



Thida Htay: Won by Love in Myanmar



Thida Htay came from a very poor Burmese family. Her mother worked as a domestic in the home of the late Rev. Matthew Hla Win, leader of the Church of God in Myanmar (Burma). The Win family had orphans living with them and needed extra domestic help, so Thida accompanied her mother to work at the Win home.

She encountered something in their home that she had never seen in her home: LOVE. She was astounded at the way the Win family talked with each other, ate together, shared with one another, and respected one another. This was something she had not seen in her home. Everyone fended for him or herself. No one even ate a meal together.

Thida noticed that the Win family went to church every Sunday. So one Sunday she hid in the Win car and went to church with them. This was her introduction to the Church and to Jesus. "I started going to Sunday school regularly, but my parents did not want me to go to church. My entire family are Buddhists. My parents would beat me for going to church." Thida shares. "I had an accident when I was eight years old, and I almost died. After that, my father changed his mind about me attending Sunday school. He could see that my whole life changed."

"In grade five, I asked Rev. Dorothy Colney (national leader of the Church of God in Myanmar and Children of Promise Director) for help because my family was so poor. Children of Promise, through my sponsor, provided for my education. COP helped me very much. I am from a very big family. We shared everything, even the pencils for school. I was sponsored until grade ten when I finished school," Thida thinks back.

Thida remembers, "Revs. Sidney and Jean Johnson came to visit the COP children and they asked me what I wanted to be when I was grown; I said, 'I want to be like Dorothy.'" Thida's road to becoming a pastor proved to be challenging, but her faith kept her determination strong.

Rev. Dorothy Colney said, "Thida graduated from high school and continued to attend church and Sunday School. Her parents were very, very angry when she was baptized. They said she betrayed them and turned her back on their Buddhist religion. Her father disowned her. He kicked her out of the family. She was persecuted in many ways but she did not give up on her faith in Jesus Christ."

Thida moved to the church compound and lived with Rev. Colney. There she found acceptance, love, respect, and a purpose. She earned bachelor's and master's degree at university. Today, she is the pastor of a congregation of the Church of God in Myanmar and has been a Children of Promise volunteer for many years.

Thida became a pastor, like Dorothy. "She is working very effectively, and because of many life changes she is also very helpful in the church now. I am very proud of her," Dorothy affirms.