

Missionary or Vacationary



THAILAND | April 19

Renato

couple invited Renato over to their apartment every day. “Come here, and have tea with us,” the woman said.

“Let’s hear what you have in mind for the next day,” the man said. “Do you need anything?”

On the fifteenth day, the man asked Renato a new question, saying, “Did you come to Thailand to be a missionary or a vacationary?” Renato didn’t know what to say. He didn’t reply.

The man asked the question again. “I need you to think,” he said. “Did you come here to be a missionary or a vacationary?”

Renato understood what he wanted to know. Thailand is a wonderful place. Not only does it have beautiful beaches in the south, but it also is known as “the land of smiles.” Visitors are treated very well. Missionaries could be distracted by opportunities for fun. Renato couldn’t answer the man.

On the sixteenth day, a Sabbath, Renato went to church and greeted the elderly couple, whom he now saw as his adopted parents. He wanted to chat, but he didn’t have time. First, he had to participate in the church worship service. Then he was leading a potluck for a young adult group. After that, he planned to go home for a nap at 3:30 p.m. He was exhausted.

While taking the nap, Renato got a phone call. It was the daughter of his adopted parents.

“Please pray for Dad,” she said. “He isn’t feeling well.”

Renato stretched in the lobby of his apartment building as he got ready for an early morning run in Bangkok, Thailand. The 36-year-old Seventh-day Adventist volunteer had arrived a day earlier to serve as a missionary teacher at an Adventist school.

An elderly woman walked up to him and asked, bluntly, “Who are you?”

“A new teacher,” Renato said.

“Where are you from?”

“Brazil.”

“You are far from home. Will you teach at the school?”

“Yes.”

“Then from this day, you will be my son. I will take care of you.”

The next day was Sabbath, and the woman introduced Renato to her husband at church. “So, you are my new son,” the man said. “Don’t worry about your house or your food. Just do your best at work, and we will take care of you.”

For the next two weeks, the elderly



Renato left the apartment in his pajamas. He saw two ambulances come and go. Then he heard the news that his adopted father had died. It was all so sudden. He wondered, “What will happen next? What will happen to Mom?”

Renato had a heart-to-heart talk with God during the funeral. “Give me strength to answer the question that my adopted father gave me,” he prayed. “Did I come here to be a missionary or a vacationer?”

After the funeral, Renato made a promise to his adopted mom. “I came here to be a missionary and not a vacationer,” he said.

He knew that it was a decision made through trauma. But it was the trauma that had given him the strength to make the decision. He wished he had made the decision much earlier.

After resolving to be a missionary, everything seemed to fall in place. Before, Renato had wondered if he was starting mission work late in life. He was 36, and many mission volunteers were in their twenties. He had wondered, “Why did I start now?” He also had been confused when people asked, “How long will you serve as a volunteer?” He had not been able to answer. When he had arrived in Thailand, he hadn’t been sure if he was a missionary or a vacationer. But not anymore. Now he would be a missionary in Thailand and anywhere God sent him.

“Even if I leave Thailand, I pray that God keeps me connected to Adventist Volunteer Service or any other ministry that will allow me to serve as a missionary and not a vacationer,” he said. 🌍

Pray for missionaries like Renato at Ekamai International School in Bangkok, Thailand, as they proclaim Jesus’ soon coming. Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter that will help spread the gospel in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, which includes Thailand.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Show Brazil and Thailand on the map. Then show Bangkok, Thailand, where Renato works as a missionary.
- Watch a short YouTube video with Renato at: bit.ly/Renato-mission.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Southern Asia-Pacific Division: bit.ly/ssd-2025.
- Know that this mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Mission Objective No. 1, “To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples,” and Mission Objective No. 2, “To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach in large cities, across the 10/40 Window, among unreached and under-reached people groups, and to non-Christian religions.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo.org.

Fast Facts

- Thailand was known as Siam until 1939, when the government officially changed its name to Thailand.
- Thailand is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy. The Thai currency is the Thai baht. The official language of Thailand is Thai.
- Bangkok is not only the capital of Thailand but also its main port and largest city. Bangkok is located on the delta of the Chao Phraya River.
- Bangkok is called the Venice of the East for its 83 canals and the 10,000 boats full of fruits, vegetables, and fish that crowd the canals, creating a floating market.