

# Asia: Its Beople and History

Bonnie Rose Hudson

WriteBonnieRose.com

#### **Asia: Its People and History**

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural references contained in this book are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Project Manager: Liz Koon

Cover and Text Layout: Ronda Bodenstab

Editor: Melanie Rigney

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#### **Introduction and Suggested Use**

# 

Welcome to *Asia: Its People and History!* Is Asia a mystery to your kids? Do they know who lives there? Do they know how to pray for them? Asia is home to more than fifty countries and territories and roughly three-fifths of the world's population. Could you use some help introducing your family to this vast land? This sixteen-week course presents a brief picture of six nations. It is by no means all encompassing. Its purpose is to introduce your students to the people of Asia, share their stories, and spark curiosity.

I pray that the course does much more than that, however. I pray that through meeting just a few of our brothers and sisters who live in cities and villages with names that are hard to pronounce that your children feel more connected with those who are suffering for their faith in Christ. I pray that their hearts are inspired to pray for them and share their burdens as well as their victories.



The curriculum is divided into sixteen weeks, with sections on the history of each nation, one or more stories to bring each one alive, discussion questions, and activities. You may stretch the weeks into longer units or compress them as best fits your schedule. I encourage you to help your children find ways they can express or share what they are learning and feeling as they meet these men, women, and children. Help them find ways to write about the stories, draw or create a project based on them, raise funds to help a ministry serving in these countries, or speak to a youth or Sunday School group. Not only does it help them retain the content, but it also gives them a way to continue growing and provides a way to act on the burdens they may begin to feel.

#### **Bonus Content and Printable Downloads**

Please don't miss special geography-themed copywork related to the nations covered in this study. You will find print, cursive, and manuscript style worksheets free for download at

http://writebonnierose.com/asia-its-people-and-history/.

You can also print the activities included in the end of this book from this page as well.

I would love to hear how the curriculum works for you and your family. Please e-mail me at writebonnierose@gmail.com. Thank you, and God bless you, your family, and the people of Asia!



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Laos: Week 1



ول \_\_\_\_ Week 1: When Jesus Came to Laos \_\_\_\_\_

This is a fictional account.

Thao stared at the empty pocket of dirt at his feet. The morning before, he had been sure he had spotted copper or gold or something valuable. What he found was an old metal shell, left over from an old war. All through the years, it had not exploded—until Thao had dug it up. Now instead of copper or gold, all he had to show for his work was an ugly, scabbing, swollen cheek. He wasn't sure what had drawn him back to this spot; part of him still struggled to believe he could have been so foolish yesterday.

A bush rustled nearby.

He sighed when he saw who it was—Kong and Souph.

"Find any gold, Thao?" Kong said. "How about any treasure?"

Kong smiled and nudged his brother beside him.

"No," Souph answered, "he just found a big hole."

"What's that on your face?" Kong asked. "We told you not to be poking around on our road."

Thao turned and ran into the jungle. It wasn't their road, any more than the jungle was his jungle. But Kong and Souph could tease for hours when they were bored. Anything he could find to do at home would be better than listening to them.

Laos: Week 1

He threw the door open to the small bamboo hut and burst inside. His mother jumped to her feet and slid something under a blanket.

"Thao!"

"I'm sorry, Mother. I didn't mean to scare you. What were you doing?"

His mother pulled the Bible out from under the blanket. When she looked back at Thao, her eyes were filled with tears.

"The pastor came this morning, and he brought his Bible for me. I sat down to read it for as long as I could"

His mother reached out her hand and lightly touched the gash on Thao's cheek. "You need medicine. I fear your cheek is infected."

Thao fought the urge to wince. "Don't worry; I'll be all right."

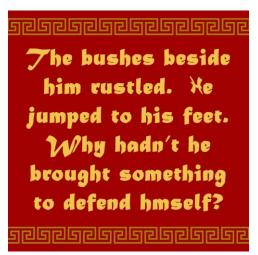
A commotion outside the hut grabbed their attention. Someone pounded on the door. "Strangers are coming up the mountain!"

#### **Strangers**

Who could it be? No one from the outside had ever traveled this high in the mountains, until last year when the pastor came. He came with the Bible and told them about Jesus and how He loved them. The pastor had stayed in the village ever since, teaching them from the Bible.

A terrible thought sent a tremble down Thao's back and through his feet. What if they were men from the government? What if they had found out many of his neighbors believed in Jesus?

