

Light

Let me paint a picture for you: One large street full of people showing you all sorts of things like advertisements for their bars and colored lights that fly up in the air. Tourists fill the area, from elderly couples all the way down to small children. Little girls run up to you, begging you to purchase a fresh flower necklace. Loud music is coming from every angle, including live karaoke or special street performances. Shops line the left side, full of anything a tourist could want. The right side is lined with smaller streets, containing bar after bar full of women dressed very scandalously. Games are being played on every countertop; games like Connect 4 and Jenga. Everywhere you turn there are women dancing on bars, flirting with men, or begging you to come into their bar hoping to show you a good time. Women also line the roadsides, waiting to be purchased for the night. The smell of alcohol and cigarettes lingers heavily in the air. Here on Bangla Road in Patong, this is what you experience.



But this is only surface level. During our first few nights of ministry, this is what I saw; people having fun and girls just trying to make a buck or two. But after being submersed in the culture of this particular area, things started coming into focus: a bar girl laughing and seemingly carefree sneaks behind the bar to take some pain pills and down a shot of vodka; a woman pushing advertising takes a brief moment to sniff some more glue before continuing her lively and upbeat persuasion; a small child being pushed away from her parents to bring home money for the family by selling flowers. This is real life for the people who work the streets here in Patong. Every night, trapped in a place that brings little to no promise for a future.

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Prepared? Not a chance. Willing? Bring it on. Changed? Forever.



By: Bekah Byxbe, June 2011