

## From Prison To Pastor - The Story of Jagaa & Idermaa

by Susan Griffeth

The first time I met Idermaa it was in the year 2000. I was running two camps for street kids that year and she worked at both as a translator. I was immediately taken by her grace and kindness toward the kids at camp and also to everyone around her. Idermaa has been my friend ever since then. As I've gotten to know her better, I know of all the difficult trials that she has overcome in her life. Her family background involves mental illness, neglect, and alcoholism.



**Pastor Jagaa, Idermaa and their daughter .**

Idermaa became a Christian very soon after the church's beginnings here in Mongolia. Even though she is only thirty-four years old, she has been a Christian since she was sixteen. This makes her a grandmother of the faith here in Mongolia. She and a few of her friends were the founders of the World Mission Harvest Church where my family worships. The church is full of life, good teaching, and fellowship.

Although Idermaa's background is rough, her husband Jagaa's youthful years were worse. After turning eighteen years old, he came to UB (Ulaan Baatar) from the countryside to attend University. He was in a class for gifted athletes and was studying wrestling.

Jagaa was mixing with the wrong crowd in Ulaan Bataar. This boys were the first in Mongolia to hold up gas stations and steal cars. They are actually in the history books of Criminals of Mongolia. They stole three cars, burning one of those. Jagaa's gang also robbed four gas stations. Jagaa



**Jagaa in his 'wild years'**

was caught and put in prison.

Jagaa served six years for his crimes. During this time, he learned more bad habits from those in prison. He was only twenty-four years old when he got out of prison and was not received well by friends or family. People were shocked by his harsh way of talking. He felt like he didn't know how to speak appropriately in social situations. Then Jagaa joined a group of pick pockets at the black market. They stole during the day and drank most nights.

While attempting to pick pocket a woman at the market, the woman became aware of what was happening.

She looked him in the eye asked him what he was doing, and told him that Jesus loved him. She suggested that he start attending church and she invited him to the World Mission Harvest Church.

**... the first in the history of Mongolia to hold up gas stations and steal cars. Jagaa served six years in prison and got out when he was twenty-four.**

For some reason Jagaa couldn't shake the idea. He tried to get some of his pick pocket buddies to go with him but they were not interested.

It was a long hike up hill from there but by the grace of God Jagaa has climbed step by step from the pit that he had put himself in. He started working at the railroad station instead of pick pocketing. He stopped drinking, and started telling the truth. Jagaa learned how to communicate again. He studied accounting and graduated as a CPA in 2008. After serving as Youth Pastor at World Mission Harvest Church, he was recently called to serve as the Senior Pastor there.

Redeemed from a life of crime and a tortured family life, God has transformed Jagaa and Idermaa into servants whose ministry is producing good fruit in Mongolia.

## Personal Notes from Susan,

I was able to spend almost three weeks in the USA during the Christmas season of 2008-2009. I am very thankful for those of you that I was able to spend time with, and for those of you I met for the first time!! If you saw me, I probably shared with you a list of all I'm thankful for in 2008. There are so many things that came to fruition in 2008.

In March, and April we visited 39 families. These are the families of the children in our head start program. I took vital statistics on each family and invited all of them to our activities at the community center.

-In April, my mother came to Mongolia and did three home studies for Christian families hoping to adopt Mongolian Children.

-In April, we had a house built for a family in need.

-In May, the Tvrdivs came for the first time to Mongolia. We walked for three days to visit families in the countryside and explore Mongolia together. Also in May, Saikanaa started her Youth With A Mission Discipleship Training Session. She walked in new places with the Lord. I'm so proud of her.

-In June, I took ten days of silence to pray...in that time God released a four wheel drive vehicle. We also received a couple of short promotional pieces in the Lonely Planet Guide Mongolia about our travel agency Rinky Dink Travel.

-In July, I helped to organize two summer camps for some of the street kids of Ulaan Baatar. Uyangaa and Regzin ran Christian Camps in July and August. We were able to host YWAM "Crossroaders" from the Netherlands again. They are such a blessed group.

Crossroaders are middle aged people in the "crossroads" of their lives.



-In August, a wedding of my oldest Son Zorigo! That was maybe the highlight of the whole year. It was sooo awesome.

-In September, Anju started pre-school, I became a part-time Math Teacher at the International School of Ulaan Baatar.

-In October, Flourishing Future received the largest single donation in our six year history. Thanks to the Love Mongolia Dinner in Hong Kong!!!

-In November, the Tvrdiv were released to join the Mission in Mongolia!! Not as touching as my son's wedding but wow is this

big for me!! Also in November, Women's Aglow at the community center has started to take off; Up to 60 ladies in each meeting.



-In mid-December, we headed to Rockford, Illinois for Christmas and catch up with my family and friends in the area. Altan turned three years old!

It has been a good year. I'm looking forward to 2009. Thanks for traveling this long Bumpy road with me. I'm excited to see what is around each bend. And I'm very thankful that I'm not in the car alone!!! Thanks be to God,  
susan

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