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GLOBAL MISSION
frontline

Stories and News From Our
Urban Centers of Influence



**Hard Like
Pulling a Live
Tiger's Teeth**



Sa-Ngop on his first Sabbath in church

Someone once said trying to share Christ with Thai people is as hard as pulling a live tiger's teeth. Christians have spent decades doing mission work in Thailand, yet only 1.2 percent of its 70 million people identify as Christians. Most of these are from ethnic minorities with animist backgrounds rather than from the mainstream population.

One reason it's difficult is because Thai people see Christianity as a Western religion and becoming a Christian as a loss of their identity. Also, parents are reluctant to allow their children to become Christians because of their beliefs about offerings to their ancestors. It's thought that when one becomes a Christian, they must neglect their "obligation" to their ancestors. This results in



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being isolated from family and society.

The goal of the staff at the urban center of influence (UCI) in Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand, is to create a community of

“Thai-ness Christians.” They want to demonstrate that becoming a Christian won’t negate a person’s

Thai-ness and that a person will not only be more dutiful to their parents but also care for the community and society.

Despite the challenges they face, the staff is building relationships with their community and meeting its needs through their language school, branch Sabbath Schools, radio ministry, and community service projects. Thanks to these activities, many people have come to know Jesus.

One man who recently embraced the gospel is Sa-Ngop. On the outside, he appeared to be a prosperous builder. But inside, Sa-Ngop saw himself as a failure. He felt empty and unhappy. “The problem,” his wife told him, “is that you don’t believe in anything.”

Many Thai people don’t know any Christians. Sa-Ngop’s first contact with Christianity happened when he was hired to renovate Suwane’s home. Suwane, who worked at the UCI, asked Sa-Ngop whether she could pray with him before he started working. She asked God to protect Sa-Ngop and help the project go smoothly for him. Sa-Ngop had never heard a Christian prayer, and he found the experience strange. But he liked Suwane. She was kind and generous and always greeted him politely.

Not long after Sa-Ngop finished Suwane’s home, she called him again. This time, she asked him to do some work at her friend’s house. The friend was a minister, known in Thailand as an “ajarn.” Ajarn Khamsay and his wife also worked at the UCI. They were friendly and treated Sa-Ngop like family.

While working on this job, Sa-Ngop got to know some other friendly Christians staying in Ajarn Khamsay's house. He felt at home in their company.



When Sa-Ngop completed the projects, Ajarn Khamsay asked him to do another renovation project in a nearby area. While working on this job, Sa-Ngop got to know some other friendly Christians staying in Ajarn Khamsay's house. He felt at home in their company. But Sa-Ngop was dealing with some personal problems in his life. His son was involved in a lawsuit, his daughter's business collapsed, and Sa-Ngop had a motorcycle accident. Sa-Ngop was declared at fault, and his motorcycle was confiscated. He was devastated.

At home, Sa-Ngop's wife told him, "It's because you don't believe in anything that

these misfortunes happened to you." One night, out of desperation, Sa-Ngop prayed to God. "I don't know what to do," he said, "but I would appreciate it if you could help me."

When Sa-Ngop went home the following evening, his wife told him the lawsuit was settled. The next week, his daughter's business thrived. Sa-Ngop wondered, has the God of the Christians answered my prayers?

When the renovations were complete, Ajarn Khamsay hired Sa-Ngop again to build an apartment for a church. This project was about two and a half hours from



Sa-Ngop's home, so he camped on the church property. He enjoyed Ajarn Kham-say's occasional visits and the company of the friendly Christians who brought him a delicious lunch each day.

In addition to building the apartment, Sa-Ngop built a foundation for a large water tank. Then, he put up the tank and filled it with water. The next day, he saw that one side of the foundation had collapsed, and the tank was tilted to one side. *It's like someone is holding it to keep it from falling*, Sa-Ngop thought. Sa-Ngop believed that only the God of the Christians could hold that tank.

From then on, Sa-Ngop worshipped with the Christians every Sabbath! God had used the renovating and building jobs with Ajarn Kham-say to renovate and build his broken life! Through the ajarn and his family, Suwanee, and the other Christians at the UCI, Sa-Ngop had come to know how much Jesus loved him.

Fifty-four-year-old Sa-Ngop Pakchak-cheng now believes in the God of the friendly Christians!

"To lead people to Jesus, we must follow His method of ministry," Ajarn Kham-say said. "We must mingle with them, minister to their needs, become their friends, and win their confidence. Only then can we share the gospel message with them. At Ubon UCI, we're committed to befriending and loving the Thai people."

Please for people like Sa-Ngop, and thank you for your prayers and financial support of Urban Centers of Influence like the Ubon UCI. Your faithful gifts are helping Global Mission introduce unreached people to Jesus.

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