

# Luke & Alyssa Miller

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## A DREAM FULFILLED

For years Boy, a PYF coworker, and I have been dreaming about doing ministry in the village where he grew up. We would sit at our desks and talk for hours about his village's deep ties to Buddhism and Animism. He would cry as he shared the burden of his parents not knowing the Lord.

One of the most striking things he said to me was, "I'm just waiting. Just waiting for God to send someone to my village to share the Gospel because I know if there is a community of believers, my family will come to Christ." With my western mindset, it took me some time to understand this concept of faith being born in community. Thailand is a collectivistic culture, so being connected to your tribe is essential in everyday life. This idea doesn't just involve physical needs like sharing the fruit you grow with your neighbor, but spiritual needs as a community shares their beliefs, values, and customs in the way they live their everyday life.

There are many reasons the Gospel is slow to reach Thailand. One reason we see is that many people have still not heard the good news of Jesus. Matthew 9:37 says, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." The Gospel can reach a village, but who will stay in the village to build a church, teach the believers, or carry a burden for the entire village to hear the Gospel? Boy carries that vision, so we are partnering with him in every way we can to see his village come to Christ.

After years of planning, we were able to go to the village. We took previous students from our leadership program, a few of our PYF staff, and a team called Ends Adventures from the states. As Boy and I planned out how the team would serve, I knew God had a special plan for this village. I have never been more amazed by what God can do when his people decide to go and simply show love.

During the time we spent there, we were

able to lead a full day children's program at the local school where the Gospel was shared with every child in the village. We split into ministry groups where some went house to house to pray and encourage people, some worked on fixing broken water pipes and construction, and some were able to meet with the village chief and pray for his family. We were also able to travel to two different villages where churches had been planted to encourage the believers. Our Telos students shared their testimonies, led worship, and used drama to share God's love. Each moment felt like it was all part of a necessary step in planting seeds for Boy's village to receive the message of the Gospel.

My favorite moment was finally, after waiting years, being able to visit Boy's home and meet his family. To see where he came from and to now understand the context of his burden for his family and the community that raised him was powerful.



## MINISTRY IN BRIEF



### TELOS GRADUATION 2024

In January, we held our final camp and graduation for our 2024 Telos students. It was a bittersweet time together as we challenged students to go deeper in their faith and said “goodbye” to all the students graduating high school. We are so proud of each participant and how they have grown personally and spiritually throughout the year.



### TELOS WELCOME DAY 2025

In February, we welcomed 84 new students to our youth leadership program. The Welcome Day event was a success as it was an opportunity for new students to learn about the program and begin planning their service projects for 2025.



### HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

It is always special being able to attend high school graduations and supporting students in that special moment. The look on their faces when they see someone has come to celebrate them is always rewarding. Some of the students aren't expecting anyone to be there for them, so it is a quite an honor to be there and cheer them on.

## → FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

When we do ministry with youth, we want them to see and understand Jesus as someone who was also human and relatable. This concept crosses cultural barriers and makes Jesus real for students. The best example I have ever seen of this was when we had a short-term team from New International come to work alongside us.

We had a random drawing for a “buddy system” where each visitor was teamed up with a Thai youth for the weekend. When our friend Bryan drew Somchai's name, I knew immediately it was a perfect match. They instantly connected, sharing tattoos and life stories. The truth about Somchai is that he has been one of our most challenged students. It is honestly a miracle he is alive.

Bryan's love and shared life experience immediately broke through the cultural barriers and Somchai was able to see and understand Jesus' love for him in an incarnational way. I have honestly never seen Somchai smile more in his life. It was as if for the first time, there was someone who truly understood him,

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cared about him, and made him feel safe to be himself. Relationships like this are essential for young people to understand the love and hope of the Gospel.

Each student that we work with has a story. A story about who they are, where they've been, and where they think they are going. One of the biggest blessings is that we are able to be present and dependable in the lives of these students. We are able to see countless young people come to faith, find their way, and become the incarnational

love of Jesus this country so desperately needs.

Working with our student leadership group often reminds me of the story in the Bible where the disciples immediately dropped their fishing nets to follow Jesus. They saw and realized the call to follow Jesus was so good, they left everything behind. As we remind our students often, this call to serve and follow the Lord should not come from a place of guilt, but a place of a transformed heart, and a realization of God's love. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because He first loved us."

The students we work with have more struggles and barriers than I can even count. But, when the Gospel reaches these youth something truly amazing happens. Instead of ignoring the call to follow Jesus due to past pain and hurt, they embrace it. They, just like the disciples did, drop their nets and follow him.

One of our favorite things to see is youth

grow in their confidence. To see them begin believing in themselves and their ability to thrive as they navigate high school, college, and their careers. Often young people in institutional care feel like a burden to their caretakers and to society. We believe for all young people a paradigm shift can take place; where self awareness, emotional well-being, and spiritual growth can take place. This shift is essential as youth recognize their value and importance to God and the world around them.



## FAMILY UPDATE

In February, we moved to a new house after being told we needed to leave our previous one. This being our fifth house in six years has made it difficult to feel settled. Shortly after this, True was bitten by a neighbor's guard dog who escaped. Luke has also been dealing with various health issues. It has been a stressful few months, with lots

of unforeseen changes and challenges.

When I was younger, I had a professor who served for many years throughout Asia. She told me that she kept a small piece of paper with Nehemiah 8:10 written on it. "The joy of the LORD is your strength." She too was raising young children overseas and faced countless moves. She said that whenever she set up a new place, the first thing she did was find that piece of paper and hang it up on the refrigerator. When she was feeling weak or defeated, she would glance at the paper and remember the source of her strength. I have also come to believe and experience this "joy as strength." Not as a fleeting moment of gratification or burst of energy, but a deep, abiding joy rooted in God's character and promises.

Thailand and its people remain deeply in our hearts. Our family is committed and feels joyful to have the opportunity to serve the Lord and continue our work here. Thank you for your faithfulness in prayer and giving; allowing us to continue serving this beloved group of people.





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