MISSION STORY

OUR LITTLE MENTORS

By Job and Jell Cabanero

I’ve been a missionary teacher for almost three years now and yet it still feels like this work is new to me. I used to teach high school students in the Philippines because that’s what I was trained for—a high school teacher. And now here, funny and paradoxical may it be at the same time, I was tasked to teach primary students.

Every day is a constant struggle inside the classroom. I don’t know how to speak Thai and they don’t know how to speak English. There is a Thai teacher who would accompany me anyway but sometimes we don’t understand each other as well. In the end, we do some facial and bodily gestures. Most of the time, I feel like were just playing and having fun while learning. And in this very struggle that I am into right now, I longed even more to learn how to speak like a Thai and read like a Thai. Now, I know my husband and I are already improving.

One day, the Thai teacher in my Primary 2 class was absent which I don’t know the reason why. When I went in the classroom, the students were very noisy, running to and fro, and some of the chairs were disarranged. Some boys are playing rubber bands, others were talking and shouting, yet there were a few who were behave. I came in after greeting them and started the class with the usual routines that we had. When everything was set, we prayed together by having them repeat the words I said.

That day, I taught them the English terms of common colors. I taught them the English terms; they taught me the Thai terms. We exchange learning by giving in what we know and by taking in what we don’t. What’s even more amazing was they taught me how to spell the transliterations using the Thai letters. Their vowels and consonants are just so many in number that it’s so hard to memorize them with their “almost the same” sounds. I feel so happy because I can already memorize and remember some letters with their names and sounds. They also taught me how to pronounce Thai words adorably and patiently. Of course, they would laugh out loud when I say it incorrectly but still would teach me again and again. And honestly, I learned faster with them. The day ended great! I forgot that I was very tired when I come to think of so many things I learned during the day.  
I know our language struggles will be over soon. As recorded in the Scriptures, “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; a time to weep, and a time to laugh… (Ecc. 3:1, 4)” We may be literally crying now, not because we miss home, but because of the language barrier; nevertheless, we know we will come out victorious in God’s beautiful and perfect time.