What if they arrested his mother? The Bible she had hidden was the only one the village had. They all shared it. But it was illegal to have a Bible.



Suddenly, he had an idea. He grabbed the Bible and the plastic bag the villagers kept it in to keep it dry and clean. Then he ran out the door.

"Thao, come back!" his mother called.

But he ignored her. If it was the government, they would not find his mother with the Bible. He would hide deep in the jungle until it was safe.

He ran through the high grass and bushes, deeper and deeper. The branches grabbed at his legs and beat his face. But he knew

Laos: Week 1

he had to keep going.

Something wet landed on his arm.

He looked down. Blood. He reached up and touched his cheek. The branches had opened the gash on his face. It was bleeding, more than a little.

Thao slowed his steps as he pushed on into the jungle. When he knew his legs would buckle if he tried to run another step, he stopped and looked around. He could not see much through the heavy curtain of trees and brush that surrounded him. Thick tree trunks shot up to the sky where the tops grew together in such a jumble that Thao couldn't tell one tree from another. The blistering sun shot darts of heat all around him.

He sank down into the grass at the base of a tree where the canopy of leaves would shade him. He felt like he had swallowed his banana that morning without chewing it. It was lying in his stomach in one lump. Maybe he should just rest for a minute.

The next thing Thao knew, his arm was wet, soaking wet. This time, it was not from blood but from rain!

#### No Escape

All around him, rain hammered the ground. Not one little corner of the ground was dry. And not one corner of himself, either.

And he noticed something else. It was dark. Very dark. He could only see tiny spots of light through the leaves overhead.

Thao shivered, then touched his face. His cheek was hot but he was cold. His mother had been right. He needed medicine.

But what could he do now?

Should he leave the Bible in the jungle and go home? Would his mother still be there, or had she been taken away? He looked at the Bible. The pastor told them Jesus always knew where they were and what they needed. But did He really know how far Thao had run? Would He help him find his way home?

The bushes beside him rustled. He jumped to his feet. Why hadn't he brought something to defend himself?

He stood perfectly still. A small, brown deer stepped out and smelled the air around him. When he smelled Thao, he bolted into the jungle.

Seconds later, something ran down a tree not far from Thao. It disappeared into the brush, chasing the deer.

Laos: Week 1

Now he knew he was in trouble. He'd recognized those black splotches and brown coat immediately. That was not just any cat. That was a leopard. And if he didn't catch the deer, he might come back for Thao.

Thao ordered himself not to panic and tried to think of a way out. The trees above offered no protection—the leopard could climb better than he could. And outrunning the dangerous cat was impossible.

The trees rustled. Something large was crashing through the brush. The leopard was coming right toward him! The deer must have escaped. That prayed he would, too.

He darted into the jungle. How would he ever get out of here? He glanced around but couldn't see any escape.

#### **Visitors**

The leopard was closing in. Any second now....

That threw himself to the ground as a huge explosion behind him threw dirt and branches and leaves into the air. He covered his head with his hands and waited for the dirt to stop raining down.

When the air around him quieted, he opened his eyes and looked around. He saw the leopard lying on the ground, still.

He inched closer to it. The leopard had found another unexploded weapon; this time, a land mine.

If Thao instead of the leopard had stepped on it —

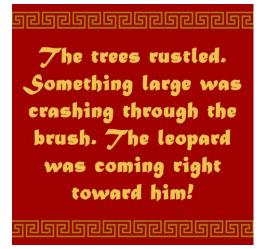
He sank to the ground. A bush rustled. Now what could it be?

He forced himself to stand. But instead of an animal, a light-haired stranger stepped from the bushes. And Thao's mother was with him!

His mother ran to him and wrapped him in her arms. She stepped back, and her eyes filled with tears when she saw the blood on his face.

The stranger scooped Thao up into his arms and followed Thao's mother back to the hut.

He laid Thao down on a mat. Thao's mother leaned close to him and poured warm tea into his mouth. He coughed once. There was something different in the tea, but he did not know what. He felt warm and sleepy.



Laos: Week 1

When he opened his eyes again, his small hut was full of people squeezed tightly together. The stranger was telling a story from the Bible. Jesus had healed a man who had been blind since he was born. But because Jesus healed him on a Sabbath, the rulers were angry. They called the man in and asked him the same questions again and again. They did not believe Jesus was God. But the man believed. And because he told them so, they ridiculed him and threw him out.

