



January 2015

I've been meaning to do this for a while, but things just seemed to keep getting in the way. Today though seemed like a good time to share with you everything I've been doing for the last seven months. On Christmas Eve, I had the opportunity to stand up in front of all 1000 students and teachers at this school and tell the real Christmas story—about how much God loves us and wants us to be with Him in Heaven, and how he sent Jesus so we could be. Then, I was able to pray over the school. After it was over, I stood there and thought about how much better it would be if I had people praying over this school with me, so here we are.

I'd like to tell you about my school: Srisongrak Wittaya School located in Dan Sai, Loei, Thailand. There isn't much to Dan Sai. It's located up in the North-eastern part of the country, which is considered more backwards and "country". In many ways, it sort of is. We're out in the sticks here, and they do things differently, including Buddhism. Unlike the rest of the country, the Buddhism here is mixed with a bit of animism and is far more demonic in nature. Dan Sai is the only part of Thailand that celebrates "Phitakhon", a rather demonic festival in which the people of Dan Sai pay homage to and celebrate the evil spirits in the area so that they will protect them over the rest of the year.

Srisongrak Wittaya is the local middle school and high school and has about one thousand students. The rather interesting thing about Srisongrak though, is that it is about the equivalent of an inner city school. Anyone with a decent amount of money sends their children to schools in the neighboring large cities during the week, and they come home on the weekends. The small poor villages all around Dan Sai send their children here to school, so the school itself is rather poor and the students are even more so. I have been offered jobs in large schools all around the Loei province for much higher pay, better hours, and better students. However, I feel like God has led me to this school and to this missionary family (the Stubenrauchs) here in Dan Sai. I don't want to leave them. I am frequently very frustrated with this school and with some of the students, and even some of the teachers, but I'm not here for myself (as I have to frequently remind myself), I'm here for God.



"Phitakhon"



Students



Sports Day



Which brings me to my next point; it's been seven months. My contract ends in another four months and two months of that I'll be home. I've thought and prayed about it a lot and I don't think I'll be finished here when May comes. So, I've decided to stay another year in Thailand. The Thai government is giving this school a grant to start a miniature English program, but they can't do it without a native English speaker. I want to stay and help them run their program and continue to do my best to minister to the students and teachers at this school. I'm very excited about the prospect of teaching smaller, higher level English classes next year, and I'm already excited about different things I'll be able to do in the classroom and outside of the classroom.

I'd really like your help though in praying for this school. It's very dark and very Buddhist, and Dan Sai is very dark and very Buddhist. Please keep this school and everyone in it in your prayers, and please pray for a miraculous spiritual awakening in this village. I want to see great miracles done here. I want to see this entire village turn to the Lord.

Thank you so much. I love you all and I miss you.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Leah



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