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Advocacy Coordinator

**Aaron Hart** Communications Coordinator / Editor



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**Situation:** Afia poses proudly in her cap and gown for her 2025 matriculation as she begins her university journey.

### **CONNECT WITH US:** f X O D V

888-823-8772

global**servants**.org

office@globalservants.org

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# A Better Way

### Choosing the good part in a distracted world

### BY TRAVIS RUTLAND

t is interesting to me that certain things in life come to be understood only in a specific context. For example, in 1997 the VW New Beetle came out. I thought it was an interesting new design. However, I remember that very quickly it became known as a "woman's car". Once that context was assigned to that car, then everyone only thought about it in that specific way.

The same thing is true when it comes to Luke 10:41-42. And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." I have heard it taught many different ways but the context is rarely correct. Jesus was not talking to Martha about self-pity or works righteousness. That is not the right context. Furthermore, Martha is not the bad guy. She is not the villain and she certainly is not in sin. In this moment, it is

just that Jesus is telling her and all of us that there is a better way.

There are important keys in these verses that we miss because we are so busy trying to make our point. I want you to notice that Martha is not reprimanded. Jesus never tells her she is wrong. He also does not say that Mary is right. Instead in verse 42, Jesus says that Mary has chosen that one good part that is needed. This is the moment in that story when we lose the context. Jesus is not giving us a contrast between work and prayer. It is also not a lesson about proximity to Jesus. That somehow Mary was close and Martha was far away. Being close to Jesus is not sufficient. Remember, Judas was close to Jesus. Instead, the important word is found in verse 39. Mary heard His word. That is the lesson from this encounter. Listen to Jesus! That is the good and necessary thing. Nothing else that is happening is as important as listening to Jesus!



In John 11, the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead is recorded. Lazarus is the brother of Mary and Martha. In this story, Martha encounters Jesus after her brother has died and she demands answers from Him. Again, Martha is not rebuked or condemned. She just keeps missing out on a better way. Jesus is not upset with Martha and He answers all her questions and concerns. But the better way happens with Mary. Mary falls at Jesus' feet weeping



and Jesus wraps His arms around her and cries with her. Jesus always offers His comfort but often we become like Martha. We demand answers that will not actually help us. In the difficult moments of life, allow yourself to be comforted by Jesus. Over my years of ministry, I have sat with hundreds and hundreds of families and people in hospitals and funeral homes. In those difficult times of pain and loss what you think you want are answers. Trust me when I tell you that what you need is not answers but comfort. In those difficult seasons of life, Jesus provides His comfort to each of us.

We see one final encounter between Martha and Jesus in John 12:1-3. All three siblings have assembled in the house to eat dinner with Jesus. As usual, Martha is serving Jesus. Lazarus is sitting close to Him. But they both miss the example of Mary. She falls on

the floor before Jesus and pours oil on His feet and wipes them with her hair. Mary expresses the passionate love for Jesus that we are all called to exhibit. Do you passionately love Jesus? Are you crazy in love with Him? Do you love Him more than your reputation and your fear of embarrassment? Martha is serving and that is great. Lazarus is close to Jesus and that is wonderful. However, Mary is passionately in love with her Savior and that is what we also are called to be about.

We all need to be reminded of the call on our lives to choose that good part. We get busy and we get distracted. Instead, we need to be more like Mary and discover the better way. Listen to Jesus, be comforted by Jesus and, above all, passionately love Jesus. We at Global Servants are trying to do that every day in the lives that we impact and the girls that we rescue.

We thank you for your support in all that we are doing around the world. God bless you! ◀

TRAVIS RUTLAND has worked for Global Servants since 1997. He currently serves as the President of Global Servants. In addition to his role at Global Servants, Travis is the Lead Pastor at The Church at Liberty Square in Cartersville, Georgia. A native of Georgia, Travis holds a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree from Southeastern University. Travis has been married to his wife, Courtney, since 1997 and they reside in Cartersville, Georgia. They have three sons, Mark, Owen and Liam.