When the stranger stopped his story to answer a question from a little girl, Thao pushed himself up on one arm and wondered what Jesus did next. Did He storm into the meeting and tell the rulers how wrong they were?

The stranger continued. "Jesus went looking for the man. He knew the rulers had thrown him out, and He found him. He told him more about who He was and told him about God."

He opened a box and pulled out a Bible. Then he pulled out another—and another! Soon, every family in the room had their own Bible!

Thao's mother knelt by his mat. She clutched her new Bible in one hand and felt Thao's forehead with the other. "Your fever is going down. The stranger and his friends brought medicine and Bibles. They said Christians in a country far away knew we needed them and sent them here. And they promised to come back as soon as they have more."

Thao leaned back down onto his mat. The man in the story may have lost his friends, but Jesus had gone looking for him. And He did not stop until He had found him. Thao knew a little bit about how the man must have felt. And he knew that Jesus had known where he was in the jungle all along.

# 

#### **Discussion Questions**

- ❖ If it was illegal to have a Bible, what would you do? Would you keep one hidden? Would you read it?
- ❖ Is there ever a time Jesus doesn't know where we are or what we need?
- ❖ Have you ever been made fun of for believing in Jesus? How did it make you feel? How do you think it makes Jesus feel?

Laos: Week 2

## Week 2: Let's Talk About Laos Part One — &

# <u> 925252525252525252525252</u>

Laos—or the Lao People's Democratic Republic, as it is officially called—is a landlocked country in southeast Asia. You can find it along the Mekong River, a river that flows along its western border with Thailand. Farming is the main source of income for the people of Laos, and the majority of the farming is growing and harvesting rice.

But Laos has a problem. Most of the potential farmland isn't safe to work. During the Vietnam War, countless bombs were dropped over Laos. Many of them did not explode, which sounds like a good thing. But, those unexploded bombs are now very old and unstable. If there is one in a farmer's field, and he hits it when he is plowing, it can explode and hurt, or even kill, him.

#### **History**

What we know of Laotian history starts with a man named Fa Ngum, who created the very first Laotian state, called Lan Xang. Lan Xang means "Kingdom of the Million Elephants," and the elephant is still the national symbol of Laos today.

Fa Ngum conquered much land between 1353 and 1371, and created a great kingdom. After he died, his son, who reigned under the name Sam Sen Thai, organized the government of Lan Xang, and continued to develop the kingdom his father had established. After his death, Laos remained mostly peaceful until the reign of Photisarath from 1520-48. At that time, Laos went to war against its Burmese and Thai neighbors. The fighting would go on for about two hundred years.

Laos continued to be a land in turmoil and conflict until the reign of a man named Souligna Vongsa who came to power in 1637. He negotiated peace with Laos' neighbors, and brought calm to the country.

That calm, however, ended with his death. When Vietnam helped one of Vongsa's nephews take control of the kingdom of Lan Xang, the country broke into three separate kingdoms, which later fell to Thailand (formerly Siam). Thailand had run-ins with the French, which eventually resulted in Laos becoming a protectorate of France. This protectorate, which we now call French Indochina, gave the Laotian people some authority to make decisions in local matters, but all the major decisions were still made by France.

Then came World War II, and Southeast Asia was invaded by Japan. Afterward, Laos remained a country with only limited power to make its own decisions. France still controlled the country. Not everyone was happy with this arrangement, however, and a civil war broke out. It was during this time that the political movement called the Pathet Lao came into the spotlight of history.

Laos: Week 2

In 1954, the Geneva Accords were signed, ending the First Indochina War. The agreements allowed the communist Pathet Lao to regroup. Civil war ensued again. Another cease-fire was called for in 1973. In 1975, as communist forces took the cities of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), Vietnam, and Phnom Penh, Cambodia, many of the forces in Laos who stood opposed to the communist Pathet Lao left the country. The Pathet Lao took control and created the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Communism has shaped the history of Laos ever since. Though Laos is more open to foreign countries investing money in its businesses than traditional communist regimes, the teachings of Marx and Lenin have not lost their hold. Laos continues to this day to be closely tied with the neighboring communist countries of China and Vietnam.

# <u>526252625262526252625262</u>

#### What Life Is Like for Christians in Laos

Ethnic conflict between various groups of people sometimes puts Christians in danger in Laos. Over half of the country is Buddhist, and many Christians who leave the Buddhist religion face strong pressure from their families to convert back.

