

Thailand: Something beautiful into something tawdry

February 10, 2015

We have learned a lot more about the sex industry here in Thailand. Trafficking is a huge business here, more than most people would like to realize.



Stacie Aguilar Prostitution is obviously a big part of the Thai economy and culture, as well. About 8 million foreign men visit the red-light districts each year, but they only make up about 20 percent of the customers. Researchers estimate 95 percent of Thai men have taken part in the sex industry at least once by age 21, and around 450,000 Thai men visit the red-light districts every day.

Prostitution is so accepted in culture, Thai women do not even expect their men to be faithful. They believe men just need sex, and they will go find it. Prostitution is illegal in Thailand, but clearly, that does not stop anything. When a country does not believe in God, there is no definition of sin. Without a clear definition of sin, man is left to justify himself.



Most of what we eat comes from vendors selling off the street and it is always delicious! Sexuality is the most intimate form of communion created by God for us, and without God at the center, we have destroyed our understanding of it. We have turned something beautiful and precious into something perverted and cheap.

Traveling in to Thailand, I had the idea I would offer individuals a way out of the sex industry, and they would accept the invitation in a heartbeat. But that's not reality. Most of these people grew up in northeast Thailand, in a very poor region called Isaan. They move to Bangkok to make money to send back to their families, sometimes knowing that they will end up in the sex industry, and sometimes not. Working in a bar is one of the easiest jobs a woman can get in Bangkok. Sometimes that is the only option.



A family riding their motorbike in the slums. I took this while riding on the back of a truck. The money is so important to them, they are willing to do whatever it takes. The work pays well, which makes it difficult when we are offering them a job at our café. They could be free from this kind of life, but the money keeps them there. As one of the missionaries here said, "Sadly, the same society that has no money to give these individuals a salary has money to pay them for their bodies."

Young men also are part of this industry. Every Tuesday, I go with a partner to a massage parlor in one of the districts to teach English to some of the young men who work there. We sit in the lobby and teach there, since it's a small place.



The Thai slum church that we attend almost every Sunday. Sometimes customers will come by and be startled by our presence. Other times, they are unfazed by us and will take one of our boys from us without blinking an eye.

Last week, our lesson with five of the boys was interrupted as they asked all 12 or 13 boys to stand in line in front of a customer as he chose one for himself. It's an awful feeling when you cannot do anything in that situation except sit and watch it happen. It made me even more upset when I realized the man had chosen one of our sweet boys.

Please continue to pray for these boys and that we can continue to find ways to share the love of Christ with them.

Stacie Aguilar, a recent graduate of the University of Texas at El Paso, is serving with an anti-trafficking ministry in Thailand through [Go Now Missions](#).