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## How God is multiplying networks of house churches through the Buddhist Background Believers' Movement

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*Over the past 15 years, 4,362 new churches have been planted throughout 15 unreached people groups of Myanmar with 126,848 baptisms. This movement is now spread over 11 out of 14 states of Myanmar. It has also spread into Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore through migrant workers. From 2002-2007 Jay P. was the Rakhine and Rohingya Strategy Coordinator. Jay P. and wife Anna are also consultants for relief and development workers helping feed thousands of Burmese victims of cyclones and ethnic conflicts in the second poorest country in Asia.*

In August 2001, the entire Rakhine Buddhist village of P.S. converted to Christ en masse. In two days, nearly 300 Rakhine were baptized by two pastors of the Myanmar Churches of Christ. This village was later forced by government and Buddhist officials to reconvert to Buddhism at gunpoint. The Rakhine, with a population of 3 million are one of the strongest Buddhist people groups of Southeast Asia. The Rakhine, also called Arakanese, believe that Buddha once visited their land along the Bay of Bengal. The Rakhine (The Arakan) Coast once stretched from Dhaka, Bangladesh to Yangon, Burma. Most of the Buddhist peoples of southeast Bangladesh speak Rakhine as their trade language. Rakhine state of Burma is separated from the rest of Burma by a 6,000 foot mountain range. The Rakhine lost their kingdom to the Burmese in 1784 and have bemoaned this loss ever since.



In 2002, the Church Planting Movement<sup>1</sup> vision was shared with 50 Rakhine Christians in Burma's largest city of Yangon, but it was soon recognized these believers were too traditional and they had little desire to reach Rakhine state 400 miles away from the city of Yangon. In 2003, after a few false starts with young single Rakhine men whom J.P. baptized, there was a dramatic shift when two older Rakhine Christian men met J.P. in Yangon. After 6 months of training these two men were assisted with funds to travel to the northern Rakhine village where the mass conversion had taken place two years before. Upon their return these two trainees reported they had restarted two churches and started another church through their nearby relatives. One of these two trainees, the Lawyer, was originally from this area.

These two Rakhine CPM trainers reported that the entire village of P.S. was forced at gunpoint to reconvert to Buddhism. The new believers wanted to follow Jesus but the local monk in cooperation with the Burmese army demanded that they could not speak about Jesus any longer. The new believers had been shown a traditional model of church, which was too large and easily identifiable by the police. The two Rakhine CPM trainers helped these believers start tiny reproducing house churches with lay leadership. Only 24 previously baptized believers out of the 300 returned back to Christianity by confirming their faith with the observance of the Lords Supper. With the help and guidance of the two men who received church planting movement training, the Buddhist Background Believers Movement have been completely indigenous with no transfer growth from other denominations other than these 24 believers. 90% of these new believers are adults with 10% baptized children between the ages of 9 years to 15 years.

One of the greatest obstacles that our team has seen overcome is a clearer understanding of the Theravada Buddhists worldview, it's barriers, and how to bridge these barriers with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The clearer understanding came from the indigenous leadership of the BBBM. Our closest coworker from New Zealand worked with Buddhists for 25 years in Thailand and Burma. In 2007, Ms. J.H. an outside worker with the BBBM wrote a paper about her experience with the movement.

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\* A Church Planting Movement is a network of disciples who plant multiplying churches who rapidly enthrone Christ by obeying all of His commands in love. A CPM has at least 3 branches with 4 generations deep. According to the BBB Movement definition, when a seeker group discovers Christ and wants to make Him Lord by obeying His command to be baptized then the seeker group becomes a church.

*Only in the last few years, as I have discipled new believers from Buddhist backgrounds and made a much-belated effort to learn their worldview, has it become evident that I can neither blame the devil, nor 'hard hearts' nor 'wrong timing', but my own failure to be a humble learner of their culture.*

Our aim at first was a contextualized presentation of the gospel for the insiders however after learning a clearer understanding of the Theravada worldview we shifted our goal to indigenization. This means that indigenous leaders of the BBBM decide what forms, terminology and structure they will reach and teach their own people.

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### The Situation of the Church in Myanmar

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Three Christian Tribes dominate Christianity in Burma. These tribes were never Buddhist and therefore their worldview is vastly different from the majority of the Buddhist population. They are the Karen (50% Christian), The Chin (98% Christian), and the Kachin (99% Christian). These peoples have been Christian for almost 200 years. Before having a knowledge of Christ these peoples were primarily animist who had stories of the Most High God and were waiting for the gospel when missionaries arrived. These Tribal Christians make up 99% of the Church of Burma. Besides the movement described in this paper, the Buddhist Background Believers (BBB's) only number around 28,000 believers are scattered among these Tribal dominated churches. There are a few BBB background churches like the Shan Baptist Convention and the Mon Baptist Convention, but these churches are not growing. There is not a single ordained Rakhine leader in the Rakhine Baptist Convention. The RBC leadership is completely Asho Chin. Even though 85% of Myanmar are Buddhist, the Buddhist Background Believers still comprise only the tiniest minority of the Christian population. This means that the majority of the growth of the church in Burma is only generational. It is not reaching out among other faiths.

The BBB Movement of Myanmar are praying for the day when the Buddhist Background Churches become the majority of Christians. This was the original vision of Baptist missionary, Dr. Adoniram Judson when he arrived in Burma on July 13, 1813.

Judson stated, "It is easier to pull a tooth from a tiger than win a Burmese Buddhist to Christ." BBB's believe that "we respect Buddha but follow Jesus. The BBBM vision is to start churches among 10% of the the 5 largest Buddhist

peoples of Myanmar; the Shan, the Mon, the Palaung, the Bamar, and the Rakhine and a BBB group in every village in Myanmar by 2020.