# **Beyond Sponsorship /**



## **Full Circle**

A sponsor's journey from a photograph to a family reunion across the world By Courtney Rutland

am so thrilled to write this article. Not because I was desperate to write something for the magazine but because of what this article represents. For years, I was not sure if I would ever be able to travel to Thailand. But it finally happened! After all this time, I was able to go to Thailand and I got to meet Jinda in person.

One evening, almost 20 years ago, after getting home from work at Global Servants, Travis brought me a photo of a precious little girl, scared and disheveled. He said she was one of the new girls that had just been brought to House of Grace-Thailand. He asked me what I thought about us sponsoring her. I did not hesitate. It was an absolute yes. Jinda was about 7 at the time. Right in between the ages of our two older boys, Mark and Owen. We knew this would be a great opportunity to show them how to show others the love of Jesus.



We were supposed to be a blessing to her but I really feel like it was the other way around. We enjoyed years of sending notes and drawings back and forth. We mailed Jinda birthday and Christmas gifts. We picked out clothes, shoes, toys, games, more than one Barbie. I did only have boys after all. Travis was able, because of his job at Global Servants, to visit Jinda several times on mission trips to Thailand. It was such a blessing to him but I was not ever able to go.

We followed Jinda through her school days. We supported her as she graduated from high school and attended a trade school. We watched her grow into a lovely young woman. Jinda was finally all grown up. It was time for her to move on and move out of House of Grace. I was so worried. What would happen to her? Would she be okay? Will she succeed in life? We had questions and worries just like any parent would for their children that they love. However, we knew that we



have a Heavenly Father that loves His children even more than we ever could imagine. He knew what would happen to Jinda. He knew if she would be okay. He knew if she would succeed.

Now, it is February 2025 and I still couldn't believe I was finally at House of Grace-Thailand. I was standing in a church service surrounded by the House of Grace girls. Travis was about to preach and I was listening to the worship song with my eyes closed. I didn't understand a word they sang but I knew the tune. Suddenly, I felt a tap on my shoulder. As I turned around, I immediately recognized Jinda's face. We practically jumped over the chairs to embrace. We grabbed each other and just began to weep. The church service continued around us. Travis got up to speak but Jinda and I were still hugging and crying.

After church we got to meet her precious children, two adorable boys. Then, she asked if we would like to meet her husband. Jinda married a godly young man, who is a hard worker. He is providing and taking care of his young family. Glory be to God! Our prayers were answered. Jinda is more than okay. Jinda is a magnificent success.

Being a sponsor to Jinda was a wonderful part of our life as a family. She was always with us in our hearts

if not in person and she still is. If you are interested in being a sponsor, please contact the Global Servants office. It was one of the most rewarding things we have ever done as a family. It is something that becomes a part of you. I promise that it will bless you more than you can ever imagine. ◀

COURTNEY RUTLAND is a native of Texas. She has been married to Travis since 1997. They have three wonderful boys, Mark, Owen and Liam and one amazing daughter in law, Katie. Courtney is so proud of all the work that Global Servants does around the world.

# c-manana

## **Make An Impact /**



## **All In**

### From business leader to ministry advocate—a journey of faith and impact

By Steve Birmingham

first became acquainted with Global Servants around 2015. At this time, I was the founder and president of Birmingham & Associates, Inc., a general construction company out of Birmingham, Alabama. God had blessed our business beyond what we could have imagined. My wife, Sherry, and I have always shared the same heart and mindset regarding helping others. Honestly, there is nothing more rewarding than helping

improve and impact someone's life for the better. We had been searching for a ministry we could support for a few years. We knew how blessed we were, and we just wanted to give back and be a blessing to others. The criteria for this ministry that we were searching for was simple: 1) Actually do what they say they're doing, and 2) We wanted as much of our support as possible to go directly to the need and not to exorbitant salaries. As we began to vet Global Servants, we knew we had found a ministry that

met our personal benchmarks. We knew that our investment into the kingdom would be used to drastically change lives and "empower them" to change the lives of people in their own community.

