

## Student Returns to Begin Christian School to Serve Poor Children in Northeast India

When **Bob Osburn**, the Academy's founder, met him at a faculty meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the student union on the U of Minnesota campus late in February 2009, **Thangboi** seemed like a man with a mission. Now, he's back in India pursuing that mission.



"Thangboi's story is all about the amazing way that God opens doors," said Bob Osburn, Wilberforce Academy founder and executive director. "He is clearly a man after God's heart."

One of among 77 mid-career educators recently chosen from around the world by US State Department staff, Thangboi was sent for five months of intensive study at the University of Minnesota, from January through May 2009. When he arrived, he met some Lutherans who offered to help him. When he arrived at their church, he noticed a Baptist church across the street. A Baptist follower of Christ in India, Thangboi visited that church the very next Sunday, having no idea that members of that church had a close relationship with the very last American missionary to Manipur state, from which Thangboi hails! So when he wandered into a meeting of Christian faculty in February, it was already obvious that God was doing something special in Thangboi.

Bob immediately began meeting with him, utilizing a text that will be incorporated into the developing curriculum of the Academy. The book is *If Jesus Were Mayor*, by Robert Moffitt. Together Thangboi and Bob explored the implications of a Christian worldview for one's community and one's nation.

It wasn't long, however, before Thangboi revealed the way Jesus had been moving inside him. For months, his

family back home had urged him to found a Christian K-10 school to serve the thousands of poor children in his corner of India close to the Burmese border. "By God's grace, I want to start that school," he said to Bob.

Realizing that time was short, Bob immediately began to focus his energies by coaching Thangboi to develop a project proposal that would forward the project so that the school could launch in February 2010. Week after week the two reviewed and revised the proposal, and then in early May Bob introduced Thangboi to **Dr. Herb Klem**, founder and director of Global Horizons, a Twin cities-based organization that seeks to advance Christ's Kingdom by helping ministries amongst the poor around the world. Remarkably (in a metropolitan area of over 2.7 million people), Dr. Klem and Thangboi were attending the same church (Central Baptist of St Paul)!

Besides Global Horizons, because of the Academy's close relationship to Phoenix-based **Disciple Nations Alliance**, Bob Osburn was able to introduce Thangboi to another member of the Alliance, Dr. Elizabeth Yeomans, a world-class educator who helps Christian schools around the world develop biblically-based curricula.



Yet another evidence of God's marvelous plan was the way that members of Thangboi's church in the Twin Cities came

together several nights before his return to India to eat, pray, and discuss their role in helping to support what will be known as **Cornerstone Academy Manipur**.

We're only just beginning to write our curriculum, but God is already bringing students prepared, like Thangboi, to be his agents of redemption in their home societies.

## Laying a Good Foundation

Some of Jesus' sharpest teaching concerned the danger of diving into discipleship without carefully counting the cost. "Otherwise," says Jesus in Luke 14:29, "when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him."

In these early days of the Academy, our eyes are wide open to the costs of training college students to intelligently employ a biblical perspective in addressing some of the biggest challenges facing their societies. Jesus said the cost of laying a good foundation needs to be carefully assessed (v.29).

So, what are some of those costs, and how are we assessing them? There are many, but one involves skilled human resources---such as the gifted and well-trained Christian educators who will be needed over the next 18 months to carefully develop our curriculum. **Peter Swanson**, a brilliant summer intern from Southern Evangelical Seminary, invests by writing the worldview portion of our online curriculum. **Dr. Linda Leonard**, a much-beloved international student ministry colleague with a PhD in curriculum and instruction from the University of Minnesota, will invest her working hours in our curriculum development project, thanks to a seconding agreement with InterFACE Ministries. **Stacey Bieler**, another colleague who is a published writer on Christian international change agents (based in East Lansing, MI), will advise us on the curriculum. Others are in the wings.

The Academy's Board works carefully with the founder to assess the costs of our endeavor, whether the human investment or donor investment of dollars. We utilize, as a guide, a strategic working paper that has been developed to guide the next three years of our development. We are "counting the cost of discipleship," and that includes our planning process.

## Tyranny, anarchy, or self-government?

In late May, Wilberforce Academy board member **Arthur Brown** accompanied Bob Osburn to speak with international students at Mt Carmel Conference Center. What to say to brilliant, mostly graduate students in sciences and technology?

Osburn addressed the topic of social order, which will be one of the issues addressed in the Wilberforce Academy curriculum. Building his argument on biblical teaching, he showed the students that societies have only three options: anarchy, where order is sacrificed for freedom, tyranny, where freedom is sacrificed for order, and self-government, where both freedom and order are simultaneously possible because people subordinate themselves to the rule of Jesus Christ. The central verse is Galatians 5:13: "You, my brothers, were called to freedom, but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another in love."

## I've Been Thinking...

"Can the West Save Africa?" is the title of a fascinating (and very long!) research essay in the current issue of *The Journal of Economic Literature*.



The conclusion: Western aid is not saving Africa, despite

gigantic sums invested in large-scale transformational programs and marginal, small-scale projects.

The missing piece is the one that defies the logic of a materialist worldview: culture. Darrow Miller, in his book *Discipling Nations*, understands that religion is the very core of culture. He says that the animistic worldview which underlies historic African cultures diminishes the material world in favor of the spiritual. Thus, material poverty.

By contrast, the Bible teaches that only Jesus will save Africa (and all our nations), because He is Lord of heaven (spiritual realm) and earth (material realm). Ponder Colossians 1:19-20 and pray for the students we will train to develop their nations spiritually and materially.

*Bob Osburn*