On top of that, the people of Laos, even the ones who follow Buddhism, largely also follow *animism*, which mixes in many additional beliefs and rituals. Tribes may fear that the spirits they worship will punish the entire village if anyone is allowed to become a Christian. So, Christians are persecuted, and sometimes even driven away from their homes, because of the villagers' fear of punishment.

And, the communist government does not want its people following Jesus Christ. It continues to watch and monitor Christian activities and restrict freedom of religion. Entire congregations are threatened. Missionaries are forbidden, though some find ways to help the country grow economically, provide medical resources, or work in special teams to remove the unexploded bombs left behind from the Vietnam War.

Christianity in Laos, however, is growing. Many men, women, and families risk a great deal to go from village to village, sharing with everyone they can the wonderful news of Jesus' love. These leaders are often targeted for arrest, or even killed. Families are separated, and sometimes pastors' wives are left behind to care for a family while their husbands are in prison.

Even children are persecuted. Some have been driven from their homes by family members who do not understand or accept their faith in Christ.

Laos is one of the poorest countries in the world. Many do not have access to the health care or other necessities of day-to-day life. And life can be even harder for Christians, many of whom do not have Bibles or other Christian resources.

There are many ways you can learn more about the people of Laos. You can download a free book called *Bold Believers of the Hmong People* at <a href="http://www.kidsofcourage.com">http://www.kidsofcourage.com</a>. And, you can learn about the Khmu people of Southeast Asia with the free book *Bold Believers Among the Khmu of Southeast* 

Laos: Week 2

*Asia* at <a href="http://www.kidsofcourage.com">http://www.kidsofcourage.com</a>. Both books are produced especially for kids by Kids of Courage, part of The Voice of the Martyrs.

# 

## **Crossword Activity**

Try your hand at the crossword puzzle all about the country of Laos. The sample is in the Activities section in the back of the book. Download your own copy at:

http://writebonnierose.com/asia-its-people-and-history/

Laos: Week 3

## ولا \_\_\_\_ Week 3: Driven from Home \_\_\_\_

# <u>526252625262526252625262</u>

This is a fictional account.

Kham closed his eyes as the pastor prayed.

"God, thank you for this rice and for not forgetting our exile. Be with us and bring us joy in the things that bring you joy. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Kham looked at the smiling faces, ready to enjoy the first good meal they had eaten in over a week. But he didn't feel joy. He was worried about his sister, Bua. She had not been feeling well, and she needed good food, more than just once. And she needed clean water.

As soon as the meal was over, he grabbed his friend Vieng's arm.

"Vieng, we have to do something. Bua is getting worse."

"We can go to my uncle's barn. We'll get some tools and dig a well. The clean water should help some."

"If we get caught—"

"My uncle and his family wouldn't turn us in. They left the rice for us to find."

"We've been starving for weeks! And we don't know for sure who left the rice!"

"My family doesn't hate us for believing in Jesus. They're just afraid of the other villagers."

Kham sighed. "I'm glad some people in our families believe in Jesus."

"We'll leave for the barn first thing in the morning."

Morning could not come soon enough.

#### **Discovery**

As soon as the sun began to shine above the trees, they set out on the four-mile hike to the small village nestled deep in the jungle of Laos. Overhead, a parakeet called to her children. The last time Kham had walked this path, the shouts of the angry mob had drowned all songs. One morning, the villagers had forced everyone out of church and forbid them to ever return to their homes or the village.

Sometimes, Kham didn't mind living in the shelter his family had built. It kept out the animals and most of the rain. But every day that passed, they had less to eat. Then yesterday, someone had left them rice.

Laos: Week 3

He thought his sister would finally have something good to eat. But when Kham had peered into the cooking pot, the dirty water he saw made his stomach sick. And it was not only dirty, but crowded. Crowded with bits of plants and crawling with bugs. How could anything cooked in that make Bua feel better?

"Vieng, wait!"

Kham stopped his friend just before he stepped out of the bushes. A heap of boards and pieces of a grass roof lay right in front of them, right where Vieng's home used to stand.



Vieng stepped closer. "I have to see if my uncle and cousins are all right!"

"Not now. The villagers might spot us."

"But I have to help them!"

"Your family is probably working in the fields. I've heard that villagers in other places have torn down a house as a warning. They probably did it after your family left. But if they see us here now, they might think your family is helping us. Maybe we can get the tools from my family's home instead."