***The least evangelized peoples.*** *There are still many millions of unreached, and the need for bold but sensitive outreach and church planting persists. There is a young but encouraging movement to Christ that expresses the gospel in a framework sensible to Buddhists. It began among the Rakhine and moved to Burmese and Karen Buddhists.* Operation World 2010 edition speaking of the movement described in this paper

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### Training process

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*Theological Education by Extension (TEE) is an essential tool for multiplying trained leaders for the fast-growing Church. This concept is working well in both traditional churches and in the Buddhist-Background Believers' Movement.* Operation World 2010 edition speaking of the movement described in this paper

Two Rakhine men began to meet at one of their homes everyday for almost 6 months in a temporary training church. The BBBM were shown this pattern by Dr. George Patterson through J.P.\* In this temporary training church the BBBM built a model of reproducing churches, which they could easily imitate. After a few days of participatory bible lessons on the 8 commands of Jesus J.P. asked his two new best friends, "How can we help Buddhists feel comfortable worshipping Christ in tiny multiplying house churches?" They immediately grabbed a flat triangle shaped bell that every Buddhist in Myanmar calls, a *gyeezi* bell. "With hands folded in prayer on our knees we will strike this bell three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit at the beginning of worship time and at the end," instead of in the name of the Buddha, The Monkhood and the Dharma of Buddha."

These two men were the keys to unlock Jesus kingdom in the defeated kingdom of Rakhine. In April 2003 the BBBM set a faith goal to see 7 new churches started within the year. Exactly one year later the two men called to declare "We've started our seventh new church"

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\* [www.mentorandmultiply.com](http://www.mentorandmultiply.com) Dr. George Patterson's Theological Education and Evangelism by Extension is an adaptation of Ralph Winter's TEE. TEEE is a decentralized model of training leaders in a Church Planting Movement. Winter's model is more for traditional churches.

A team of Buddhist Background Believers were formed; this team were then trained to look for Persons of Peace who would lead to Houses of Peace, the team was then sent out. While meeting the BBBM leadership practiced L.E.A.P.P. (Listen, Evaluate, Assign, Praise, Pray); The BBBM leaders listened to their trainees reports and their previous work was evaluated, the team was assigned new task and studies and these men were Praised and Prayed for. This pattern is based on Christ mentoring model in Matthew 10 and Luke 10 after Christ formed a team, trained a team and sent them out to look for Persons of Peace from a specific people group.

By Jan 2004 these two Rakhine men restarted two churches in the village where the government monks thought that they had destroyed Christ's disciples. These two men instantly graduated to trainers when they helped to revive Rakhine house churches in P.S. village to share with Beautiful Brother's village. In April 2004, these trainers reported that 21 Rakhine jumped into the Kaladan River to be baptized after they repented and believed on the blessed news of their new King Jesus. A new kingdom had come to Rakhine, this kingdom will never be defeated!

In mid April 2004, Rakhine house church networks from two areas of the state came together to learn how to form networks of multiplying churches. The Rakhine leaders drew maps of their areas to identify where Persons of Peace lived. They set goals and laid plans to cover their areas with new churches. All of the leaders at this training were male farmers. During our "Just Obey Jesus Training" the BBBM identify Jesus training about church planting movements based on Matthew 10, Luke 10 and Acts 10. Our definition of church is a group of disciples who gather together to meet with Jesus and obey all of His commands in love. These newly appointed elders (see Acts 14:23) began to write their own praise songs to Jesus. The BBBM leaders were asked, "Do you think you can change the words of your state song and write praise to King Jesus? They shouted in unison, "Hoo Kay!" (Okay in Rakhine and Burmese). At this mid April training these leaders were also trained in new farming techniques that they learned from agriculture trainer, Roy Almolani, from the Asian Rural Life Development Foundation of Mindanao, Philippines.



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### Topics of Training

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How to facilitate an inductive Bible Story Study with a House of Peace

Orally train 14 Old Testament Stories with pictures and have them repeat 2 times.

8 Barriers for Buddhists

8 Commands of Jesus curriculum

How to call others to repentance and belief in the Good News?

What is the good news?

How to make disciples?

What is a church and how to start a church?

What do leaders of a church look like?

How to pray for the sick and to see breakthroughs?

How to give for Christ's mission?

Assessing Movement through Link Analysis.

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### Indigenous Forms of Worship

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The Rakhine Buddhist Background Believers House Church Movement grew from 3 house churches in January 2004 to 219 churches by October 2006. These two men split their ministries around 2006 and now 42 house churches work with UKS. This small house church network was one of the healthiest and most unified. The leadership of these house church come together once a month to share victories and challenges. Several recordings of their praise and worship were made during these meetings and some were moved to tears the first time they sang the works, "Praise be to the Creator of the universe and Jesus Christ His Son."

Sadly, this network of 42 house churches have stopped multiplying since a person who does not have the Church Planting Movement vision has taken over. They have seen 10 churches backslide into their former way of life. The BBBM

still have a relationship with trainee Bro. UKS but this network's growth has plateaued. This is not the only time when outsiders have slowed down the growth of BBB house church networks. In the Irrawaddy delta numerous salaried evangelists and church planters have "tagged" along with Sister Red in order to see how she was being successful. The BBBM leadership immediately laid down a rule for all the church planters, "Do not allow any outsiders to tag along with you." Why? "These evangelists use your success to report to their head quarters about all the new churches and baptisms that they now have started. You can offer to train their people in their own areas but do not allow them to tag along to your new flocks." **Acts 20:29-30.**

The BBB Movement in Myanmar learned many concepts from studying what God has been doing in other BBB movements in Southeast and South Asia. The BBB Movement typically do not say "amen" at the end of prayers but use the Buddhist term, *thado*. The BBBM learned that the Thai Covenant Church (Phra Khun) of northeast Thailand say *sato*. The Myanmar BBB Movement also fold their hands in Buddhistic fashion of prayer in addition to striking the gyeezee bell three times.

