

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

in the Kingdom of Cambodia

Winter 2016

A remarkable providence

I got the text from my sister, Celeste, a few hours after my last preaching assignment at a missions conference in Illinois. I was already on my way to Greensboro to visit her and my parents for a few days, before going to Greenville to see my kids and grandkids, then back to Cambodia.

“Mother stopped swallowing today.” It was short, but the meaning was clear. For years we had known that unless Christ returned, Mother’s Alzheimers would eventually take away her ability to swallow food and water. That day had come. In God’s providence, a visit would turn into a vigil.



Mother at 18, two years before she would go to Japan as a missionary.

Mother at 82, with the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.



When you live 10,000 miles from your mother, you have no guarantee that you’ll be with her when the Lord takes her to heaven. By a remarkable providence I was able to spend nine days with her and my family. Most of that time she was not aware of her surroundings, but every once in a while there would be a few minutes of lucidity, and she would see us, and sometimes remember us. We spent dozens of hours just singing, quoting

scripture, holding her hand, and ministering to her needs.

On December 3, surrounded by her singing and praying family, she closed her eyes on this earth and opened them in heaven.

On Thanksgiving Day, Kim penned this remembrance of Mother, which was read at her funeral.

“Today I give particular thanks for my remarkable mother-in-law, Mary Crowley. She has been the instrument of God’s grace to me for 35 years—and more than that, if I consider her

shaping influence in my husband’s life from his birth. She has modeled godly Christian womanhood in a way that I have yet to be able to follow.

My first impression of this extraordinary woman (when we met just two days before my marriage to her son) has been corroborated many times through the years: unconditionally loving; unfailingly optimistic; unreservedly grateful. In short, all the things I’m not.

Theological Famine Relief

Man doesn’t live on bread alone! Recently The Gospel Coalition and others have been talking about a different kind of famine—a famine of theological resources in many parts of the world. Here are some ways you can help:

·JD’s *Commentary on Romans for Southeast Asia* is being translated into 3 more languages: Vietnamese, Thai, and Burmese. Pray that the translators and checkers would do excellent work, and that this tool would help many in Asia to honor God and his gospel. Pray that we would be able to raise 5 thousand dollars more for these 3 book projects. The Vietnamese edition has already been completely underwritten by a church in Hawaii.

·We just finished translating and adapting an entry-level systematic theology to be used in our training program here, and, we hope, eventually, all over Cambodia. Bruce Ware’s *Big Truths for Young Hearts* will be repackaged in Khmer as *Theology for Families and Churches*.

·If you’re interested in investing in any of these four “theological famine relief” projects, you can send a check to EMU at the address below, or go to our website at emuinternational.org and click “Donate.” Then click “Donate” again under the Paypal choice.

She has been the most can-do person I've ever known. She was a consummate educator and administrator—without a college degree. And she taught so effortlessly that she assumed everyone else could (and should!) teach too. "Kim, you'll be teaching English and math to the elementary grades this summer. You can rummage around in the storage room and find some old workbooks, I think," she informed me confidently. I had arrived the night before from the Mainland, and was already suffering the throes of culture shock. But I had been married only 2 months and 6 days, and I wasn't about to disappoint my new mother-in-law.

Later that first day, she achieved another wonder. "Kim, you'll need to get good at driving stick-shift. You can drive me home." With infinite patience, laced with abundant humor, she demonstrated how to set the hand brake on a steep Hilo hill, and then, with lightning-fast reflexes, release it and power through.

She was a model of innate hospitality. Our first Sunday at the little church, she invited an unlikely "couple"—a ninth grade student and her big Samoan immigrant boyfriend—to come home for lunch. On the way, she stopped and bought KFC. And it worked! No hassle, no agonizing preparations, no "putting on the dog"—just sincere love and thoughtfulness for the souls of others.

This woman had energy reserves that I've only dreamed

about. Once she led three of her preschool-aged grands on a little excursion of Washington, D.C. on the Metro—just for the fun of it! (Everyone knows you take only as many preschoolers as you have hands!) Legend has it that she and another superannuated woman dismantled a large house in Hilo so it could be repurposed as a much-needed school building for the Christian school she had co-founded. But that was before my time, so I have to rely on hearsay.

Mother never met a stranger. In any given establishment, she could be found chatting conspiratorially with a salesclerk or commiserating with a fellow-shopper. And she was invariably bewildered that I didn't share her expansive, all-embracing connection to others. "These are my family from Cambodia," she'd beam, while I smiled wanly.

But, oh, to see with her eyes. There was something to celebrate every day. There was beauty in every scene. Every child was clever. Every old person was precious. God was good ALL THE TIME.

I regret to admit that I was not nearly impressed enough with this phenomenal woman in my early years. But as time has passed, and I've seen what a pygmy I am compared to this bigger-than-life model, I see what a rare and priceless gift our family has had in Mother. And more and more, I long to be like her when I grow up."



· Many Christian tribal young people are being tempted to marry unbelievers. There are now hundreds of single young Christians in scores of villages, yet many are still choosing to marry unbelievers. Please pray for this vulnerable second generation of Christians.

· Kim and I are going to spend more time mentoring Tampuan pastors and their wives in 2016. Pray that God would give us wisdom, and knit our hearts with our dear brothers and sisters.

· Pray that JD would be a wise and encouraging team leader of the five EMU families in Cambodia.

· In God's inscrutable wisdom, He saw fit to take one of the key Jarai leaders home unexpectedly. Nhol, though young, was one of the first Jarai believers in Cambodia,

and was one of JD's two right hand men in the Jarai Bible school. His influence will be sorely missed. Praise God that Nhol was faithful unto death. Please pray that God would work powerfully in the

hearts of other Jarai leaders to fill in the gap left by Nhol. Pray that there would be an awakening among this people group, many of whom have become weary in their walk with God.

· JD has resumed his weekly evening Romans Bible study in the Tampuan village of Hyouen. Pray that the Word will bear fruit that will endure. Pray for open hearts and the ability to concentrate for those who are already tired after a long day's work.

· Pray that God would rescue these from alcohol addiction: Kia, Swing, Wiñ, and Hot.