

**THE CHAM OF
CAMBODIA
A 30-DAY PRAYER GUIDE**



The Cham of Cambodia: A 30-Day Prayer Guide
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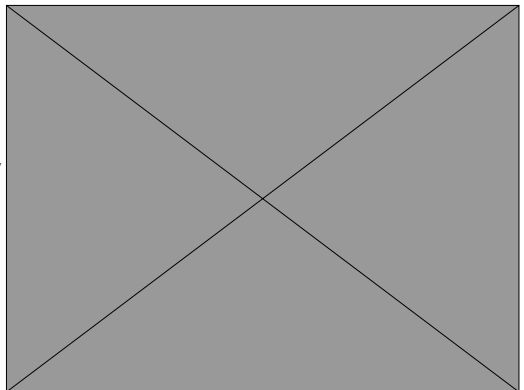
Introduction

God has a tender heart for the Cham people. Like all peoples across the earth, He has created them and knows them intimately. His Son suffered and died for them. And yet, few Cham people have a clear awareness of God's deep love for them and His provision through Jesus. They deserve our prayers.

The Cham people live predominately in Cambodia. Although most Cambodians are of the Khmer people group and follow Buddhism, the Cham are a smaller minority group and adhere to Islam. They originated from the ancient Champa kingdom located in present-day Vietnam. Due to conflict with the Vietnamese people long ago, Cham migrated in large numbers west to Cambodia. Because of geographical separation and different contexts of living, this group has developed into what is now considered a separate ethnic group, the Western Cham (from now on referred in this booklet simply as the Cham). Remnants of the original Cham people continue to live in Vietnam. They have a unique language and culture and are known ethnically as the Eastern Cham. The estimated population of the Eastern Cham people is 80,000 and a conservative figure for the Western Cham is 400,000. The Western Cham can be found in nearly every province of Cambodia, though the largest populations occur in the provinces of Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang, where large river systems are located. Refer to the accompanying map for more detail.

This prayer guide focuses on the Western Cham in Cambodia, though many of the prayer points can easily be used for the Eastern Cham as well. Information and stories are included in this booklet. Names have been changed at times and photographs may not be of the person described. This has been done to protect the identities of those written about.

This guide is organized into 30 days, with each day including a topic and prayer points. This booklet can be used when praying for the Cham during the 30 day fasting month of Ramadan. This booklet can also easily be used during any other 30 day period. Our desire is that this guide both motivates and informs people to intercede with God for the Cham people. Thank you for your prayers.





Day 1

FISHING AS A WAY OF LIFE

It is November. Ishmael rises early and, after completing his pre-dawn prayers, makes his way to his boat. His wooden fishing boat is 13 meters long and is powered by a small diesel engine. The propeller drives the boat down the nearby river as the sun climbs into the morning sky. Ishmael's boat carries a large net called a cgaa. Other fisherman often use smaller jaal nets thrown by hand, but Ishmael is accustomed to using a cgaa. Two others fish with him today: repeatedly setting down the net, diving underneath the water to gather its edges without it being snagged, and then pulling the net in to reveal the catch. Often a day's yield will sell for \$5-10 -- a meager

amount to share among three people. Ishmael is also concerned about the decreasing fish stocks in the rivers. The fish are not as plentiful as they used to be. He knows some of the reasons, including illegal fishing by others using electric shocks. Also, at times, bribes are paid for permission to fish during prohibited times or in prohibited locations. Ishmael has always earned his living through fishing, as do a large percentage of Cham people. He does not see other easy options, and yet fishing is becoming more difficult. What will the future bring?

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that good policies and proper enforcement will allow the fish stocks to remain steady.*

• *Pray that people like Ishmael can continue to make a living as fishermen, as they have done for decades.*

• *Pray that Jesus would call many Cham to become "fishers of men".*



Day 2

ROLE OF WOMEN

Many Cham mothers both raise their children and also work hard to earn a living. Some make food or snacks which they sell in front of their homes or in a small stall by the roadside. Others have a stall in the market where they sell household items or fish. In some areas ladies work in the fields, planting and harvesting. In other areas they weave fishing nets to sell. Whatever their activities, women often earn a significant portion of the family income. According to the culture, it is the female who should hold the money in a household. They are seen as more responsible with the funds and are respected. Ladies have a key role in raising their children, including instilling values and developing character. However, they are usually not involved in the religious workings of the

mosque. Most females carry out their ritual prayers on their own or with other ladies in their homes, not at the mosque. The leaders of the community are men, not women. Although females often are out and about and have a large role in the family, they still do not have the full honor given to them which God intends.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that ladies would have a full sense of their worth to God, and see that religion is not just a man's realm.*
• *At the same time, pray that they would discover the intimate heart of God, not just the outward teachings of religion.*