We began our journey with Global Servants by becoming sponsor parents. Our new daughter's name was Panida. She had been rescued from very poor conditions in her village. These are conditions that traffickers love to target

Sherry and Steve with their first sponsored daughter, Panida.

their victims. We were so excited to receive our packet, which told us all about Panida. We received a letter from her thanking us for supporting her at House of Grace, where she was now safe. You could feel her excitement from her letter. Now she could go to school with her new friends. She did not have to worry if there would be a meal on the table. We could not help but be excited with her. Her favorite color was

purple. She wore a size five shoe. We loved sending Christmas and birthday gifts to our new daughter. It was not uncommon for me to come home from work to see gifts for Panida across the sofa, where Sherry had been shopping for her. It was such a joy for us when Fay, the Global Servants advocacy coordinator, would send us the pictures and videos of Panida unwrapping the gifts. We were all in! Or so I thought.

On December 27, 2022, I had the opportunity to travel to the



House of Grace-Thailand to see their operations firsthand and it was lifechanging. We read about the ministry of House of Grace-Thailand and were told many times about the work there. We thought we had bought entirely into the work of this ministry until we discovered that it is a whole different level of buy-in once you physically visit the home. We had gotten lots of correspondence with Panida and her incredible story. Still, visiting the campus of House of Grace-Thailand, you see dozens of stories of young girls, just like Panida, all from different villages.

The happiness on all the precious faces and the love of God that exudes from each girl and staff is something that is unexplainable. You can feel God's love and presence when you first walk on the campus. It is like a sacred experience. It reminds me of the Scripture in Proverbs 11:25: "They that refresh others shall be refreshed." We go to be a blessing, and God flips the switch on us. We always walk away overwhelmed, feeling refreshed and blessed.

As we continued getting involved with Global Servants, we could easily see how God has had His hands on this ministry for almost 50 years. For nearly half a century, He has used Global Servants to change the trajectory of so many. Lives are being profoundly changed through providing basic opportunities that we



sometimes take for granted. Digging wells and providing clean water, disaster relief efforts, providing education supplies to schools and children, providing a safe home, and providing education for little girls who would have never had the opportunity are just some of the wonderful things God is doing through Global Servants.

It has been 10 years since we were first introduced to Global Servants. We are now sponsoring three new girls. We have watched and observed everyone operate with integrity and purpose during this time. I am so honored to be on staff with an organization that is truly impacting this world. As the new Director of Donor Relations, I have the privilege of traveling and sharing all the wonderful things God is doing through Global Servants. I am also leading teams to Ghana and Thailand so they too can encounter a life-changing experience.

If you would like to know more about Global Servants or joining us on a trip, or if you are already supporting this ministry and have family or friends that you feel would like to know more about getting involved, please get in touch with me at steve@globalservants.org. I would love the opportunity to come meet with you and your friends to share about how you can get involved and change someone's life forever.

STEVE BIRMINGHAM is the Director of Development at Global Servants and has been an active supporter since 2017. He spent forty years in the construction industry, founding Birmingham & Associates, Inc. at the age of 27. After 32 years, he sold the business to pursue full-time ministry. Steve holds a Master of Arts in Ministry and Leadership. In addition to his role at Global Servants, he also serves as Missions Pastor at The Church at Liberty Square. Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, Steve now resides in Rome, Georgia. He and his wife, Sherry, have been married since 1996 and are blessed with nine children and twenty grandchildren.



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pplied by Travis Rutland

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Narrated by Mark Rutland





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# **Beyond The Classroom: Dreaming Big, Rising Higher**

How House of Grace girls in Thailand and Ghana are redefining the future through education

By Fay Inman

ccording to the United Nations, quality education is goal #4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This goal aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote

lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. The SDGs are universal in scope, and their call to leave no one behind puts the world's most vulnerable and marginalized people - including children – at the top of the agenda.

