even the most undesirable of His people.

Because Cambodia is a collectivist society, it is necessary to minister to the entire family unit and community, not just to individuals.

⁷⁶ Iowa State, June 7, 2011.

Day 28: Power Distance

In the past few days we have been looking at ways Cambodian culture is different from other cultures – particularly Western – such as how different cultures perceive time and how they communicate. Today we will be looking at another issue one must address in order to be effective in his or her ministry in Cambodia – power distance.

Power distance is the extent to which people who are less powerful in society – whether youth, subordinate employees, lower class persons, etc. – will accept inequality in power and consider that inequality to be normal. According to power distance theory, there is inequality in power in every society, but the degree to which individuals within that society will tolerate it varies.⁷⁷ There are two types of power distances: high-power distance and low-power distance.

In high-power distance countries and organizations, people don't question the decisions of their leaders. Leader-follower relationships are not close and followers expect to have their jobs and responsibilities dictated to them. In some cases, they will not articulate disagreements with authority for fear of the consequences for stirring up conflict. High-power distance societies perceive a clear delineation between superiors and subordinates and between the young and the old, and they place high value on obedience, respect and allegiance to superiors.⁷⁸ Cambodia is a country with a high-power distance culture where people expect leaders and followers to maintain their roles in the social structure, both in the workplace, but also in everyday life between elders and youth, parents and children, and other class, age, and societal distinctions.

Low-power distance countries, such as the United States, tend to have more decentralized hierarchies and they encourage individualism and experimentation.⁷⁹ Low-power distance individuals are expected to and are more comfortable with voicing their opinions, even if it contradicts a supervisor's word.⁸⁰ Relationships outside of the workplace – in families and other community groups – also tend to be less formal. While elders and parents are given a certain degree of respect, individuals are often still expected to make their own decisions according to their own best interests.

Since Cambodia is a high-power distance culture, it's important that you show proper

⁷⁷ Helen Spencer-Oatey, "Unequal Relationships in High and Low Power Distance Societies: A Comparative Study of Tutor-Student Role Relations in Britain and China," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 28 (3), 284-302. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022022197283005>.

⁷⁸ "Interpersonal Communication," *ELL Assessment for Linguistic Differences vs. Learning Disabilities*, 2005, <http://www.ldlproject.net/cultures/cambodia/differences/interpersonal.html> (accessed October 18, 2012).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Kirkman, B. L., et al. (2009). Individual power distance orientation and follower reactions to transformational leaders: A cross-level, cross cultural examination. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52 (4), 744-764.

respect to those in authority. It is also important for you to know that as a foreigner, you will be perceived as an honored guest, or person of authority yourself. Many Cambodians, including AIM staff, may become uncomfortable if you break out of a perceived hierarchical structure. For example: In an attempt to be kind, you decide to go into the kitchen of a ministry site and make a meal for the Cambodian cook. While your intention is to bless and honor him or her, the cook may become embarrassed or uncomfortable that the honored guest is serving the staff. It may even be perceived as insulting – that the cook's service was not up to your standards or taste to the point that you had to prepare the food yourself.

Because you will be viewed as a person of authority by most Cambodians, you can use this position to bless the staff and those you are there to serve. One of the best ways to serve Cambodians is to publicly praise and give words of affirmation to those by whom you have been blessed. Your words will give them honor among their peers, followers and/or superiors, and will allow you to serve and encourage the staff while not making them uncomfortable because of power distance.

Because you will be viewed as a person of authority by most Cambodians, you can use this position to bless the staff and those you are there to serve.

At the start of Jesus' ministry, He went out to the desert to be baptized by John. As He "came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.' The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness."⁸¹

God the Father affirmed Jesus publicly in His ministry. It was both a tangible reminder to Jesus as well as an encouragement, particularly with the trials He was to face immediately thereafter in the wilderness and in the years to come. Your words have the power to build up the Cambodian staff by giving them honor and by encouraging them. Remember that you are only there for a limited time, but it will be up to them to face the challenges of the days and years ahead to continuously love and show Jesus' love to the Cambodian people.