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### Indigenous Bible Translation

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In 2007 Rakhine trainer, The Lawyer, began his translation of the *Christ Pitaka*. *C.P.* is a new translation of the Burmese Bible. Dr. Adoniram Judson's translation that is vigorously defended by Burmese tribal Christians is unintelligible by the vast majority of Buddhist peoples of Burma. The Judson version is a direct translation, which calls Heaven "sky." Judson's wife Ann translated the first gospel of Matthew into the Thai language through two Thai soldiers held captive in Yangon in the early 1800s. Therefore the first Thai Bible carried on the direct translation strategy into another country. The Lawyer's translation is a meaning based translation that calls Heaven "the Golden City of Nirvana." The Lawyer explains, "No Buddhist wants to go to the sky or a higher abode, they want to go to a place where there is no more sin and no more suffering."\*

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\* The reason behind the use of this term are explained in J.P.'s paper, "8 Barriers for Buddhists."

In addition to developing an indigenous translation of the Burmese Bible the BBBM have also developed a set of Bible story pictures which show; The Four Noble Truths of Buddha, from Creation to Christ, and pictures of our strategy taken from Acts. These Picture Bibles have been very key to the growth and multiplication of the BBB Movement. The original digital copies of these pictures came from Drs. Mickey Sampson and Steve Hyde's team of Cambodia. Burmese Christian artist Saya Sithu redrew the pictures in Burmese form. The artist was urged to draw Jesus without a beard. The reason is that when our church planters showed pictures of Jesus with a beard the Rakhine and Burmese Buddhists replied, "Jesus was a Muslim? That's too bad, we really like Him but we hate Burmese Muslims (Most Burmese Muslims have beards). To avoid this barrier the BBBM developed a beardless Christ and it has been a hit with Buddhists ever since. **Right: King Darius' Decree in Daniel 6:25 Buddha lived just down the Silk Road from Daniel and learned a lot of ideas from Daniel around 544 BC.**




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### Helping the poor

In May 2, 2008 Cyclone Nargis struck the Irrawaddy Delta killing 140,000 Burmese. The Rakhine house churches in Yangon were equipped to help our friend Sister Laughter to help her Karen Buddhist families in the delta to have enough food to get them through this disaster. Sister Laughter's Buddhist Karen relatives had completely forgotten their Karen language and had become Burmese. Their National Identity Cards say Bamar Buddhists. There are 35 million Bamar Buddhist but many of these are from Karen people who have gone through a process of Burmanization.

The Rakhine BBBs began to share the gospel with the Burmese and Karen Buddhist of the delta and have continued to help these people to recover from one of the largest disasters in Asian history. Baptist Global Response, the disaster relief organization of the Southern Baptist Convention helped us provide rice and temporary shelters for several thousand survivors of the



disaster. The people were so grateful for this help and it has directly resulted in 2,200 baptized BBB's since 2009-2011. In August 2008 the BBBM began working with Samaritan's Purse relief organization. A major goal of the BGR was Church Planting Movements, SP on the other hand were not aware of the CPM vision or if they were it wasn't in the conversation of any of their leadership.

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### Relations with Buddhist Monks

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For several years the BBB movement held house church leadership trainings in Buddhist monasteries. The Lawyer had developed numerous friendships with Buddhist monks in order to gain deeper understanding into the Buddhist worldview for evangelistic and Bible translations purposes. After the gyezee bell was struck in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit the monk spoke up. He had just watched the Jesus film the night before in his native Rakhine language.



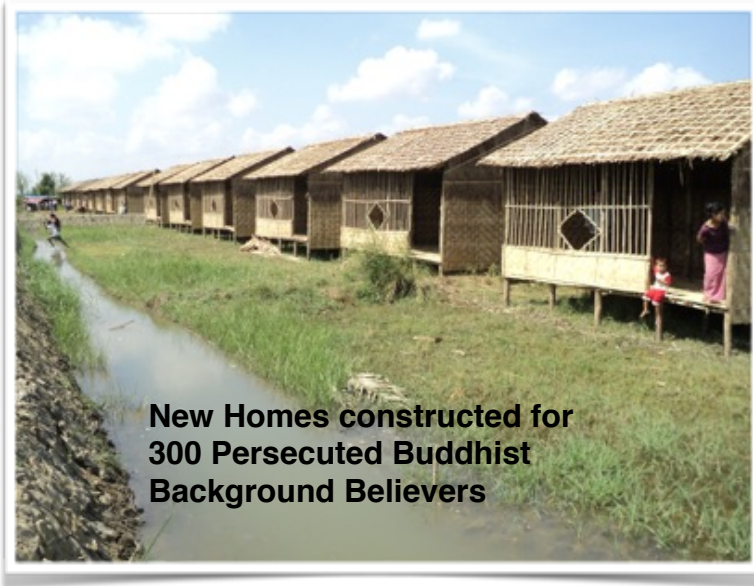
**Training BBB leaders in Buddhist Monastery**

"You should all follow Jesus, because Jesus is God." The believers were shocked as he continued, "In fact if you want to get baptized you can use my lake behind the monastery as a Jordan River for your baptism ceremony. If anyone gives you problems for following Jesus, you tell them to come talk to me." This particular monk never came to Christ but he did protect the BBB movement in the state for several years.

After Cyclone Nargis killed 150,000 Burmese in May 2, 2008 the primarily Rakhine BBBM were able to provide \$50,000 in aid to their Burmese and Buddhist Karen friends in the Irrawaddy Delta. Two fishermen from this area heard the gospel and were amazed at the freedom in Christ. Their Buddhist monk announced to them they are guilty of killing fish and therefore were on

their way to hell. He stated that if they give him their fish then he could earn them merit to get them out of hell. They were overjoyed to hear that Jesus spends time with fishermen, provide salvation for free and even teaches them how to catch more fish. "This Jesus is a lot cheaper than Buddhism. Why haven't we heard this before?"

In Aug. 2012 Monk Pandeeta started to hire men to harass and persecute the believers in this area. Pandeeta began to place curses on these new believers.



