

THE ISLES ARE SINGING

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 alway, 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.