

May 25, 2009

Dear Friend,

After returning from my recent trip to Cambodia, and first since the inception of the Lydia Project, I have been trying to determine the best and most responsible way to report what I encountered to you. Most of you know me very well, and one thing is for certain, I am very, very rarely at a loss for words. In fact, something I have had to work on over the years is my annoying habit of speaking over folks and finishing others' sentences. (Just ask Stephanie; she has put up with me for over 29 years!)

The problem I'm having is that the needs are so great I do not know how or where to begin. But here goes.

When all of us receive letters from all of the care organizations, like World Vision and Compassion and others who do great works around the globe, we are touched by the stories and the photographs and the pressing needs. Steph and I sponsor children with both of the afore-mentioned organizations as well as supporting several others, so when the new requests come, I sometimes simply throw them away, as I am "doing my part" already.

I also know, after having read the annual reports, that there is a significant organization behind these causes, and the likelihood is that the children they have encountered and agreed to care for will be provided the basics of food and clean water, even if I don't give today. (At least, that is my way of moving past the moment.)

Upon visiting the Khmer Christian Orphanage, driving into the jungle, and down the bumpiest road I've likely ever travelled, about 30 kilometers outside of Battambang, I encountered 28 happy, smiling children, ages 6 to 21, a young pastor named Vanny and his wife Som Nang and Vanny's parents, his father a retired pastor. **32 people in all, living in a small compound with no running or filtered water, no electricity, and a food source of primarily rice that relies totally on the belief and assurance that the Lord will provide.**

Khmer Christian Orphanage, you see, has no organization behind it.

Vanny and Som Nang felt the call to take in a child here and another there several years ago, and the tragic stories of broken families, lost parents and rescue from abuse equal exactly the number of children they have rescued and now love as their own.

The original "sponsor", an American named Charles, is now elderly and is no longer able to support the orphanage. So Vanny prayed and asked God to help him find assistance and food for the children, and somehow, Bob and Kay Petrik's email address found it's way to him (it is still not clear how). Bob and Kay then founded Lydia as a response to this and other needs that permeate this country, still suffering from the ravages of the Khmer Rouge.

So, as we describe the needs at the orphanage, and as you consider how you and your family might come alongside to help, please keep in mind one thing that has been the pressing prompting of the spirit on my heart since I left that day. *There was a pouring rain that flooded the kitchen (two blocks with an open fire and a rice pot), the laundry area (a cistern of pond water and a stone) and the dishwashing table (same cistern of unfiltered cold pond water and some dishwashing soap) and all of the eating areas. (The "roof is a thatch that has grown as porous as a screen, and serves no real purpose other than to block out the sun on the hot days.)*

The prompting I felt as I watched all this was to tell everyone I know that these beautiful children need your help and my help. You see, we, (the Petrik's, Bob and Kay and their two son's and families and Stephanie and I and our children) are the only resource these children have right now, today, for life sustaining food, access to clean water, proper shelter, lye soap to combat lice, medicines to combat scabies from the unclean bath water, and all of the other things we all take not only for granted, but that we have forgotten we even have and use.

There is no "fall back" organization that will send the \$1650 a month necessary for food and the basic needs. We, as they say, "are it!"

So, that is why I write. The needs are urgent, and God is sufficient to provide for them. Of course, we will begin simultaneously to reach out to organizations and foundations and NGO's that might be able to step in and provide assistance, but as you know those requests take time, and are not predictable. That is why our request is that you consider including these young ones in your giving, and if that is not possible, in your prayers and those of your small groups and friends.

Lydia will contribute 100% of your giving for the orphanage directly. There is no marketing expense or overhead expense deducted. 100% of the monies will go directly to these children and the needs outlined on the enclosed document. Even the printing and mailing of these letters has been donated.

The Lydia Project, while just getting underway, has been presented with many needs that we will attempt to address. New church planting, rice distribution in poor villages, a goat farm to provide a reproducible method of assistance for rural churches serving the poor, and providing support for Khmer Krafts a project allowing poor young women to learn a trade and become self-sufficient while learning how they can have confidence in themselves and their abilities, as well as how valuable they are to God.

All of these projects, and information as to how you might support them and share them with others, will follow soon in upcoming newsletters as well as the new Lydia Project website that will launch in just a few short weeks.

This letter however is to request that you consider if the Lord might prompt you to make a commitment to Khmer Christian Orphanage. Our commitment is to be certain that your gifts are used wisely.

In His service,

Rob Corley

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after Widows and Orphans in their distress." —James 1:27 (NIV)