Global Servants has supported education for all girls at House of Grace in Thailand for over thirty years. Rescuing the most vulnerable girls from the hill tribes of northern Thailand and empowering them to follow their dreams. The ability to follow your academic aspirations

for as long as you would like has been supported by individual sponsors for every girl on campus. Starting in kindergarten at Ban Mae Korn school, the girls at House of Grace have tutors, access to computer labs, a stocked



library, and classes in vocational/creative arts. They are supported throughout primary school (1st-6th grade) and lower secondary school (7th-9th grade), which ends compulsory education in Thailand. The legal age to begin working in

Thailand is 15. Most girls from the hill tribes complete their education after the ninth grade if they make it that far. However, at House of Grace-Thailand, 95% of the girls continue into upper secondary school (10th-12th grade). Students can choose between academic and vocational fields of study. We have girls who completed a three-year vocational program and continue into technical college for an additional two years. The girls on the academic track will continue into university. The girls'

sponsor families, assisted in some cases by higher education benefactors, pay all the expenses involved in their education, including a monthly stipend. In 2025, ten girls graduated from high school, and nine are pursuing higher education through the generosity of their sponsors and supporters. Twenty-six young ladies at House of Grace-Thailand are in either a university or a technical college. Their entire family legacy will be changed as they fulfill their God given destiny.

In Ghana, the higher education process is different than that in Thailand. Ghana claimed its independence from the United Kingdom in 1957, just 68 years ago. So their educational system is based on a British model. Kindergarten-6th grade is considered primary school, and 7th- 9th is junior secondary/high school. Global Servants, which operates as Trinity Foundation in West Africa, has a school on the same campus as House of Grace-Ghana, which all our girls attend.



Trinity Foundation School has over 300 students and is an asset to the community. After the ninth grade, everyone in Ghana must take the Basic Education Certificate Examination. Ghana's main exit exam for junior high school students determines their eligibility for senior high school and vocational training. This exam determines which school a student is eligible to attend. The ability to pass this test with a tribal village education is extremely difficult. Most children from northern Ghana end their education after the ninth grade. Every girl from House of Grace who has



taken the B.E.C.E. has passed and was placed in a senior high school. All the girls who participate in senior high schools are enrolled in boarding schools and live on campuses close to their village of origin.

In 2025, three girls completed high school and took the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination. (WASSCE). This exam determines if you have passed senior high school and are eligible for higher education. The Ghanaian government then determines your school and major. We are excited to announce all three House of Grace girls passed the WASSCE and were placed in universities.

In Ghana, the celebration is not focused on high school graduation but matriculation. Matriculation: The formal process of enrolling in a university or college to become a student seeking a degree. It involves fulfilling specific academic requirements and potentially participating in a formal ceremony.



House of Grace-Ghana currently has five young women pursuing higher education and five more completing their senior year this summer. God is good and faithful. Every young girl rescued in 2012 as the House of Grace-Ghana charter resident is attending university or completing senior high school this year. They will follow their educational dreams into their destiny. These girls are pioneers, showing every little tribal girl that comes to the House of Grace a future they may have never even dreamed of. Your past does not determine your destiny. Your beginning is not your ending. Every aspect of your life and future is saved when God saves you.

Please join us as we celebrate these young ladies' hard work, dedication, and answered prayers. Because of the committed financial support of the sponsors and supporters of Global Servants, every child who enters House of Grace is offered an education as far as they desire to pursue it. They decide if this may be job training, technical college, vocational internships, or university. Global Servants stays the course when other child welfare organizations release children after compulsory education ends. We are grateful for the continued blessing of God that allows girls to follow their dreams and complete their destiny. Congratulations to all our graduates! ◀

FAY INMAN is the Advocacy Coordinator at Global Servants. With over 30 years of experience as an advocate nationally for girls. Fay has been married to Kenny for over thirty years, and they have two daughters: Kennedy, Gussy and grand-baby Ophelia Fay.

