

CAMBODIA

Japanese pastors journey to Cambodia to teach the Bible and minister in areas unreached by the Good News of the Gospel.

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Over the past four years, Pastor Chizuo Sakurai of Calvary Chapel Kokubunji, Japan, has been traveling to Cambodia to share the Word of God and encourage believers. In March of 2008, he traveled with Pastor Takaaki Anma from Committed Fellowship Hamamatsu, Japan. This was Chizuo's third trip to teach the Bible in the town of Poipet, Cambodia, which lies on the border with Thailand. He spoke at a two-day Bible conference that drew 36 people from 18 villages. Chizuo noted that about one-third of the attendees did not own a Bible. Several people had never heard the Word of God. He was encouraged, though, to see that many who previously had been unfamiliar with the Word during his first visit were now acquainted with the Scriptures. Attendance had grown since the last conference.

In one lesson, Chizuo taught from the Sermon on the Mount:

“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”
Matthew 5:44b



Attendees at a Bible conference in Poipet, Cambodia, are amused as they play a game during a break. Pastor Chizuo Sakurai of Calvary Chapel Kokubunji, Japan, has been traveling to Cambodia with other Japanese CC pastors to teach the Word of God and

encourage believers in areas not previously reached with the Gospel message.

One of the women listening was astonished. Although she considered herself a Christian, this was the first time she had been impacted by this command from Jesus. Having been persecuted for her faith in her village, she now knew how to respond. She would forgive them. Realizing that her obedience could help her persecutors see the Gospel in action, she desired to obey Christ despite the difficulties. After Chizuo finished teaching, she shared with him how God had opened her eyes.

Chizuo was challenged and encouraged by the woman's testimony. Later, the wife of a Pentecostal pastor explained how the Word of God had influenced her as Chizuo had taught about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Suddenly she had realized that 1 Corinthians 13, which describes how believers are to love one another, teaches that without love all the gifts of the Spirit are useless.

Chizuo said, “My vision is to see the believers in the villages around Poipet growing in the Word of God and in the Spirit.” He

pointed out that most of the believers at the conference in Poipet have come to faith in Christ within the past three years. As many hear Bible teaching for the first time they are eager to embrace the truth.

Cambodia's Spiritual Climate

The nation of Cambodia—slightly smaller than Oklahoma—has a painful history of war and submission to foreign governments. The brutality of the four-year reign of the communist Khmer Rouge forces in the 1970s left deep scars on this society. An estimated

1 to 2 million Cambodians died from execution, forced hardships, or starvation in the “killing fields” of the Khmer Rouge. After a 10-year occupation by Vietnam, Cambodia faced civil wars until 1991. Though now a democratic society, the people still struggle for survival. Many from rural areas do not have access to potable water. Other major problems include AIDS, waterborne diseases like hepatitis A and typhoid fever, and vector-borne diseases like the deadly dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis, and malaria.



Chizuo Sakurai, right, teaches the villagers during the conference.



Chizuo shares about forgiveness while studying the “Sermon on the Mount,” a difficult topic for new believers living under persecution.



The gate to the “Kingdom of Cambodia” is near the border of Thailand and Cambodia, by the city of Poipet.



Buddhist statue

