

Thailand News

January 2008

Hello from the Land of Smiles and a big welcome to the year 2008,

I am truly excited about what God is going to do this year. We brought in the New Year by having a cookout Thai style. We all stayed up until past midnight playing games and just worshipping.

The first of January, I took the girls up to Puchifaa and spent the night. Puchifaa is a mountain. One side of it is a slope, so you can climb up it. Once at the top, you look down on a sheer cliff drop. Directly below is Laos. From the top, you can see a tiny Hmong village down below. Other than that, it's just green jungle. In the mornings, you're wrapped in a blanket of fog. We left late morning of the 1st after sleeping in until around 9 AM (a real treat as we usually get up at 5 AM – and, in case you're wondering, yes, I do indeed drag myself out of bed at that insane hour). That evening, it was freezing cold and no heater. We stayed in a guest house very close to Puchifaa. That evening we talked about getting rid of the stuff in our lives that hinder us, the stuff that keeps God from working in our lives, things such as jealousy (a huge problem among all Hmong people), complaining, laziness and unforgiveness. The next morning, we got up at 7 and braved the cold weather and the fog and made the 15 minute climb up Puchifaa. We had group devotions where we talked about our goals for the year 2008. This is a new concept for many of them. Hmong people in general don't really look to the future. Many people in the villages are so concerned about where their next meal is coming from that it's hard for them to think about what they're he next year. Just about all Hmong children, especially girls, have never even thought of what they want to be when they grow up. It's a totally foreign concept to them. The 3 older girls are able to set goals and have visions for the future, but the 3 younger girls are still pretty much on the clueless side. We're working on that.

It's exciting and frustrating at the same time. I asked them what they wanted to see God do in their lives this year and I believe that God is going to do a mighty work this year in and through their lives.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO ASK ALL OF YOU THE SAME THING. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE GOD DO IN YOUR LIVES THIS YEAR IN 2008? THIS IS NOT A QUESTION TO JUST SKIM OVER, BUT ONE TO PONDER.

The Bible says that Mary (when Jesus was still very, very young) pondered or treasured all of these things in her heart. How much do we ponder and treasure what God is doing in our lives??? For those of you who would like to share with me by email, I would love to hear what God is doing in your lives and what you want to see Him do.

Please pray for all 6 girls:

*pray that they would stick to these goals as God directs

*pray that they wouldn't get sidetracked by boys or other things

*most of all, pray that they would see God in a bigger way than they have before

PRAISE:

This April, Kia is going to come and live and work with the girls. As you know, we have been praying for quite a while for a Hmong woman to come work with the girls. Kia is graduating from Payao Bible College this March. She is 23 years old, and is very mature. She did her internship at an orphanage in Chiang Mai and we believe this is the person that God has brought. I am very excited. It's an answer to prayer. I love the girls and I have treasured my time with them, but about a month ago, before we met Kia, God told me that He has other things for me to do this year and that it was time to move out. Before you guys start freaking out, that doesn't mean that I will not still be

working with the girls and with the Bible Training Center. That simply means that I will not be living with everyone and that I will not be taking care of the girls directly, but I will still teach English and will still be involved in their lives.

So, you ask, Susan, what are you going to do? I'm excited about actually learning Hmong (yes, I know I've been talking about this for quite a while now) and going into the villages and doing more teaching. I have an opportunity the end of this month to go to Nong Khai, which is on the Thai/Laos border, but quite a ways from here with another missionary and some Hmong pastors to do some Bible/leadership training for women. I have many ideas floating around in my head right now, so please pray for wisdom from God that I would know specifically what He wants me to do, but I'm excited about branching out a little.

Thank you for praying for the family who lost 2 sons in 6 months. They are doing ok. The father is now back studying Bible in Measai, but his wife refused to go with him and is now sitting at home doing basically nothing. She's really struggling and I'm concerned about her, so please continue to pray for her. I had a chance to see their daughter who lives at a hostel in Chiang Rai and she is ok. She's getting through this, but I know it's hard for her.



(Christmas Program)

Christmas just keeps lingering on and on. (You gotta love that!) The last weekend in December we took the Bible students and 3 of my girls to Huay Ku village to give Christmas to those in the village who would otherwise not have anything. It's a

great time of outreach, to minister to the believers there (there are believers, but no church) and to share with those who aren't Christians. We spent the night there, and it was freezing cold, especially sleeping on the hard concrete floor in the school. But it was totally worth it to see the smiles on the children's faces. As we were coming back, I asked my 3 girls what impressed them about the weekend. Plai (this was her first outreach) said that she was impressed with the way the children in the village obeyed. They were interested in what we said and they followed directions during the games. She said the kids in her village (Plai's village is much more developed than Huay Ku) don't listen, don't obey, and don't care. It was quite an eye opening experience for them. While we were in this village, we met 2 families from a surrounding country who are here in Thailand escaping persecution. It was such a blessing getting to meet them and hear their story. They said that we were like angels coming to visit. I would like to share their story with you.

They had to swim across the river. I think that if I had to swim across the river, I would probably die as the river is very wide and very cold. I asked them what they thought of as they were crossing the river. They said they weren't thinking of anything because they were so afraid back in their home country. They just prayed and put their lives in God's hands. After praying, 4 of them tied their arms together with rope. Two of them can't swim and they didn't want those who couldn't swim to fall into the river and drown. It took them almost a full night of swimming to get to the Thai side. Between the wind and the river and river currents, they were blown about 3 kilometers down the river. As they were being blown down the river, the rope that was holding them together broke and the 2 who couldn't swim started to go under. Then they got caught in a whirlpool. By that time, they had no strength left and had just about given up hope. They cried out to God and He answered. God sent a strong wind behind them and pushed them out of the whirlpool.



The arrow in this picture shows where they reached dry land. No one lives in that particular spot. Upon reaching dry land, they were very cold and had to hug each other to keep warm.

May we thank God every day for the freedom we have to worship Him and may we never take that freedom for granted.

David and Jaelyn have 2 more months before they are finished studying here at the Bible Training Center. They are doing well. David's English is very good and he's starting to translate more and more. He's asking me to "preach" to him 15 minutes every day so he can practice translating. He's doing very, very well. (Just so you know, I teach English to all the Bible students, but I don't require them to translate like that. That is something that David is doing on his own because he really wants to study.) As I write this, Jaelyn is back in her home village, (her village is Huay Ku, the village where we did Christmas at) for Hmong New Year. She's helping lead the children and also some adults. She's almost 18 years old, but when you talk to her, you'd think she's about 25 or so. It's really quite amazing how God has matured her. Some of their support is in, but not all. Please continue to pray for them.

May God bless your little socks off this new year.

Susan



Susan & Coffee

CONTACT INFORMATION:

SNAIL MAIL:

PO BOX 99
Chiang Khong
Chiang Rai 57140
Thailand

PHONE:

+66 84613-8121

WEB ADDRESS:

www.calvarycg.org/sstaples

EMAIL:

susanmarie777@hotmail.com

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