

# THE BALLOU FAMILY



## *Recognizing the moment*

A reflection on the present season in life

“Don’t make decisions when you are down”, or “Don’t doubt in the night what God gave in the light” are far more than cliché statements in the lifetime missions journey. Any person entering into missions with a long-term view does so with the understanding that there will be low points. Like a long-distance runner understands that there will be points of fatigue and a need for mental discipline, a missionary has to know that difficult times are part of the package.

So what should we do when ministry disappointments happen? In the moments of realizing that a 2-year long friendship will not end in conversion and sanctification, but rather in seeing a person whose own decisions leave him jaded toward Christ and the church?

How can I be okay when a person who has seemed to grow tremendously for several years suddenly turns fully away from Christ, joins an unhealthy friend group, and ignores all communication from me?

What about a marriage that had pulled back from the brink of disaster, only to discover a couple years later that the husband is now in an affair and is not repentant?

## *PRAYER REQUESTS*

Salvation of Yoke, Wong & Sai family

Inroads in reconnecting with friends made through our prison ministry.

Bible Institute development, including counseling courses

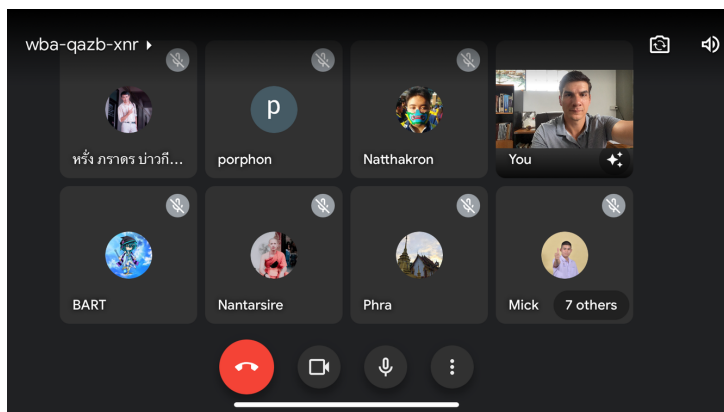
And what if all those things happen in the same season? And what if that season is already fraught with the whole package of craziness that is invoked with the simple phrase, “pastoring through Covid-19”?

In all of these scenarios, the most surprising, yet most common feeling for me is self-doubt. But it is in those moments that the truth is the most powerful.

I ran a marathon in December of '19, before a global pandemic halted running events. It was just as predicted. I survived, and I finished, and I learned much about myself along the way. I had run several half marathon events already that year, and my training was fine. But for marathon runners, something happens around the 35th kilometer. The mind begins to unravel.

The feeling I experienced was beyond just wanting to rest. It was a weariness that cannot be put into words, a dysphoria-inducing departure from normal processes of thought. Oddly enough, the thing that got me through was recognizing the moment I was in. I had read of and anticipated this marathon fatigue. *I knew it was coming, and so I knew it would pass.*

As much as I wish I could write a glowing praise report for you this month, detailing the lives changed and decisions made to follow Christ, that would not be an honest report. And I believe it's heartening to us all when we share these moments with each other, able more fully to bear one another's burdens, and taking heart that we are not alone.



This is what I hope you feel with me as you read this letter: This is only a moment. This is a short season in a long ministry. For every weight of discouragement I am facing, I could count a thousand blessings. I could write volumes right now about the beauty of family life and marriage. I could still share scores of stories of how I have seen God's grace working miraculously in lives. Thanks to modern tech, I also receive regular encouragement from true friends. Even in this moment, I am truly living the dream.

Finally, I want you to know we are doing all we can to connect with our community and share the truth of Christ even in these unusual times. The picture above is from a university English class that I have been teaching, though we are currently online due to lockdowns. Last night Alisa and I gave out food baskets to a community of Burmese workers and sat in the room of a man who has been seeking to know more about Jesus, praying with him that he would journey all the way to the foot of the cross and into a new life. Thank you for faithfully holding the ropes as we share the truth of Christ here in Thailand!

In Christ,  
The Ballou Family

*Through this season, I have often sensed the guiding and comforting presence of the Holy Spirit in key moments. His ministry has never been so clear in my heart. I am also especially thankful for the efforts of my parents and other godly influences to instill the truth of God's Word in my mind and heart.*

[www.lightforthailand.com](http://www.lightforthailand.com)  
[www.lancasterbaptist.org](http://www.lancasterbaptist.org)  
[www.bimi.org](http://www.bimi.org)