



Youth for Christ

December 2008

Asia Pacific

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"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Psalm 46:10)

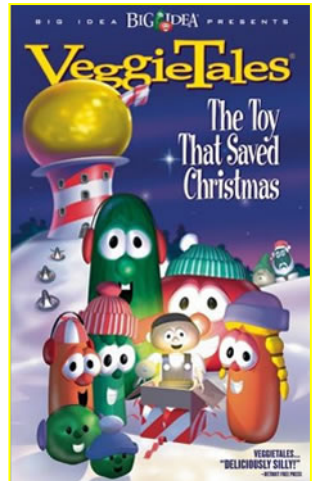
Dear Friend,

Greetings from Thailand, recently voted 7th in the *Top 20 Most Dangerous Places* compiled by the *Telegraph* newspaper of London because of "major political demonstrations and a temporary state of emergency" at the two Bangkok airports. This latest edition of the list puts Thailand behind Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, South Africa, Somalia and Sudan as the most-dangerous spot for travelers.

What a fall from grace since July, 2008 when *Travel + Leisure* magazine listed Bangkok as the best tourism city in the world. The fall seems a bit severe unless if you happened to be near either of Bangkok airports, needed to visit Bangkok, or were trying to travel from Bangkok to another country over the past week. Unfortunately for us, all three of these scenarios have recently taken place. (We share more about this on the reverse side.)

Before we tell more of this unfolding story, let us pause and wish you a Merry Christmas!

We are reminded of the VeggieTales *The Toy That Saved Christmas* DVD where the main characters learn that it is better to give than receive and boldly claim that giving "is the real meaning of Christmas." Are they serious? Jesus did say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." But, is that the "real meaning of Christmas?" The real meaning of Christmas is more than a good moral lesson, isn't it?



The many crises around the world and even now in Bangkok remind us that suffering, evil, and unlawfulness are always with us—sometimes they are just closer, more severe, and more in our face than for others. Maybe this is a good reminder for us this Christmas because it is often easy to focus on the gifts and what we give or get at Christmas. Focusing on "giving" at Christmas is better than focusing on "getting", but it still falls short of the point.

The real meaning of Christmas is more about **why** God came and **what he saved us from**. For the next Veggie Tales Christmas special, we would like to propose that the real meaning of Christmas is: *Easter!* But, maybe that wouldn't sell many DVD's. A Halleluiah chorus anyone?

Merry Christmas from the Cougill's!

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Youth for Christ



The Tables Were Turned

In November, 2008 the tables were turned. In April, 2006, Scott went to Dhaka, Bangladesh to meet with Niko Thapa, our YFC Nepal National Director, with Peter Halder (Bangladesh) and Prabha George (India). But, Niko couldn't get there because a National Strike was called in Bangladesh and a curfew implemented.

On November 26th, Scott was supposed to meet Niko in Bangkok, but when we woke up early to go to the airport we learned that the new Bangkok airport was closed due to political protesters. All flights in and out of BKK were canceled and thousands of people were stranded at the airport. We contemplated trying to get to the old Bangkok airport, but flights to the old Bangkok airport sold out immediately. Then, bombs went off in front of both the new and old Bangkok airports. It was crazy.

Things have only gotten worse. Now both Bangkok airports are shut down, over hundreds of thousands of travelers have missed flights and there are no flights in or out of Bangkok—Asia's fourth busiest airport. We have no idea what will happen next or when this will end. As of this writing, the airports are still closed and there is no sign of opening again soon.

The irony is that usually these kind of problems happen in South Asia, not Thailand. Thailand is the safe place. What is going on here? The simple answer is that the protestors are from a group called People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), which is an interesting name to call yourselves when, essentially, you are forcefully blocking the airports because you don't like the democratically elected party and their Prime Minister.

These protests have isolated Thailand and, without compromise from someone, could lead to considerable violence.

Many challenges still remain in South Asia also. Nepal was for a long time the only official Hindu Kingdom in the world and now is led by communist Maoists. Sri Lanka's conflict is intensifying between the ethnic Sinhalese (Buddhists) and Tamil (Muslims). Two of the youth we work with were passive victims of the violence there last month (they were killed).

In the midst of all this chaos, fear, distress, and hopelessness, faithful staff and volunteers of YFC are tirelessly working with young people—feeding them, teaching them, training them, caring for them, and loving them—truly demonstrating the real love of Christ. And many are turning to Christ in this time of chaos.

Yet, in each of these South Asian countries, we witness how the Lord is using YFC to make a difference in these nations. In Bangladesh, in just the past five years, YFC's work with youth has grown to 14 centers across the country working with drug addicts, street children, families, churches, and schools (yes, even some Muslim schools) to share the love of Christ to a lost and hurting generation. In Nepal, YFC has officially registered with the government and has a new desire to help and provide job skills for street kids in Kathmandu. Similar ministry growth has also been seen in Sri Lanka, India and now Bhutan, one of the most closed countries of the world and the newest democracy.

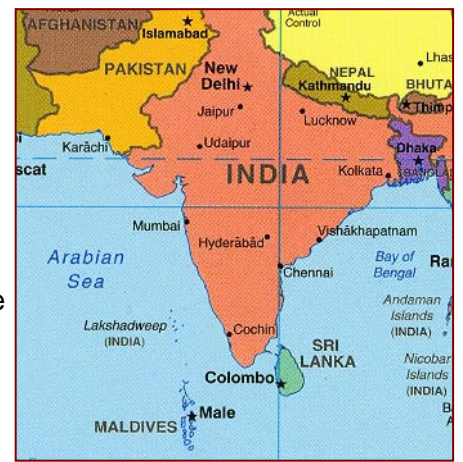
One of the keys to this success is strong leadership—which YFC is blessed to have across South Asia. A history of strong local, regional, and international training has made a difference with our key staff and volunteers.

In October 2006 in Bangalore, India we planned for the first ASPIRE South Asia when we had hoped for over 60 staff and volunteer leaders from across South Asia to participate. It was a great time. Now, we are planning for the second ASPIRE South Asia for February, 2009 in India. We will focus on bringing together leaders from each of our YFC nations in the area (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka) and some that we want to pioneer (Bhutan, Pakistan). There will be times of fellowship, sharing, teaching, praying, and learning from each other. The details are coming together well and there is similar excitement and anticipation.



We thank you again for your continued support of our family and YFC this year! We would quickly like to tell you an encouraging story from Sasha Kim's Central Asia fundraising time in Denver, Colorado last month. Sasha (pictured to the right) is our leader of YFC Central Asia and was in the USA sharing about the ministry and raising funds. In September, we had setup an appointment to share to employees of an auto dealer in Denver for late November about YFC's desire to purchase a van for our Bishkek work.

You know what challenges have come up in the auto industry since September. But, after hearing from Sasha, the employees committed over 75% of the funds needed and the owner gave the rest. Even during a financial meltdown, God is still in control and is actively advancing His Kingdom through people and finances.



The Impact on our Travel

- Niko and Scott were able to have their meeting over Skype and it was productive, but not the same.
- Niko is stranded in Bangkok.
- Neil O'Boyle, on our team here in Chiang Mai, was supposed to fly to Abu Dhabi last week. He cannot get a flight out.
- Scott is supposed to travel through Bangkok on December 4th to go to Bangladesh.
- Stephen, the intern working with us is stranded in the south, but is taking the Thai rail system (21 hours) to get here.