Regardless of what you think or how you feel about the high-power distance culture, consider how you can operate within it to bless and to minister while you are in Cambodia. Spend time in prayer asking God to prepare you to recognize and take opportunities to bless others and bring glory to His name.

⁸¹ Mark 1:10-12, ESV



Day 29: Saving Face

You are in Cambodia, and one afternoon you decide to take a brief outing. You are walking down on the riverfront and you stop to ask a Cambodian which direction it is to a particular restaurant someone has recommended to you. The Cambodian smiles politely at you, listens to your question and, still smiling, points you in a direction. After walking in the humidity and heat for twenty-five minutes and finally giving in, hailing a tuk-tuk, and finding out that the restaurant was only about two minutes in the completely opposite direction from where you had stopped to ask for directions, you are livid.

Why did the seemingly friendly Cambodian lie to you and give you bad directions? Was it malicious? Did he not like foreigners? Was he trying to send you down a rabbit trail?

Probably not. More than likely, the Cambodian simply did not know the answer but did not want to "lose face" by admitting that he did not. Most Cambodians would rather act with confidence than risk embarrassment or lose the respect of others, even if it means sending you in the wrong direction.

The concept of "saving face" originates from China, but it has certainly spread to other cultures.⁸² Saving face refers to the maintaining of one's reputation and standing in society.⁸³ This means that in order to save face, you do everything to avoid embarrassment.

Since "saving face" is such an embedded part of the Cambodian culture, it is necessary to understand that it will impact your communication. It will be difficult to see where this practice is at work, but where you sense that someone may not be telling you something as it is, consider that it may not be from a malicious intent to lie, but an attempt to save face.

While it would be great to give you an easy "how-to" guide to communicating in a "saving face" culture, the reality is that it takes years to learn how to navigate communication, just as it takes years for a low-context communicator to learn how to communicate in a high-context communication society. We can give you a couple of

Most Cambodians would rather act with confidence than risk embarrassment or lose the respect of others.

pointers here, but be ready to be flexible, to be understanding, and to swallow your pride when you believe that you have been lied to and wronged.

The following suggestions will be helpful to keep in mind:

- Avoid pointing out someone's mistakes openly in front of their peers or strangers. If you believe that someone is in the wrong and needs to be corrected or assisted – for example, you are helping a staff person learn a new software or are tutoring a student in a subject – do not correct them in front of the rest of their peers. Instead, take them to the side and work with them to see how to complete the task correctly. They may still feel embarrassed in front of you, but you have at least eliminated their embarrassment in front of their peers and others.
- Make sure to give sincere compliments when they are merited as it helps people to increase "face" in front of their peers.
- Show extra respect to elders, military or other people of uniform.⁸⁴

Navigating within a new culture, new language, and new people will bring daily stresses, frustrations, and will stretch you in new and different ways. Spend time in prayer today that God would specially prepare your heart for the challenges in communication that will likely arise during your trip.

⁸² Peter Huang and Christopher J. Anderson, "A Psychology of Emotional Legal Decision Making: Revision and Saving Face in Legal Theory and Practice," *Minnesota Law Review*, 90, 1045-1071 (2004).

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Greg Rodgers, "The Concept of Saving Face: An Introduction to the Concept of Face in Asia," About (2012), <http://goasia.about.com/od/Customs-and-Traditions/a/Saving-Face.html> (accessed November 4, 2012).

Day 30: Cultural Do's and Don'ts

Although it's impossible to categorize an entire culture, we've compiled a list with some key highlights and distinctions of Cambodian culture that will make your time much more enjoyable.

