

Overall Vision

Our vision is to glorify God here in Phayao in, at least, these three areas:

- We want to live like Jesus here in Phayao, Thailand while trying to understand and live in ways that make sense to Thai people. At the same time, we know that Jesus calls us to live very differently from the world, so we want to live in ways that show how Jesus might live if He were living in Thailand today and invite people to follow Him.
- Our team is the church here in Phayao, but we want to invite others to join us by being a church that serves the Phayao community. We want to train Thai Christians to understand the Bible and what it means to be a Christian so they can find new and creative ways to serve and evangelize in Phayao, even after we are gone.
- We want to be a church that includes all kinds of people, especially the poor. We don't want to just focus on one age, economic level or education level in our church.

Areas of Focus for Year 2

Developing Contextual Evangelism

- We want to share the gospel with people in Phayao. Specifically, we will tell stories from the Bible about Jesus so people can learn about him from the stories themselves, instead of just sharing our perspective. This way we can address and discuss with them the questions that are important to them.
- We want to have activities that allow us to form relationships with people in natural ways yet still give us opportunity to share about the gospel. These might be as simple as regular meals with our neighbors or as elaborate as a blanket drive during the cold season.
- Our research revealed there are many things in Phayao culture that are considered “normal” yet do not fit with the way of Jesus. We want to live our daily lives in ways that show what God's desire is for us, i.e. faithful marriages, forgiving others, etc.

The Church in Phayao

Our Sunday morning times are primarily for the believers to come together and encourage one another as we worship. While we still invite our non-Christian friends to join us, we will not use this time to teach them about the gospel. The lesson times will be geared toward those who are already believers. Also, we want to try to incorporate elements of Thai culture into our worship. For example, we regularly hold our hands together in front of our faces when we pray because this is a common Thai way of showing honor and reverence. We hope as we have more Thai Christians they can help find other elements of Thai culture that would be appropriate for our worship.

Discovering the Needs of the Suffering and Marginalized

We want to find what groups of people are hurting and that Phayao society might be overlooking so we can serve them as a church. We want to pay special attention to those kinds of outsiders that Jesus gave special attention to, like the lepers, the blind, and the lame. In Phayao, this might be people with AIDS or orphans. Through our interaction with them, we pray they can clearly see and know the love of Christ.

Starting a Restaurant

As outsiders who practice a religion that is seen as “Western” in the eyes of most Thai people, it is to our advantage to try to fit in to Phayao society as much as possible. So, instead of being “missionaries,” we think it is better to be seen as business owners so that we can more readily impact the people of Phayao who have lived here a long time and already have established relationships. Our presence is less “foreign” to Phayao if we are doing something that other Thai people are doing, i.e. running a restaurant.

Basically, if our only role is that of missionary, Thai Christians might think “Yeah, it’s easy for you to be a Christian since that is your job, but what about us normal people who have to work in the rice fields all day or have to work 40 hours a week at the bank where no one is a Christian? How can normal people be Christians?” If we own a restaurant, it makes us more “normal” and so our example of living the Christian life is more readily imitable.

We want our business to be a “Christian” business. Thus, for example, we will be closed on Sundays even though most restaurants are open 7 days a week. When people ask why we are closed, we can tell them it is because we are Christians and want to worship God on Sundays.

Any net profit produced by the restaurant will be used for economic aid and development in Phayao and/or for funding ministry efforts intended to bless the people of Phayao.

The actual restaurant building will be used for many other ministry activities that help us share the gospel with people in Phayao.

In conclusion, we recognize that our vision will take prayer, patience and hard work. We choose to have a vision that demands us to be faithful to God and trust that He is working through us and around us.¹

¹ A more-detailed version may be downloaded from <http://www.thefikesfive.com/interviews/research-papers/year-two-vision.pdf>.