

# The Haydens

*Serving with International Community School of Bangkok in Thailand*

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## February 2012

I can hear our neighbors a few years from now recalling Friday night's events. "Remember that time Scott showed up at our house and told Auntie A that they had lots of food left over because no one showed up for their party? So Auntie A called the whole family and said, 'Quick, come to the Haydens' to help eat food.' And so we called our new brother-in-law and said, 'Sorry, we can't come over for dinner, because the Haydens really need help eating up lots of food.' Then we got to the Hayden's house and the only thing they served was fruit and sticky rice. Yeah! And the sticky rice wasn't even sweet."

Yup, they would be right, but in my defense I only said we had lots of food to be eaten, not that it was a meal. I had forgotten that even though we had eaten our supper, I was inviting them over on short notice at the very time they usually ate supper, about 7:30. It didn't dawn on me 'til we were all around our table digging in to the mangoes, lamut, and sticky rice that they probably hadn't eaten a meal yet. Oops, miscommunication or cultural faux pas?

And then Saturday was Alizabeth's Valentine party for a few friends. I forgot to anticipate the various ways different ethnic groups interpret invitations. We expected her friends to be dropped off at 11 and picked up at 1. But with one of the friends came her little brother and mother who both stayed through the whole party. Oh yeah! Some cultures interpret an invitation to one member of the family as an invitation for all of them. Add to that Bangkok traffic, and the habit of many parents is to bring their kids to parties, then wait there until the party is done. It beats sitting in traffic jams. What's more, though the mother was not Thai, her English was so poor that we soon discovered it easier to communicate with her in Thai. But to top off the cultural disconnect, this particular mother had brought a fancy Swensen's ice cream cake, significantly outclassing the homemade heart-shaped cookies we were serving and causing us to completely forget to serve cut fruit we had picked up from the vendor earlier. All in all, both hospitality events went off fine. Friendships made or deepened. Games and music were shared.

Last week at school, I gave a gospel-embedded curriculum talk to parents checking out ICS for their elementary children. As part of an annual open house I shared with a mixed (Christian and other religions) crowd of about 40, why "Followers of Christ" was the core outcome of an education at ICS. You can watch an 8 minute version of the talk at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bjwuR8ZfR0>.

A few weeks back, I had a great opportunity during a baptismal class with a single student. This is Bangkok where it's not uncommon for people to miss appointments. So this class that had 3 people sign up for had only one show up, and that one about an hour late. As we worked through a little preparatory quiz about baptism, she paused on the last question and said, "I don't really understand this word *salvation*." What an opportunity! This college student was obviously hungry for God, that's why she came to the class, but it turned into a chance to share the Gospel with her.

This morning as I waited at the front of the church to pray with anyone that sought prayer, a young man from a middle eastern country whom I had prayed for a time or two before came forward. He is here, like many, seeking refugee status. He asked me to pray for his difficulties. I prayed to the effect that God would use all these difficulties to make him more like Jesus. I prayed this in confidence because God has promised that as the goal of every circumstance which He uses for our good. When I was done, it occurred to me that my friend may have not known that promise. So we grabbed a Bible from the front row of chairs, and I had him read Romans 8:28-29 to me. After some explanation, he seemed touched. I didn't know how touched until he approached me later that morning downstairs in the gathering area and asked me where those verses were again. He wanted to spend more time reading them.

God is good. All the time. It's an honor to be an instrument in His hands.

*Scott, Christine, Krista, Alizabeth, Clarisse and Susanna*

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