

Mission to Papua New Guinea

By Lloyd & Nancy Greenhaw

Beautiful Papua New Guinea is still the land that time has forgotten yet in the last few years that we have been coming here we have seen the encroaching western values. We were met by our good friend Bishop Tony who informed us that he wouldn't be traveling with us to his home in Wewak. It was Friday and he wouldn't be back until Wednesday. We walked to the domestic terminal while he filled us in on what we would be doing. Then we parted company and we flew to Madang and then on to Wewak. After a day of rest, we began our mission on Sunday night in Yarapus at Mercy College where 700 girls awaited us. They are between 16 and 20 years old. This is a Catholic school started by missionaries. Most of them have now left the Papua New Guineans with the responsibility of continuing the faith. We showed them the six minute video of the very poor in Sudan, with the children drinking water from the ruts in the road, as well as the Sudanese girls who are not allowed to go to school and the children walking with AK47's in their hands. Practically all 700 girls had their tender hearts moved and were wiping tears away. We were with these lovely young women of faith for three days and we had a glorious time. Almost all of the girls stay at the boarding school during the semesters because the school is at least 10 miles from Wewak and the cost of getting there each day is higher than room and board. During the time with them we applied the Gospel to their personal lives by teaching them the five keys to forgiveness and healing as outlined in Neal Lozano's book *Unbound*. They loved it. Several had been raped and were filled with anger and shame and were blaming themselves. We prayed with quite a number of these young women and God worked powerfully in setting them free! At the end, after we told everyone goodbye, each one of the 700 girls stood in line to personally give and get a hug!



The next day we started out for Aitape. A worker named Peter showed up in a small 4-wheel drive with the bed of the pickup full of people. We were told we would cross 130 rivers. We have made this hazardous trip two times before and I decided to count the rivers and I only saw 87. I am assuming that most of the ones we didn't see were covered by this magnificent rain forest. Many places in the road we crossed were completely covered by undergrowth. We drove up and down mountains, through the green forest; sometimes we drove close enough to see the beautiful sandy beach and coastal blue green waters. The beautifully constructed huts along the coast are little more than a shelter or covering from the sun and rain. Palm, coconut, bananas and coffee plants are everywhere.

A few miles up the coast from Aitape is an area that was completely engulfed by a tsunami ten years ago. At seven in the evening, as the mothers were cooking, kids playing in the sand, and

dads walking home from the forest or working on their nets, a huge wave, taller than the palm trees, came over the land and killed 3000 men, women, and children in six minutes. The Bishop said that the people living there are still in trauma. We are lodged at the Aitape Diocesan Guest House. It most resembles a camping structure with a communal bathroom downstairs and electricity for fans. After setting up our mosquito tents we met with Bishop Otto, who was the Apostolic Administrator and was officially appointed Bishop on June 13th and installed on August 5th. It was interesting to hear this indigenous priest talk about the first missionaries who came to an island off Aitape in the late 1800's. The Catholic faith spread from Aitape to all the villages and towns in PNG and now things have come full circle. The indigenous people are taking the faith that was given to them and in this new bishop, giving back one of their own as a kind of first fruit of the land!

On the first night we began the outdoor program and although it was announced at the Cathedral, only about three or four hundred people showed up. But each night as news of the event spread by word of mouth, the crowds grew. During the days we went to St. Anna's to teach. The Bishop lent us his car and in spite of driving on the "wrong side" of the road, on a steep hill, with a left-handed stick shift, we managed to get there. Every day the group got larger. I taught from the *Unbound* book and Lloyd taught apologetics. Every evening Lloyd preached followed by a healing service.

On the last night the most people came; the Bishop consecrated 1000 hosts and used them all although there were also many who didn't come to communion and were in the dark so we couldn't see them. After Mass the Bishop took the monstrance through the crowd and the people told Jesus their problems. At first they seemed a little reticent to walk up to the Monstrance when the Bishop held it up, but soon all were reaching out to "touch the hem of His garment". The people knew the priests better than they knew the new bishop and when the priests took their turn the people began to intimately talk to Jesus. Afterwards the Bishop told us how much he loved it and how impressed he was by the faith of the people. But he was especially touched by the presence of the youth whom he called, "the future of the Church."

We left Aitape on a positive note; there was much reported healing and the people were able to meet the new bishop in very happy circumstances. On Thursday we rode back to Wewak with at least eleven people in a small Toyota pickup, including an eleven month old baby and several children. A huge blue tarp was added in case of rain. The driver went really fast and I was nervous for the kids in the back. At one point he explained that the river had begun to rise and we were hurrying to try to make it across before it got too high. When we reached the river in question he let air out of the tires and said we were lucky it had only risen a few inches.

We arrived in Wewak after dark and stayed with Bishop Tony. On Saturday we rose at 4:30 am for the 6 am flight. The Bishop called it the, "friendship run" because only a friend would get up that early to take someone to the airport! After he left us we were told that the flight was changed to 9 am. There were too many people for this flight so they decided to take half the passengers to Madang and turn around and get the rest. So we waited and then finally took off around 1 pm and arrived in Port Moresby, only to find our flight to Australia was canceled.

Welcome to PNG! But God is so good, and we eventually made it to Australia and then home to Texas. It is

always good being with the God's people. In Papua New Guinea they have all the problems that plague mankind. They are isolated and our hope is that this might protect the kids somewhat from the importation of drugs, pornography, etc. The young women we ministered to are still somewhat innocent, but things are changing. We see much more tourism in PNG. Oil has been discovered and it won't be long before the world will be at their door.

We just pray that the faith of the people will be strong enough to withstand the temptations. What a great honor we have, to stand in the gap in faraway places and bring the love of Jesus to those for whom he died!