

Keeping Up With the Joneses March, 2019 – Transitions!

Summertime is in full swing in the southern hemisphere. For those of you still shoveling snow and fighting cold weather, it's hard to believe that the temps here in Thailand have been in the triple digits every day for weeks now with virtually no chance of rain until late next month or even May!

Changes and Transitions

If you're anything like me, you agree that changes can be scary. Really scary. As we get older, routines become an essential way of life that helps us maintain stability when our schedules are full. Changes complicate life, and if too many happen at once, they leave us feeling vulnerable, helpless and like our life is spinning out of our control. We like the comfort of knowing what's coming up next on the to-do list. When something pops up unexpectedly, we dislike the instability of not being in control of our circumstances. And as you probably realize, that's exactly where God wants us to be: In a state of perpetual dependence on Him! The ministry here in Prasat has been full of changes and transitions over the past three years since we moved here. Let me illustrate.

1. Some folks came and went without allowing the Gospel to impact their lives.

In June of 2016, we started meeting in a small house on Sunday mornings. We knew for certain that we would have at least my family, one other American lady, and one Thai believer who were committed to joining us. Through the years, we've had probably a total of 120-140 people attend our morning services (but never more than 35 at a time). How many of those have attended for weeks, months and even years, but moved on without ever turning to Christ? A lot! *Grandma Tong, Aunt Puan, Noey, Baam, Rhet, Kit, Fargo, Focus, Jay, First, Bop, Boom, Bia, and Praew are just a few names that come to mind.*

As we taught, preached and shared our faith over the past three years, the nature of our ministry began to transition as men and women were saved and a small handful of Christians from the community began attending. The focus of our services went from "evangelistic" to "discipleship" as our group grew.

Transitions...

2. Some folks came and went, but not before the ministry of Prasat Baptist Church impacted their lives.

Some of our closest friends here in Prasat have relocated after either being saved here or spending time with us at Prasat Baptist Church. One dear friend *Ju* was saved in the months leading up to her recent move to California with her husband and 11-year-old son. *Paak* was another faithful believer who attended services for a year or more before getting married and moving to southern Thailand. Choosing marriage over hanging out with Matt Jones? Crazy, right? *Taan*, another young lady in her 20s, is moving to Bangkok for work in the months to come. Another friend, we'll call him "*Bob*," is from a Middle Eastern country with strict anti-Christian laws. He converted from Islam while in Thailand and is currently making plans to start a new life in the West. *Transitions...*

3. Some folks came...and they're still here being impacted by the ministry of Prasat Baptist Church!

I can remember just about six months ago when our little church group was hovering around 15 people on Sunday mornings and then something happened. New people started showing up. Believers followed the Lord in baptism, a new family moved to Prasat to help in the ministry here, and suddenly our group doubled!

Each Sunday morning, we wait eagerly to see the faces of people like Aunt Lamduan, Grandma Jan, Bancha, Manna, Pawn, Fon, "Bob", Paka, Liyate, Wat, Amanda, Am, Nok, Emsie, Janine, and a group of unsaved kids who regularly attend as well. *Transitions...*

4. Some came here with us twelve years ago, but now they're moving on.

I'm assuming very few people want to read the emotional musings of a missionary family on the verge of losing their oldest child to life back in the States, so I'll try to keep from digressing here into a swirling pool of sorrow and self-pity, but no promises.

On April 25, 2019, Matt will board a plane bound for Dallas, Texas, with our oldest daughter, Lindsey Jones, as the only other member of Team Jones on board. Lindsey will spend a few weeks in Kansas with Courtney's younger sister while working her way back into American society. She will be starting college at Bob Jones University this August. I will fly back to Thailand ALONE in early May in time for our annual Southeast Asia MK Camp, and after camp, our entire family will return to the States for a short, seven-month furlough.

Transitions...

So, once again, the Jones family is hurtling toward some major transitions in life. Having your kid *across town* in college is tough. Having your kid *across the state* in college is hard. Having your kid *across the country* in college is awful. BUT, having your kid *across the world* in college—literally, 10,000 miles away—is just downright cruel and inhumane! The only thing that could make it worse? Knowing that next summer we'll be losing Erica as well. Now, I'm starting to think we should have had more kids...or not.

Transitions...

Our most pressing needs right now have really put us in a place of eagerly seeking the Lord for help. Our most significant needs right now are:

1. Housing (cheap and/or free) in the Greenville, SC, area from anytime after June 1 until January of 2020. We've had a couple good leads, but nothing concrete yet. This is huge for us. The reason for this furlough is to be near Lindsey as she goes through a massive time of transition from Thailand to life on a Christian college campus. Also, we are praying this furlough will give Erica a clear picture of what college life is like to help ease her transition period next year.

2. A vehicle to buy/use for our family while in the States. We need something that can seat at least 5-6 people and still has enough life in it to run 30,000-40,000 more miles.

3. A good job for Lindsey in the Greenville, SC, area once she starts college.

I've pretty much used up all the space I'm allotted in this update, so I'm going to cut it off here. Maybe I'll send another update in the weeks to come telling you about the MK camp in Peru that Trevor and I helped with last month? Or maybe I can fill you in on the arrival of Wat and Amanda Dasantad here in Prasat to help us for a year? Maybe I could share with you the way our visa renewal process is progressing? Maybe you'd be willing to pray about the couple in our church reeling from the effects of adultery in their marriage? Maybe you'd enjoy hearing about our upcoming MK camp and the 66 MKs signed up?

Just know that we desperately need your prayers now more than ever!

Matt and Courtney Jones
Lindsey, Erica, Trevor, Tyler

Baptist World Mission
Thailand