Day 3

PAHLAA AND SPIRITUAL MERIT

Pahlaa is the Cham term which can be defined as “spiritual merit”. Cham people know there is one true God and believe in the reality of heaven and hell. They desire to spend eternity in heaven. In their understanding, one must have enough spiritual merit in order to enter heaven. This merit is earned by doing good deeds and also by following the rules which Allah has passed down. Thus they should work hard to do such things as: pray five times a day, fast during the month of Ramadan, avoid alcohol or unclean food such as pork, make the pilgrimage to Mecca, give alms to the poor, and do good deeds for others. They believe that Allah ultimately decides whether or not one actually enters heaven. There is no promise of heaven, but having as much pahlaa (spiritual

merit) as possible is certainly a great help. In essence, the Cham are depending on their own works to obtain merit. This is what they have been taught. Most have yet to hear or fully understand the good news of being able to depend in humility on the work of Jesus for salvation, new life, and an eternity in heaven.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that the Cham people will understand that their own good works are not enough to earn one’s way to heaven.*
• *Pray that they would embrace the good news that Christ’s work on the cross is completely sufficient to pay for man’s sins and allow them to enter heaven.*



Day 4

REACHING THE HEARTS

// How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?

And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" (Romans 10:14-15) Learning a new language is not an easy task; in fact, it is a lot of hard work! What if one has to learn two new languages? This is what is often necessary in order for the Cham minority group to hear the gospel in their mother tongue. A believer was asked what he felt was the most important thing that others should pray about for the Cham people. He answered: *I pray and hope that there will be God's Word written in my heart language. The elders and religious people in my village want Scripture written in Cham. It is a bridge to their hearts. If they see the Scripture written in*

their heart language rather than in the national language, it will draw them to desire to study it. Some people are busy translating the Scriptures into Cham, but it is a long and arduous task. Much prayer is needed, especially because the evil one is busy opposing this important work. And how can they hear when only very few are able to tell them in their own heart language? Once translated, there is the need for both outside workers and literate national believers to share and teach from the Word.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray for more workers to come and be willing to learn the Cham language.*

• *Pray for those in language study -- that our Father will sustain them through this hard work.*

• *Pray for both cross-cultural workers and native speakers who are working on Bible translation and Bible teaching.*



Day 5

NECKLACES

Maliki has a necklace. It is not a normal necklace as many of us understand, which is worn as adornment. Maliki is a young child, and his necklace is made with a cord. Hanging from the cord is a rolled piece of lead. Specific verses from the Qur'an are inscribed on this thin flat object. If one were to ask Maliki's parents why he is wearing this necklace, they might say something like "He cries a lot", or "He is sick a lot". Why does Maliki have a necklace? Not for beauty, but for protection. This necklace is essentially an amulet. Maliki's parents understand that the crying or sickness by their son can be caused by evil spirits. Thus they try to protect their child from spiritual forces by use of this amulet worn around

his neck. The Qur'an is seen as a holy book and also one which has power. It therefore makes sense to use specific quotes from this book in making the amulet. These amulets are sometimes made by parents, but more often they are created by specific religious practitioners in a community who are seen to have this skill. In some communities a large percentage of the children wear such necklaces – a sign that belief in spirits is strong in these areas.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that people would discover the true protection available through the work of Jesus Christ.*

• *Pray that Satan would be defeated in his desire to punish and strike fear into the hearts of man.*



Day 6

PERIL AT THE RIVER'S EDGE

It had started out like any other day – cooking a simple meal of rice on a cramped boat, washing clothes in the river, trying to keep a small boy occupied while nursing an infant . . . but Sophia had not been feeling well and she fell asleep while nursing her youngest. While she slept, her four-year old son went to leave the boat and climb the bank to go to his relative's house on the land. He never made it. Hours later they found his little body drowned in the shallow river inlet where the fishing boats were moored. His mother howled with grief, his aunts were called home from their jobs at the factory, and his father, Sophia's husband, was also overcome with sorrow. As a result, he grew very angry and blamed Sophia. She covered behind relatives as they

tried to keep him away from her until he could calm down. The grief threatened to overtake her. She did not know at the time, but nearby one of God's servants was praying for her. She would not meet her until much later, when her husband had calmed down, and when the infant was as old as her lost child and she had a new baby to hold and love. Sadly, though, not all stories turn out as well as Sophia's. Children drown each year in the river. Women are often blamed when things go wrong and may have to endure continuous abuse or be cast aside if their husbands believe they are at fault.

PLEASE PRAY: • Pray for God's comfort and healing to come to those who have lost their dear children to drowning, disease, or accidents.
• Pray for abused women to know how much God loves and values them.
• Pray for whole Cham families to come to know Christ's love, forgiveness, and tender compassion.



