

The Isles Are Singing

The story of how the isles of Papua New Guinea,
and the inhabitants of the villages of Owena,
learned to sing a new song,
a song of praise unto the LORD.

by J. L. T. Young

Sing unto the LORD a new song,
and his praise from the end of the earth,
ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein;
the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

Isaiah 42:10

“I have but one candle of life to burn,
and I would rather burn it out
in a land filled with darkness
than in a land flooded with light.”

--John Keith Falconer

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

O, hear the isles singing
A jubilant song,
No longer in bondage,
Their darkness is gone.

A song of rejoicing,
A song of praise,
A song to give glory
To the Ancient of Days.

Can you not hear them?
How the earth swells
With their melody sweet
As of vict'ry it tells.

Their souls are set free
from death and despair,
The tempter defeated,
A song fills the air.

Listen, O listen,
Ye people of light,
A new song is ringing
From out of the night.

Chapter 1

THEY WAITED FOR HIS LAW
He shall not fail nor be discouraged,
till he have set judgment in the earth:
and the isles shall wait for his law.
Isaiah 42:4

Except to traders and colonizers, the island of New Guinea was virtually unknown to the rest of the world until the middle of the nineteenth century. The first traders began to make journeys to New Guinea in the early sixteenth century after Magellan and his crew proved to skeptics that the earth is round. When other Europeans heard about Magellan's discoveries, they too had an urge to travel and explore distant lands. Some of them made journeys to the island of New Guinea and started trading with the people who lived there.

Before that time, traders came to New Guinea from nearby Asian countries such as China and Malaysia. They brought metal goods, glass beads, cloth and porcelain. For those goods, the New Guineans traded tree bark, spices, and Bird of Paradise feathers. Little could be learned from their contacts, however, because the Asians did not record anything about the New Guinea people.

The European sea captains were the first travellers to write anything about the people of New Guinea. In 1526, a Portuguese sea captain named Jorge de Meneses made a voyage to the island of New Guinea. It is believed that he is the first European navigator to arrive on this island. The people he saw were called "papuas" by the traders from Malaysia. Papua means "frizzy-haired people," and Meneses called the name of the island *Ilhas dos Papuas*, which means "land of frizzy-haired people." If this island had another name before that time, the name is not known. As far as is known, *Ilhas dos Papuas* was the first name given to this island.

In 1528, a sea captain from Spain named Alvaro de Saavedra travelled to the north coast and the Manus Islands. Then in 1545, another navigator from Spain named Ortiz de Retes, sailed along the north coast of the island. The people of this place reminded him of the people of who live in Guinea, West Africa. So he named the island New Guinea.

Seamen came to New Guinea from Holland, England, France, and other countries in Europe. They travelled along the coast of the island and traded with people who lived near the coast. But nobody explored the inland areas of the island until the second half of the nineteenth century.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, more and more ships visited New Guinea. At times the New Guinea people were friendly to them, but oftentimes traders and sailors were killed and sometimes eaten by New Guinea headhunters and cannibals.

Most of the traders were wicked men who brought much evil with them everywhere they went and not just things to trade. They mistreated the people. They brought strong drink and made people drunk. They abused many of the women. In exchange for trade goods, some of them took villagers and carried them to Samoa, Fiji, and Australia where they sold them to work as slaves on plantations.

As more and more men visited New Guinea, people in various parts of the world began to learn about this island. A number of strong European nations had already begun taking new land for themselves in Africa and Asia, and it wasn't long before the colonizers came to New Guinea. In 1828, Holland took control of the western half of New Guinea. The new colony was called Dutch New Guinea (or Netherlands New Guinea). This land is now part of the country of Indonesia.

People from two countries came to New Guinea in 1884 and started colonies in the eastern half of New Guinea. They divided the eastern part and the nearby islands among themselves. Germany took control of the northern part of eastern New Guinea and called it German New Guinea. England took control of the southern part and called it British New Guinea.

The majority of the New Guineans did not want foreigners to rule over them. Much fighting and killing resulted because of the foreign rule. Because the Germans and British had better weapons, however, they eventually won the fights.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Australia became an independent country; and in 1906, Britain gave control of British New Guinea to Australia. Australia renamed this area Territory of Papua. In 1914, World War I began. Australian troops invaded German New Guinea and took control. After the war, the League of Nations gave Australia the right to control the northern part of this half of the island. They then called it The Mandated Territory of New Guinea. The new territories, New Guinea and Papua, each had their own administrative center and capital, but both of these administrations were under the control of Australia.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, European churches also learned about the land of New Guinea. Some of them began to think about sending missionaries to this distant land where the people had never heard about Jesus. They organized missionary societies to help send missionaries to this land of darkness.

Missionaries came from many different religious groups. Some of them did not come with the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. They only came to convert people to their own religious beliefs. These missionaries thought they were doing a good work which would help them get to heaven, but they did not have any good news to give to the people of New Guinea. Their teaching changed people on the outside, but there was nothing to change their hearts and prepare them for eternity.

A few missionaries came with the good news about a Saviour who created them, who loved them, and who wanted them to be God's children and have eternal life. The light of Jesus Christ was beginning to shine in this dark corner of the world. In Isaiah 42:4, God had said that the isles would wait for His law. New Guinea had waited a long time, but now they were beginning to receive that for which they had waited.

Chapter 2

PREPARING A VESSEL

And the vessel that he made of clay
was marred in the hand of the potter:
so he made it again another vessel,
as seemed good to the potter to make it.
Jeremiah 18:4

Long before my heart was yielded, the Potter began to mold a vessel for His glory, a vessel to one day serve Him on the island of New Guinea. Although the vessel that He made was marred in His hands, the lowly lump of clay slowly began to yield itself to the Potter's hands, and the Potter lovingly made the vessel again as seemed good to Him, preparing it for His use.

There are three things I remember the Potter using to begin preparing the life of a little girl for future service. The first was a home where hospitality was graciously extended to missionaries. A woman who served the Lord in Peru came several times to our home. I have no recollection of her name, but it was my first close contact with a foreign missionary. The fact that she was a medical missionary and showed pictures of her medical work had a particular impact on my life, but not a positive impact. I would gladly pray for missionaries, but I was convinced that was not the work for me.

