



JAY JUDSON

After meeting Dr. George Patterson at a Perspectives class in 1999, Jay was mentored by George for a year at Western Seminary where he learned the dynamics of worship in small house churches as well as how to multiply them in a two month underground church training simulation. In July 2002 Jay moved to Myanmar, serving as Strategy Coordinator for a Buddhist people group numbering 2.8 million. Within three years he established 252 churches. These churches now number over 1,492 with 42,500 believers among 20 unreached people groups. The movements have now spilled across the borders into surrounding countries.

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HOW 42,500 BUDDHIST BACKGROUND BELIEVERS ARE PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

There have been tremendous evangelistic breakthroughs among animistic tribals, Chinese, nominal Christians, Hindus, and now even Muslims, but there have been very few breakthroughs among the 350 million Buddhists of the world. Surely the Buddhists are one of the few remaining giants in global evangelization.

INDIGENOUS ELEMENTS OF CHURCH MULTIPLICATION MOVEMENT VISION AND PRINCIPLES

In February 2004 my two of my trainees, the Lawyer and the Farmer, started to see a break-through among their Buddhist unreached people group. Within two months we saw the first seven new churches. Six months earlier we had started a temporary training church modeled after what we learned from Dr. George Patterson. This training allowed the Lawyer and the Farmer to develop a Buddhist-friendly style of worship. I asked, “How can we help Buddhist seekers and Buddhist background believers feel comfortable worshipping Jesus?”¹ The trainees decided to use a Buddhist *gyzee* bell available on the prayer altar in every Buddhist home in the country. We adapted its purpose and the *gyzee* is struck three times to indicate the beginning and end of worship in homes. The trainees adapted the basic outline and terminology of the Buddhist monk’s ordination ceremony to baptism. New believers (novices) are trained in an easily reproducible curriculum we call the Ten Commands of Christ² and asked if they lovingly commit to obey our Abbot wherever they go. The novices reply with a Buddhist Pali term *amabondi* (I promise). There is only one Monk—Jesus—whom they bow before.³ When they pray, the believers use the Buddhist term for amen or well done, *thadu*. In Adoniram Judson’s translation of the Bible

into Burmese, Jesus uses this word in Matt 25:23, giving precedent for its use.

RAPID OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST'S COMMANDS HAS LED TO RAPID MULTIPLICATION OF NEW DISCIPLES AND CHURCHES.

Sister Than Than's alcoholic husband left her in 2005 because he found out that she was earning money by way of the oldest profession in the world. When Than Than traveled to the city where the Lawyer and I lived, looking for her runaway husband, she heard the gospel, was baptized a week later and was shown a simple model for church. We trained her, shared the vision for a movement and sent her back home. By Christmas 2005, Than Than had started 14 churches in her area. I asked her how she did this, and she was irritated at my amazement. She went on to share her waterfall strategy: "People come to my house on Sunday morning and my daughter Phyu Phyu tells a Bible story using our picture Bible. Then the trainees repeat the Bible story back to the group and I ask the four inductive questions." The last question is "Who are you going to share this story and truth with?" She challenges the trainees to repeat this story at their homes that afternoon. Therefore the Bible flows out of Than Than's house to the second, third, and fourth generation like a cascading waterfall. Nine-year-old Phyu Phyu is the best preacher in that area out of 200 new house church leaders.

The networks often hold leadership trainings inside monasteries and homes. The Lawyer works with monks on community development projects. A handful of monks have been identified as persons of peace⁴ who have embraced the Messiah while others have been identified as persons of goodwill.⁵ A few monks, however, have proven to be strong opponents of the gospel and have driven 300 believers from nine villages. They are jealous of the large numbers turning to Christ and have placed curses on our leaders, which we have broken.⁶ We have learned a great deal about handling spiritual warfare thanks to these monks.

Living in an area with one of the lowest cell phone penetrations in the world, our network leaders continue to struggle with lack of communication between mentors. We have sent "runners" with hand-written letters to encourage other leaders and organize future trainings. The house church networks have taken up offerings to build schools, care for children at risk and provide aid in natural disasters and ethnic conflict zones. After cyclone Nargis washed away 140,000 people in May 2008, the movement crossed cultural barriers and spread into the majority people group numbering 60 million Buddhists.

EIGHT BARRIERS TO BUDDHISTS RECEIVING CHRIST⁷

While many cross-cultural workers have developed various methods for sharing the gospel with Buddhists, it is more crucial to identify the barriers.

1. The term for heaven: Buddhists desire to be set free from the cycle of sin and suffering (reincarnation).
2. God's wrath and justice: "Your God killed people in the Red Sea?"
3. The term for sacrifice: "Your God wants me to drink blood and eat flesh? Is He like a hungry ghost?" See the story of the Rabbit in the Moon for our way of dealing with this issue.⁸
4. Eternal life: "You want me to be stuck in reincarnation forever? No thanks."
5. The preeminence of Buddha: "Buddha lived before Jesus; therefore Buddhism is correct."
6. God's grace verses merit: "If salvation is free, then it must be worthless."
7. Sin versus crime: "You said 'for all have committed crime and fallen short of the glory of God.' I am not a criminal."
8. Creation: "The monks told us not to think about creation; that it is not important in our religion."