Day 7

KEY EVENTS: RAMADAN

The month of Ramadan is a significant holy month. Muslims worldwide fast from dawn to dusk during those 30 days, not eating or drinking anything during daylight hours. People usually gather in the early evening to break the fast together as the sun sets. Fasting during the month is required for all Muslims, and is also seen as a chance to earn spiritual merit. This merit is of great importance in the afterlife. Fasting is difficult to endure, though many comment they are used to it after carrying it out for several years. It is simply something one is expected to do. While not all Muslims perform the fast fully, there is pressure to do so. At the same time, the special gatherings, foods

eaten, and shared experience during the month often build a sense of unity among Cham people. During Ramadan there is emphasis placed on reciting the Qur'an, performing extra prayers, and reflecting about God. For cross-cultural workers, this can be a good time to talk about deep things with people. It can also be a season of spiritual opposition, however, as the evil one desires to discourage people and attack them in various ways.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that as Cham people pray and fast the Father will draw them to Himself.*

• *Pray for opportunities for cross-cultural workers and believers to share the good news with people during the month of Ramadan.*

• *Pray for protection from the evil one during this month.*



Day 8

KEY EVENTS: EID AL-FITR

The celebration of Eid al-Fitr is perhaps the most significant day of the year for Muslims. This day immediately follows the final day of fasting during the month of Ramadan. For the Cham, the day begins with a unique time of prayer in the mosque, usually around 7:30 a.m. After that, people return to their homes. Eid al-Fitr is characterized by color, food, and visiting. New clothes are commonly worn during the day, and the ladies, especially, are dressed very colorfully in Islamic-style clothing. Nearly every family prepares special food - usually a delicious curry made with beef or chicken. People visit from house-to-house and are often invited to sit and eat food together with the hosts. As visits are made something else significant occurs. People

greet each other and say “forgive me,” realizing that they have sinned against others and desiring to ask forgiveness for their errors during the past year. While it is not always clear how sincere people are when they communicate these words, this practice is significant. It points to the understanding of one’s sin and the desire to be cleansed. These attitudes have obvious parallels with the gospel message. In the afternoon, after most of the visiting has been completed, many Cham will enjoy themselves by traveling as a group to visit a special area such as a park, riverfront, or shopping district. Activities like this are a fitting end to a special day and the season of fasting.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Please pray that during the day of Eid al-Fitr people would sincerely ask for forgiveness for personal sins.*
• *Pray that this activity would reinforce the realization of personal sin and increase the desire to be fully forgiven and cleansed by God.*



Day 9

KEY EVENTS: EID AL-ADHA

The celebration of Eid al-Adha occurs about ten weeks after Eid al-Fitr. During this day, sacrifices of sheep, goats, or cows are carried out in remembrance of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. Abraham is well-known among Muslims as a prophet of God, and is respected as a man of sincere faith. In the days prior to Eid al-Adha, animals are purchased and gathered, usually near the mosque. Individuals are encouraged to buy an animal and donate it. More commonly in Cambodia, animals are provided by outside funds, such as sponsors from Malaysia. Among the Cham, cows are usually slaughtered, as most

people are not accustomed to eating goats or sheep. The meat is then divided and distributed to the poor as an act of benevolence. In many communities, all families receive a portion of the meat, regardless of their economic status. As with the festival of Eid al-Fitr, special foods such as curry are commonly prepared, and Cham people visit house-to-house, enjoying each other's company, eating together, and asking forgiveness.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that many would come to see the significance of Abraham's sacrifice, which God provided in the form of a lamb.*

• *Pray they would realize that Jesus, the true Lamb of God, is the ultimate sacrifice and can completely take away sin.*

• *Pray that Cham people would experience faith in God as Abraham did, who was justified by his faith and not his works.*



Day 10

THE PURSUIT OF EDUCATION

One will find many teenage Cham people living in the provincial capital of Kampong Cham. They are not, however, living with their parents. Why is this so? In a word, education. The Cambodian school system is still developing. While there is usually a grade school within walking or bicycle distance of any home, this is not the case for middle or high schools. Attending one of these upper-level schools often requires the child moving to a different location to be close to the school. If possible, the student stays with extended family members. In some cases a group of students stay together in a rented room or house. This is not ideal. Many students in these new locations naturally

experience loneliness and are also faced with various new temptations including drinking, drug use, peer pressure, wider access to the internet, and having a boyfriend or girlfriend. Some students are able to weather these temptations well; for others, life can unravel. Even after high school, the challenges often continue as studying in a university usually includes locating in a large city or in the capital of Phnom Penh, far from home. On the positive side, they may have more access to hearing the good news about Jesus in these larger population centers.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that Cham students living outside of their homes in order to study further would be protected from harm.*
• *Pray that they would find good friends and have wisdom to make good decisions.*
• *Pray that they may hear about Christ from fellow students and from workers in the cities they move to.*



Day 11

STORY OF HADASSAH

A group of children clamor to come in as the gate is opened. They rush forward into the room and quickly take a seat on the mat to color pictures. Hadassah, however, lags behind, walking slowly. She stands on the outside of the area, wondering if she should come inside or not. She knows she will likely drip urine onto anything she sits or stands on and she is embarrassed. Hadassah was born with spina bifida, a condition in which the bones of the spine do not fully close around the spinal cord. Consequently, she has experienced many health troubles throughout her 13 short years. She often takes care of her two younger siblings and helps her mother cook

rice. She is pleasant and kind, but she wishes she could go to school like her siblings. She remembers a time she was in the children's hospital when a teacher came to the room and taught her all the letters. Several foreign people have lived in her village and they have helped her with medical care. She was able to have one operation and recently a new doctor has offered the hope of new procedures that might allow her to live a more normal life. She knows that the foreigners believe a bit differently than her family. They talk a lot about Jesus and how he offers forgiveness for sin.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Please pray that Hadassah will be healed and able to live a full life.*

