

"Thanks For Letting Me Bring My Beer Into Church"

November 24, 2009

Dear Sandra,

Gratitude is expressed in many ways. Sometimes we are unaware of the seemingly small gestures that can have a big impact. The following journal tells of an encounter with a man in the red light area and how he expressed gratitude.

Music, Beer, and A Simple Prayer

"Thanks for letting me bring my beer into church, man!" The man looked around at us with misty eyes of gratitude thanking us as he left. This night was proving to be a confirmation of a vision God gave long time ago. Though I had never figured a bottle of beer as part of the equation, what took place was exactly what I had hoped for.



Years ago, God gave me a vision of a center in the red light area of Bangkok. Exactly what that would look like I didn't know but I had images and ideas. One of those images was a coffee shop with live music played by visiting musicians. The coffee shop would be a place where men visiting the area would be welcome. Yes, - the demand side. We have worked with the women for years and maintain that as our focus. However, we have also come to feel God's heart for the men who find themselves in the area and are often very broken, lonely, and trapped. Many have been burned by the church and turned away in bitterness. Many have failed in broken relationships and feel doomed to fail time and time again. Some are sex addicts who hate themselves but cannot see the way out. Others are on a journey seeking they don't know what, and hoping for an experience to give them some revelation of that which they seek. These men come from every nation, every language, and every religion. They are old, young, rich, poor, social elite and social outcast, dogmatically religious, embracing all religion, or in total rejection of all religion. Brokenness, loneliness, and despair are not picky and find their way into the hearts of all types of men. The vision I had was a coffee shop that would welcome these men and give them a place to be heard and to find hope.

God provided the building in the red light area last December. That in itself was a miracle and the first confirmation that this vision was not one I had made up in my imagination but close to God's heart and part of His agenda.

This past week a team of men from Michigan, Colorado, and Kansas, came to launch the remodeling and building improvements. They worked hard for several days and we

began to see glimpses of the vision becoming reality. Their last night here we gathered in the empty room of the future coffee shop. Several on the team were professional musicians and that night, John, on the guitar and Ferl with an improvised drum set, sat facing the street and began to play. The open door was an invitation with no explanation. People walking by paused and did a double-take. A representation of the world walked by: foreign men with Thai prostitutes, European travelers, Uzbek and Russian streetwalkers, Middle Eastern businessmen, and Thai vendors who set down their heavy baskets and waved at us through the window.

The music was passionate, vibrant and yet soothing as it called out to the weary travelers. Many paused, but then went on their way - Until he came. He popped his head around the doorframe cautiously and we beckoned him in. "Can I bring my beer?" he asked. We nodded; the music continued. He entered and stood watching the musicians. As he listened, the music began to reach in beneath the hardened surface. His eyes were red from drinking but the expression in his face softened as he listened. Someone asked, "Where are you from?" He said, "It's not where I'm from but where I'm going that matters." He took a couple photos and then showed the picture of his 3 week old son on the back of his camera. John, the guitarist asked, "Can I pray for your son?" "Yeah, sure." John prayed for the baby and then for the baby's father. "Thanks." The man's eyes were wet and tender. He looked around at us all. "Thank you," he said again. He lingered a bit more and then as he turned to go, he said, "Thanks for letting me bring my beer into church."



What gave him the idea this was church? The music the guitarist played would steal any show. We all just sat around, some singing, some chatting, some dancing; mostly just watching the passers by, delighted at their reactions and enjoying the moment. We had no agenda other than to play music, to be present, and to welcome those who found their way in. The man came in with his beer and left feeling good like he had been in church. An open door and excellent music invited him; a listening ear welcomed him; a thoughtful prayer for his newborn son ministered to him. He came in just as he was; curious, cautious, and beer in hand. We may never know his story, why he was here, or where he was going. But, for that brief moment, we saw a glimpse of God's heart reaching out to this man and to all the men who will come in to the coffee shop in the future. **"Come in for coffee; stay for church. Come as you are but don't leave the same."**

Thank you for all the gestures that you show, large and small, that support and encourage us in our work. Whether it is buying jewelry, donating money or time, prayers in the night on our behalf, or spreading the word, we are grateful for your part.

Sincerely,

Annie Dieselberg
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