THE LAWYER'S METHOD (THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS OF CHRIST)

Taking these barriers into account, my trainee the Lawyer developed a presentation of the gospel for those who live under the four laws of Buddhism (Four Noble Truths⁹). He presents the bad news of Buddha's law before proclaiming the liberating good news of Christ. Buddhists call this liberation *nirvana* in Sanskrit (*nibbana* in Pali). The Lawyer proclaims Christ as the way to *nirvana*. The following is my version of his method.¹⁰

Jesus and Buddha are in agreement that humans have to be perfect. It is impossible with men but possible with God.

1st Truth: Suffering and death have an origin (a cause). Suffering and death is the effect of that cause. *See figure 1.1.*

2nd Truth: The origin of death is sin. Share the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience (Gen. 3:3) and Rom. 6:23. *See figure 1.2.*

3rd Truth: There is a place where suffering and sin no longer exist. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Rev 21:4, NIV) The goal is to go to *nirvana*. *Ni* means no, *vana* means fire or burning. *Nirvana* is a place of no sin and no suffering. *See figure 1.3.*



Figure 1.1

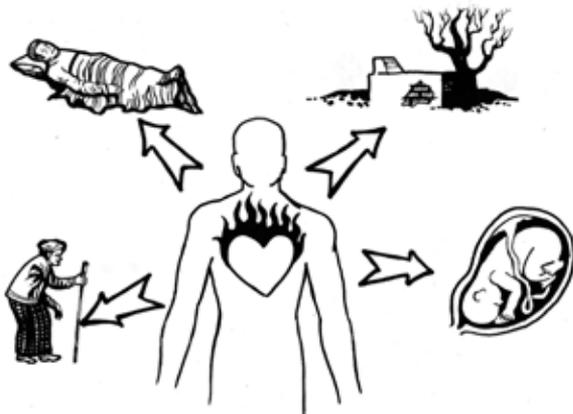


Figure 1.2

4th Truth: The Way out of the cycle of sin and suffering is faith in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Christ walks the perfect road through His disciples. He makes them perfect in His eyes. "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21, NIV) See figure 1.4.

After praying for the sick, the Lawyer reminds persons of peace that there are many stories in Theravada Buddhism about salvation by grace through faith. For example, most are familiar with the story of a man named Angulimala who murdered his father and repented before the enlightened Gautama Buddha.¹¹ The Buddhist background believers announce that Christ is very similar to the Lord of Compassion, the *Ari Metteya*.¹²

MIRACLES, MUSLIMS, HINDUS AND JEWS

Not only have the Buddhist-background believers in Myanmar seen a missiological breakthrough among Buddhists, they are also spearheading church multiplication movements among Muslims who have recently embraced the good news. Through them over 400 Hindus have also been baptized and are worshipping in 70 churches.



Figure 1.4

A Theravada Buddhist's view of the Cosmos and understanding of Salvation

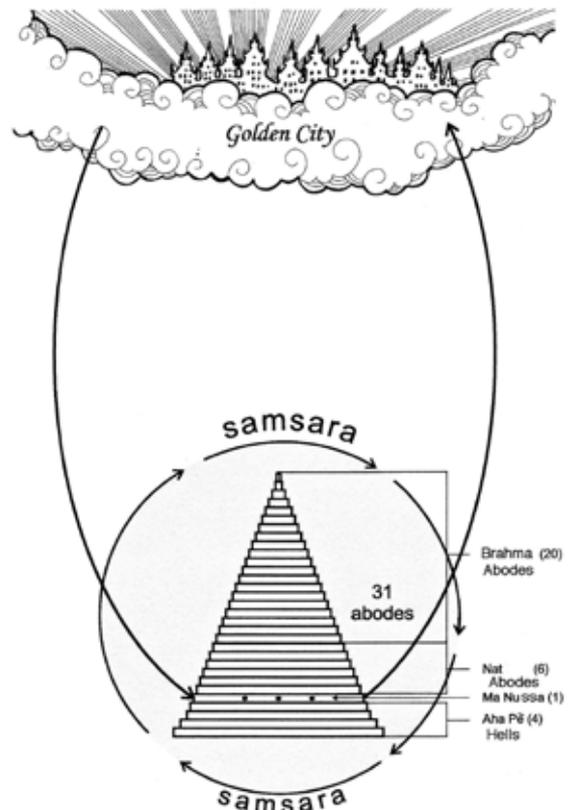


Figure 1.3

My trainees from Israel have conducted a signs and wonders training in Asia. Now our networks in Myanmar are reporting hundreds more healings and even one resurrection. Only Jesus can bring Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Jews together in the body of Christ. All the power in the world cannot break down the walls of religion, but with Christ all things are possible. (MF)

* All illustrations were drawn by Saya Sitthu

* See online version for footnotes.