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### [Monastery School Project](#)

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One community development project that leaders of the BBBM started with a Buddhist monk provided salaries for primary school teachers. The monk and the Lawyer's idea was to get start-up money for three rice mills. The villagers promised to use these particular rice mills in order to earn money to pay for their schoolteachers' salaries. They needed no school buildings since the plan was to simply utilize the existing monasteries' facilities for the schoolrooms. This indigenous plan would help provide salaries for eight schoolteachers who were all new BB believers. The Christian schoolteachers would be allowed to teach openly about Jesus as well as about other religions. Everything went along well for a year until a doctor from San Francisco decided to "help" the situation by offering to pay salaries to the teachers without the need for the community run businesses. After this foreign investment stopped after the second year the entire plan fell apart as well as the lawyer's friendship and protection by the abbot monk.

This story illustrates how outside funds or even the promise of ongoing outside funds can damage local believers and ministries. For 9 years no salaries were given to anyone in the BBB movement. The BBBM leadership have attempted to help church planters start their own businesses however our rate of success has not been as great as the leadership would have liked. It is much easier to help a church planter to enhance an existing business or to start a business that they have already been trained to run. If outsiders suggest starting a business then ultimately the outsider will be responsible if the business fails. In the past 5 years we have been able to finance a handful of key trainers.



House churches have been encouraged to give offerings to the traveling expenses of the leaders and church planters and some have taken up \$20 here and \$50 there to help with mission expenses. The believers are also encouraged to give from their produce. In the Old Testament the Jews gave portions of their produce and many BBB's are doing this now.

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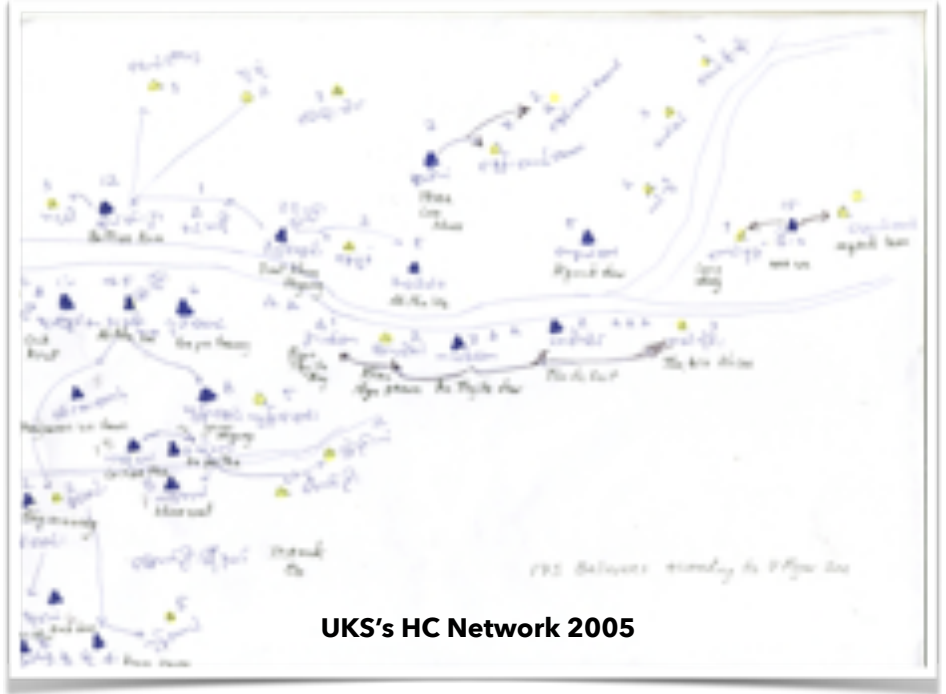
### Signs and Wonders

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In 2005, Brother Bright Light turned to Christ and his entire family followed. He first heard the gospel from the Lawyer and told us the story of his demon possessed Muslim neighbor. If the neighbor saw a raw piece of meat he would eat it immediately. He asked Brother Bright Light if he could drive out the demon that was tormenting his soul and bringing shame on his family. Bro. Bright Light was asked if he wanted help in casting out the demon because he was just a 3 month old believer, but he politely declined. He declared, "I want to gather the entire village together in order that they might see the power of my Jesus". A month later this brother was asked about the result of his effort and he nonchalantly replied, "Yes, it went away."

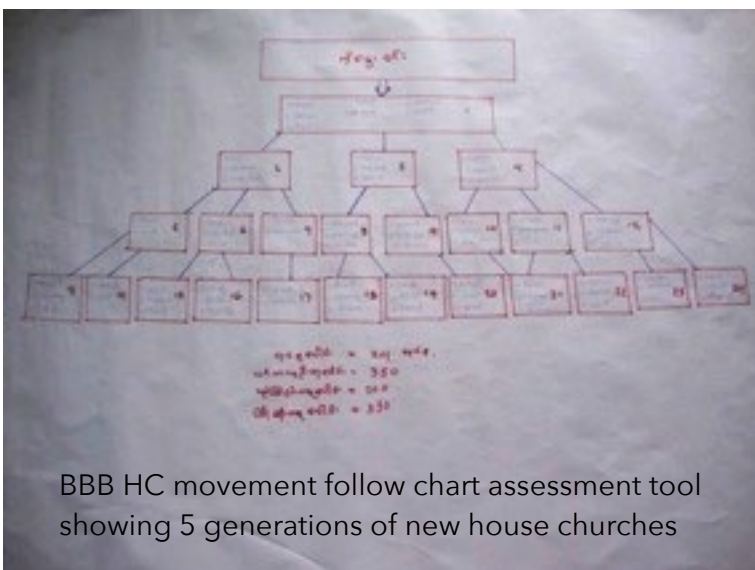
Trainees are shown to anoint the sick with oil and are prayed for in the name of Jesus. Numerous reports of healing regularly occur. However most of these are healing of headaches, backaches, mental illness and minor sicknesses. The

network have reported 3 people raised from the dead. This was a bit discouraging until it was learned that it is normal for God to build up the faith muscles of new believers through smaller miracles and victories before more faith can lead to larger miracles. He did this through David. God allowed David to kill a bear, then a lion before God allowed him to slay the giant, Goliath. There are many Goliaths' to slay in Myanmar including 45 million unreached Buddhist Burmese, the worst healthcare in Asia and one of the most oppressive governments in the world.