"Your uncle and cousins hate us—even your brother Boun."

"My brother wouldn't tell anyone if he believed in Jesus because he was scared. But he doesn't hate me."

Vieng followed Kham deeper into the jungle.

"There, you see—everything is quiet at my old house," Kham said.

The moment he stepped from the bushes, he realized how wrong he was. His uncle and four cousins stood in the shadow of the house. And Boun stood with them.

"I knew you'd come here after you saw what happened to Vieng's home," his uncle said.

"Bua is sick. We have to get tools to dig a well."

The frown on his uncle's face deepened.

Kham turned to his brother. "Please, Boun, we need your help."

Boun looked away.

Laos: Week 3

His uncle shouted, "We told you to leave! If the elders think we have helped you, we will suffer the same as Vieng's family!"

Another man's voice called out from behind the house.

"We've heard your refusal to help these Christians."

Kham swallowed hard. The village chief.

The chief walked to the front of the house. "We were willing to let you live in peace outside the village, but you have broken our rules and returned."

Kham thought of his sister lying sick in the shelter. A wave of boldness surged up in him. "Live in peace while we starve to death and drink bad water?"

"You chose that life when you chose to follow the one you call Jesus. He is not the spirit our grandfathers worshipped."

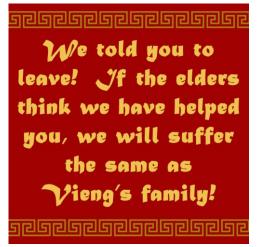
Behind the chief, a great murmur began to grow. The chief held up his hand. A mob of villagers stepped out of hiding.

Kham prayed for help.

#### Sounds of Thunder

The chief continued, "The spirits must be made to understand your decision to follow Jesus is not our fault. Otherwise, they could punish us for your betrayal."

Deep in the jungle, the sound of thunder shook the ground. Kham dove to one side and glimpsed Vieng dive to the other.



Three elephants charged into the clearing. Kham scrambled to his feet and watched them race straight toward the mob. They ran with their trunks tucked close to their heads, waiting to plow both head and tusks into whoever was careless enough to get in their way.

The villagers scattered into the bushes.

Kham pulled Vieng to his feet and ran for the shelters.

Gradually, the village sounds faded. Kham glanced behind him to see if anyone had chased them. He thought he had heard someone.

The next thing he knew, he was lying with his face in the dirt.

Laos: Week 3

Vieng dropped to his side.

"Are you all right?"

"I tripped on that branch. I think I broke my ankle. And maybe my arm."

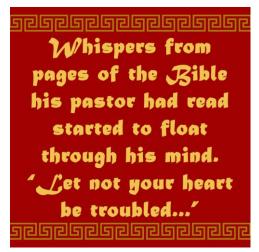
"Stay here. I'll get your father."

Kham nodded. Vieng disappeared into the jungle. Suddenly, he felt very alone. He was stranded between what used to be his home and a small, make-shift camp far from food, clean water, and almost everyone he had ever known. His sister was sick, he was hurt, and he didn't expect things to get better any time soon.

"God," he prayed, "why did you leave us alone out here in the jungle?"

He leaned his head back and closed his eyes. Whispers from pages of the Bible his pastor had read started to float through his mind. "Let not your heart be troubled. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Suddenly, he heard it again—that sound. Kham's eyes flew open.



"Who's there?"

Boun stepped from the bushes.

"You're hurt."

"What are you doing here?"

"Why do you live this way, starving in the jungle and drinking dirty water? Does it really matter what spirit we worship?"

Kham reached into his pocket and pulled out a small, wooden elephant. "Do you remember when you carved this? You said it was more than a piece of wood. It was a gift of joy."

"Jesus gave me a gift of joy, too. God is with me, and He didn't give me just a piece of Himself, but all of Himself. He and His joy will never leave me. I hate starving. I hate seeing Bua so sick. But I realized something just now. I'd rather be hungry and sick with Jesus than full and healthy without Him."

Boun turned and looked toward the village. "Aren't you scared of the villagers?"

"Sometimes."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Because it was a piece of myself I gave you forever."

Laos: Week 3

His brother turned to face him. "Do you have room in your camp for one more?"

"Always!"

Boun picked up his brother and carried him down the trail. Just as they reached the camp, they saw their father, the pastor, and Vieng.

"What are you doing with Kham?" their father asked.

"I thought I would bring him home."