The second was a book that had been given to me, the story of Mary Slessor of the Calabar. I recall how Mary Slessor promised the Lord that she would serve Him on the mission field but did not want to go to Africa. As the Lord worked in Mary's heart, she surrendered her own will and submitted to God's. I would learn a lesson from Mary, but not in the way that I imagined. I declared that I would never be like Mary, and that I would go wherever God wanted me to go. However, I was certain, and I told the Lord so, that God would never send me to a place where disease, sickness, and injuries were abundant and where I would have to face the possibility of being involved in medical work.

The third was the time of my baptism. As a shy ten-year-old, I was frightened about being baptized. I asked my sister Priscilla about her baptismal counseling, and she informed me that one thing our uncle/pastor asked her about was what she wanted to be when she grew up. Since I had never given one thought to that question and wondered what I would answer, I asked her how she had replied. "I told him I want to be a missionary," she said. That sounded like a good answer to me; and it became the answer I gave, and was an answer the Lord would never let me forget.

Chapter 3

A GOODLY HERITAGE

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant *places*;
yea, I have a goodly heritage.

Psalm 16:6

Howard Henry Arnold, was born to Frederick Arnold and Ida M. (Towne) Arnold on November 3, 1915, in Manchester, New Hampshire. Winifred Loraine Allen, was the firstborn daughter of Markley A. Allen and Edith Marie (Bent) Allen. She made her arrival into this world on January 6, 1920, in Groton, Connecticut.

On October 17, 1941, Howard and Winifred were united in marriage and began to build a Christ-honouring home. Their firstborn daughter lived only ten days before the Lord took her to Himself. Priscilla Ann, born a year later, November 11, 1943, in Milton, Massachusetts, was their first living child. A year after that, the Lord gave them another daughter, Judith Lorraine, also born in Milton, on the 17th of November.

We were war babies, but Dad was not called to active duty because he had had polio. Instead he worked in the shipyard in East Braintree. Blimps flying overhead and convoys of army vehicles going by on the main highway are memories that I hold of those early years. As little children, we found these sights quite exciting; but we understood nothing about war.

Special memories from my childhood were our first home, on 12 Field Avenue in Weymouth; fun times with adopted grandparents, Mom and Pop Breton; moving to 85 Vine Street where Grampa and Nana Allen lived upstairs and our family lived downstairs; watching the rag man come with his horse and cart to pick up old clothing we had collected; having large blocks of ice delivered so our ice box, which stood outside by the back door, could be kept cold; buying penny candy or nickel fudgesicles; playing with my best friend, Patti; and setting up a lemonade stand and selling lemonade at the roadside.

After the war, Dad worked for a printing company and now and again brought home cut offs of paper which were kept in a drawer in the basement which was also our grandfather's workshop. What fun we children had drawing, coloring, cutting, pasting, and crafting to our hearts' delight! Even as primary age children, Priscilla and I would make up crafts and short Bible lessons and hold summer Bible clubs with our friends and other children in the neighborhood. That included making up Bible dramas and inviting parents to attend the performances. We had such a great time making costumes for these plays from the old clothes in the rag box near the back stairway that went down to the basement and up to Grampa and Nana's place.

Grampa was a professional carpenter and watching him do his work was one of my favorite pasttimes. Besides the beautiful pieces of furniture he made, he delighted us grandchildren with wooden pins decorated with decals and carved to the decal's shape on his electric coping saw. One unique item that he made for his grandchildren was an outdoor bench, each end shaped and painted like a giraffe. Grampa passed away suddenly one day when I was only eight years old.

Great grandma Bent also lived upstairs with Grampa and Nana. She was a professional seamstress and kept her great granddaughters (Priscilla, our cousin Margie, and me) supplied with dresses until the angels took her to heaven when I was around five or six years old.

Our parents knew, loved, and served the Lord and were faithful to bring up their children to know God too. Godly grandparents and great grandparents also added a Christ-like atmosphere to our home.

Life and home centered around serving the Lord. Dad regularly led the family in worship of the Saviour, and time and again we gathered around the old upright piano to sing as Mother played choruses and hymns. Dad and Mom took us to church each Sunday and whenever the church doors were open for services. Sometimes there was outdoor preaching in the public park adjacent to the church. We children always looked forward to Vacation Bible School and children's Bible clubs.

I do not remember a time when Dad was not deeply involved in the church – helping pastors wherever needed, teaching or preaching, visitation, Sunday school superintendent, VBS and other special programs, building programs. Dad was always there and ready to lend a hand wherever needed.

In 1955, our family made a long trip all the way across the state of Massachusetts and most of the way across New York so that Dad could attend Bible school. By that time, there were five children in the Arnold family; and nine months later, the Lord blessed our home with number six. It was some years after I had finished college, however, before Dad was ordained to the ministry. After their nest was empty, Dad sold his business and Mom and Dad spent a couple years doing missionary work in Jamaica. When they returned, Dad continued serving in churches wherever they lived until the Lord promoted him to higher service in April 1994.

Chapter 4

THE DOUBTS ARE SETTLED
For God so loved the world,
that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,
but have everlasting life.
John 3:16

One of my favorite choruses when I was a little child was

Jesus loves the little ones like me, me, me,
Jesus loves the little ones like me, me, me,
Little ones like me sat upon His knee,
Jesus loves the little ones like me, me, me.

Why would Jesus ever love the little ones like me? I was such a naughty little girl – mean and hateful to my older sister; disobedient to my parents, often willfully; speaking unkind words and thinking unkind thoughts; letting unrestrained temper control my words and actions. What would make a little girl like me throw a stone at a little boy and injure him?

In spite of my wickedness, I was assured by everything I learned from my parents, Sunday school teachers, and pastors that Jesus loved me. Not only was I taught that Jesus loved me, I was taught that the wages of sin is death and I would some day face God's judgment for my sin. However, God loved me so much that He gave His Son to die on the cross of Calvary and bear the punishment that I deserved. As a five-year-old child, with a heart full of sorrow, I repented of my sin and received Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour. I do not remember the exact day; but I do remember the event, Vacation Bible School, and the year, 1950.

Now that this disobedient child was saved, she would be sweet and submissive, right? Oh, that it were so! I found, however, that my old nature would rise up in sheep's clothing and tempt me to do that which the new nature did not want to do. How sad I felt when I went astray! I tried so hard. Why couldn't I be good? Maybe I wasn't really saved. Oftentimes during my childhood years, when it got to the point where my sin overwhelmed me, I would kneel by my bed and, resolving to do better, would cry out to God to save me again. Things would improve for a while after that, but then I would give in to another temptation, and another, and another, until I repeated the cry for mercy and for salvation.