Church Multiplication Statistics

The BBBM saw 250 churches with 4,865 baptism started from 2004-2009 among 4 Buddhist peoples; the Rakhine (Arakanese), Bamar, Diangnet and the Mru (Myo). From September 2010 to December 2011 we have seen over 479 new churches started in 5 house church networks among Bamar, Karen Buddhists, Hindus and even one church among the 4 million South Asian Muslims of Burma.



BBB HC movement follow chart assessment tool showing 5 generations of new house churches

116 of these new churches from 2010-2011 have been started in the Irrawaddy Delta in 2 house church networks. In late 2012, 36

house churches were started among Shan and Mon peoples. Mon and Shan States are completely on the opposite side of the country from where the movement started in Jan. 2002.



The small Rakhine House Church network grew steadily until a ministry split between the Lawyer and UKS in 2008. The BBBM tried numerous times to reconcile these two workers, but resolved that factions must come. I Cor. 11:19. The reason for the decline is that new leadership training is academic oriented and not obedience oriented as our trainings were. This form of discipleship is much more information based than life transforming directed. The new churches no longer are urgent about finding Persons of Peace that lead to Houses of Peace and new evangelistic inductive Bible studies. His Bible study style is much more direct or deductive than our former approach with seekers and new believers. This non-reproducing pattern has led to a growing clergy/laity divide and loss of new churches in UKS network.

The Lawyer shifted his focus from Rakhine to the Irrawaddy Delta in May 2007 and a consequence of this shift in focus was little to no reporting for the Rakhine Buddhist Background Movement from 2008-2010. The reason why Sister Laughter's house church network in the Delta is growing so much faster compared to the other networks is because she is training church planter coaches who are training new church planting trainers. She accepted the challenge to disciple a few in order to reach larger numbers. She has decreased her responsibility of evangelism in order to train more evangelists. The BBBM leadership have also have been more consistent in training the first generation of leaders than the other areas. Seven of these house church networks have multiplied to the fifth generation of new churches.

Burmese trainer, Bro. TW told his testimony of why he decided to follow Jesus. "The Buddhist monks told me that because I was a fisherman and killed fish that I was going to Hell. The remedy to get me out of Hell was to feed monks the fish

that we killed and to give the monks money that we made from the sell of the fish.

The monks told me that Buddha said, 'Do not kill.' I was so relieved that Sister Laughter told me that Jesus loves fishermen, helps them to catch more fish and gives them salvation This Jesus is a lot better deal. His religion is a lot cheaper!" Burma is the second poorest country in Asia and the sixth poorest country in the world. The oppressed Buddhist peoples of Burma live in extreme poverty but they give enormous amounts of money to Buddhist monks in order to gain a higher celestial abode. They believe that attaining Nirvana will be easier once they reach the higher abodes.

In August 2011 Bro. TW and Bro. Olive along with 300 believers, were driven out of their homes by a jealous Buddhist monk named Pandeeta. This monk is with the a Buddhist Convention (related to the government) went from village to village to persecute BBBs and proclaimed, "Your Jesus is destroying our Buddhism. You must not speak to any more Buddhists about Jesus." Several Buddhist villages have turned to Christ before this and this is the area where the BBBM has seen the largest growth.

In March 2011 Rakhine Brother TA of Sister MM's network decided to obey Jesus command to be baptized. His son-in-law had passed away a year before and his daughter had faced severe mental illness. The BBBs prayed and when she was healed Bro. TA began to listen to Bible stories from the nearby church that met in a primary school that we had help to start. From March to June 2011, Brother Victory started 5 churches with his friends and family. On June 27 he baptized his fifth trainee, his 8 year old grandson.

<b>Trainer</b>	<b>baptisms (as of Feb. 2013)</b>	<b>house churches</b>
The Lawyer, Sis. M&M, Sis. UTTen	28,098	1050
Sis. Red (Major's daughter) and KF	45,050	1,800
Sister Laughter (HBB, BBB, MBB networks)	47,000	1400
Raj. (Hindu Background)	400	70
UKS	300 (1,400 seekers)	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>120,848</b>	<b>4,362</b>



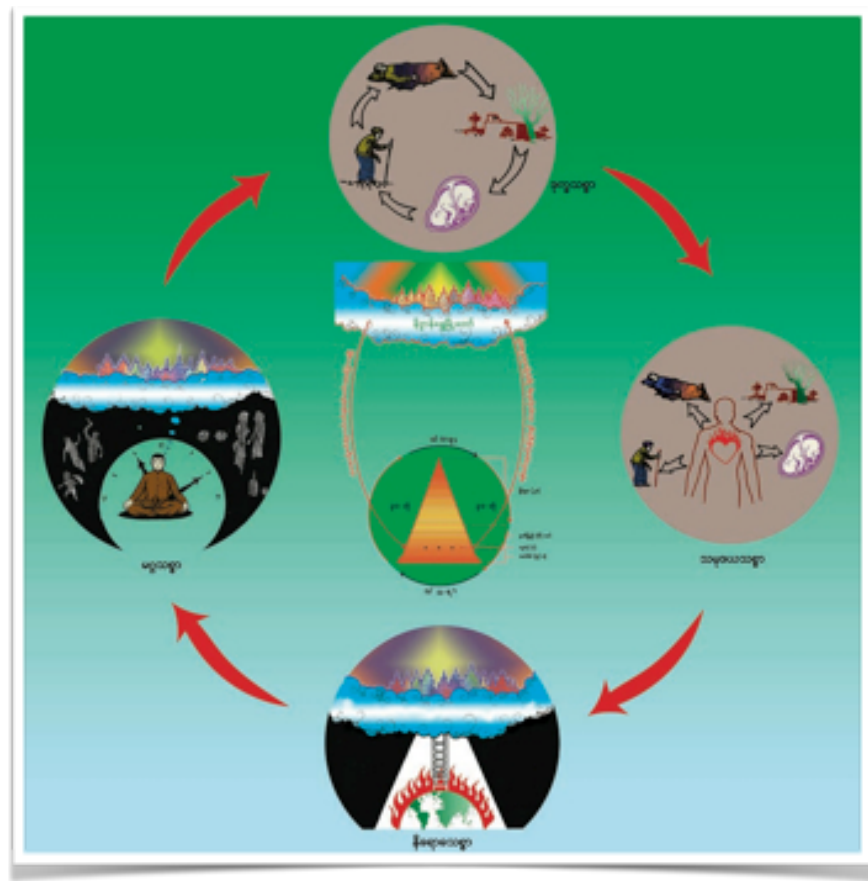
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The Lawyer's Method of Sharing the Good News with Buddhist