• *Please pray for other Cham children who need special medical care or have disabilities.*

• *Please pray that God would use these situations and His servants to show His love, compassion and message of hope to these children and their families.*



Day 12

DIVERSITY AMONG THE CHAM

Anthropologist William Collins has identified three different groupings of Cham people. All live in Cambodia, feel some brotherhood with each other, and embrace Islam. At the same time, there are key differences as well. The largest group is the Chang Wang, who comprise over 60% of all Cham people. The Chang Wang speak the Cham language, pray five times per day, and seek close connections and support from other Muslim countries like Malaysia and Kuwait. The Imam San group speak the Cham language and greatly value their ancient traditions, even when other Cham criticize some of those traditions as not fully following Islam. They maintain and promote an ancient script for writing Cham. In contrast to the other two groups, they follow

a previous teacher who instructed them to only pray one time per week, mid-day each Friday, not five times per day as other Muslims do. The final group are referred to as Cwia. The Cwia enjoy relationships with other Muslim nations like the first group. They also pray five times per day. However, they do not speak the Cham language. Many consider themselves to be descendants of Muslims from locations like Java or Malaysia who came to Cambodia centuries ago and settled on the southern coastal area. Ethnically, they are likely not Cham. At the same time, as Muslims they share ties with the other Cham groups and are often referred to as “Cham”.

PLEASE PRAY: • Pray that each of these three groups would be blessed by God and that, through His work, they would come to have an identity which is centered on Jesus. • Pray that all groups would clearly hear the good news and that thriving churches would develop and spread among each group.



Day 13

PROGRESS TOWARDS GOD

James Engel developed a scale which describes an individual's progress from knowing nothing about God to eventually accepting God's personal salvation and growing strong and mature in Him. Along this scale there are several key steps, including such stages as "Awareness of the Gospel," "Grasp implications of the Gospel," "Positive attitude toward the Gospel," "Personal problem recognition," "Repentance and faith in Christ," "Incorporation into the Body," and "Behavioral growth." This scale is helpful as we consider the Cham people. Many have an understanding of God and some of His attributes, but do not clearly grasp the idea of God as

loving and intimate. Furthermore, they have little knowledge of Jesus, including perhaps false knowledge taught by their religious teachers. It is common for Cham people to have a negative view of Christ. It is thus important to see the progress and changes of attitude needed for someone to actually personally turn to God in repentance and faith in Christ alone. Much patient work is needed as people share the good news. These conversations are all significant, as they can be used to help people progress in their journey toward God and growth in Him.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that believers can sensitively and patiently share with Cham people.*

• *Pray also that Cham people can hear about our Savior through dreams, visions, books, and audio/video materials.*

• *Pray that all these "seeds" will be used by the Holy Spirit to help people progress in their understanding of God, their feeling of their personal need for Christ, their decision to repent and have faith in Christ, and in their growth and deliberate involvement in the body of Christ.*



Day 14

PERSECUTION

In various parts of the world, some followers of Jesus are experiencing persecution. Some Cham believers are among those facing these difficulties. One young believer was reluctant to tell his parents about his upcoming baptism as a follower of Christ. Later, his parents found out and were angry with him. Other believers have been ridiculed and looked down upon. More serious incidents of anger and beating likely occur from time to time. To be Cham is to be Muslim; any change is seen as betrayal and also as sin. Some religious leaders likely instruct others to avoid interaction with followers of Jesus, and to not listen seriously to what they say. Many

Cham are not interested in deep gospel conversation. When people do clearly follow Christ, it is thus not surprising if they experience ridicule or opposition. For most, persecution is a hard burden to bear and also very discouraging. It is, however, a fact for many who will follow Christ. Followers of Jesus are few, and their walk is often a lonely one. The Father can give strength to bear all things, but they need His close presence and the prayers of others.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray for believers who are experiencing any type of persecution, whether it be harsh words, anger, criticism, or worse.
- Pray that Jesus would be very real to them during these times and that He would be a clear comfort.
- Pray that the believers would be able to stand up to any persecution that comes and would also have the ability to respond in boldness and love.



Day 15

MINISTRY TOOLS: SCRIPTURES

The Bible is readily available for most people in the world. For some, however, the Scriptures have not yet been translated or are only available in portions. The Cham people have their own unique culture and language. Thankfully, there is ongoing work to produce a Bible in the Cham language. Much effort has been expended. Thank God that Bible portions are becoming available, but there are still years of work ahead. The complex process includes initial translation by a group of people followed by checking the translation in various ways, further updating it, and publishing the result. It is obvious many workers are needed to see this task completed, including both foreign and national

personnel. Yet we rejoice in the solid progress being made. The scriptures are the foundation for understanding God and for living according to His will. There is a contextualized version of the current Khmer language Bible available. This version uses the standard Bible in the national language, but changes key religious words so the Scriptures are more understandable to the Cham people. Currently this Khmer language contextualized Bible and New testament Bible in the Cham language are available. Praise God for that. Also there are some portions of OT in Cham and there are some portions of audio Bible is available too. These are needed resources for the growing church.