During my teen years, due to the trauma of our family's move to New York state where we found the culture to be somewhat different from New England, I became very withdrawn and melancholy. Throughout my high school years, though outwardly I tried to be a good Christian, inwardly I was very miserable.

In my last year of high school, I was introduced to Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, and was accepted as a student there. I struggled through my first year, having many doubts as to whether I really wanted to be there or not. Toward the end of the year, however, the preaching of God's word brought conviction of sin; and conviction of sin brought me to my knees seeking God's forgiveness.

I still struggled with doubts, however, until my third year of college. As I helped minister in child evangelism, one question that plagued me was "How can I help these young children find assurance of salvation if I am not sure of my own salvation?" My merciful Lord, knowing the desire of my heart to find assurance, sent a guest speaker to one of the Bible conferences on campus, who preached on John 3:16. The answer to my deepest need had been in my head and in my hand all these years since I was a small child, and I didn't even know it. The preacher emphasized that this verse is a statement of fact. It is a fact that God loved the world. It is a fact that He gave His only begotten Son. It is a fact that everyone who believes in Him will never perish, but WILL have everlasting life. The verse does not say that I can suppose I have everlasting life, nor perhaps, nor maybe, nor guess so, nor any other word of doubt. What peace and joy flooded my soul as those truths reached deep into my soul. Yes, I had believed on Jesus Christ as a little girl. My salvation is secure. It is everlasting. Glory I'm saved! It's real. It's real. Praise God! The doubts are settled, and I know, I know it's real!

Did I never sin anymore after that? How nice it would be if that were the case! But, no, the old nature is still with me. From then on I was confident, however, that sin couldn't take away my salvation. I didn't need to be saved again, but fellowship with God and with Jesus Christ needed to be restored through confession of sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9) My God is faithful and my God is just. He keeps His promises and grants forgiveness and cleansing. Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

Chapter 5

GOD CHOOSES WEAK THINGS

²⁷But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world
to confound the wise;
and God hath chosen the weak things of the world
to confound the things which are mighty;
²⁸And base things of the world, and things which are despised,
hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not,
to bring to nought things that are:
²⁹That no flesh should glory in his presence.
I Corinthians 1:27-29

As the joy of assurance began to give me new purpose in life, the Holy Spirit started reminding me of those early years of preparation – the missionaries in our home, the story of Mary Slessor, and my baptism.

There was a young MK (missionary kid) in college who often told me stories about his parents and their missionary work in Brazil. He was burdened for unreached peoples who had never had an opportunity to hear the Gospel. I don't know why he shared these things with me as I didn't really know him, and I don't recall having told anyone that I was interested in serving the Lord on the mission field. At that time, it was still something very remote in my thinking. The Lord used those conversations, however, to stir my heart and create a desire to have a part in reaching those who had never had a chance to hear the name of Jesus.

Later, a missionary speaker at college presented a challenge for missions, and asked all those who were willing to serve the Lord full time to stand and make it public. I knew that message was for me, and it took every ounce of my being to keep myself glued to my seat when the Holy Spirit was urging me to stand. How thankful I am that the Lord did not give up on me! The Holy Spirit kept on wooing me and tugging at my heart strings until I started bending to His will. "Okay, Lord, I'll serve you on the mission field," I finally declared. Yet the "but" was still in my heart, mind, and mouth. "But I know You'll never send me to any of those places where sick and physically hurting people would need my care. You know I would faint at the sight of blood, and you know how my stomach churns at the sight and smell of bodies that are eaten with disease, mangled, deformed, ready to die."

God wanted total yieldedness, however, and continued to remold the vessel He had started working on years before. Not long after college graduation, during a missions conference at my home church, the challenge was given once again to volunteer for active duty. The word of God pierced into the depths of my soul and spirit until this earthen vessel was fully yielded in the Potter's hands. "There are many men and women who are wise after the flesh, and mighty, and noble. There are many who have great abilities and could do great things, but God has not chosen very many of these because too many of them would trust in their own strength and would glory in themselves. God has chosen foolish things, and weak things, and base things, and things which are despised, and things which are not." Those descriptions

certainly fit me – foolish, weak, base. Certainly then God could use me just as I am. But what about this weak stomach?

I do not remember how II Corinthians 12:9 fit into the message. It may have even been another message on another day of the conference. I do remember, however, coming to the end of the meetings with peace in my heart, no longer fearing, no longer dreading those things that had held me back, ready to go anywhere, knowing that God's grace was sufficient for every situation I would meet. God's grace for facing disease and physical troubles was not needed at that time. If and when His grace would be needed, I had His promise that it would be available, and it would be sufficient. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (II Corinthians 12:9)

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

Chapter 6

THE LORD THINKETH UPON ME

But I *am* poor and needy;
yet the Lord thinketh upon me:
thou *art* my help and my deliverer;
make no tarrying, O my God.
Psalm 40:17

Sydney Crandall Young, was born August 4, 1899, in Osceola, Pennsylvania, to Louis D. Young and Martha L. Tinney Young. Helen Lena Wheeler, daughter of Lafayette Mortimer Wheeler III (called John) and Helen Spencer Wheeler, was born October 8, 1911, in Gillette, Pennsylvania. Sydney and Helen met in Big Flats, New York, and became Mr. & Mrs. Young on April 12, 1938.

Eight years later, on Sunday, August 11, 1946, at 4:00 a.m., Helen Young gave birth to her and Sydney's third child, Lewis William, at Newcomb Hospital in Vineland, New Jersey. Lewis had an older brother named Francis, Sydney and Helen's firstborn, and a sister named Martha. There was also a half brother, Sydney, from his father's previous marriage.

During the first year to eighteen months of his life, Lewis was in and out of the hospital with pneumonia.

Perhaps God graciously blotted out memories of childhood from Lewis's mind as he does not remember much at all from his early years. Those were hard years, years when they could have lived as a middle class family; but, because their father squandered away his money gambling at the horse races, the family was very poor. There was a time when Dad was away from home for about a two-year period, forcing Mother to work in a canning factory, and leaving Martha (only ten years of age) to take care of the house.