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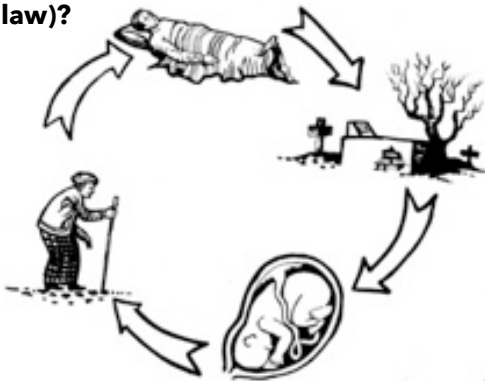
This image was first drawn by the Lawyer, Major Tun Kyaw Oo and I, but redone by Saya Sithu, Yangon, Burma 2005. The Lawyer's Method was written by Lawyer TKO and heavily influenced and encouraged by Dr. Thom A. Wolf.



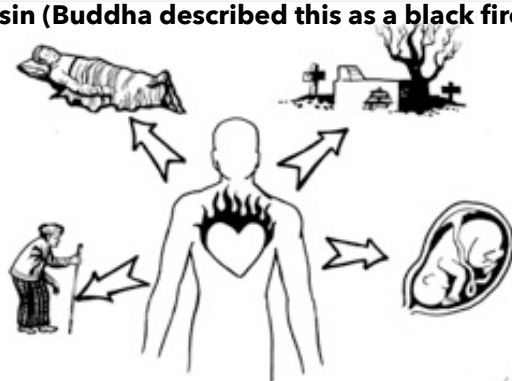
Since 2004, the BBB Movement has proclaimed that Christ is freedom from the cycle of reincarnation. They have also proclaimed that He is the way to the Golden City of Nirvana. There are 40 different ways to say Nirvana in Burmese. "The abode of no more sin and suffering, Nirvana the Golden City, The Blessed Abode," are just a few ways to describe Nirvana. The Lawyer's translation proclaims that Jesus came from the Golden City of Nirvana and wants to take all peoples to Nirvana. "

Even though UKS, Sister Laughter, Sis. Red and the Lawyer do not work together they all agree on the forms of worship, key terms and that the Lawyer's method is the best way to share the good news then disciple and start churches with the unreached Buddhists of Myanmar. They are unified around the use of key terms for discipleship and the Lawyer's translation. Currently 4 out of 5 BBB house church networks are using the Lawyer's Translation of the Burmese New Testament.

**The first law is Death and Suffering (the result of the 2nd law)?**



**Second is that the cause of death and suffering is sin (Buddha described this as a black fire)?**



**Third Law: Your goal as a Buddhist is to go to Nirvana? Ni means no, vana means burning.**



**Fourth Law: The Way out of Sin and Suffering towards Nirvana is to do**





The Lawyer points out the illogic of Buddhist thought, "Have you ever been to the rich country of Malaysia? If Buddhism is true, why are all the Muslims in Malaysia so rich and healthy? Shouldn't we righteous Burmese Buddhists be the ones with democracy, freedom, health and wealth? Were the rich Malaysian Muslims good and earnest merit making Buddhists in their former lives?" This makes no sense and many BBBs have come to Christ through this reasoning along with simple inductive Bible stories and discussion about the truths of Christ in the homes of Persons of Peace. The Lawyer's Method is very similar to Thai Buddhist Background pastor in Australia, Steve Cioccolanti's method, in his book "From Buddha to Jesus."<sup>2</sup>

On one occasion the Lawyer shared the bad news of Buddha's law of perfection with a sincere Rakhine seeker in Yangon. This seeker became teary eyed when he realized that he could never gain salvation through adherence to Buddhist rituals. The Lawyer showed him that Buddha demanded 100% perfection through meditation and giving lots offerings to build monasteries and pagodas. This new Rakhine believer went back to his hometown and led his entire family in Irrawaddy to Christ. This method of sharing the gospel fit this man's worldview so much that he could easily share it with his Buddhist friends and family.

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### The Four Noble Truths of Christ

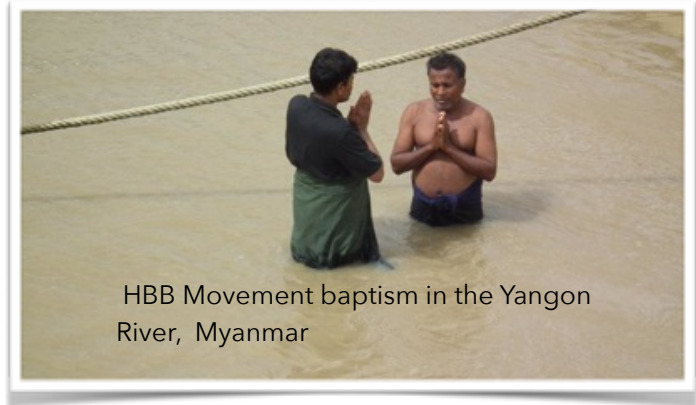
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1. Suffering and death have an origin (a cause). Suffering is the effect of that cause.
2. The origin of death is sin. The story of Adam and Eve's disobedience is the cause.
3. There is a place where suffering and sin no longer exist.
4. The Way out of the cycle of sin and suffering is faith in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Christ walks the Perfect Road through His disciples. He make them perfect in His eyes.

