

## FAITH FOR THE MOMENT - ADVERSITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

By John Meriweather  
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**H**ave you ever considered the magnitude, the enormity, of God's mission? To go unto ALL the world? To make disciples in EVERY nation, tribe, tongue, and people? How easy is it for us to place human limits on an all-powerful, limitless God? Still we go. We do our part.

There is an old Arab proverb that says, "It isn't the mountain ahead that deters my journey; it is the grain of sand in my shoe."

Often it isn't the enormity of the mission that causes us to stumble but the grain of sand—the challenge of the moment—that tests our faith.

God is faithful. We know that to be true. We proclaim God's faithfulness when we reflect on the past. We see the big picture of God at work in our rearview mirror – how God has blessed those faithful men and women over the years who have answered the call to "go and tell." We see that fruit today all around the world.

And we cling to God's promises for the future, believing God will continue to bless our faithful efforts today. That ultimately God's glory will be made known and his kingdom expanded through the prayerful toil of faithful servants around the world.

But it's the grain of sand in the shoe—the circumstances of the moment—that often ensnares us. We know God has proven faithful in the past, we believe he will be faithful in the future, but what about today? What about the situation I'm currently facing? What about the very next step of my journey?

In the countries of Southeast Asia where BMA missionaries are serving, the mountains are real. They are areas of the world where Christianity is suppressed and where false religions are ingrained in the culture. It has been said that in Thailand, for example, it can take up to seven years to see conversion and discipleship due to the "mountain" of Buddhism. The same is true in the Himalayas and in India with Hinduism. In Myanmar, oppression, suffering, and literal sacrifice is real. All of these are mountains our missionaries face.

But it is the day-to-day work that so often challenges our faith and resolve:

When that relationship we invested in for so long is severed.

When the visa is denied.

When you are kicked out of the building you've been meeting in.

When converts stray.

When doors of opportunity are slammed in your face.

When you are constantly battling a system and culture that is against you.

In these moments, the mountain is blurred by the moment. It's the current crisis, indeed the constant stream of disappointments that become countless grains of sand in our shoes.

For our missionaries all across Southeast Asia, First Peter 5:6-10 says, "Humble



yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."

In Thailand, India, Myanmar, and new churches in the Himalayas, pray for the mountains they face, and the persecution, oppression, and false religions that drown out the truth. These are ever present conditions. They are real. They are hard.

But also pray for faith in the moment, for today, for this week—for our missionaries to be "firm in the faith, knowing the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by brothers throughout the world." Pray they will cling to the God of all grace, the God of unwavering faithfulness. Pray they will not be deterred by the moment, by the immediate crisis, by doors that refuse to open. Pray that Christ will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish them.

And most of all, pray that God will be glorified, his truth revealed, lives transformed, disciples made, and churches planted.

Every nation, tribe, tongue, and people – that's the mission. It's big, even enormous, but we move forward in the faith that was revealed in the past, promised for the future, and necessary for today.



# mission:world

## NEWS

## A WARM DIVIDE, A SLOW ANSWER

By Miriam

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**A**s a warm culture here in Southeast Asia, time is of little consequence. Quality time and friendships are prioritized over the scheduled, fast-paced culture we are controlled by in the West. Personally, I generally prefer this slow, easy-going culture. The day is not determined by every task you must accomplish or by planning far ahead but by steadily gliding through each day wherever it may take you. Yet what good is this when we are pressed under the imminent return of Christ? As Mark 1:15 states, “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” This is an urgent call. Man should not take his time responding to this kind of call.

In our predominantly Hindu country, every household awakens early to begin the daily religious rituals. They light candles, burn incense, ring bells, and blow into their shelled horns to awaken their millions of gods and ask them to bless their homes. How

can one convince a nation of people that believes all gods are one, that only one God exists? How can we convince them that they must repent of their sin? How can we explain to them that they are indeed a sinner in need of repentance? Our prayer is that this nation would awaken to the urgency of their spiritual condition and ensure their futures are settled in Christ. A task only the Holy Spirit can do.

However, as the hands and feet of Christ, we are honored with the job to arise each day, go out into the streets, go out into the mountains, and seek people to share the truth and free gift of grace the Lord has for them. Graven images of wood and stone have no power to save. The demons hiding behind these masks are the true puppeteers and have used the impressionable minds of the people to enslave an entire country to idolatry. Our command is simple, but the execution is difficult.