The first ten years of Lewis's life were spent in South Jersey. They did have electricity in their home but had no indoor plumbing. Wood stoves were used for cooking and for heat. There was no family car. Dad was employed at a glass factory.

Some of Lewis's fond childhood memories include lying out in the field in the warm weather and enjoying the sunshine; riding around with a neighbor boy who had a jeep; playing with his sister, Martha, in what was left of the basement of a house (even though there were snakes there); and "riding" the trees with his brother Fran as the trees swayed back and forth during a hurricane. He also recalls attending yearly camp meetings in Malaga where his mother would take him with her to the altar and would have to order him to sit still because he was so wiggly.

He, along with his family, attended a Methodist church, where he had been baptized as an infant. A picture in his mind from when he was a little older is that of the Methodist minister dipping his hand in a basin of water and laying the wet hand on infants' heads to baptize them. Several years, he received pins for perfect attendance in Sunday school. He thought he was a good boy, but we've learned that there are things he doesn't remember that are better forgotten.

When Lewis was ten years old, his family moved to Pennington in central Jersey and stayed there about a year. His father worked on a farm milking the cows and taking care of the barn. After a year or so they moved here and there, staying a few months at each place before moving again.

From eighth grade through his junior year of high school, he lived in Mt. Airy, Pennsylvania, and has some good memories of his years there. He enjoyed helping on a farm in summer, especially baling hay. He remembers when his brother Fran bought him a small radio which he could carry in his pocket and listen to rock music. He attended school dances and went to the junior prom in both tenth and eleventh grade. As a member of the Lambertville youth rescue squad team, there were sometimes contests with teams from other areas, and Lewis was usually the victim that needed to be rescued. One time he was given the opportunity to drive the ambulance back to the station.

All of Lewis's grandparents had passed away by the time he was born so he never had the privilege of meeting any of them. Grandfather Young was a composer and musician, and Lewis's Dad had learned to play the musical saw. Dad raised many fine farm animals including a hog named Curly Boy that weighed 1,255 pounds and a registered Belgian Stallion weighing 2,289 pounds. When the family moved to Westfield, Pennsylvania, in 1964, Dad worked at Cotton-Hanlon Mill in Cayuta, New York, as a fireman and a watchman. Dad passed away October 1971 when I was pregnant with our first child so our daughters did not get to know their grandfather on Lewis's side. After Sydney's death, Mom, affectionately known as Gran to her grandchildren, lived with Fran or Martha until her promotion to heaven on August 6, 1997.

Although during all those years, Lewis did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the Lord thought upon him and preserved his life for that day when he would bow before his Maker and receive the precious gift of eternal life.

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

Chapter 7

GRACE ABOUNDING

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that, though he was rich,
yet for your sakes he became poor,
that ye through his poverty might be rich.
II Corinthians 8:9

Our Lord Jesus Christ wanted Lewis to be rich, not in the things of this world, but in spiritual things. That is why, although Christ was abundantly rich, He left His home in heaven and became poor, so that Lewis might become rich. And that is why, in 1967, during Lewis's college years, God placed Lewis on a summer job where a co-worker shared with him God's simple plan of salvation. For most of Lewis's life, he had attended either a Methodist or Presbyterian church, but has no recollection of having heard or clearly understood that he was a sinner and needed to be saved. After hearing the good news and the testimony of that fellow worker, Lewis made a profession of faith. Soon after that, he was baptized and became a member of People's Church in Potter Brook, Pennsylvania.

At that time, Lewis was furthering his studies in accounting at Clarion State College, after having received an associate of science degree in accounting at Williamsport Area Community College. While at Clarion, a Christian English teacher required the students in his literature class to read the book Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners by John Bunyan. The Bible was also read in their classes. He did not think about his need of God's grace at that time, but seeds were being planted in his heart.

Just a few months after his profession of salvation, there was a missions conference at the church in Potter Brook, and Lewis was challenged with the plight of the unreached peoples of the world who had never heard the gospel. He determined that, rather than pursue his studies in accounting, he would give his life to help take the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth.

He applied and was accepted for missionary training at New Tribes Mission boot camp in Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania, and began the training program there in January 1968. He had never had any Bible school training and did not know much about the Bible. A godly married man who was also in training took Lewis under his wing and became a spiritual father to him in providing one-on-one discipleship. The boot camp training was a one-year program, but Lewis spent an extra semester there, affording him time for further spiritual growth.

From the beginning, there were times when it was uncertain whether he would be able to continue the training or not, since the military was seeking to draft him. Through much intercessory prayer and a special meeting with the draft board, he was given a reclassification and was able to remain in boot camp and prepare for missionary service.

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Chapter 8

CONTENTMENT

Not that I speak in respect of want:
for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am,
therewith to be content.
Philippians 4:11

In the summer of 1967, I entered missionary training in Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania. For those who were already there, the classroom program had been completed. Jungle camp was about to begin, and I joined the other single ladies as they labored to chop down trees and build a rough structure in the woods which would be our dwelling place for the next six weeks. A number of families built “jungle” homes to live in during that period too. This practical phase of the training included river travel; hiking with a backpack; and learning to cut hair, shoot a gun, kill a chicken, and many other skills. It was designed to help prepare us for life in remote areas where we may serve the Lord in the future.

After jungle camp, many of the families and young ladies left for language school in Missouri and a new group arrived for boot camp training in Jersey Shore. The class time was geared to help us begin to understand how to share the gospel cross-culturally, and work detail gave us ample opportunity to learn how to work in unity with others.

When the second semester came along in January 1968, a handsome young man named Lewis Young also came along for boot camp training. Although Lewis didn’t seem to notice that I was there, father Sydney gave me his attention whenever he and mother Helen came to Jersey Shore to visit their son. And Lewis claims that he did take notice even though I didn’t notice that he noticed. The Lord knew what was best for both of us, however, and in His time would make His will known.

By September that year, I was off to Camdenton, Missouri, to begin language school training while Lewis continued his training in boot camp. I concentrated on the classes in phonetics, language learning principles, cross-cultural communication, and linguistics, and had pretty well put all thoughts of Lewis out of my mind.

