BEYOND WHAT WE IMAGINED

We have overflowing joy from what God did among us through the proclamation of his truth during the first-ever marriage and family conference of Ratanakiri Pastors School. Around 150 students and wives attended, including visiting couples from Phnom Penh, Stung Treng Province, and Kracheh Province.

The outlines we created from Ajith Fernando's recently translated book, *The Family Life of a Christian Leader,*provided the basic framework for the teaching, but our team of teachers added significant new material, Scriptures, illustrations, and exhortations as the Holy Spirit led. I believe we have the best team of professors of any academic program in Cambodia, teachers who know how to provide exactly what our rural church leaders need. Praise God.

Some highlights:

* Attendance of 150 students and wives
* Passionate song leading by Matt Hancock, who who composed an original song in Khmer for the “Shema” in Deuteronomy 6:4-7
* Deep theological foundation concerning marriage and family
* Practical examples and illustrations from every day marriage and family life
* A lesson book of 24 lessons on marriage and family for the church leaders to take back to their villages
* A beautiful, air-conditioned meeting room and a special offering to pay for its rental
* Childcare for around 20 children who came with their parents—courtesy of Kim, Lydia, Sophia, and Julia
* A deeply moving lesson, “When Tragedy Strikes a Family” by Pastor Vachna, who lost a daughter to illness two years ago.
* Strong emphasis on delighting in children, as they are an inheritance and reward from God (More than one couple told us they are now open to having more children!)
* Clear emphasis on heart change in our children, not just outward obedience
* Warnings about the dangers of smartphone use in our homes, and strategies to keep our children safe
* Practical ways to show love between husband and wife
* The destructiveness of marital unfaithfulness and divorce

When I asked a newly married couple for their feedback, he said, “Now we know how to pray for our children, and we have a road map to help lead us to the destination God has for our family.” Amen!

Thank you for your part in this historic conference through your prayers and offerings.

JD

Special thanks to Family Church for your regular support of the Pastors School, and to JDA and LHA for your special gift for this session.