
Grow More to Give More

By [Cori Wittman](#)

Having spent the majority of the last six years living in rural Thailand, my Thai neighbors have been some of my greatest educators. I'm now faced with the task of carrying these learning moments into daily life on our Idaho farm.

One such moment happened on a visit to the small farm of one my Thai "uncles." He recently invested in a well that will allow him to raise about a half-acre of vegetables in the dry off-season rather than relying on a single rice crop for subsistence. As I helped him water this newly established vegetable garden, we talked about his goal of putting in a drip irrigation system and plans to slowly grow the vegetable operation. It was at that point that a shy smile lit up his face and he said, "The more I produce, the more I can give!"

Such a simple statement, yet so enlightening. A man who lives simply – a wooden stilt-house with no electricity, a few head of cattle, spending his energy on laborious fieldwork and caring for elderly in-laws – and his whole aim is to **grow more so he can give more**.

What was equally impactful about his statement was what he *didn't* say. He didn't say he wanted to earn more so he could *start* giving. No matter how much or little he has, he's one of the most joyful givers I know. Our small Thai community of ragamuffin kids practically lived off his mango and coconut trees, his "skinny chicken" population and their modest harvest of arguably the best jasmine rice in the world.

He also didn't say that he wanted to earn more so he could buy [insert wish list of "things that would make life easier" here] and *then* maybe start giving. And believe me, there are a number of life-improving investments that you and I would more than likely prioritize if we were in his shoes. Electricity and plumbing, for starters.

I walked away from that conversation challenged on a number of levels. It's easy to give out of our wealth; how many of us are willing to give out of our poverty? Is our goal to earn more so we can *start* giving? Is it to earn more so we can *have* more? Or do we live simply and generously – and joyfully, I might add – and seek to grow more so we can give more?