

T O  
H N  
E T  
H H  
O E  
U H  
S H  
E I  
L L



By Colin C. Bell

Nong lived with his family in a small village in Southeast Asia. Like most people in their village, Nong's family were farmers. The villagers had their houses next to their fields on the wide plain, except for Nong's family, whose house stood alone on top of a hill.

Since Nong's family's fields were on the plain below like everybody else's, his mother and father had to go up and down the hill every day to work the fields. During the harvest they had to bring the harvested rice up the hill to their storehouse. And because the school was also down on the plain, Nong had to go down the hill to school every morning and climb back up the hill to go home every evening.

One day Nong talked to his father about this. "It's not fair. I have to walk up and down the hill every day, but my friends don't. Why do we have to live up here on the hill?"

Nong's father thought about this for a while before he answered. "I'm not sure why we live here on the hill. Our house has stood here for many generations. I'm thankful for our little house up here. Think of it this way: We are the first to see the sun come up in the morning and the last to see it set in the evening."

But this didn't mean much to Nong. "But we have to work so much harder than everyone else. And I have to walk much further than my friends. It's not fair!"

"Oh, but we shouldn't say that," Nong's father replied. "God has given us this place and we should be thankful for it."

Yet Nong was not convinced. He wished he could live down on the plain.

One day not long after this conversation, the clouds began to gather in the sky over Nong's village. It was only a few weeks after the rice harvest, and so the villagers looked to the sky with concern for the stored rice. And the weather got only worse. The sky became darker and darker. Then it happened. The rains came down and wouldn't stop. It rained and rained and rained. The houses and fields in the plain were all flooded. The harvest and stores of rice were lost.

Only Nong's house on top of the hill was dry, so that's where all the villagers fled. They were all thankful for Nong's house on the hill, and they ate of the rice that was stored there.

"Now," Nong's father said to him with a gentle look in his eye, "are you thankful for our house on the hill?"

Nong smiled sheepishly and nodded.

So often we complain about some hardship or are tempted to feel that life—and therefore God—isn't fair to us. But if we can accept whatever God has allowed to come into our lives and be thankful for it, one day we will see that He can turn our seeming hardship or handicap into a lifesaver for us and others.

**You have no silver linings without a cloud.**

—*Angela Carter (1940–1992), British author*

Happiness is what you make it. Some people are unbelievably cheerful in the midst of difficulty or obstacles; others bemoan the slightest inconvenience. Those who look for the upside of any seeming disaster or trouble are the ones who come out ahead in quality of life. And the radiance of their positive attitude sheds light on the paths of others.

—*Chloe West*