PLEASE PRAY: • Give thanks for the current scripture portions in the Cham language, the Bible in the modified Khmer language, and also some portions of Audio Bible in the Cham language • Pray that these will be helpful tools for those who are seeking God and for those who are believers, to grow in faith. • Please pray that God will send faithful and committed workers for the Bible translation so that these important tasks will be done.



Day 16

MINISTRY TOOLS: “JESUS” FILM

It is evening in northwest Cambodia. In a rural village a group gathers. Visitors have come. These visitors arrive from time to time, helping with medical needs, interacting with people, and talking about the things of God. On this evening a white sheet is strung between beams of a house. It hangs underneath the edge of the house, which is elevated on stilts. All can easily see this makeshift screen. A computer and LCD projector are set up. Because the village does not have electricity, a source of power is rigged up using a two-wheel tractor connected to a generator. After preparations are complete, a movie is played. This movie is the “JESUS” film - watched in many places around the world. The movie is engaging, and people comment about

what they see, talking about such things as the clothing worn by the characters, the geography and lack of trees, and even the type of fish caught by Jesus’ disciples. The content of the film reinforces previous teaching the people have heard. At the same time, it gives the villagers an opportunity to see God’s story played out on the screen. In most locations, the “JESUS” film is watched on a regular television screen via use of a DVD player, but on this evening it is broadcast large on the big screen. The “JESUS” film is a powerful tool. It is communicating God’s truth and softening hearts, and is being used in many places across Cambodia.

PLEASE PRAY: • Please pray that many would be able to view the “JESUS” film, and that through it God would make his gospel plain.
• Pray that this film would be used by the Father to draw people to Himself and that it would have a great impact in Cambodia.



Day 17

STORY OF ABDUL

Abdul is a young man from the countryside. His community had yet to have government electricity; people simply use car batteries to power small lights and perhaps a television. When the battery runs low, it is taken down the street to a person who makes a living by recharging batteries. Abdul has suffered from health problems for many years. He is thin and somewhat frail, and yet hopeful and easy-natured. Abdul has received specific medical attention through the help of some concerned believers. This medical attention has led to a clear diagnosis and has helped prolong his life. Abdul has also received clear information about salvation

through Jesus Christ. After several discussions with many different people, he decided to put his faith in Jesus and follow Him. Abdul is now growing as a believer and is not ashamed of his faith. At the same time, he struggles to know how to share with family members. Abdul learned a trade in the capital city. His health is stable and he is being disciplined by others. He has now returned to his village after being married. Through a combination of seeing God's love demonstrated and hearing it described, Abdul has come to know God personally and has hope for the future.

PLEASE PRAY: • Give thanks for the good medical attention that Abdul has received. • Please pray for those who have medical needs that they will get the right treatment and get to know Jesus as their savior and healer through believers' and Christian Hospitals' help. • Pray also that he would grow strong as a follower of Jesus, and be used to witness to, teach, and encourage others.



Day 18

COMPASSION & DEVELOPMENT

Physical needs abound in Cambodia, and the Cham experience them as well. Many Cambodians do not have access to clean water and toilets. Medical care is limited, with few skilled doctors for a growing population. Educational opportunities are relatively expensive and often far from home. In spite of these challenges, God calls all believers to be salt and light, and to practically love others. Cross-cultural workers coming from outside Cambodia usually have financial resources to assist Cham people. The challenge is how to use them well. If one only attempts to provide many resources for needy people, then the result may be an unhealthy dependence on the cross-cultural workers, looking to them to take care of one's needs rather than God. If the worker avoids helping

anyone practically, the result may be ministry falling short of all that God desires. Wisdom is obviously needed for cross-cultural workers, as well as for any believer who is being a witness to the Cham. People serving the Cham have helped in a variety of ways, including teaching and distributing health materials, financially assisting people to receive quality health care in a Christian clinic, providing wells for clean water, sponsoring students in their studies, and individually assisting people according to their specific needs. These acts of service are done with joy. May Cham people see Jesus through these acts, and may the Father use them for His glory.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that cross-cultural workers would have wisdom, skills, and resources to practically serve Cham people.*

• *Pray they would be able to serve as Jesus would, and that they would have Christ's attitude toward the hurt and needy.*

• *Pray also that they would serve in ways that lead to ultimate dependence on God, not themselves.*



