

May 2009

MIYANMIAR PROJECT



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Dear Friends,

We hope this letter finds you healthy and looking ahead to summer's approach. We are each healthy and looking forward to seeing family and friends as well as a July 4th celebration, even though we haven't finished the month of May!

In April, we completed our Marriage Enrichment course with several couples, widows and singles from various ethnic groups along the Thai/Myanmar border. They all left the final meeting with smiles and earnest expressions of thankfulness. (The photos in this newsletter provide a small glimpse.) One of the men, a former Buddhist shaman said, "I have been married for 32 years and before you came, I had no idea that my wife was unhappy in our marriage." (The fact that she built herself a separate room in which she hid behind a locked door evidently didn't speak clearly enough.)

Many women had expressed complete surprise that (1) God created the marriage relationship to be a union of pleasure, (2) that being the "helper" of Adam did not make Eve (or women in general) of lesser value, and (3) that the sexual act was not "unholy" in the sight of God. **There were so many lies that they had accepted as truth, and when we walked through the scriptures one by one, they felt liberated and elated. Some of the widows began weeping saying, "I wish we had known these things before,** but I am committed to sharing these truths with my children and young married couples."

During our months of preparation, we sensed that if we are going to be serious about helping the Myanmar church, we needed to help marriages. The issues of AIDS, child abandonment, prostitution, mistrust, cultural deterioration, church instability—all need to be dealt with at a very core level: the marriage relationship.



Craig frequently points out that people are often stirred when they hear truth, but are they challenged and committed enough to *change*?

Three weeks after the last marriage enrichment session, Kara returned to meet with these women one last time. **They were bubbling excitedly about the changes in their husbands' behavior over the last five months** (we began the course in late January and finished in late April.)

Many of you read and responded to the insensitive comment of one husband in our previous newsletter, "It is easier to cut myself than to say I should turn my focus from my mother to my wife!" We are happy to report that when I (Kara) last saw his wife she was giddy as she shared how much the course had changed her husband, *before the marriage course began, my husband told me he would only attend one day, and not to expect more. We were on the verge of divorce, and I was always looking for an opportunity to return to the village of my mother. Now he is spending more private time with me, treating me respectfully, and he even defended me twice when his mother spoke harshly to me.* Her countenance was visibly improved.

When we first met with the group back in January, nearly all the couples said that they spoke with each other less than an hour per week. One young wife tearfully said, "My husband was a child soldier. He was kept in the army from the age of eight, until he was 23. He rarely speaks to me because all those years he had been conditioned not to speak, or demonstrate any feelings." The lesson the husband considered most valuable? The lesson on communication.

Another woman admitted that she had been waiting for years for her husband to change... the

marriage course helped her to realize that she too had a part in their emotional and geographical separation. The husband willingly attended the courses and met with his wife to complete the homework and projects together. Now she walks two miles every Friday to spend the evening with her husband (she lives in a compound with no privacy). They are excited about their new perspectives and the possibilities that accompany them.

Several women commented that the marriage course wasn't just a blessing to them, but benefited the whole family with its end result. (We like to hope that the best results are yet to be realized.) One of the single women has already begun teaching the course to other singles in her church and one of the couples has begun teaching other couples in surrounding villages where violence against women is the norm.

While we are honored to have been a part of this journey with our friends we recognize that all good and perfect gifts come from our Father above (James 1:17) who made it clear in the garden that a happy marriage union was His idea (Genesis 1:26-27). Our role is to point to the scriptures when questions are asked and to be witnesses of the great things God is doing among people who seemingly have no hope.

Myanmar generates a tremendous amount of negative news... we are happy to report something positive and life giving...something many of you played a part in making possible.

Sharing from our hearts and experiences,

The Garrison Family

These smiling faces could be found at the marriage course along the Thai-Burma border.



All gifts toward our work with the people of Myanmar (Burma) should be sent to: The CornerStone International P.O. Box 192, Wilmore, KY 40390. Please write "Myanmar Project" on the memo line. Additionally, you can make secure online donations at www.cornerstoneinternational.org. Click on "Make a Donation" near the top of the homepage to find directions on how to do so. THANK YOU for your generosity towards our family and the people of Burma.

FAQS ABOUT OUR RETURN

In less than a month we will be back in the U.S. for a one year furlough. There have been many questions regarding our return so we've compiled this FAQ list for you. If you have other questions or comments for us, please email us at garrisoncraig@yahoo.com.

When will you return to the States? We will return to the U.S. in mid-June, arriving in Cincinnati, OH.

What's your agenda for the year? Our agenda is three-fold. With Sarah, our oldest child, graduating from high school, we are wanting to help her transition to the next season of life. As of now, she plans on attending a five month YWAM DTS (Discipleship Training School) in Denver, CO starting in October and plans to begin college in the fall of 2010. Second, we are wanting to reconnect with family and friends as we've only been home for 2 months out of the last (almost) 5 years. Third, we are looking forward to visiting with our supporting churches and friends from around the country and share more about what has been happening these past few years.

Where will you be living while back in the U.S.? Our home base will be in Wilmore, KY (where Craig went

to seminary and where our sending agency headquarters is located).

Where will you be traveling in the U.S.? We plan to be in Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Florida, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Indiana, and perhaps a few more states, Lord willing. We are glad to have a year to make it to all these places!

What about your kids' school? We plan to use a combination of online and home schooling for Emilee, Katy and Jake. Because of our anticipated traveling schedule, we are going to need to be relatively mobile and flexible with their school.

What will happen with the work you've been involved with while you are gone for the year? Craig will be returning to Thailand and Burma in November of this year for about 2 weeks to work on a visa renewal (for our return in 2010) and to check on projects. The group of women Kara has been working with for the past three years will come under new leadership and, prayerfully, continue their learning.

How are you feeling about coming back to the U.S.? The best word to describe our feelings is "mixed." While we all are certainly looking forward to seeing friends,

family, supporters, etc., we also realize that transitioning back to our culture of origin can be difficult. We plan to debrief with some trained professionals upon our return and we would certainly appreciate your prayers. Also, we realize that the America we left at the end of 2004 and the America we are returning to in 2009 are not the same. Neither are we. So, there's some anxiety in this as well. And, let's not forget that we have to recall how to drive on the right side of the road, as well as teach two teenagers to drive!

How can we pray for you? As with any transition, we recognize that there are stressors involved. Pray for an attitude of flexibility in all of us as well as embracing this year in our homeland as an adventure. Please pray as well for our finances as we realize that the cost of living in the U.S. is significantly higher than in Thailand. It is humbling and amazing how God has provided for us these last (almost) 5 years. Our faith has increased tremendously as He has shown His faithfulness to us through people like you.

Answered Prayers:

- We will have a mini van, and a small car available to us this next year.
- We finally have our air tickets purchased (after much ado)!