The Lawyer points out, "If a Buddhist commits one sin during his billions and billions of lives before he attains Nirvana then he will fall back down the ladder of reincarnation. Attaining a life in a higher abode (31 abodes seen in the center of the illustration above) is actually a place where sin is more likely and

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keeping Buddhist rules is much harder than life in this world. Jesus also demanded perfection but congratulated His disciples when they recognized that they can not make themselves 100% perfect. Christ joyfully replied, 'With man this (perfection) is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' Matthew 19:26. On the cross Christ made the way possible, but His victory over death did not end with death on the cross but with the resurrection."



HBB Movement baptism in the Yangon River, Myanmar

Eight things (The Eightfold Path). Basically Buddhist must not think about sin and become 100% perfect

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### From Bridge to Multiplying Networks

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One Rakhine trainer Sister Tan Tan, found Christ when she came to Yangon in order to find her husband who had abandoned her and their two children. Tan Tan reported, "My husband found out that I earned money through prostitution. My husband was a lazy drunk and I had to find a way to feed my children. When my husband found out what was happening he was furious and left for the big city of Yangon. When I met with J.P. and my Lawyer friend I was so happy to hear about Jesus, a man who loves me and who will never leave me. According to Buddhism I was going straight to Hell for my sin of adultery. The Lawyer explained to me that Buddhism demanded 100% perfection and I realized that I never would receive salvation through Buddhism. They told me

that Jesus came from the Golden City of Buddhism and how He can forgive a sinner like me and save me from assured hell. I was shown how to have a simple form of worship that I could practice back in my hometown. J.P. and the Lawyer helped me start a tailoring business. Three months later JP and the Lawyer were shocked when I told him that I had started 14 churches. He had me draw flow charts that helped us see how many baptized believers and seekers gather in each church, how often we meet and whether or not we are doing the Lord's Supper and have started other groups with group facilitators. We saw that my 14 churches had multiplied to the third generation. Even my 70 year old mother is starting new churches."

Tan Tan was asked about her training process. She went on to describe her method. "At 11 a.m. on Sunday we strike the gyeezee three times as the Lawyer showed me and pray to Abbot Jesus. My 9 year old daughter Pew Pew tells a Bible story using the pictures that JP gave me and then I ask the questions to help seekers and new believers find the truths from the stories. Then I tell the house church members and seekers to repeat this same story and pattern of worship in their homes. So at 2 p.m. that same day most of these members meet in their own homes. There are 14 churches now." Pew Pew, the nine year old, Bible story teller is the best preacher out of 50 house churches in that area.

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### Making disciples of All Nations

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The Buddhist Background Believers' Movement has started house churches networks among Hindus, Muslims and even Burmese Jews. In 2010 Bro. Raj of Bago Division was baptized by the BBBM national leadership. Raj is a member of the Bhojpuri people who number 39 million worldwide. The BBBM coached Raj to jump-start 31 churches with 200 baptisms in 6 months. Raj's network of Hindu Background Believers now number



over 400 and these 61 churches are meeting regularly and worship Jesus in a number of Indian languages. The BBBM cast a vision to Raj's HBBM to disciple the 1 million Hindus of South Asian descent in Myanmar.

The BBBM have seen 37,000 Burmese Muslims baptized



In 2012, the Muslim neighbors of 37,000 Buddhist Background Believers witnessed their idol worshipping Burmese friends putting away their images and discussing about a prophet mentioned in the Koran, Jesus (Isa).

A small group of Muslims then turned to Christ (Isa Al Masih) and then a group of Muslim ladies were also baptized. This created quite a stir at the nearby Muslim Seminary. One of the Muslim Background Believers in this picture has recently wed and relocated to Kachin State near the border with China and Tibet.

In June 2012 violence erupted across northern Rakhine State when a group of Rohingya Muslims reportedly raped and killed a young Rakhine woman. The violence spread quickly across the state leaving 90,000 refugees 4,500. Hundreds were killed as Buddhists and Muslims began to kill each other in the streets. Tensions have remained high for three months with many clashes occurring daily. The situation is further aggravated by the Bangladesh government not allowing the Rohingya to take refuge in their country. The Buddhist Background Believers Movement in Rakhine are some of the very few Rakhine who have provided aid to the Rohingya victims. The Rakhine house church networks have formed Peace Teams and have organized several meetings between the Rohingya and Rakhine communities both in Yangon and Rakhine State. As a result of Rohingya believers being pushed across the border into Bangladesh thousands of Rohingya now reside in Bangladesh and these are spreading to the Middle East. The Rohingya MBBs have also shared the gospel

among Bengalis and leaders of the 50,000 Kaman Muslims of central Rakhine state.

The fourth largest army in Asia is one of the most notorious for genocide against Christians, Muslims and other minorities. The *Tatmadaw* (Burmese Army) has ruled Myanmar with an iron fist for the past 50 years. It has driven one of the most thriving Asian economies into the ground. These men told us that they are guilty of rape, killing and



pillaging and were destined to go to hell in 4 religions. They laughed as they said, "We going to hell in Buddhism and Hinduism for killing, we are going to hell in Islam because we aren't good enough, and we are going to hell in Christianity because we don't go to their church. Now we are so happy to hear this wonderful news about forgiveness in Jesus. Only He is able to wipe away the enormous amount of sin that we have accumulated in our lives. The three soldiers pictured above were killed in November 2010, when their fellow brother in arms and in Christ received their marching orders to go fight the Kachin Independence Army. The group of remaining soldiers exclaimed, "If we go fight against these Kachin Christian Army we will surely perish." They began to pray and fast for 3 days, miraculously on the third day of praying and fasting their orders were reversed. As a result of Jesus answering their earnest prayer for salvation from certain death 20 more Buddhist soldiers placed their faith in Christ.

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## Outside Assessment

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*In 2015 Dr. Bill Smith an independent assessment of the movement was held across Myanmar. Summarized Report with questions from Dr. George Patterson to Dr. Bill Smith. Dr. Bill Smith is retired from the International Mission Board and has spent 40 years in Asia.*

**Patterson:** If you can spare a moment, please mention a case or two in a very few sentences that confirm any of the following:

**Smith:** Evidence that numbers of believers or churches are reported as accurately as field conditions allow (statistics not carelessly bloated).

