

*“According to God’s great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is*

*imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.”*

*1 Peter 1:3-4*

Greetings from N. Wahgi!

We returned to the village 2 weeks ago today and have some thrilling things to share with each of you! It has been great seeing what the Lord has been doing in the lives of the believers here in North Wahgi. We desire for the Lord to receive the most glory in all of these wonderful events taking place as it is evidence of His work in the lives of these precious people that He has given us the privilege to work among.

So as I sit here writing this, the constant pounding of yet another rainfall is above my head on our metal roof and I am in awe as I take a moment to consider that I am typing this letter from the middle of a rain forest located on the top of a mountain in the middle of a small island country not much larger than the state of California! Yet, in this ‘tucked’ away place among a language group of 50,000 +/- people, in a village of 1,500 +/- people where God has called out another ‘precious baker’s dozen’! J

And reflecting once again on the Amazing hand of God in the Team that He has put together to allow us to be here in this place. Each of YOU are a part of this Team. I hope that you can know this and own it in a very real and personal way no matter where this letter finds you! Thank You for praying, giving, going and sending!! May your heart rejoice and be encouraged as ours are!

These special individuals here have come from all different backgrounds. Formerly fitting the labels of being a religious leader/teacher, a police officer, a senile/village ‘idiot’, a criminal, an accused sorcerer, a rapist, a murderer-hired assassin, a store owner, a few abandoned wives & mothers, gamblers, no-bodies-neglected & forgotten...ALL lost and without the Hope of Christ’s forgiveness!

BUT GOD...One year ago January, and throughout this past year, God’s Word spoke to each of their hearts & through His Spirit, removed the scales on their spiritual eyes and each one has accepted the amazing GIFT of God’s loving Grace through accepting Jesus Christ as their substitute-sacrifice for their sin! Their Savior!! And each one has been made ‘new’! A New Creature In Christ Jesus! A Child of GOD! Set apart for great things in His Kingdom!

Through the last many months we have been seeing in each one fruits from the working of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in their lives! This has been so exciting to be an eye witness here with them. It has been even more exciting to see them take on more and more of an active role in this last 6 months with the second chronological Bible teaching that was begun for other non-believers that started to attend our Sunday morning service.

Each one is active in leading the Scripture memory times, joining in with the music ministry, reading the Scripture portions, leading the prayer time, leading the review questions, sharing personal testimonials and biblical truths that they are being impacted with to strengthen others, assisting in the Sunday School lesson preparations and we even have a wonderful and very faithful greeter who hands out the ‘hymnals’...ok just the sheet of paper with 10 songs on it faithfully every week. J And he does it with a smile and a joy that shines from within!

All of this is leading up to our First recent event mentioned above! Because of time, our co-worker Dan was not able to teach on the Resurrection on Easter Sunday as was planned. He thought it would be best, to leave the group thinking more deeply about the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus.

The reason for His death and the absolute necessity for it as well as the fulfillment of the penalty for all mankind’s sin. He was the promised Redeemer! This is why He came to earth, so that we could be set free

from the penalty and power of sin in our lives and come into fellowship through forgiveness for our sins with the Almighty God as a result!

We have received permission to use and adapt excerpts from our co-workers recent update to share these exciting recent events with you. Thanks Dan and Rachel! 😊



### **FIRST: The Final Lesson Lena & Sisilia**

*On Sunday (7<sup>th</sup> April) Dan taught the final lesson from the creation to Christ course with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. He taught the people how Jesus paid for our sins when he died on the cross and how by rising from the dead, he conquered death and sin. Some of the believers who were there shared their own personal testimony of how Jesus had saved them from their sins.*

*Steven shared how he used to be a local catechist and had taught people from the Bible how to follow the law in order to be right in God's sight. He said that he used to go to Church and give offerings thinking that God would be pleased with him for doing that. He shared that now he knows that Jesus alone has saved him from his sins and that those good works that he did counted for nothing. Trusting in Jesus is the only way that we can be reconciled to God.*

*When he finished speaking, a number of other believers also shared similar stories of how God had saved them through the work Jesus did on the cross.*

*Wirol added, "The curtain in the temple was torn in two because by Jesus dying on the cross, he opened the door so that we can be with God again."*

Wirol's grown son David, a shy and quieter man, attended our first teaching over a year ago and has continued to come to our believer's Bible studies, often adding good thoughts and asking searching questions. He has formerly professed faith but never as clearly as he shared that morning with both his mother and sister also present. We were all so excited to hear exactly what he is placing his trust in.

Each of these individuals were responding to the message once again and each one were trying to 'strengthen the message' as they say here, to emphasize to those that have not yet professed faith in Christ who were present that day how important this message is to their lives and eternities!

It was so exciting to be able to be a fly on the wall for this time and it is so encouraging to see the Lord working in those around us in spite of us!