Day 19

UNREACHED

In 1982 leaders involved in cross-cultural work met for special meetings in Chicago. They defined an Unreached People Group as a people group within which there is no indigenous community of followers of Jesus able to fully share the good news within that people group. According to this definition, the Cham people in Cambodia would be considered an unreached people group. There are certainly some believers among this people, and yet there are few communities of believers: congregations which meet regularly and see themselves as the body of Christ in their area. Rejoice that God has raised up some believers and congregations. This is a mighty work. At the same time, the existing believers do not yet have the ability or resources to

reach the rest of their people. There are still too few believers and congregations to easily finish the task of telling others about Jesus. The Cham represent only one of thousands of unreached people groups across the globe. All of these people are special in God's sight, as He has created them and He yearns for them to experience Him fully. May people from all unreached groups around the world clearly hear the good news and come to know God intimately.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that many more Cham would deliberately choose to follow Jesus, and that they would be powerfully used to reach others in their ethnic group.*
• *Pray also that God would provide more workers from outside the Cham who would be willing and able to share the good news cross-culturally to the Cham.*
• *Pray that Cham believers can eventually help take the gospel to other unreached peoples!*



Day 20

CROSS-CULTURAL COURAGE

The Cham people are a minority group in Cambodia, vastly outnumbered by the majority Khmer people. If one were to ask a Khmer person what their feelings are towards the Cham people, they would probably hear the following answer, “I am afraid of them”. Why is this? “Because they can do black magic”. For many Khmer, there is a fear and suspicion of the Cham people. They believe the Cham can manipulate spirits to punish others, and thus it is easiest to just avoid the Cham. At the same time, when Khmer live near or interact closely with the Cham, these fears often dissipate. Many Khmer believers are highly motivated to share the good news with other Khmer who have not heard, but by and large there is a reluctance to deliberately engage

the Cham in gospel conversation. Part of this reason may be because of the difficulty of the work and the reality that cross-cultural communication is needed. One must take into consideration the understanding and culture of the other person, although the facts of the gospel remain the same. Thankfully, there are some Khmer who have a deliberate interest in sharing with the Cham. They are being courageous and engaging the Cham. But there are thousands of other Khmer believers, many living in close proximity to the unreached Cham. The bold and sensitive witness of these Khmer believers could have a huge impact on the Cham people.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray for positive interactions between Cham and Khmer which lead to decreased suspicion and fear.*

• *Pray for Khmer believers to be motivated and strengthened to reach out cross-culturally to the Cham.*



Day 21

NEW LIFE

Ibrahim and his family live along the banks of the Mekong River. He is over 50 years old and is skilled at growing rice and planting cash crops. Cham people live all around him, including many extended family members. Discussions often take place with several people present. In the past couple of years cross-cultural workers have visited Ibrahim and his family and have shared the good news with him. Ibrahim has been grateful to these workers. They have practically helped with medical needs of his family, including facilitating treatment at a quality clinic. Several months ago, the cross-cultural workers came to visit once more. One shared the gospel again, talking about the hope for forgiveness and new life in Christ. As this person spoke, several of Ibrahim's

relatives listened attentively. When invited to make a commitment to trust in the work of Jesus for forgiveness, several of the listeners sincerely responded. They received new life in Christ, not because of their own works, but because of His work for them. Ibrahim and the others have just begun this walk. They have received some training about how to meet and study the Scriptures together, but they are still learning what it means to follow Jesus and live as His community. Thankfully, there is sincere interest in moving forward.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that the Father would confirm their decisions to follow Him, and that He would protect them from the attacks of the evil one through doubt, fear, or persecution.*
• *Pray that this group would be able to regularly meet together and see themselves as the body of Christ in that community.*



Day 22

STAGES OF LIFE: CHILDHOOD

A significant number of Cham children are still malnourished and a number die of childhood illnesses that have already been overcome in the developing world. While poverty plays a strong role, some of the problems come from lack of understanding of even basic health principles. Many children drink un-boiled or unfiltered water and don't wash their hands before eating. For those who have access to modern medicine, there is still suspicion and fear that illness is caused by evil spirits rather than bacteria,

viruses, or parasites. In addition, many suffer from mosquito-borne illnesses such as malaria and dengue fever. Dengue fever, which is common during the rainy season, can cause fatal internal bleeding in children if not detected and treated early. Transfusions are needed and often there is a lack of blood supply in a country where giving blood is still feared by many.

- PLEASE PRAY:**
- Families to grow in their knowledge of how to care medically and nutritionally for their families at home as well as wisdom to know when to seek outside medical help
 - Families to have the funds needed to pay for medical expenses and to have a mindset of valuing children's health
 - Christ-following development workers who are teaching families about how to better feed and treat their mildly-sick children at home
 - Christ-following medical staff treating more seriously ill children in clinics/hospitals
 - Adequate supplies of blood to save the lives of sick children
 - Cham children to understand God's love and Jesus' provision for them



Day 23

STAGES OF LIFE: YOUTH

As with youth all over the world, Cham young people are faced with a generation gap between the modern world they see at school, on TV, and at work vs. the traditional world of their parents and grandparents. This is magnified by Islam's emphasis on rituals and trying to do things as their prophet did – customs from the 7th century. While their friends wear jeans, young Cham men are encouraged to wear robes or traditional sarongs. Girls, who regularly see fancifully dressed movie stars on TV, are asked to wear long skirts and scarves on their heads. Add easily available alcohol and drugs, and it is no wonder that there are clashes occurring in many

families. Still, there are those who seek to bridge the gap and move together into modern society. Pray that those of both generations can find the solid principles and values they need in God's true Word and the foundations of the Gospel that can be contextualized into every culture and age.