At the end of two semesters of training (I would have one more semester to go to complete the linguistics course), several of my dorm mates were preparing for marriage. I began to feel like I was left out, and I struggled a bit with discouragement and discontentment. Taking the matter to the Lord, my heart found sweet peace through His word that I belonged to Him, that He loved me, and that He would take care of me. *But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. (Isaiah 43:1) For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. (Isaiah 54:5)*

With this assurance, there was no doubt in my mind that, if the Lord wanted me to marry, He could give me a husband on a foreign field just as easily as in my own country. If He chose for me to remain unmarried, I could be content to live my life wholly for the Lord as a

single missionary. When the school year ended, therefore, I headed joyfully toward home to spend the summer with my family in New York state, anticipating my return to language school in the fall to complete my training. I had previously decided that I would stop at Jersey Shore boot camp on my way home and spend a couple days there. When I arrived, families had already begun the jungle camp phase of the training, and Lewis was still there.

Lewis escorted me around the jungle camp site and introduced me to other students. I didn't give it any thought other than that he was being friendly; and after a couple days, I continued my journey home. A few days later, however, thoughts of Lewis came rolling into my mind. No matter how hard I tried, I could not escape them. "Lord," I prayed, "please help me control my thoughts and quit thinking of Lewis." But the thoughts would not go away. And then, lo and behold, a couple weeks later, I received a letter from Lewis, telling of his feelings for me and asking me how I felt. "Lord, what shall I do? You have already given me peace about going to the field single. Why is all this happening? Please show me Your will."

Since I had already planned to go back to Jersey Shore later in the summer for their missions conference, I simply replied by thanking him for his letter and stating that maybe we could talk when I would see him again. In the meanwhile, much time was spent in prayer and in God's word; and before my next trip to the boot camp, my heart was once again at peace. The verse the Lord used to still the mental turmoil was Jeremiah 33:11, *The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.*

Before the week of missions conference was over, Lewis had asked me to marry him. I was a bit stunned that the proposal came so quickly, and hesitated a moment before answering. Since the Lord had already confirmed His will, however, what could I say but "yes"? We would both be in language school in the fall, but would return to New York at the Christmas season for a wedding on December 23. Mother's prayers had been answered for a husband to serve with her daughter on the mission field.

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

Chapter 9

REACHING FORTH

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:
but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind,
and reaching forth unto those things which are before,
I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:13,14

After our marriage, Lewis and I were in language school for another year. While he finished his language and linguistic training, I had the opportunity to teach phonetics and culture. Then we both taught for one semester before heading back to New York State where we spent a year with our families. Lewis worked to earn extra income for shipping a few goods to New Guinea and for buying plane tickets. We didn't know anything about deputation and were satisfied that our home churches and a couple others had pledged to send us monthly support. We did know that we were going in obedience to the Great Commission and that Jesus had promised "*lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*" (Matthew 28:20) We had no doubt that our loving heavenly Father would take care of us.

In mid-January 1972, we bid farewell to loved ones and friends and to all that was familiar, boarded a plane heading west across our own beloved country and then across the vast Pacific Ocean, and set our thoughts on beginning a life of service for the Lord in a world unknown to us. I was six months pregnant with our first child; but when that child would be born, we would be far from home and from the tender care of grandparents who could give wise advice and instruction.

Our first culture shock came as we arrived at Jackson's International Airport in Port Moresby, the capital city of Papua and New Guinea. New Guinea women sensed no shame in nursing their babies in the airport or any place else, whether public or private. From the capital city, we flew inland in a twin engine plane to a small landing area in a place called Wau. A missionary family met us there and took us to a mission station in the Watut outside of the town of Bulolo. Here we would spend our first six months in orientation to life in New Guinea. And here culture shock set in again as we found ourselves face to face with a people with whom we were unable to communicate. We were abundantly thankful for the encouragement of the experienced missionaries serving there and the training we had received that had prepared us for coping with times like this. It wasn't long before we were learning the trade language, Melanesian Pidgin, and getting to know the local people.

We were expecting our baby to be born in mid-April; but the due date came and went, and time seemed to drag on. About four weeks later, complications set in; and I was admitted to the four-bed Bulolo hospital. It was soon determined, however, that delivery would need to be by Caesarian. Since there were no provisions for surgery in Bulolo, arrangements were made for a flight to the nearest large hospital, located in the city of Lae. There around 3:00 p.m. on May 11, 1972, Christina Marie made her debut into this world. The next morning, the effects of the anaesthesia and the pain medicine having subsided, I yearned to embrace that

precious gift of new life. I could hardly hold back the tears of joy as the doctor laid her in my arms.

Several months later, we moved from the Watut to a mission station in the Eastern Highlands where we stayed for a few months as we made preparations to enter the area of work to which the Lord was leading us. The plan was to spend a couple years with Louie and Laura Dodd who had already spent a few years among the Aziana people. Our goal would be to get tribal experience by helping them with language problems and administering language tests, following which time Lewis would travel around Papua New Guinea as language consultant and coordinator.

In January 1973, Lewis began building a home in Aziana for our family. We didn't know how long it would take since it was difficult getting the local people to help at that time as most of them were working for the government on a road that would be passing through that area. A month later, however, Lewis had a house ready for us; and Christina (whom, at that time, we called Tina) and I were flown to the government station at Wonenara, the nearest landing strip to Aziana. We were met there by Lewis and about thirty Aziana people. Holding back tears, I smiled and shook hands with all thirty of them, and then cried when I reached Lewis's arms. It was so good to be together again. Lewis had come the day before to meet us, and had spent the night there in the house of a *kiap* (a government official).

The walk from Wonenara to Aziana wasn't nearly as steep and rugged as I had expected. There was a road of sorts to follow most of the way. Tina was in a back carrier, and was given to one of the Aziana men to carry. She was extremely unhappy about being separated from Mother, however, so was transferred to my back for the remainder of the journey. After a couple hours of walking, my pace began to slacken. Then we saw the Aziana base about an hour and a half away, and my legs seemed to gain new strength. The Lord brought to mind the words of Isaiah 40:31, "*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*"

The last half hour of the hike was the roughest. We had left the road and were plodding uphill on a steep, narrow mountain trail. Nearly four hours after leaving Wonenara, including a half hour stop for lunch, our destination was reached. Praise the Lord! We were thankful to be home and grateful that Tina had done well on the hike, dozing now and then in her back carrier, and just starting to get fussy a few minutes before we arrived in Aziana.