Scores of individual and small group interviews were conducted asking relational, geographical and chronological questions as well as gathering hard numbers about believers and new churches. The figures gathered are as accurate as those from any of the other scores of movement assessments conducted. Rapid multiplication has yielded healthy churches (shepherds adequately trained to work in their local context, etc.).

Various approaches using both oral and written materials, conferences, Train & Multiply materials and traveling trainers have pushed out equipping as far as is humanly possible. The net result has been new believers growing both in knowledge, understanding, and practical experience in leading transformed lives. Individual house churches were visited. Leaders interviewed and observed. While they may not have advanced knowledge of theological and doctrinal concepts taught in Western seminaries, they have mastered the practical realities of thriving in persecution environment. Thousands of local believers are role modelling and pointing to scripture, helping newer believers pass on dynamic truths to newer generations of believers.

Reports of miraculous healing and signs are valid (not "all the result unrestrained gullibility").

Habakkuk 1: 5

I know that some will not believe when they hear one more person say that these are real. Scripture predicted that when God does miraculous things that disbelief will often be the result. Validity is always a function of the eye of the beholder.

However here is something you can feel free to include.

“ On several occasions people ranging from a few weeks old baby to an elderly woman were brought to training sessions and received prayer. Numerous times there was an immediate positive response. Interview after Interview produced stories of miraculous healings or deliverances. Sometimes these events were determinative in causing a Buddhist or Muslim to transfer faith to Jesus Christ. Believers were eager to show or describe to this outsider the results of healings and deliverances from habits, addictions or destructive life patterns. Local worship services often included spontaneous testimonies of answered prayer . ”

Suffering from persecution is as prevalent as reported (not exaggerated to attract sympathy and funds).

One again if someone does not want to believe , no statement from another new witness will change their mind.” Bill Smith

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### What Other Christian leaders are saying about the Move of God that Jay P initiated in Myanmar.

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**Dr. Bill Smith** - Strategy Coordinator trainer and 40 year veteran of the International Mission Board of the SBC. “In Myanmar rapid multiplication has yielded healthy churches and shepherd’s trained aquatically in their local context etc.” [nomadbill@verizon.net](mailto:nomadbill@verizon.net)

**Pastor Jimmy Tam** - Sonrise Christian Community “I have never seen a Move of God like this one in Myanmar.” [pastorjimmy@sunrisela.org](mailto:pastorjimmy@sunrisela.org)

**Sean Steckbeck** - missionary coach with Simeon’s Cry Ministry Israel “I have worked with Jay and his teams in Myanmar for the past six years and have seen the trainees that Jay has raised up multiply into several massive gospel movements that area sweeping the entire country and reaching dozens of unreached peoples.” [simeons\\_cry@hotmail.com](mailto:simeons_cry@hotmail.com)

**Justin Lovan** - missionary coach with GCN and The Ark Initiative “Being with these movements in Myanmar has helped my ministry vision to increase and multiply into the Buddhist world.” [justinl@globalcatalyticnetwork.org](mailto:justinl@globalcatalyticnetwork.org)

**Doug Wall** - Christian Businessman San Diego, CA "I have been touched by the sincerity of geniuses of the Buddhist background believers faith I witnessed first hand through Jay Pratt's ministry last year (2016). [dougfwall@cox.net](mailto:dougfwall@cox.net)

**Yae Yint Thu Fish - Lisu missionary to Buddhist World - The Ark Initiative**

**Thailand** "I am a Lisu Christian from northern Myanmar. I have learned a lot from Jay's trainees and am now confidently and successfully sharing the gospel with Myanmar Buddhist people in Thailand and beyond. I am so excited to see my countrymen coming to Christ." [Yeyintthuark@gmail.com](mailto:Yeyintthuark@gmail.com)

**Pastor Rey Abejero** - From Sunrise Church in the Philippines "I have visited GCN's work in Myanmar and have taken what I learned and applied it to our new house church networks in Hong Kong and the Philippines."

**Dave Marrett** - Life On Mission - Australia "I was greatly impacted by the immediate and radical obedience of these indigenous Burmese Buddhist Background believers and their deep love for one another as they invested their whole selves into the miraculous work that the Holy Spirit was doing in and through them." [davemarrett@gmail.com](mailto:davemarrett@gmail.com)

**Calvin Conkey** - YWAM Create International of Chiang Mai, Thailand and Australia has done 2 short documentaries of the movement in Myanmar. [creator7@gmail.com](mailto:creator7@gmail.com) Calvin was told for years by the IMB rep. Gerald Davis that IMB Regional leadership believed Jay Pratt's work was fabricated.

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## Conclusions

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- The BBBM made indigenization the goal rather than getting stuck in the contextualization ditch.
- The BBBM taught leaders, "do not allow any outsiders to tag along with you. Offer to train their people."
- The leaders accepted the challenge to disciple a few in order to reach larger numbers. Decrease responsibility of evangelism in order to train more evangelists.
- The leadership learned that divisions in ministry will occur even though believers are commanded to be unified. I Cor. 11:19
- Set faith goals and write them down. Habakkuk 2:2.



- Go to the Monastery first or religious leadership with the people you are trying to reach.
- The leadership learned that it is much easier to help a church planter to enhance an existing business or to start a business that they have already been trained to run.
- The leadership learned that outside funds or even the promise of ongoing outside funds can damage local believers and ministries.
- The BBBM share the Bad News of true Buddhism before proclaiming the Good News of Christ.
- Most cross-cultural workers and national leaders won't believe CPM reports even if someone rises from the dead and tells them that it is true. Assessments and outside evaluations are only respected by those who have the Church Planting Movement vision. You cannot convince those who are blind to the CPM vision and you will be better off to not work with those who do not accept this vision. Continue to walk in faith, obedience and love.
- 1.) Trust the Holy Spirit to guide you to the right people to train. 2.) Trust the Holy Spirit to provide for His work financially. 3.) Trust the Holy Spirit in the hearts of new believers.