

2007-09 Phoenix Experiences with the Karen

May I please share some of my experience!

Indeed, "overwhelming" describes the situation in Phoenix as well. However, there are so many things to be thankful for. I for one like to think that we have many successes in Phoenix. Last Sunday, children sat on the floor to worship as our congregation exceeds the church capacity. Last Saturday, we had 85 children attending the Bible Study. So what! We used to worship on the ground or in a bamboo hut. Sure! We have problems with space, cleanliness, etc... But our motto now is "Go Back to the Big Picture!"

These people want to come to church when many shun the church. How wonderful is it that God gives us the opportunity to be a part of His ministry! In Phoenix, we have many committed, hardcore people we could really count on now. Here is how Adam and I deal with it. We do not force people to do anything. We ask for something and once they decide to help, they have to promise to deliver without excuses. This approach has proven to be successful. One father said "I make a commitment to not work overtime on the day that we have Bible study because I strongly feel that it is spiritually important for my kids and other kids. I am going to help and I don't mind forgoing \$150." For example, we had 6-7 people who are picking up kids for Bible study. We told them that their job is to get the kids to the church by 12:30. It may take them to get out of the car and look for the kids in the park. It may take them to run around in the apartment complex.

Their job is to come back with the kids. We also do good manner classes for kids so that their responsibility is to wait at a certain time at a certain place. As you are aware, only 20% of the churches' people do the job. The same with the Karen! We can't expect everyone to contribute equally. We do pay attention to our relationship with a few that are willing and capable. We learn to focus on God, and not on people. Adam and I usually ended up being martyrs. Nowadays, we get better at delegating.

Our Phoenix congregation has been extremely generous as well considering they have nothing. They have contributed between \$5000 - \$7000 to projects in Burma and on the border in the past twelve months. We also give \$1000 a month to the church we are attending. Last week, Pastor Ramey lost his watch. I spent 15 minutes collecting \$200. They want to give him a really nice watch.

I used to visit every single refugee family but I can't anymore. But I now have friends who are visiting refugees in different areas. The other day, I got a call that a mother of young children, who just arrived, is crying because she's got no food at all. We told him to go ahead and buy food and we will reimburse later. There are many more stories like that. A refugee proposed that everyone who has a job contributes \$2 a month. Everyone resoundingly agreed. The money is little but you have to appreciate the fact that they are God-loving people who want to help and contribute.

I felt I was doing so much helping the refugees. But they are the ones who give me a meaningful purpose in life, the ones who reveal what God wants my family to do. We are thankful. It is so much fun. Yeah, I moan and groan from time to time. Can't help it! In fact, my husband is taking off from work today because he got absolutely worn out during the weekend and this is not the first time he does that. Compared to Moses, Nehemiah, and others, our job amounts to nothing. We are so grateful to God for putting us in this role. We just need to continue what we are doing and leave things that are out of control in God's hands. This is the kind of things I tell my friends who ask me for advice. My friends, May Thet and Chris Hmun, are going through the same thing in Texas. We encourage and pray for one another.

Our future plan is to give a class on basic banking and credit card. Adam already preached about consumerism. Many have bank accounts that require \$5000 minimum balance. Since they don't have it, they get charged \$35 a month. We are also gathering information on kids who can attend college. Believe it or not! We talked to an advisor at a local college who said you don't necessarily have to have all records of a high school transcript or diploma to attend college. There are ways around for those that cannot prove they graduated from high school.

I thank you and Mrs. Binkley for your work. As overwhelming as it is, I believe you are making a huge difference in God's kingdom more that we will ever know.

God bless,

Tansy Kadoe