

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

Chapter 12

TO EVERY CREATURE

And he said unto them,
Go ye into all the world,
and preach the gospel to every creature.
Mark 16:15

Eight hours' walk across the mountains to the north of Aziana lay the small village of Owena; and an hour and a half to the east of Owena was Waisara, an even smaller village of Owena speakers. (The people group, their language, and their largest village all go by the name Owena.) The two villages, though belonging to the same language group, were separated not only by distance, but by hostility between themselves. In the 1970's, the population of these two villages was only about three hundred and seventy-five. The Owena people had never heard the greatest story ever told. They did not know that there was a God who loved them and had given His only begotten Son to provide everlasting life for them. They had no knowledge of the Almighty who could break down the wall of enmity that caused them to fear one another.

The Owena people had sent representatives to Aziana to ask for missionaries to come live in their village; and following our first furlough, May 1976 to July 1977, we were asked to consider taking the good news to these people. What were the Owena people like? We had no idea. But we did know that they, too, needed a chance to be introduced to the Great Shepherd and to be brought into His fold. After praying and seeking the Lord's will, we had peace that this was the ministry God had for us.

Some asked if it wouldn't be a waste of our time to work among such a small group of people. Is not every soul on earth precious in God's sight? Did Christ not command us to go into ALL the world and take the gospel to EVERY creature? In Revelation 7:9, we read, *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of ALL nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.* Yes, even some from the smallest nations and the smallest language groups will be there in that glorious day, standing with all the other saints before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In September of 1977, Lewis, along with Aziana missionaries Louie Dodd and Mike Henderson, made a survey trip into the Owena area and were encouraged by the friendly reception from the people of Owena village. These people had been waiting for some time for missionaries to come and live among them, and they already had a plot of land picked out, an area large enough for two houses and a helicopter pad. Since there were no roads, and there was no landing strip, our only means of moving into the village would be either by foot or by helicopter.

It was exciting to realize that an unreached people group had a desire for missionaries to live among them, but what was their motive? Were they concerned about their spiritual welfare? Did they sense a need for hearing the Gospel? No, not at all. They didn't know they needed to be saved. There were several factors that made them eager to have a missionary

living among them. One, the white man was their means to obtaining material goods. Remember the Cargo Cult? Secondly, it was prestigious for any village to have its own white man. They also had a yearning for education. Although it was the love of Christ, and none of these reasons, that constrained us to take the word of reconciliation to these people, God had set before us an open door and had made us ready to go inside.

A month later, our family moved into Aziana once again where Christy, Connie, and I would stay until a home was ready for us in Owena. The next day, Lewis left for Owena with Louie Dodd and some thirty Owena people who had come to Aziana to pick up supplies to begin building our house. Later, Kwekweninsanavu, who was quite skilled in carpentry, would help carry on the building project.

Our house was built mainly of bush material—native trees for the frame, and bamboo and *pitpit* (a type of reed) for plaited floors and walls. The roof was corrugated iron so that rain water could run off into a holding tank for our water supply; and there were glass louvre windows to let in light and, at the same time, give protection from wind and rain. The Lord provided for the purchase of a single side band radio so that we could keep contact with headquarters and with other missionaries.

The fog sat on the Aziana mountains for a couple hours on the morning of January 12, 1978. Yet, as we prayed, the Lord gave confidence that the girls and I would join Lewis in Owena that day. Lewis had hiked over to Owena a couple days before to make sure everything was ready for our coming. By 9:00, the fog was lifting, and the helicopter was on its way. Within three hours after its arrival, eight loads of cargo had been shuttled over from Aziana to Owena. The girls and I flew over on the fourth shuttle and were greeted with much enthusiasm and hand-shaking by about fifty Owena people. The people just couldn't get over the baby dolls which Christy and Connie had carried with them on the helicopter, and most everyone was afraid to even touch them. As we came in, the people asked if there was more cargo to come yet. Yes, there was. After the fifth shuttle they asked again; and the sixth; and the seventh. By then I was beginning to feel very embarrassed about all our worldly possessions. We were so rich in their eyes. How we prayed that our "things" would not be a stumbling block to their receiving the gospel!

As I gazed on God's handiwork that surrounded us there in Owena, I praised the Lord for His faithfulness in bringing us safely to our new home. What a lovely location on a *kunai* ridge with majestic mountains all around and a deep river valley to the north! (*Kunai* is a tall grass used for making grass roofs on the native houses.) And then I set my gaze on the curious people standing all around us. How dark and bleak and hopeless were these lives without Christ! Oh, that the beauty of Jesus would be seen in us, and that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ would soon shine unto them! What an awesome task lay ahead!