

# A Christmas

By: Barbara Dickson

On February 21, 1999, a three-day-old girl was left abandoned on the dirty steps of a Thailand government orphanage. Tiny and helpless, she appeared utterly forsaken by the world. But not forsaken by God.

Ten and a half time zones away in Clarke's Beach, Newfoundland, Tim and Debbie Gifford waited for a phone call that would change their lives. And this little Thai baby, discarded half a world away, would be the reason for that phone call.

Tim and Debbie had always wanted children. Married in May 1992, they built their dream home, welcomed two dogs, and expectantly waited for children. Life was perfect.

But there were no babies. Heartbreak stole into their home month after month when they realized that Debbie was not pregnant. They spent much time in prayer asking God to bless their home and hearts with a little child that they so desperately longed for.

After seeking specialized care and enduring many tests, the agonizing reality hit. Tim and Debbie would never have children of their own.

"Why, God? Why? We have everything to offer a child. Why did You give us such a strong desire for a child and then deny us?" Debbie challenged God.

Psalms 127 in the Bible says that children are a blessing from the Lord, a reward from Him. What was God trying to teach by withholding this precious gift?

Tim and Debbie explored provincial adoption, but there was a 10 year

waiting list. Helpless and discouraged, they sought God in prayer. Didn't God know their longings? Debbie recalled one night in particular when humbly they left all their anxiety and heartbreak with God and declared: "Lord, if it's not in Your plan for us to have children, then Your will be done."

Tim and Debbie knew that true

their trust in Him. Years passed. At peace with God's decision, they no longer dwelt on their childlessness.

Jeremiah 29:11 says: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" Unknown to Tim and Debbie, God had a plan that would take the



peace and joy came not from fitting God into their plans, but allowing God to fit them into His plan. Even when it hurt.

Romans 8:28, one of Debbie's favourite Bible verses, comforted her during those difficult months: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

How could God work this sad thing together for good? It seemed impossible. But Tim and Debbie set



# Gift

*With hearts filled with longing for a child, we were told we would never have children of our own*

tragedies of abandonment and childlessness and work something beautiful.

Tim and Debbie's quiet world turned upside down in December 1998. A friend called telling Debbie about a missionary, Avis Rideout, who ran an orphanage in Thailand.

Helpless, tiny children longed desperately for a mom and dad to love them. Tim and Debbie longed so deeply to love a child. Could this be God's miracle? God stirred their hearts toward Thailand. Only weeks later, a newborn girl would lie on cold, hard steps.

A new year began and with it the long and exhausting process toward international adoption. Feeling frustrated about the hurdles they faced, Tim and Debbie kept their trust in God and sought Him in prayer. While paperwork shuffled back and forth, Avis Rideout in Thailand began looking for their little girl.

She heard about the baby girl deserted on the government steps, and knew that God had hand-picked this baby for Tim and Debbie. Her name, Kittima, suited her: "honoured little one."

Tim and Debbie were away camping Labour Day weekend 1999, when there was a knock on their trailer door. The orphanage had called requesting a call back as soon as possible. Anxious and afraid that something had gone wrong with their application, Tim and Debbie called the orphanage. Another phone call that changed the rest of their lives.

Kittima was available for adoption. The next morning pictures of an adorable Thai girl floated over fax lines into Tim and Debbie's hearts. They were in love.

The autumn was filled with excitement and apprehension. Excitement anticipating the moment they would hold their little girl and apprehension over travelling halfway around the

world to meet her in a foreign land. When they received the call that preceded their journey to Thailand, God had already worked the details out. Tim and Debbie stayed with Canadians, Cecil and Joyce Sturge, who were teaching school in Thailand's capital, Bangkok.

Tim and Debbie met their little girl, Rebecca Elizabeth Kittima, for the



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first time on December 6, 1999. Rebecca was facing away when her new mom and dad walked into the room. When she turned around to see them, her little arms opened wide to welcome them. There was an instant, extreme love affair.

"I cannot even begin to explain the joy that we felt when we first held our baby in our arms. All the fears I had about the first meeting disappeared the minute this beautiful little girl looked up at me and put her arms out to come," Debbie said.

Tim and Debbie spent the rest of the week with Rebecca, and only 12 days before Christmas, the Gifford family landed in St. John's,

Newfoundland, to the exuberant cheers of family, friends and church members. There were balloons, teddy bears, hugs, laughter and tears as little Rebecca, their Christmas gift from God, touched Canadian soil and met her new extended family.

Debbie now knows why they didn't have a baby five years ago. "There was a plan for a little girl halfway around the world who wasn't even born yet." God's plan.

Rebecca's grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins all gathered Christmas morning to wait for little Rebecca to wake up to open her first stocking and share in her first Christmas. Along with the delightful smell of Christmas dinner, peace and joy touched the air.

Two thousand years ago, God sent His Christmas gift to us as a little baby. This small child, Jesus, brought joy not only to His family, but also to the whole world. As Rebecca grows, she will learn about Jesus and His love for her.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! ☪