A man was recently asked, “Do you know what sin is?”

“Sin is the bad things we do,” he replied confidently, something not everyone in this country often has an answer to.

Once more, he was asked, “And where do you go if you sin or do bad things?”

“Sinful people go to hell and perfect people go to heaven,” he retorted.

“But is this not bad news for you and I? I am a sinner and you are a sinner. I am certainly not perfect. I don’t know anyone who is . . . !”

This man’s replies were very much the same as everyone else we have asked. They understand the concept of sin and doing wrong but not how it applies to them or how it applies to the eternally Holy God they have sinned against. What rings as truth in their ears falls dead before it reaches their hearts.

Please pray for our ministry, pray for the lost, pray that Jesus would intercede on behalf of our friends and draw them into the Father’s fold of grace.

Pray that we might not be harmed by the dark and evil forces of the devil in this country.

Pray that we might equip ourselves each day for battle and remain victorious in Christ.

Pray that the people of this country would not tarry in making the choice to repent.

Pray that they would hastily take hold of this offer of salvation and cleave to it earnestly until the second coming of our Lord.



# mission:world

## NEWS

## LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE

By Sean Pasley  
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Every international missionary's first priority should be a committed effort towards learning the language of the country they're going to, so it's no surprise that for the better part of our two years in France, it has consumed my every waking moment. As a non-missionary you might not have attended a dedicated language school or have a 1000-day streak on Duolingo, but every Christian has had to learn a new language. (And no, I'm not talking about Hebrew and Greek ... although you should!)

American Christians have developed a peculiar vernacular that I like to call "Christianese" – a Bible-based adjacent dialect that combines Bible references with folksy wisdom. For example: "In this season of life I'm feeling 'convicted' to 'spread the love of Jesus' to 'the nations.'" Have your Google Translate app give that one a try.

But while "Christianese" really is only a set of cute expressions that have developed around our shared culture, there can be a danger in using this language. Will anyone outside of your particular church culture circle understand what you're saying when you're speaking about the most important subject in the world? If you were to share the gospel with a neighbor, would he or she understand what you mean when you tell them they need to "invite Jesus into their heart"?

When speaking about eternal things, we should instead use language that the Bible gives us and be able to define it succinctly.

A helpful example of this would be Dr. Clif Johnson's first message at the 2023 BMA National Meeting. While encouraging every pastor and missionary present that teaching "good doctrine" is not optional, Dr. Johnson blessedly defines what "doctrine" actually means! Doctrine, or "the faith," in the context of Paul's epistles to Timothy, is the sound, biblical teaching that has been handed down throughout the ages—the entirety of God's revelation to man (1 Tim. 1:1-7, 4:6-16, 6:20, 2 Tim. 1:13-14, 3:10, 14-17). If we were to incorrectly define "doctrine" or worse yet, avoid the term altogether for the sake of our Christianese, we would in fact not be teaching what accords with sound doctrine and would be disobeying the command of the Lord. My encouragement to every Christian is to learn the language the Bible uses and to use it regularly yourself.

Unfortunately, there is even a danger in using the right words!

With the ever-looming presence of the Roman Catholic Church here in France, I have spent many hours researching their teachings in order to better understand what the traditionally majority religion of this country believes. Some evangelical scholars will tell you that we have more in common with Rome than we have differences, but that opinion is generally based upon the language we both use. In his book *Same Words, Different Worlds* Leonardo de Chirico warns that Protestants (this includes us BMA Baptists) must be careful not to fall into the trap of joining with Rome as if we worshiped the same God.

While the language might sound the same, the meanings of key terms could not be more different. A Roman Catholic and a Baptist could both say that we pray to God, but who is this God? How do we pray? Must we pray through an intercessor? Who is it that intercedes for us? All these questions will be answered differently, and the definitions of each of these terms varies wildly depending on who is responding, the Catholic or the