Our new home did not yet have doors and windows, but we did have a roof over our heads and a place to eat and sleep. The walls, floors, and shelves were all made of plaited bamboo. The roof was corrugated metal so the rain water could run off into a holding tank and be used for cooking, washing dishes, and bathing.

As soon as the house was completed, we started full swing into concentrated language study. One of the young Aziana believers, Kwenkweninsanavu, was hired as a workboy and language informant. His wife, Kwenkweninsau, was the only woman believer in that language group at that time. The two of them were eager to help us learn the language so we could help translate the Bible and teach them to read and write. It wasn't long before we had decided on an alphabet for the language and started working on trial primers for a literacy program.

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

Chapter 10

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

⁷⁷To give knowledge of salvation unto his people
by the remission of their sins,
⁷⁸Through the tender mercy of our God;
whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,
⁷⁹To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.
Luke 1:77-79

As we sat with the people of Aziana, learning their language and culture, we became more aware of the spiritual darkness in which they lived. A few families from the Me'ari clan were moving out of their villages and building new homes near the mission station. In the villages, most of the houses were round. The men lived together in one house, and the unmarried initiated boys in another. Each wife had her own home where she slept with her daughters and uninitiated sons. The women's houses were located on lower ground than the men's, and there was also a separate trail into the village for the women.

Their new homes were European style, that is rectangular rather than the typical round house. The change in style, however, did not indicate a change in their thinking. In their new homes, the man had his own bedroom on the uphill side of the house, while the wife and young children had a room on the downhill side. The woman also had her own door through which to enter and leave the house.

The Cargo Cult had also gotten a strong hold on the lives of the Aziana people. The teachings of this cult, which was widespread in New Guinea, varied from place to place; but the general belief is that the ancestors of the New Guinea people have a lot of money which the white man and the government have intercepted and kept for themselves.

In mid-1973, a cult leader from another area, who claimed to have gotten the secret from the government, came to the Arevunkuru clan to tell them how they could get the money that is rightfully theirs. First of all, they had to build a *haus mani* (money house) in which they put suitcases, string bags, and other things, each containing a certain amount of money. The house was locked, and the cult leader kept the key. Somehow the money was supposed to multiply; and after a set amount of time, the cult leader would come back and unlock the house so the people could collect their money.

There are certain taboos connected with the house; and if these aren't kept, the money won't multiply. The people were warned not to tell any *masta* (white man). We pitied these people who had little or no understanding of how money is made and distributed. Many were easily deceived, and a few still are today, by teachings such as this. And you can imagine that everything in the *haus mani* disappeared at the hand of the keeper of the key. Perhaps he led the people to believe that they did not strictly follow the prescribed taboos.

During this time, Kwekweninsanavu and Kwekwenisao, who were expecting their first child, faced a lot of pressure from their own people for not observing the usual taboos that

were believed to assure the baby's life and health. Their lives were truly a light to those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.

While we were living in Aziana, work was in progress on a landing strip for a small plane. Sometimes only a few showed up to help as they had other obligations such as garden planting or harvesting. Whenever there were people there helping, there were opportunities to preach the Gospel. Kwekweninsanavu and his brother Yanimavio faithfully witnessed to their people and stood strong in the Lord and in the power of His might even in the face of opposition. The dayspring from on high had come, through the tender mercy of our God, to visit this small group of people and give them knowledge of salvation. On a Sunday morning in April 1974, we had the joy of hearing four more new believers give public testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ as they were baptized.

In June, we received word that two more Aziana men made professions of faith in Jesus Christ, and two women recently gave birth to babies outside the ceremonial birth house. This was a real break away from the old custom and a cause of great fear in the hearts of unbelievers, who were concerned especially for the life and health of the child and father.

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

Chapter 11

BRAINS AND BRIDES

⁶They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;
⁷None of *them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:
⁸(For the redemption of their soul *is* precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)
⁹That he should still live for ever, *and* not see corruption.
Psalm 49:6-9

We had expected to stay in Aziana for about two years; but toward the end of 1973, plans were made to build a house for us at the main base outside Goroka, and carpenters had begun building. Chuck Turner wanted to start breaking Lewis in on the language consultant work around May of the coming year. Since our Redeemer was teaching and leading us in the way that we should go, it was our desire to follow.

On May 8, 1974, we shook hands with and said good-bye to the people whom we had grown to love during the year and few months that we lived in Aziana. The Aziana landing strip was now complete, and what a blessing it was to be able to board a plane right there on the base, rather than having to hike four hours to the Wonenara airstrip!

On August 9, two days before Lewis's birthday, we rejoiced together in the miracle of the natural birth of our second daughter, Connie Sue. How thankful we were for this wonderful heritage and reward of the Lord and that Caesarian was not needed for this delivery!

Besides having the opportunity to help and encourage missionaries working with various people groups, Lewis also gained much useful cultural information as he visited these tribal areas. During a visit to the Fore, he was told about a young man about twenty-five years of age who was dying of *kuru*. *Kuru* is a disease unique to the Fore people and starts with weak muscles in arms and legs, followed by shaking, inability to walk and sit, and lastly inability to eat or digest food, resulting in death. *Kuru* is a Fore word which means shivering or trembling. Although it has been the subject of much medical study, no medical explanation or successful cure has been found for it. The germs that cause it cannot be easily destroyed, and contaminated brains remain infectious even when preserved for years in formaldehyde. It is contracted by eating infected brain tissue or through contact with sores infected with the *kuru* germs, and it can show up seven to twenty years afterward or even longer. Incidences of *kuru* are significantly less since the custom of eating the brains of deceased relatives has nearly died out.

When visiting missionaries among a Chimbu people group, Lewis was told the story of a young Kuman woman who had eloped with a man from another area and recently returned to her village with her husband and baby. The woman's family was demanding payment of over \$1,000 US, 25 pigs, a coffee machine (for removing the pulp from harvested coffee beans), a cassowary, and a cow. Does that seem like a high price for a bride? It is, and was especially in the 1970's. Yet with inflation, education, and more income opportunities, bride prices have tremendously increased over the years. The custom of buying a bride is common to all New Guinea peoples, although traditions differ from place to place.

Stories like these are not just interesting pieces of information. They can be used in presenting the gospel in a meaningful way. Sin, like *kuru*, is a deadly disease. There is no medical cure for sin. It always results in death. Unlike *kuru*, however, there is a cure for sin. That cure was provided through the death of a substitute, Jesus Christ, and results in eternal life.

