

1 March 2006

## “Tell us a story,”

the men said to Tom, Jeff and Jet when all were seated on the mat. They knew the strangers had come to tell them something new. They were interested. So, they arranged to gather in a house and got out a mat for sitting. They had even organized refreshments, fermented palm toddy (made locally from the sweet juice of the sugar palm tree) and roasted cowhide with charred bits of meat clinging to it.

Radios, TVs, telephones and electricity are rare in this rural village. So, a visit from a distant relative (Jet) and some foreign friends created quite a stir. A meeting and a chance to hear a new story was in order. In Kuy culture, sharing stories is a way to pass on information or to entertain each other.

It had taken the three men more than a day and a half to get to the village of Thmea by motorbike. They had to delay their start a bit waiting for Jet’s bike to get fixed. Jeff’s bike broke down just a few kilometers from Rovieng. The others pushed him in and they had to abandon

that bike at a repair shop to get up to Che Saen that day. On the third day they made to Thmea, where Jet has relatives.

They were able to tell some Bible stories and talk a lot about the gospel on the mat that evening. Jet, a Khmer church leader, had been given some instruction and examples of how to tell Bible stories. But when it came down to the mat, he fell back on his own strong Christian traditions. He found it difficult to leave out the “Christian language” to which he is so accustomed. It would be a bit like a believer in the US using “King James vocabulary” to share the story of Jesus in an elementary classroom.

Tom, Jet and Jeff spent three nights sleeping in hammocks with mosquito nets slung under peoples’ homes. They made the return trip in one long day. Jeff’s motorcycle had been fixed well enough to make it back. Tom’s broke down about an hour from Phnom Penh. He had to catch a ride in a van and tie it on the back!

Tom went back to this same village again with another Khmer friend, Meng. His tendency is to expound on the stories. It was clear to Tom from these two trips that people in predominantly oral cultures learn by apprenticeship, that is, by being with someone who knows how to do what they need to learn. We need to work to improve our training methods for story tellers.

Pray with us that Kuy villagers will begin to believe the Bible stories and want to know more so that a house church would be born in Thmea.

### Pray for these workers

- Tom and Lynn—Pray for wisdom to develop helpful tools and equip others to reach out to the Kuy.
- Ralph and Kim Lewis (New Tribes Missionaries) - Pray for their family as they settle back into the Kuy village after being on home assignment, for facility in Kuy language and good relationships.
- Kes Jan and Myriam Bos (SIL) - Pray for wisdom as they work on an orthography for the Kuy language.
- Jon and Kristen Smedley (New Tribes) - Pray for their acquisition of Khmer in preparation for going to work with Ralph and Kim Lewis.
- Matt Cinavou and Ben Ryland (Christian Mission Fellowship, Fiji) - Pray for their adjustment to life in Cambodia and their Khmer language study. They plan to move to a Kuy village next year.
- Pastor Kamsorn (Thai pastor) - Pray for vision as he comes to see the Kuy and thinks about how he and his church can get involved.

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