



# from Glenn and Beth Calderwood

July 8 2010

PNG Newsletter

Number 2/10

Dear Friends,

Missionary work in the tribal Highlands of Papua New Guinea has presented many challenges over the years. One of the biggest challenges we have faced is to keep doing what we have been doing. When things don't seem to be going so well, when we see very little response or observe few results for the efforts we make, when there are discouragements, it becomes so easy to look around to find something else to do. We sometimes feel the pressure to be more "modern" in our approach, to catch up with the times in missionary endeavour, to do what others are doing ostensibly with much more success and pace.

Of course we do need to be assessing what we do and if changes need to be made then they should be made. We don't want to have our heads in the sand. Nevertheless, we also don't want to change for change sake, introducing new programs to keep up with people's desire for the latest fad in church activity or to satisfy the latest "mission-thinking" back home. Sadly, in our experience, many of the activities we see around the country do not produce the lasting change that the gospel promises, but rather produces shallow, superficial, and ultimately short-lived results. The challenge for us is to stick with the weekly preaching of the Word in the churches, to persist with God-centred evangelistic outreach in the villages, to persevere in the translation of the Scriptures (even though very imperfect) so believers may have the best opportunity we can give them to know what God is saying, and to keep going with the literacy program to facilitate the reading of the Scriptures. These are our staples.

Ultimately there are no short-cuts in gospel ministry, and while there is room for creativity and innovation, we always need to remember that our mandate is from the Lord – it is his work and he sets the boundaries for us.

Over the past couple of months some of the local men have tried to stir up trouble for us, but with Leften's help things appear to have settled again. There is a constant undercurrent of opposition from some, which flares up from time to time. It's unpleasant and often

confrontational, but will always be part and parcel of gospel work, as the Lord has promised.

In the past few weeks we have been surprised and delighted as some of the men who have been attending the Tatagufa church have given us reason to think they have become Christians. Fisa, a young father, said that no matter how he looked at it, he can see now that there is going to be no escape from the consequences of the life he has been living – except through the faithful work of the Lord Jesus. He said he couldn't afford to miss this great opportunity. Iko, his father, who has been pained at Fisa's wayward, and sometimes brutal, lifestyle is quietly optimistic that there is a genuine change in his son. He has prayed often for it.

Another man, a middle-aged grandfather, who has been attending the men's meeting for some weeks now spoke at length after one of these meetings – what he said encouraged us to think that maybe he has also become a believer. He is not an articulate man, so it is sometimes hard to know exactly what he is saying, but as far as could be ascertained there has been a shift in his thinking and will. He lives quite a distance from the main Tatagufa village, but always makes an effort to attend the men's meeting on Saturday and the main gathering on Sunday. This doesn't prove anything, I know, but we are hopeful that real change has taken place and his efforts to avail himself of biblical teaching is a product of that.

At the Avili church it looks like Leften and Ellien's adopted son, Vako (who is actually Leften's nephew) has become a Christian. His parents seem to think so. They have spoken of positive change in his relationship with them and his interest in the gospel message. He will need lots of prayer as he faces many pressures from the rest of the young people around him. It will be hard to keep standing his ground over the long haul, being the only one of his age (he's about fourteen or fifteen years old).

The Seventh Day Adventist sect is very active in the Avili area and seek to swallow up everyone they can. At the



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local school they have attempted to shame the children by asking all those who “worship” on a Saturday to put their hands up – Vako and his little brother Samson were the only two not to do so. It’s very intimidating for them, and is meant to be so. They are brave boys – many of the others who aren’t attached to this religious group put their hands up anyway just to avoid the ridicule.

We are often reluctant to speak of people we think may have become Christians as sometimes it proves not to be the case. As far as we can honestly evaluate there is reason to be optimistic by the responses of those mentioned. However, ultimately only the Lord knows their hearts. The best we can do is move ahead cautiously and see if they prove the veracity of their responses “by their deeds” in the weeks and months and years ahead.

Generally, both churches are doing well. We have been working through the first seventeen Psalms and will be doing Psalm Nine on Sunday. People have interacted quite a bit with what is preached and appear genuinely encouraged and helped. There is a seriousness and gladness within the two groups. Often after the service people will speak of their appreciation of what has been learned and have expressed how they have been encouraged. When they speak of the faithful work of Jesus it is clear many are maturing, and truly appreciate

God’s grace. Several recent visitors to the Avili church have said that not only do they recognise the teaching is very different from anything they have heard before (that’s a positive comment), but also the lives of those in the church are very different – attractively different. Maybe it’s not co-incidental there are some in the wider community trying to stir up trouble for us.

There is good reason to be glad and grateful – we hope you will all be encouraged as we are. Give thanks to the Lord who is the one who works in people’s hearts, changing them and making them more and more like himself. No doubt there are still many battles and difficulties ahead, sinful man being what he is. Nevertheless we do need to step back sometimes and recognise the gains the Lord has given and be thankful.

Our new Work Permits have been approved – this forms the basis for our P.N.G. three-year visa extension. Our current Work Permit and visas expired at the end of June, and there was a small “hiccup” with the Work Permit, so we are glad all has been resolved satisfactorily, with the new visas expected to be issued soon.

Thankyou for all your love, support and prayers.

With love,  
Glenn and Beth.

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