

University Magazine Articles

Client: Tyndale University College & Seminary

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Role: Copywriter

Details: In this magazine, I relate to school supporters the impact of their gifts through stories of outstanding alumni and important research opportunities for students.

Sokreaksa Himm's Journey from Killing Fields to Forgiveness

The story of Sokreaksa S. Himm, 2010 distinguished alumnus of Tyndale University College

Sokreaksa was an eleven-year-old boy in a large Cambodian family when the country fell to the Communists in April 1975. Soon Khmer Rouge soldiers drove Sokreaksa's family—along with millions of other city dwellers—into the countryside to work in forced labour camps.

The day came when Sokreaksa and his entire family were marched out of the labour camp to a clearing in the Cambodian jungle. Standing by a freshly-dug, makeshift grave, young Khmer Rouge soldiers began swinging hoes and axes that cut down all 13 members of his family.

"There were a lot of bodies falling over me," remembers Sokreaksa, "and I heard the hacking blades, chopping, butchering, slaughtering, screaming."

The soldiers walked away laughing, thinking that everyone was dead. However, Sokreaksa survived and the next morning he climbed out of the grave and eventually reached the safety of a refugee camp in Thailand. In time, he made his way to a new life in Canada.

Although Sokreaksa had escaped the physical horrors of the killing fields, he remained an emotional captive to his traumatic experience. "The memories really hurt me," says Sokreaksa, "and I was living my life in deep depression."

When Sokreaksa found faith in Jesus Christ, he began a journey of healing that changed his own heart. Sokreaksa enrolled at Tyndale, where he grew in his faith and began to develop skills that enabled him to return to Cambodia. During those years, he published his first book, *The Tears of My Son!*, where he describes his journey from horror, suffering and loss into freedom, faith and purpose in life.

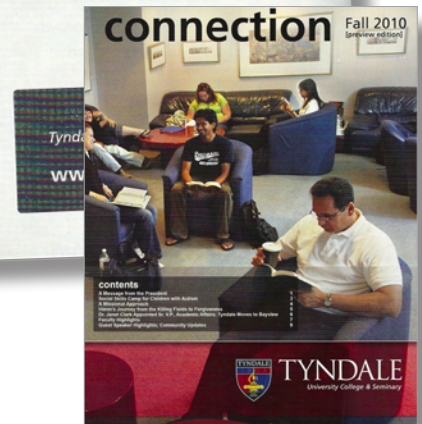
At the same time, God was preparing Sokreaksa for an incredible journey of forgiveness and reconciliation, which he describes in a second book, *After the Heavy Rain*. Once he completed a

graduate degree at Providence Theological Seminary, Sokreaksa returned to Cambodia. In his old village, Sokreaksa found two of the soldiers who had murdered his family. One of the soldiers showed no remorse for his actions. The other man told Sokreaksa that he had been ordered to kill or be killed himself. He knew what he had done was wrong and asked for forgiveness.

"I had longed to hear those words for nearly 30 years of my life," says Sokreaksa. "After those words, I just broke down."

Since then Sokreaksa and his wife Sophaly, along with their two children, Philos and Sophia, have planted five house churches and started a primary school. Among the 200 students at the school are five children of the unrepentant soldier.

Sokreaksa's experience has clearly focused his mission message. "Cambodians have suffered so much emotional and psychological pain, nothing will ever make them whole again, except the healing message of the hope, love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ."



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