

PO Box 479
Ukarumpa, E.H.P. 444
Papua New Guinea

glennbethc@gmail.com

from Glenn and Beth Calderwood

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Dear Friends,

There are numerous problems and difficulties facing the advance of the gospel here in Papua New Guinea – we've mentioned some of these in past letters. More recently the use of drugs is on the increase and is fast becoming a very serious matter. Many of you will remember the sling-shot incident back in March (where a group of young men took a shot at me as I went past on the motorbike, narrowly missing me and taking out a light on the motorbike) – this was in part fuelled by drugs. While marijuana has been around for years, and has been credited with facilitating the purchase of high powered weapons now used in tribal fights and wielded by criminal gangs on the roads and in the towns, it is now beginning to have much more widespread negative effect at the tribal village level.

Many of the young men (although not confined to the young nor the men) smoke marijuana as regularly as some would smoke cigarettes. In any culture this causes great upheaval and disruption, fuelling crime, family dysfunction, and many such social disorders. The tribal village is no exception. Addiction, therefore, is and will be a major problem for the new churches now and well into the future.

On the other side of the ledger we have been greatly encouraged with the efforts of at least one of our young men from the Tatagufa church. It probably shows our age, for when we say "one of our young men" we actually mean a married man in his early thirties. He has claimed to be a Christian for some time now and has been working hard on many fronts. We're more and more convinced of the veracity of his claim.

For many years this young man has been growing and smoking marijuana – since he was 10 or 12 years old so we've been told. Recently, of his own initiative, he has destroyed his crop, burned all his seed so as not to be tempted to replant, and is trying to kick the habit. He is seven weeks into his "cold-turkey" and is going okay. Sleeping has been a problem for him, so Beth is helping him with Phenergan, which he has found also helps with the urges to smoke.

It is a very common idea that when someone becomes a Christian everything obviously bad in their life changes quickly. Realistically it takes time for deep and lasting change to occur. Take for instance the evil

practices of many in the Ephesian church. It seems that some believers continued practicing sorcery for some time (possibly even up to two years!) before being inwardly convicted of its inappropriateness (Acts 19). We will never know if Paul knew this was going on and was patiently waiting for real change to occur, or if it was happening secretly without his knowledge. The reality was though, it was happening and it took some time for people to change.

What is particularly pleasing with the young man at Tatagufa is that the effort to change has come from the regular weekly teaching, not about the evils of drugs, but about God's great salvation in Jesus. He wants to change in response to learning about God – not because we have cajoled him to change. Of course, we must not shy away from stating clearly what is and isn't appropriate behaviour for a believer, as no doubt Paul did at Ephesus, but it is also important to be patient, and kind (empathetic), allowing God's Word to make its life-changing mark in their hearts, which then brings real and lasting change.

I hope you are encouraged by news of this man's progress as we are.

Let me update you on some matters mentioned in a previous correspondence.

Kimiagomo outreach.

Please keep praying for this outreach work each week. Hainave and Rama, in particular, continue to welcome the preaching every Friday morning. We're pleased that Rama's husband, Jona, joins us at times. He is a local government official and is often away attending to his duties, but the few times he has been at home he has come along and has engaged with what has been taught.

We have found that it takes some time before people realise they are meant to listen and to think about what is being said. They have learned such bad habits from what has gone before that we have to work extra hard to engage them. Sadly some people just don't come again because they find it too strenuous to concentrate.

The young people want all things to be fun so many

of them just don't bother hanging around when I begin speaking. They are happy to sit and listen when we are just chatting together, but when we get serious about serious things they leave.

Women's literacy.

As you know this has not been well attended since our return to PNG in January. Beth hopes to meet with all the women at Tatagufa this week-end to see if we can work out a way ahead for them. If they could tell us why they are losing interest we may be able to do things that would help them persevere. Although, the bottom line is that it is plain hard work to learn to read as an adult, especially for those who have had no schooling whatsoever. It is not impossible for them, but it is very, very difficult.

Literacy is, of course, important so they can read the Scriptures for themselves and to be able to ward off false teaching. Without good literacy skills throughout the congregation it is difficult to see how the church can become self-sustaining.

Safety.

Our safety is something which is continually on our minds here. The sling-shot incident has faded away, but we still have ongoing safety concerns. It is quite stressful for us living with this day in and day out. It is never far from our minds.

The wet-season.

Back in March we expressed our concern about the faltering wet season with its associated problems for the locals and their food gardens and how we might assist them should their crops fail. This scenario seems remote now since the normal heavy rains associated with "the wet" have finally come – and stayed! July is normally quite dry but this year we are still getting substantial rain. We are thankful that the drinking streams are running again and the food gardens prospering.

Some of you will already know that Beth and I will be travelling down to Australia soon for some medical issues attendant to a neck injury I sustained some time ago. Plans are for us to arrive into Newcastle July 22nd, travelling on to Sydney for July 26th appointments. We hope to return to PNG quickly, depending on what treatment will be required. In the meantime the churches at Avili and Tatagufa will work through a study book on the Psalms which we've prepared for them.

With love,

Glenn and Beth.