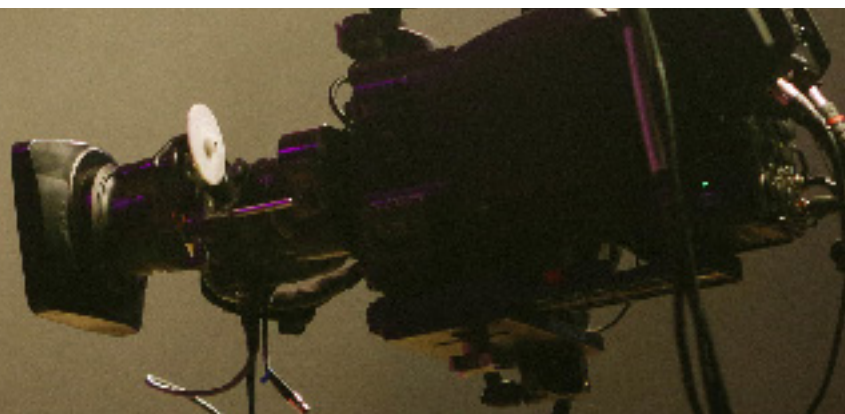
Protestant. So as with the world's languages, there can be false friends (i.e., embarrassed and the Spanish *embarazada*, which means "pregnant") and we must work hard not just to agree on the sounds of the language as if we could just pantomime our way through a conversation, but to get the underlying meaning correct in order to actually engage in this new tongue.

That being said, it is every Christian's responsibility to be a good language learner, not just those in a foreign field. As Baptists, one of our defining characteristics is that we believe the Bible, God's very Word, to be our sole guide for faith and practice. We let the Bible speak for itself and define its own terms. This is one of the reasons expositional sermons where the point of the text is the point of the message are so vital for developing good Christian doctrine. God has his own language, he defines his own words; and instead of modifying it into a mangled creole, we not only learn the original language but speak it ourselves.

So as a final encouragement, with those who are in your care, whether your children or your church, teach them what words like conviction and repentance, and phrases like penal substitutionary atonement, mean according to the source book, because this is the language that will change their lives and set them on the path to real fluency with the Word of God.







# TAKE A “TRIP” THROUGH EUROPE

By Heather Harrison

Lifeword

[lifeword.org](http://lifeword.org)

Right now, as you read this newsletter, Lifeword team members around the world are sharing the gospel through various forms of media and creatively adapting their methods to reach as many people as possible with the gospel. Their deepest desire is that many would hear about Jesus Christ and the hope found only in Him. Allow us to “take you on a trip” across the Atlantic Ocean to see some of what God is doing in Europe.

In Romania, Bodgan Bilav and his wife Daniela’s ministry is two-fold: church planting and producing internet and radio programs to share about God and his Word. They each produce Lifeword shows in Romanian: His show is called Spiritual Impulse and Daniela’s is called Daily Devotionals. They also produce programs in the Romanian, Gypsy, Hungarian, and French languages. Their main work is with the Gypsy people, who are considered outcasts in Romania. The radio programs they produce for the Gypsy people include sharing the gospel along with a lot of music. Bogdan says, “They are a very musical and expressive people.” They have found that music is an effective way to reach the Gypsies since the literacy rate among them is very low. They also have after school programs to help the children with homework, which have been well-received due to the low literacy rate.

With the war raging on in Ukraine, ministry has gotten increasingly difficult. In a recent email, Lifeword partner Pasha shared, “We’ve experienced more in one year than many experiences in their entire lives.” Yet he acknowledges how God continues to work in these dire circumstances: “We are thankful for seeing the greatness of the Lord and His work in the midst of this difficult time.” Having to adjust to a new reality, they have had their own intense struggles and also been able to help others in significant ways: After having to move from Kyiv for three months and live with friends far away from their home, they have also helped those running away from active battles in their native towns and villages and others who lost their homes and relatives. Currently, Pasha is producing a series titled Word of Life in Every Book of

the Bible, which shares God’s hope in every book of the Bible and how to apply scripture.

Sean Pasley and his family are BMA Global missionaries and Lifeword team members living in France. Sean is producing a new podcast, Saine Doctrine. Saine is a word which means “healthy” or “sound.” What a great name for a podcast that shares Christ and teaches doctrine. In his monthly newsletter, Sean says, “The purpose of the podcast is to briefly survey core Christian doctrines and concepts that are mostly unfamiliar to the secular French.” Episodes are in French and are released bi-weekly.

Whether the struggle is war, resistance to the message, financial issues, or relational burdens, our Lifeword partners in Europe continue to face difficulties in their lives and ministries. But God is doing a mighty work in the midst of it all. Thank you for your partnership with Lifeword; your support is resulting in the strengthening and equipping of these hardworking missionaries and in countless people hearing the truth and hope of Jesus Christ.