Over the next few days we will be intentionally seeking out opportunities to sit down and talk with the handful of those that have attended this teaching in order to understand more clearly where they are at in their thinking and what they are understanding or believing for themselves personally. **You can continue to pray for these individuals, that the Truth of God's Word will continue to draw their hearts and minds to Himself!**

Robyn was able to speak briefly with one of the ladies (pictured on right above) following the service and she was able to share very clearly the road to salvation. The opportunity did not allow for her to ask whether she was personally believing this for herself or not but we will be following up with her this week along with the other lady pictured and a handful of others also. (This may sound odd to some of you, but we have found that it

is easy for the people here to accept things on a 'group' level but not an individual level. Example: "yes, we ALL have sinned. BUT no, I personally have never sinned.")



## **SECOND:First Communion**

On Easter Sunday we had our first communion service with the believers. 9 people turned up and we started at about 7pm and finished just before 9. We kicked off with an overview of what communion really is all about (i.e. a time to remember what Jesus has done for us) and what it isn't (i.e. something to get in favour with God), then I read some verses from Isaiah 53 showing how Christ suffered and died on our behalf. Some of the people asked questions such as: "Do we need to be baptized to take communion?" "How often do we take it?" "We're all from different churches so can we all take communion together?" and other such questions. I reminded them that we are in Christ's fold now and therefore we are entitled to eat and remember as members of His body. Wirol gave a nice message in the morning about those of us who have trusted in Jesus are now in Christ's sheepfold and no-one can break in to harm his sheep. I asked him to share that same thought with everyone again in the evening.

We used cordial (like Kool-Aid) and some sliced bread for the actual communion. (Perhaps we will use sweet potato and water another time as we are wanting to challenge their worldviews on the elements not being what is important but what we are remembering together being the important focus.)

We all ate the bread and drank the cordial remembering in our own quiet way what Jesus had done for us. Then I said to them all that if anyone wanted to sing a song or share something, to go ahead. So we sang a number of songs, then we prayed together. Most of the ones gathered there prayed out loud including Wirol and Mara. Janet said that she wanted to sing a song instead of praying so she sang to us a song in Pidgin English about being a new person in Christ. The others knew the song too and joined in with her. Marta shared a Bible verse that she had learned with us. Then as we started to wrap the meeting up, Steven shared with everyone about all the prophecies that were fulfilled in Christ's life here on earth and how one day he will come back just as he has promised. We were all greatly encouraged in the Lord and there were no awkward moments. ***Thank you for praying and let's pray that this time of sweet fellowship will be the start of many.***



## **THIRD:Literacy Graduation**

The following Friday (5<sup>th</sup> April) was the literacy graduation. The students arranged the date of the grad and invited the local leaders to come and witness the event. They also each donated some money to buy food or

chickens for a celebratory meal after the graduation was finished. We planned to start the grad at 1pm, but a member of parliament was due to visit the area that same day, so many of the people in the village were at that event. So, at about 3pm we finally kicked off the ceremony which lasted for about 1 hour. Although the local leaders didn't come to the grad, many others (about 95-100) from our village came to witness the event. 11 people graduated! (Ranging in ages from their late 30's to late 60's or early 70's) IMAGINE!!! J



Four of the women had no formal education before starting the literacy course, so to show the locals how they can now read, we printed out a Bible verse for each one and they read it out to the crowd. This was a highlighted moment as these women were beaming and some in tears realizing the immensity of what they are now able to do!



Each person who graduated received a laminated certificate with their photo on the front. They also got the story of Joseph in a Booklet form that we have translated and into the Wahgi language and illustrated. This is really the first printed Scripture portions that they own in their own heart language and they now have the ability to read them to their own friends and families! What a thrill!

When the ceremony was finished, a good number of people signed up for the next course which we hope to start later on in the year. All the ones who graduated then had a meal of chicken and rice together as a time of celebration.

They have now started the post literacy course which lasts for about 4 months. During post literacy, the students will spend a few hours a week practicing their reading in order to retain what they learned in the literacy course and to improve reading speed and comprehension.

If you've hung on with us this far in the update, we trust that your heart is rejoicing alongside ours in these very special events.

Please continue to pray for each of the handful of individuals that have been regularly attending the Bible lessons. Pray that their hearts and minds would be opened to accepting truth and receiving Christ's free and final gift of Salvation!

Please continue to praise the Lord for and pray for the believers (God's 'precious baker's dozen' ) here in N. Wahgi. Pray that they would continue to come to the Bible studies and learn more and more how the Lord desires to change them from within and use them mightily for His name. Many of them continue to face persecution and hardships for attending these Bible studies and for their faith. Some are standing up strongly and proclaiming the message of Truth among their families and peers.

Your Co-workers in Christ, Levi, Robyn, Michael, Daniel, and Matthew Lenz