

April 12, 2020



We hope and pray that you all are in good health and enjoying the extra time at home with your families. In our family devotions a few days ago, I asked my wife and children each to share one idea that would help bring peace and unity to our family in these extraordinary times. Here are the four things that were mentioned, and I hope that they will be an encouragement and a guide to your family over the following weeks and months.

1. **Guard Your Tone of Voice:** *“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”* (Proverbs 15:1) *Soft* in this verse means “tender or tenderhearted.”
2. **Call a Moratorium on Teasing:** *“Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.”* (Ephesians 5:4) These verses elaborate on the subject of walking in love, *“as Christ also hath loved us”*

In the midst of forbidding covetousness, fornication, idolatry, and uncleanness, we find a warning against foolish talking and jesting. The Bible says these are *“not convenient”* and that we should use our speech in the giving of thanks.

It is certain that the first-century churches and believers of that era lived with much more persecution, strife, and stress than we are accustomed to. It may be that this time of uncertainty will help us to understand the importance of guarding our tongues instead of sharpening them.

3. **Do Not Assume the Worst or Judge Motives:** How often do we feel like we have someone completely figured out? We judge their motives and assume the worst, and when they fail, we shake our heads knowingly, *“I could have told you that would happen!”* *“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.”* (1 Timothy 2:8)

Discouragement can set in quickly when our loved ones doubt us and assume the worst. It was Satan who said, *“Hath Job served God for naught?”* Satan judged Job’s motives and assumed the worst about Job. During this time of difficulty, season your thoughts and conversations with grace.

4. **Purposeful Solitude:** If your family’s current situation is like mine, you are spending a lot of time together in your home. While this is a wonderful opportunity to improve your interpersonal family relationships, it can also, at times, become tedious. The term *cabin fever* comes to mind, as we find ourselves quickly snapping at each other while our patience wears thin.

The Bible speaks of Jesus Christ purposefully seeking solitude, separating Himself from others, to better commune with His heavenly Father. *“And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.”* (Matthew 14:23) Mark 1:35 says, *“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”* In Gethsemane, Jesus said to His disciples, *“Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.”*

These verses show Christ purposefully seeking solitude to remove any and all distractions, so that He could be alone with the only One Who understood Him completely and Who loved Him perfectly.

Closing Our Premier Language School: Following the directives of the Ministry of Education in early March, we closed down our language school until further notice. God was truly blessing, as the enrollment had increased greatly this year, going from 15 to 59 students. This was due in large part to the diligence of Bro. Chad Inman, who is the school principal, and to our fine teachers, Miss Shari House and Mrs. Brittany Beil. All three of these folks were teaching full classrooms before the COVID-19 shutdown. Several of these students are not regular members of our church, and this was the only way we could reach them with the Gospel. Please pray that we will be able to reopen soon.

Suspending All Public Church Services: The Thai government declared a nationwide state of emergency on March 26. We were forced to close the church doors and could not meet in groups larger than 10. Many of you reading this letter are in the same situation. One of the most enjoyable aspects of our church services was fellowship with like-minded believers. We also had the privilege of serving a hearty meal every Sunday afternoon. Our ladies would prepare food for about 200, and we would have a great time of fellowship after the morning service. For many of our church members, this was the best and most bountiful meal they would eat all week.

A New Approach (for us at least): Since our regular services and regular soul-winning efforts have been temporarily suspended, we have worked to get more and more content online. We have added soul-winning videos in several languages to our church Facebook page, and those have been viewed over 22,000 times thus far. We are, like many of you, going online with our church services and learning as we go.

Needs of Our Church Family Members: Many of our church members live day to day. They work in pineapple fields, turnip fields, aloe vera fields, and fruit-processing plants. Some sell food at roadside stalls, some sell household goods at local open markets, and some work at recycling facilities. With the travel restrictions and other limitations brought on by COVID-19, many of our members are struggling. Kuhn Pailiyn is one such member. She sells Thai food at a roadside shop. She has a prime location, one of the best in our city. My wife and I stopped by to check on her last week, and she had no customers. Pailiyn said that she would normally serve between 40 to 50 customers per day and earn about \$50.00. During the shutdown, she will go an entire day, 10 hours, and only serve 5 customers. She is also driving 45 minutes on a scooter to get to her shop every day. I gave her \$60, and she was able to close her shop for the rest of the week. It is difficult to imagine what life is like for these folks unless you have been to the mission field and seen firsthand the reality of their struggles.

Often when we give the Gospel and talk to folks about eternity, there is somewhat of a disconnect, as most of the people here have lived their entire lives planning only as far as tomorrow's meals.

Thank you all for your continued support and prayers. It is a real joy serving God and leading this incredible team of missionaries.

Serving the King in the kingdom of Thailand,

Bro. Tim Shook