PLEASE PRAY:

- *the uncertainty, turmoil and lack of peace to arouse a hunger that is finally satisfied when they hear the truth of the Gospel*
- *grace for young men and women who have already experimented with drugs and need forgiveness and freedom from addiction*
- *believers to be able to bridge the gaps and love those of different generations and ideologies*
- *strong Christ-following families who can demonstrate ways to overcome these challenges*



Day 24

STAGES OF LIFE: MIDDLE AGE

Aisah is a lady in her mid-forties. She rises early to make snacks which she sells from a wooden stall located in front of her house. Money she earns is used for food, family needs, and sending her children to school. Some of her children are serious students; others are not. In Cambodia daily fees are needed for school, including money for the teacher, snacks, and suggested time with a tutor. Because of limited funds, Aisah has had to make the decision to send some children to school and not others. She worries about being able to care for her family. Her husband earns some money from time to time, but their resources are limited. Aisah and her husband yearn for financial stability. It is a great desire. Some in Cambodia appear

to have acquired it and the joy it seems to give. But for most, financial stability is elusive. With Aisah's many children and relatives, it seems like someone is always sick. Illness often requires purchasing medicine or calling a doctor to come - services which must be paid for in cash. Adequate finances will ensure education for Aisah's children, medical treatment for family members, and hope for the future when they are older and unable to care for themselves.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that Aisah and others would be able to gain financial stability.*

- *Pray that God would bless Cham people so that they are able to be educated, able to have a source of income, and able to have adequate health care.*
- *Pray that in the midst of worries about finances, Cham people would seek and experience God. May it be that through Him they truly have abundant life.*



Day 25

STAGES OF LIFE: SENIOR YEARS

Ong Ahmat is in his seventies. Like many elderly people, he is not certain about his exact age, but in discussion with others can arrive at a close approximation. He is thin and getting frail with wrinkles on his face and a nearly bald head. Ong Ahmat has been ill recently and is concerned that he has not been able to join others in prayer at the mosque. He has been taught from birth that these prayers are important and that they also help earn spiritual merit. In addition, he believes that completing these prayers in the mosque provides many times more merit than just praying at home. Ong Ahmat knows he is nearing the end of his days. He is convinced that spiritual merit is an important factor in Allah's decision whether to send him

to paradise or to hell. A cross-cultural worker once spoke with him about being ill and not able to complete ritual prayers. This worker mentioned the fact that God knows our hearts and is more concerned about our heart attitudes than our actions. This resonates in the mind of Ong Ahmat, as he can point to several people who seem to be good on the outside, but in the inside they seem to have dark hearts. In spite of this, Ong Ahmat still wants to perform the prayers and gain as much spiritual merit as he can. He wonders what will happen to him in the afterlife.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that many elderly people will see real hope in the message of the gospel, which provides a way for forgiveness, cleansing, and eternal life through the work of Jesus.*

• *Pray that through the gospel God would remove any fear they may have about the afterlife.*

• *Pray that elderly people who believe will clearly witness to others.*



Day 26

STUDYING ENGLISH

Timah lives in a community with her siblings and extended family. She speaks Cham at home and is also fluent in the national Khmer language. Yet she still desires to study the English language. She is told by many that skills in English are a ticket to a good job and a better life. Fees for Cambodian-run language schools are moderate, but still they are too expensive for her family to pay, especially as her sister desires to study as well. Timah is thankful that her and her sister's monthly fees have been sponsored by someone else, a foreigner who once worked in that community. She enjoys studying, knows that it is a gift for her to study, and works hard in her courses. Her teachers often rank her among the top students in her class.

Learning English is a felt need for many Cham people. Increasingly, there is a desire to learn other languages such as Korean as well. Studying additional languages is difficult as it must happen outside of normal school hours. Instruction is usually done by Khmer teachers who have studied English. Having a teacher who is a native speaker of English is a rare treat. Thus there is a real opportunity for foreign workers to teach Cham and positively impact them. Many like Timah are eager to learn.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that Cham people would have the resources to study and the skills to learn other languages.*

• *Pray that foreign workers would be significantly used to teach other languages well and that their lives would be a compelling witness to their students.*