# ongratulations.





















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# **Alumni Spotlight /**



# **Love In Many Languages**

From an Akha village to American citizenship—how one House of Grace-Thailand alumna turned translator is inspiring a new generation

By Isariya (Benz) Burke

ear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. May God our Father fill your heart with love, and your spirit with peace and hope. My name is Isariya Anya Burke. I want to share a little story about myself. I was born and grew up in a small village in the mountains of Chiang Rai until I was 7 years old. My parents were divorced, and I was chosen to stay with my father in Akha village, while my sister stayed with my mother and moved out of the village. Later, my dad passed away, and my mom remarried and then had another child.

When I was 8 years old, I came to live with my mom and stepdad among the Thai locals. My grandfather asked me to live with my mom and stepdad, who could provide me with a better life. My life hadn't changed significantly as I still had to help my parents grow crops and look after my younger sisters. Since we did not own a home, we were given a small house to stay in, and in return, to look after their plantation. We had been in this situation for a while. During these times, my stepdad decided to pursue his calling and went to a Bible seminary for one year. He served the Lord in a local church and became a pastor.



My stepdad fought for our family to get Thai citizenship. He was the few among the Akha people who could speak, write, and understand the Thai language to talk to the officials. (Applying for Thai citizenship was a huge issue for the Akha tribe.) Believe it or not, my grandparents, my parents, and I have the same birthday, along with older generations in the village, due to the citizenship rules given by the Thai government.

We had no idea if I would be able to continue my education. My stepdad was looking for a scholarship or a Christian organization home for me. I am thankful that I went to stay at House of Grace when I was between 12-13 years old. Countless Akha girls have been saved through House of Grace, and this mission still stands strong today. House of Grace has shaped my life in many ways. I got to know and grow in Christ, learn how to live among different cultures, languages, and became the responsible person I am

After graduating from the vocational college in Chiang Rai. I pursued higher education in Bangkok. I graduated in political science and majored in International Relations. Meanwhile, I volunteered to serve the Lord with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Bangkok, Thailand, and I took an opportunity to go to Queensland, Australia, for discipleship training school.

During the course, I had a strong feeling in my heart to go back and continue the work that I used to do when I volunteered with YWAM earlier. Therefore, I joined to work with Step Ahead Training Center (Christian Organization) in Khao Lak, Phang

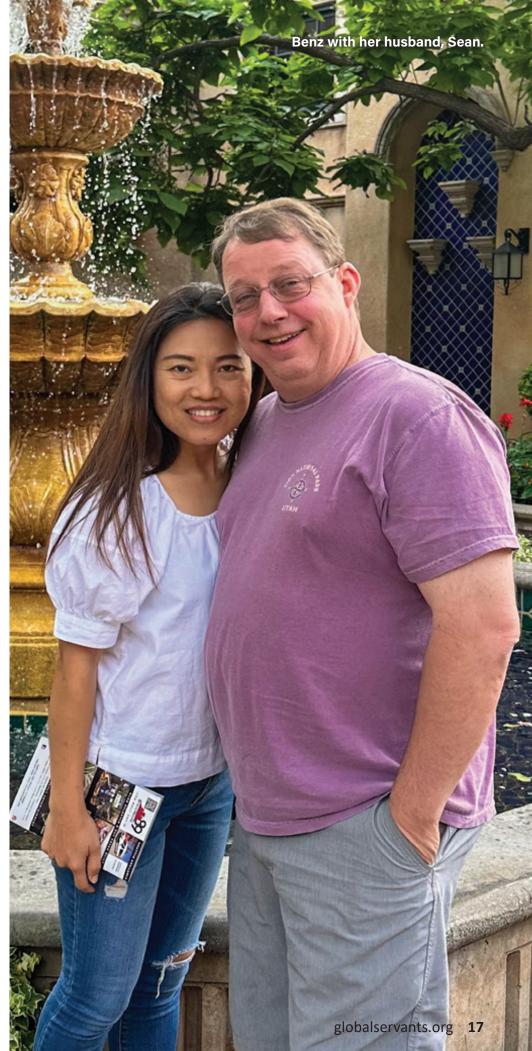
Later, I decided to work for a corporate company in Bangkok to support my sisters' education. I believed that this education would make a better life for my sisters. They graduated from university with the help of a fellow Christian, and I am deeply grateful to those who walked beside me.