Showing Respect in Cambodia

- As with most of Asia, to "lose one's cool" in public is completely unacceptable. Never shout at someone or criticize them in front of others.
- Cambodians don't typically show strong emotions in public, so don't be alarmed if they remain stoic in an emotional situation. Cambodians may also be uncomfortable if you choose to show strong emotions in public.
- Some Cambodians will giggle nervously or smile when they feel uncomfortable with the strong emotion being expressed.
- When offered a gift, it's polite to refuse it at first, but in the end, always accept it very graciously with both hands.
- Give and receive gifts, money, and business cards with both hands. It's a sign of respect.
- Be sure to give genuine compliments to people when they are merited.
- Because of Cambodia's tough past, do not bring up sensitive subjects such as war, violence, the Killing Fields, current politics, or the Khmer Rouge.
- When gesturing with your hands to "come here", it's considered rude to gesture with your palm up. Always have your palm down, and use all four fingers.
- When using a tooth pick, you should cover your mouth with your spare hand.

In many Southeast Asian countries the head is considered the highest and most spiritual part of a person's body. The feet are considered the dirtiest and least sacred.

- Don't pat children or adults on the head.
- Don't gesture with your feet.
- Don't raise your feet higher than someone's head.
- When seated on the ground, women should attempt to hide their feet by tucking them underneath themselves. Men should sit Indian style.
- Remove your shoes and hat when entering a home.

Greeting People in Cambodia

- The traditional Cambodian greeting, known as Som Pa, is made by putting your two hands together (with fingertips near the chin) and a giving a slight bow with your head. The hands are held higher to show more respect to elders.

- Many Cambodians choose to shake hands with visitors, so the best rule-of-thumb is simply to return whatever greeting you were given initially. It is considered very rude not to return a greeting.
- Pointing with your index finger is considered rude. Instead, gesture with your right hand palm-up.
- During conversations many Cambodians don't make eye contact. Direct eye contact is usually reserved for emotional conversations. Prolonged direct eye contact can be interpreted as physical aggression or attraction.

Proper Dress in Cambodia

- Modest dress is the rule in Cambodia, particularly for women.
- Women should not wear short skirts or show their shoulders.
- Men usually wear collared shirts and long pants.
- Although many tourists wear shorts to deal with the heat, the locals tend to cover as much skin as possible. While it is not a rule, pants or capris for women are safe and acceptable.
- Although tourism has caused these standards to relax somewhat, it's always best to dress conservatively to show respect.

Interacting with the Opposite Sex

It may come as a surprise to many, especially because sex trafficking is a rampant problem in Cambodia, but Cambodians strongly frown upon public displays of affection.

- Couples, even if they are married, shouldn't hold hands or kiss in public.
- Be mindful in your contact with the opposite sex, even placing an arm around a local to pose for a picture can be misinterpreted.
- Women should never touch a monk or hand anything to him; even the monk's mother may not do so.
- Cambodian males will hold hands with and hug other Cambodian males; this is a sign of friendship, nothing more.
- When gesturing for someone to "come here" with your hands, using one finger is considered romantic. Always have your palm down and use all four fingers to show respect.

Respect for Elders

- Aside from monks, elders are given the highest level of respect in Cambodia. Always acknowledge an elder's status by allowing them to control the conversation, walk first, and take the lead.
- When seated, you should attempt to never sit higher than the eldest person in the room.

- Always wait for the eldest to sit and eat first.

Photos

- Ask for permission before taking any photos.
- Try not to take photos with three people in the photo. Some older Cambodians think that it is bad luck, especially to be the person in the middle of the photo.⁸⁵

You have reached the end of this 30-day devotional. You may feel a little more nervous, overwhelmed, humbled, dependent upon God – and all of these things are okay. It is God working through you who will make a difference in the lives of the Cambodians you are going to serve.



⁸⁵ Suggestions drawn from Gregory Rodgers, "Etiquette in Cambodia," About.com (2012), http://goseasia.about.com/od/cambodiaculturepeople/a/etiquette_cambodia.htm (accessed February 4, 2013).