Day 27

SOWING AND REAPING

Most Cambodians are quite familiar with this simple phrase, “Do good, get good. Do bad, get bad”. This phrase describes a philosophy and outlook on life and actions. If you do good things, you will receive good things in return, both in this life and in the afterlife. If one does bad things, one will receive bad things in return. This phrase is commonly used by both Khmer Buddhists and Cham Muslims. For the Cham, they are concerned with right actions, which they hope will produce spiritual merit and blessing, helping them gain access to heaven as well as making them a respected person on earth. The Scriptures also talk of “reaping what

one sows”. At the same time, they teach about eternal life based on the finished work of Christ and not on personal good works. Generally speaking, Cambodians, including the Cham, trust that if they sow well, they will reap well. Although most believe that doing good brings good results, they also are confronted with the reality of the world around them where many “good” people receive bad things and many “bad” people receive good things. This contrast causes questions in the minds of some, and can lead to openness to the gospel.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that people would become more open to the good news as they see that “Do good, get good. Do bad, get bad” does not always happen on this earth.*

• *Pray that they would be encouraged to know that the Father changes and saves people not based on good works but rather on their humility, repentance, and faith.*

• *Pray that a Biblical understanding of how good works fit in can spur many on to meaningful service to others.*



Day 28

MUSLIM MOVEMENTS

Islam in Cambodia can be described as “folk Islam,” meaning that in addition to classic Islamic belief and practice, people also are involved in animistic traditions. That is, they are aware of the spirit world and seek to appease or manipulate spirits for their protection or benefit. In the midst of this reality, various conservative Muslim movements are gaining ground. These movements seek to lead people back to the original path of Islam, which they claim does not include involvement in animistic practices. They also encourage the pattern of behaving and dressing as closely as possible to the Prophet Muhammad. The most prominent of these movements in Cambodia is the Da’wahTabligh, which has been active among the Cham for over 20 years. They promote Middle Eastern and conservative dress, including females wearing black garments from

head to toe, and adult males growing a beard. The Da’wahTabligh operates several religious schools and sponsor many Cham students who live and study there. This movement has been somewhat controversial. Some Cham appreciate how they are helping students and how they are teaching others to follow Islam more closely; others resent the movement’s desire to change their religious practices, including abandoning their ancient rituals involving the spiritual world. Movements like this are causing the Cham to think deeply about their identity and practice. This tension can also provide an opportunity for God to work profoundly in the hearts of men.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that Cham people would understand their own beliefs and practices, including the positives and negatives.*

• *In the midst of the debate about what beliefs and practices are correct, pray that God would reveal His truth to Cham people and draw them to Himself.*



Day 29

STORY OF MAI SIA

Mai Sia is over 80 years old. She lives among her extended family: children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. When asked how many descendants she has, she answers “Oh, lots and lots”. Her days are spent laying or sitting on a wooden platform that is located underneath her house which is elevated on stilts. A thin mat covers the platform, with a blanket bunched nearby. For many years, Mai Sia was the midwife of the community, helping with countless births. Her husband was a respected man in the village, but he passed away a couple years ago. Mai Sia misses her husband. Not long ago she was quite sick and unable to eat. She was visited by cross-cultural

workers who knew her and her former husband. These workers had shared the good news with both of these people. As Mai Sia lay on the mat, the cross-cultural worker spoke once again about the work of Isa (Jesus), and the possibility of forgiveness and new life in Him. Mai Sia understood and indicated that she wanted to follow Isa (Jesus). She prayed with the worker about acknowledging sin and receiving forgiveness through trusting in Isa (Jesus) only. The Father and the angels rejoice in decisions like these. In the weeks since, she has continued to acknowledge the work of Christ. Some come to know Christ like Mai Sia, but often have strong family opposition.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray for those who come to know Jesus that the Father confirms this decision in their heart like Mai Sia.*

• *Pray that there is real peace and hope for those who have received Jesus regardless of their difficulties (living conditions, sickness, etc..).*

• *Pray that those who come to know Christ will keep their faith so that through them their whole household may feel the tender presence of Jesus.*



Day 30

BUILDING A FIRM FOUNDATION

// And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2) God has been at work among the Cham people even before He called specific people to work among them. Praise God cross-cultural workers have been able to partner with a local Christ-following medical clinic to help poor and needy Cham receive affordable medical treatment. Through this platform, doors have been opened for visiting many villages. Some people have had opportunities to hear the Gospel and come to faith in Jesus as their Savior. These new believers need a strong desire to gather together and to grow mature in Christ through studying God's Word. It can be challenging to gather as a house

fellowship for a variety of reasons: fear, ridicule, feeling inadequate to lead, or busyness. In spite of these obstacles, some groups do seek to gather regularly. Boldness is also needed to tell others the good news. Workers are visiting remote villages and working with leaders to build God's church in several areas. It is difficult to access some locations, especially during the rainy season. Likewise, believers in such areas feel the isolation. However, as more Scripture portions become available and more believers learn to study and teach God's Word, Christ-following fellowships can be built as places of refuge and strength regardless of the location.

PLEASE PRAY: • *Pray that believers will grow in maturity in Christ and be willing to take on the responsibility of assisting new believers.*
• *Pray that the believers will be filled with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom.*
• *Pray for the believers that they will have the passion of Christ to reach out in boldness to their own people.*



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