Although many young men in New Guinea and in many other parts of the world must pay a high price for their brides, the highest bride price ever paid was the shed blood of Jesus Christ to purchase His Bride, the Church. ¹⁸*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* (I Peter 1:18,19) No one but God's Son could have paid that Bride price. And all the people of New Guinea are included in that price, as well as you and I and everyone in the whole world. Whosoever will put their trust in the Lamb of God and His shed blood may be redeemed from the bondage of sin and of this world and may become part of the Church, the Bride of Christ.

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!

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

Chapter 13

SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS

¹*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*

²*Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*

³*There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*

⁴*Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

Psalm 19:1-4a

“Honey, are you awake?”

“Yes, what can all that shouting and commotion be?”

“Mmm, I wonder what’s going on now. What time is it anyway?”

“Two-thirty.”

“Sounds like they’re running around out here.”

“They’re coming to the house.”

Knock, knock.

“*Wet liklik. Mi kam.*” (Wait just a bit. I’m coming.)

Wenera and a few other boys were at the door, greatly excited. “*Yu bin lukim mun? Kam lukim mun.*” (Have you seen the moon? Come see the moon.)

“Honey, is there an eclipse of the moon?”

“Yes.”

“I thought it seemed awfully dark on the night of full moon.”

Lewis explained briefly in the trade language, Melanesian Pidgin, to Wenera and the others about the earth’s casting a shadow on the moon. He was able to learn from them the Owena word for shadow, which is the same as their word for spirit.

Lewis and Kevin got dressed and went down to the village to talk to the people who were greatly frightened. (Kevin and Marge Jenson had just arrived in Owena a couple weeks earlier to partner with us in reaching the Owena people.) None of these people had ever seen anything like this before. Having no scientific knowledge of such phenomenon, or even that the sun is the moon’s source of light, all they could think of was that the end of the world had come. They had learned through the teaching of an itinerant medical mission that changes would occur in the moon during the Great Tribulation, and now they expected that Jesus would come any moment, that the moon would fall apart, and that the earth would be destroyed. They were concerned that perhaps we were no longer there, as they had been informed that Christians would be taken from the earth before these other things happened.

Lewis and Kevin tried their best to give a natural explanation; but since we had only been there a couple months and were limited to the trade language, not yet having learned much of the tribal language, it was difficult for the people to understand what the two men were saying. On top of that, nearly everything in the lives of the Owena people is built upon the supernatural, making it very difficult for them to believe a natural explanation. Therefore, they were still very much afraid and asked if we could hold *lotu* (church meetings) every week. At this time, only a handful of the Owena people knew the trade language, and Lewis tried to

explain that Pidgin was not adequate for teaching them spiritual things. They agreed that this was so, and Lewis told them they would have to help us learn their own language first.

Around this same time, two older men in the village passed away into a Christless eternity. This was a grim reminder to us of their hopeless estate and their profound need to hear the Gospel. Their hearts were ripe for the truth; and, as we watched their daily lives so steeped in fear and darkness, our own hearts became more and more burdened for their salvation. For several nights, there was loud weeping and mournful singing as the villagers carried out numerous rituals to assure that living relatives were kept safe from the spirits of the dead who roamed about the village seeking to harm those relatives who did not carry out proper rites.

Following these events, the people from the youngest to the oldest diligently sought to drill their language into our heads and hearts. Our home was abuzz many hours a day with people coming and going to get medicine, to sell us food, or just to visit and look at picture books. Viewing slides of themselves with a slide viewer was always exciting. They loved having their pictures taken, and they had great fun singing and hearing their voices echo back to them on the tape recorder. At times, we visited in their homes or sat with them outside their houses to listen, observe, and learn more about their culture and thinking. We were excited to see progress in the language, but knew there was a long road ahead before we could effectively communicate the gospel.

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

Chapter 14

IS ANYTHING TOO HARD?

*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh:
is there any thing too hard for me?*

Jeremiah 32:17

Realizing the urgent need of reaching the Owena people for Christ, we diligently applied ourselves to learning the Owena language and culture. A lot of time was spent in concentrated study with my house helper, Marava, and Lewis's language informant, Wenera. Many hours were also given to practicing what we were learning as the local people came to our home or we went to theirs. Our adversary, the Devil, however, was striving to maintain his territory and was making an all-out effort to prevent our moving ahead. During our first year in Owena, I was up and down with various illnesses. They all seemed to be different, and we couldn't come up with any root cause even after talking with medical workers via radio and visiting doctors in Goroka. The daily emotional and physical strain made it difficult for me to carry the load of language study, teaching Tina first grade, and fulfilling my responsibilities as wife, mother, and missionary.

Lewis was spending an average of eight hours each day in learning the Owena language, the first step toward communicating the Gospel in the heart language of the Owena people. Language learning involved eliciting practical language material, then editing, recopying, making audio recordings, and repeatedly listening and mimicking the taped lessons until a lesson had been memorized. It also meant being with the people in their daily activities, making use of what we had already learned, taking notes of their ideology and customs, and just listening as the people conversed with one another. Kevin and Lewis worked together part of the time, and also took time to pray together which gave them renewed encouragement to keep pressing on.

As my body became weaker from undiagnosed illness, however, time was taken away from Lewis's language study to help care for me and the girls. Eventually, through a visit with a medical doctor in the city of Lae, I was diagnosed with amoebic colitis. With a change in diet, I began to see improvement and to gain back strength for my daily duties. I was thankful that Lewis was also able to get back to a more rigorous schedule of language learning.

Two years passed since our move into the little remote village of Owena. The Lord was helping us to make good progress in understanding the language and culture of the Owena people. After months of listening, writing, checking, rewriting, and comparing, we were able to draw some temporary conclusions regarding orthography. Up until this time, Owena had never had an alphabet. It was only a spoken language. We chose to use English letters to represent their sounds since the official language of the country is English and the trade language Melanesian Pidgin also uses English letters. Therefore using English letters for Owena would make it easier in the future for any of them to learn to read Pidgin or English.