Nga, where the tsunami hit in Southern



I got married in 2019, and I live with my husband, Sean, and my stepson, Connor, in Virginia. I run my own business, Isariya Translation Services. I've recently become a U.S. citizen, and I am so proud to be called an American. I would like to shout out to House of Grace, who paved the way, shaped, and gave a need for a girl who needed it most. May Jesus Christ bless you abundantly. ◀

ISARIYA (BENZ) BURKE is the Owner of Isariya Translation Services in Virginia, specializing in Thai interpretation and translation for churches and mission teams. Benz graduated from vocational college in Chiang Rai, Thailand and pursued higher education in Bangkok where she received a degree in political science with a major in International Relations from a university in Bangkok, Thailand. She has served in multiple ministries across Thailand, including Step Ahead Training Center in Khao Lak, Phang Nga, and Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Bangkok, and took the opportunity to attend a discipleship training school in Queensland, Australia. She recently became a U.S. citizen. She has been married to her husband, Sean, since 2019, and they reside in Virginia with her stepson, Connor.





# What Gratitude Really Looks Like

A birthday, a threadbare gift, and a reminder that thankfulness doesn't depend on abundance

### BY DR. MARK RUTLAND

am incredibly grateful for all of those who have given so generously to this work. I am grateful for you. You are reading this because you are on the Global Servants/House of Grace team. The following is an excerpt from my newest book, Keep On, Keeping On. If you haven't read it yet, I hope you will. Now, one last time before we get to that excerpt; THANK YOU!

One night I saw what humility and gratitude look like, what they really look like. I saw it up close and personal, and I will never forget it. I was staying in the home of a college president in Kumasi. In Ghana in 1982 that on-campus home was decidedly not the presidential mansion on an Ivy League campus. The whole college was hanging by a thread. The students worked in the college garden just so the little cafeteria would be able to feed them something. The electricity operated with all the dependability of a drunken Uber driver, and the faculty lived in small rundown cottages on the campus and worked for hardly more than room and board.

I found out that the oldest son's sixteenth birthday was to be celebrated one night; but, of course, I had no gift and no place to buy one. I did the only thing I could think of. I was at the end of my trip, so I had one clean T-shirt left. I folded it neatly with a ten dollar bill (US) inside and put it in a plastic bag from a bookstore at Heathrow Airport. I was mortified that it was all I could do.

That night, after a supper of rice with scattered bits of chicken stirred in, the president's wife produced a small cake, hardly larger than a cinnamon bun, and we sang happy birthday to the young man. There were no presents, of course. There was a cake humiliated by its small size cut

five ways, and everyone sang happy birthday. That was it. At that moment I presented my "gift," such as it was: a clean, used T-shirt and ten dollars in foreign currency.

His enthusiasm and gratitude were downright embarrassing. For their part, the president of that ragged little African college and his wife acted like the United States had sent them an ambassador with a congressional proclamation and a new car. They hugged me and thanked me extravagantly; then we all stood and sang a Ghanaian chorus about the unfailing goodness of God.

Gratitude in the face of adversity or need charms the heart of God. Self-pity is an accusation against God. If You were a better God, if You were better at the God-job, my life would be what I deserve. We can, of course, whine and moan about all we ought to have had. We can always do that. It comes naturally. We start life just like that. We can finish like that. ◀



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Dr. Mark Rutland is the Founder of Global Servants. He is a New York Times Best Selling author, educator, charismatic leader, businessman and a nationally recognized figure in Christian higher education. Dr. Rutland has been married to his wife Alison for more than 55 years now. They reside in the greater Atlanta area. For more information about Dr. Rutland please visit (drmarkrutland.com) and follow him on X (@ drmarkrutland).



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