

Tough Choices

Do we send Ellie back to the US and college by herself—or does Tim go with her and leave Charlene and Cai in the Thailand indefinitely? Anyone want to make that choice? Our May 5 flights were cancelled by the airlines and we began the wait and see game of watching the news, Facebook posts, US embassy emails, and expat chatrooms to see what would happen with Thai policy.

It has been a low-level stressor for several months knowing we had to DO SOMETHING but not knowing what. Finally, the time ran out and we had to buy tickets to get Ellie back to the US so she could start school. Since at the time only those expats with work permits were permitted into Thailand, we opted for Tim to travel back with Ellie and help her get set up at Cedarville University [with lots of advance help—shopping online—from Mom].

But recently there was another change announced regarding visa renewals that made it impossible for Tim to leave Thailand at this time. So Ellie will be coming back to Ohio alone, but to be greeted by our family who will take great care of her.



Ellie and Nelson say goodbye

We moved into another house a few months ago and with our flights cancelled, Charlene has been doing a great job of making it our home. Ellie was supposed to spend about 3 days in the new house, but it's stretched into almost 3 months. The old house was home for 7 years and it is still on Cai's mind. Just a few weeks ago he said, "Dad, when I grow up, if I'm a missionary, I hope I can come back to Thailand and then I will rent our old house again."



Our new neighborhood has an American family living about two blocks from us and they have two boys, 8 and 4-years old. Cai spends a lot of time exploring with them. When Dad first told Cai he could go explore the neighborhood on his bike, Cai balked at the sudden freedom. He could never leave our yard where we used to live. He said it was like Dad was just sending him off to college all alone! But after about a day of initial reticence, he is now gone all the time.

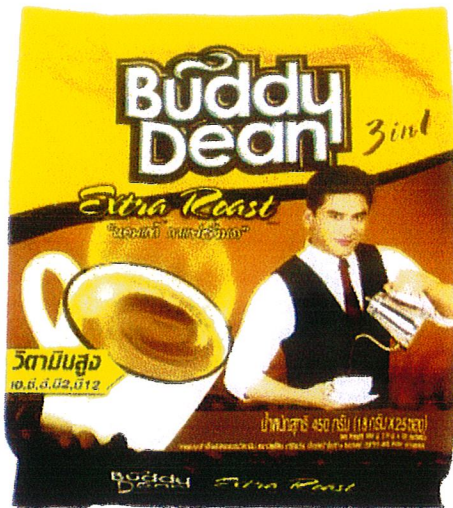
In Thailand there have been no new cases of the virus in Chiang Mai for many weeks now and just a trickle in Bangkok, nearly all returning from abroad. The pollution has been washed from the sky by the frequent rains and we can see the beautiful tree-covered hills surrounding our city. Of course, we are now doing daily battle with the mosquitoes and Tim even saw two mosquitoes apparently fighting over the right to land on his arm. We are enjoying the satisfying snap of our battery-powered mosquito rackets.

ABTS has had to cancel all its person-to-person classes through the end of this year. None of our professors can travel between countries. We rolled out four online courses in May and 80 students have enrolled in them. Those 80 will be finishing their classes in September, at which time we will launch six more classes online.

Tim just finished grading the course work from his last class in Manila. All of these students have been in complete lock-down for nearly the entire time they have been working on their assignments. They received an extra month to complete their assignments due to the upset, and most of them did very well: As and Bs. Many of them designed their application projects to be implemented in the new social distancing and online contexts. One of Tim's students in Manila had travelled there from Nepal. He is an independent pastor with no outside funding. The virus restrictions in Nepal have resulted in no face to face meetings and a significant drop in his church members' incomes. Here is a link to part of his letter (written July 1st): [Nepali pastor's letter](#).

Tim is feeling his age and learned recently that his chronic stomach pain was due to several small ulcers. They have already begun to heal and the pain has been abating with medication.

Tim continues to plug away at both Latin and his PhD studies. He completed his second class May 1st and started the next class May 4th. The focus of this third class is describing what he plans to research and how he plans to go about it—his dissertation proposal. He will submit his final paper for this class two days after Ellie flies out of Chiang Mai.



With limited library facilities in Chiang Mai, Tim has spent over \$2,000 on books for his research. These books will ultimately strengthen the ABTS library, giving it one of the best collections on the Trinity in Thailand and probably in SE Asia. Of course, this is only a fraction of the resources he will be reviewing for his dissertation. His working bibliography is already 40 pages long – thanks in large part to Charlene’s online research skills.

Our ultimate goal is to give theologians in SE Asia a guide for how to talk accurately about our triune God in their own languages. One friend of ours said one of his ministry partners suggested using 3-in-1 coffee mix to illustrate the Trinity. Without going into a detailed explanation, please do not use that highly tri-theistic illustration in your own teaching. But it does illustrate the need in SE Asia for careful thinking and teaching on the nature of our God.

Part of graduation from ABTS includes filling out an evaluation of the ABTS program and its effect in the student’s life. Here is part of one from a recent graduate:

“God is forever faithful. It was God’s will for me to be a part of this program. I was very naive before I started and I trusted and believed everything I saw on the God TV channel, and read in the books I purchased or borrowed. ABTS gave me the necessary skills and tools to test everything in relation to what God says in the Scriptures. . . . I was challenged to test everything by reading Scriptures, praying and depending on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

“Also, I was so limited to my thinking that only working in the Church is doing God’s work and I refrained from taking up secular jobs. Because I wanted to do everything for the Lord and for me to do something for the Lord was to be a pastor, elder, worship leader or a preacher. But over the years I learnt how I can be a witness of

Christ anywhere God has placed me by doing my works with honesty, integrity and in the fear of the Lord and using my gifts and talents to the best of my abilities. In the last 2 years, God has used me more in the outside world than in the formal Church setting. I feel so much freedom in the Lord by submitting to the Head and being part of His body engaging with other parts to fulfill His will and purposes for His creation."

Please pray for our family as we are further separated. Our three oldest children will all be living in Ohio and Matthew will be attending Cedarville with Ellie. That's comforting for Mom and Dad but they still won't be sitting around our dinner table anymore.

By God's grace and mercy,

Tim and Charlene

July 2020

PS: Ellie arrived safe and sound in the US after a long but relatively uneventful flight. She's now getting ready for college life. Thank you for keeping her in your prayers.

A recent post by Tim about the virus and our response was published here

<https://seagospel.net/who-is-your-god/>

If you would like to contribute toward Tim's continuing education, you can use this link

www.abwe.org/Miskimen and designate your gift for "PhD tuition."

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