The pastor studied Boun's face. "Will you be staying with us?"

Boun nodded.

Their father beamed. The pastor looked to the sky and prayed, "God, we thank you for bringing Boun home. Help us celebrate the joy you feel now that one more of your children has come home."

Home. Kham looked around. They would not live in exile forever. Whether or not they were allowed to live in the village again, he knew one day they would live in a new home with Jesus, just as He had promised. And now, his brother would be with them.

Scripture quotations from John 14:1 and Hebrews 13:5

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#### **Discussion Questions**

- ❖ How would you feel if your neighbors made you move away because you and your family believe in Jesus?
- ❖ Do you think that sometimes people don't tell others that they believe in Jesus because of what the other people might say or do? Do you ever feel that way? Do you ask God to help you be strong?
- ❖ Have you ever felt alone, like no one cared about all of the things that were going on in your life? What did you do when you felt that way?
- ❖ What do you think about Kham telling his brother that he'd rather be hungry and sick with Jesus than full and healthy without Him?
- ❖ How does it make you feel to know that God is making you a special home in Heaven where you can live with Him forever?

Laos: Week 3

Week 4: Let's Talk About Laos, Part Two

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#### Who Lives in Laos

Have you ever heard of something called a "people group"? It's a group of people who share things such as a language, history, or geographic area. That doesn't mean everyone in a people group lives exactly the same way, but they often have a lot of things in common.

There are over one hundred different people groups in Laos. We're going to talk about a few of them today.

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#### Lao

The biggest group of people that live in Laos are called the Lao. Laos is a land of many mountains, but most of the Lao people live in the flat areas in the Mekong River valley and in some of the cities. Most of the Lao people follow the religion of Buddhism. They work very hard to please the gods they

worship, but they never know if they have worked hard enough to make their gods happy. They also believe in reincarnation, believing they will be reborn time after time, only to work hard to please their gods once again.

One thing that many of the Lao people do to earn money to provide for their families is grow rice. They also grow mulberry bushes (to raise silk worms), cotton, and many different fruits. Almost every family has some livestock. The Lao's houses are usually made of wood or bamboo, and they are built high up on stilts—which helps protect them from flooding. It also gives the livestock a great place to run and play down on the ground!



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#### Hmong

Another very large people group in Laos is the Hmong people group. When you say "Hmong," the "H" is silent. So, you say "Mong." When communism tried to take control of the government of Laos, many of the Hmong fought back. Many of them were Christians, and they would not follow communism because communism said they could not believe in Jesus.

But after the communist forces won, life became very hard for the Hmong—even the Hmong who didn't believe in Jesus yet. The government didn't like any of the Hmong because they had fought against

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them. And they especially didn't like the Christian Hmong because they would not give up their belief in Jesus to follow communism. Many of the Hmong fled Laos when the communists won. According to Kids of Courage, close to 200,000 Hmong live in the United States today, mostly in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

Many Hmong also still live in Laos, most of them very high up in the mountains.

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#### **Stories from Laos**

#### **Luang Prabang**

Laos is divided into sixteen provinces. One of the provinces is called Luang Prabang. (Sometimes, it is spelled Louangphabang.) It is in the northern part of the country. Its capital, which is also named Luang Prabang, used to be the capital of the ancient kingdom of Laos.

It can be very hard to be a Christian in Luang Prabang. The government threatened some Christians and sent government officials to live with them, threatening to stay until they stopped following Jesus. Some Christians in the province have been kicked out of their homes by their families. Sometimes, they are made to leave the village completely.

Vong Veu is a Christian who lived in the village of Pookong, in Luang Prabang. Police came up to him and ordered him to give up his faith in Jesus and go back to worshiping the spirits that his family worshipped. When he would not, they arrested him and put him in jail.

That wasn't the first time persecution had come to the village of Pookong. Just a few months before Vong Veu was arrested, a group of new Christians in Pookong had asked a church elder from a nearby city to come teach them more about how to follow Jesus. When the elder and three others responded, the police arrested them and kept them in jail for several days.



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#### Savannakhet

In 2009, Thao Oun was at home in his village in Savannakhet province, in the southern part of Laos, when police came and forced him to come with them. He was arrested, mistreated, and threatened—if he did not give up his faith in Christ, he would be kicked out of the village. To make it even harder for him to say no, they arrested another man, named Thao Aom, and tried to make him give up his faith. When Thao Aom refused, they expelled him from the village.