We had also determined that Owena is a semi-tonal language, and we would need to include a tone mark in its orthography. By semi-tonal, we mean that two or more words may be spelled and pronounced the same, except for a variation in voice pitch on one or more

syllables, but will have different meanings. For example, the word *kwai* (pronounced *kwa-ee* as in making a statement) meant dog; and the word *kwai* (pronounced *kwa-ee* as in asking a question or having a high pitch on the second vowel) meant rat. In the end, twenty letters (seven vowels and thirteen consonants) and one tone mark were chosen for writing the Owena language. (Some years later it was agreed that only nineteen letters – one less vowel – were needed.)

After making decisions concerning orthography, these decisions had to be tested for accuracy and acceptance by the native speakers. Therefore a set of primers had to be written for running a trial literacy class. The sounds and syllables of the language were quite simple to work with, and the single tone mark wasn't too difficult. The grammar structure, however, was incredibly complicated, capable of producing words as long as twenty letters or more. Eventually we were able to come up with four fairly simple primers to begin checking out our deductions.

How exciting it was to begin teaching unlearned people to read and write! Most of them had never even used a pencil before so had no idea how to hold one. The little scribbles, called letters, made little or no sense at first. But as the days went by, it began to dawn on these early literacy students that all these marks and shapes had meaning. Then they began to get motivated about learning and eager for each class. What a thrill it was for them to realize that all these scrawls that at first seemed meaningless could speak to them! And what a joy it was for us to realize that we would one day be able to see pages of a book with God's word written on them in their own heart language!

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

Chapter 15

Having No Hope

*¹²That at that time ye were without Christ,
being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,
and strangers from the covenants of promise,
having no hope, and without God in the world:*

*¹³But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off
are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*

Ephesians 2:11,12

Since there were no roads into the village of Owena and no airstrip where a plane could land, our supplies were flown to the Aziana airstrip and carried over the mountains to our Owena home by the Owena people. During our early years in the work, there was a supply buyer in town who would purchase our supplies and pack them in boxes for transport on the plane. That was a great blessing and enabled Lewis to spend more of his time in the work. Occasionally, Lewis would take the whole family to town for a time of rest and refreshment for body, mind, and soul. That meant for both going out and returning home, there would be an eight-hour hike across the mountains to the landing strip in Aziana for the four of us and whatever personal items we needed for our stay in town. We were thankful for Owena men and women to help carry the personal supplies and carry Christy and Connie when they became tired. On these trips, we would buy our own supplies and take them back with us on the plane to Aziana, and then carriers from Owena would convey them across the mountains. At the times when we were dealing with health issues, we found it necessary to hire a helicopter to transport us in and out of the village.

From the beginning of our ministry in Owena, we had prayed about building an airstrip of our own. A couple other missionaries and missionary pilots helped us look over some plots of land to see if they would be suitable, but everything seemed to be too short and/or too steep. One morning in January 1980, the men and boys of Owena gathered in Lewis and Kevin's office to air their grievances over the fact that we weren't giving them an airstrip. They had somehow come to the conclusion that we or our "bosses" were holding back something from them and not letting them build an airstrip. "We are strong and can work hard to level off this land," they insisted. "And besides, we can't carry your cargo for you from Aziana anymore because we are afraid of our enemies lurking along the trail."

The Owena people were crying for schools, an outlet for their cash crops, and a means of bringing in material goods. An airstrip would certainly help meet those demands, but the government regulations must be followed in choosing a site, and the mountainous terrain in Owena just did not seem to meet the qualifications. The situation seemed hopeless and was beyond our control and also beyond the people's understanding. But God did understand, and it was He upon whom we depended to meet our needs and the needs of those people. As we left the situation in God's hands, He worked in the hearts of the people and made them willing to continue carrying for us again.

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Ever since she was three years old, our daughter Connie's greatest ambition was to grow up and be a mother. At age five, she still talked about having babies and taking care of them. Does every young girl look forward to growing up? What did the future hold for young Owena ladies back in 1980? It was in March of that year that Marge Jenson and I had the opportunity to witness the rites carried on when a girl reaches puberty. For these girls, this was a time of fear, pain, and darkness. Each young woman had to spend a whole week huddled on the dirt floor in one dark corner of the menstruation/birth hut. She was not allowed to leave the hut nor her given corner. Every day for that week, she was beaten on the back with sticks while she remained crouched on the floor. Although she cried and screamed with pain, her tormenters (the older women of the village) only laughed. At the end of the week, she was taken to the river for a ceremonial washing and a final beating – with stinging nettles. In the end, she would be a good strong woman who could carry large amounts of firewood and food from the garden.

A week in physical darkness and torment! How horrible! But what is that compared to a lifetime on this earth in spiritual darkness and then all of eternity in the darkness and torments of hell? How incidences like these made us long even more to learn their language and culture well enough to be able to tell them about a loving Saviour who longed to deliver them from their hopeless condition!

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The boys, too, were conducted through various stages of initiation. Most of these were dreadful times of fear and pain. Somewhere between the ages of five and seven, both boys and girls faced an initiation in which they were decorated with grass skirts, leaves, flowers, shells, and other things. The septums of their noses were pierced, and a small piece of bone or reed was placed in the septum. At this time, these young boys would be taken from their mother's home to a home built just for boys and overseen by one or two of the older men of the village. Here the boys would be instructed in how to become true Owena men. From now on, the young boys were not allowed to go to their mother's house nor eat any food that their mother had cooked.

(As in Aziana, husbands and wives did not live together. A couple large houses were built on higher ground where the men all lived together. Each wife had a separate home on lower ground where she lived with her daughters and uninitiated sons. The men had their own trails into the village, and women were never allowed to use the men's trails or go to the men's or boys' houses. The men could go to their wives' houses which were divided so that the wife always sat on the lower part of the house, and the men went to the upper. Women were never to cross over into the upper part of the house.)

As they got older, the boys went through some gruelling initiation rites which Lewis was never invited to witness. He was allowed to see their initiation adornment which the women were never allowed to see. The women were strictly forbidden from observing any of the initiation rites as well. Like the girls, the boys were beaten with stinging nettles; but they also had a second nose piercing, this time a sharp reed being forced up their noses until blood flowed out. The boys also went through the painful experience of having their private body

parts pierced with a sharp instrument. For several days, the boys were tormented with cruel beatings and blood-letting to be sure that they were cleansed from their mother's blood.

Praise God that the Gospel has since delivered these people from such dark, fearful events and that, not the shedding of their own blood, but the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed many from sin forever! No longer without hope!