

NEW TRIBES MISSION

# NTM@work

your connection with tribal missions



i didn't know how much  
i needed to know. page 14

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## NTM@work

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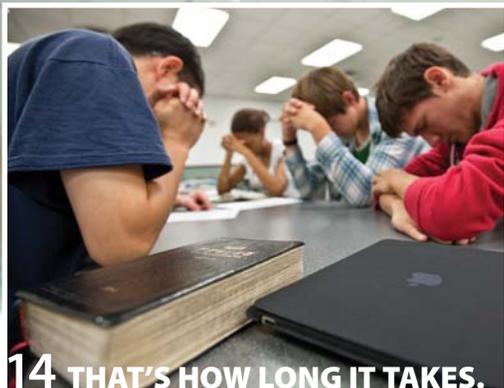
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Cover & right photo: Dale Stroud

**4 connect:** Chart a course into greater involvement with missions, missionaries and opportunities.



## 14 THAT'S HOW LONG IT TAKES.

Some see the years of NTM training as too long. Others see the enormity of the task of planting a church among an unreached people group and think it may be too short. We think it's just right.

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< **Find out why** Linda Krieg's journey through training was better because it was longer

< **Read about** the unexpected benefits Lisa Kappeler found at Bible school



# [ connect ]

## What will happen if I die?

“I’m very worried.” The aging tribesman furrowed his brow and slowly shook his head from side to side. He was a proud member of the Ngaing people. But right now he was envious of his neighbors, the Mibus. He had heard that the Word of God had come to the Mibus, and he thought about visiting them so he could learn what God wanted him to know. But he understood only a few words of their language.

“Some day, someone may bring this message to my people so we too can understand.”

“But,” he wondered, “what if I die before then? What will happen to me?”



“I see the ways of our ancestors and the beliefs that we still hold onto today, and I recognize them as untrue,” Gelio said.

“So I want you to know that I believe you’re really going to bring us the truth. And when you actually tell us what that is, I’m ready to believe it, whatever it is.”

—Akolet Tribe, Papua New Guinea

## A THUNDERSTORM IN MY ARMPIT !

In my language class this week, I managed to say that my grandpa had been murdered, that I had given birth, and that there was a thunderstorm in my armpit. None of which was actually true.

As we learn and practice language, multiple mistakes are inevitable, but we thank God that we are actually seeing progress and really enjoying our time studying.

— Brian Johnson, Philippines



## \* praise

**Wano** believers in Indonesia are becoming more involved in reaching other language groups with the Gospel. In the process they are an example and encouragement to believers from other tribes to do the same. Please pray that God’s Word will continue to go from tribe to tribe and bring forth fruit. One village of Uriay people in **Papua New Guinea** has been hearing evangelistic Bible lessons and will soon hear about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Pray that they will have a good understanding of the Gospel and put their faith in Christ.

More opportunities to pray: [ntm.org/magazine](http://ntm.org/magazine)



## Phillip Schuring



Brazil

**Ministry:** Church planting  
**Sending church:** Good News Bible Church, Williamsport, Pennsylvania

“My parents are missionaries with New Tribes Mission and I grew up in Brazil. I am privileged to have parents who were faithful to teach me what it meant to live for the Lord.

“I accepted the Lord at an early age before going off to boarding school where I was constantly reminded of the urgency to reach the world for Christ. Even as a kid I was challenged with missions and all I ever wanted to do was be a missionary to tribal people.

“Of course, my motives weren’t always pure, but slowly the Lord has replaced them with truer ones. As a kid I wanted to be a missionary because that was all I knew in life. As a teenager I wanted to be a missionary because I was drawn by the promise of great adventures and exotic places.

“But all that began to change when I started the training at New Tribes Bible Institute in Jackson, Michigan. There, I heard a part of the Gospel I had never really understood — the grace of God. For the first time in my life I began to understand that God accepted me just the way I was. That truth set me free. Until then I was rather skeptical of my goal of reaching lost tribal people for Christ because deep down I realized I would just be replacing their system of bondage with mine.

“So, I am a missionary partly because I was exposed to missions at an early age, partly because I’m up for a jungle adventure, but most importantly because He changed my life and I can’t wait to share that life-changing truth with those who have never had a chance to hear.

[ntm.org/phillip\\_schuring](http://ntm.org/phillip_schuring)

# [ connect ]

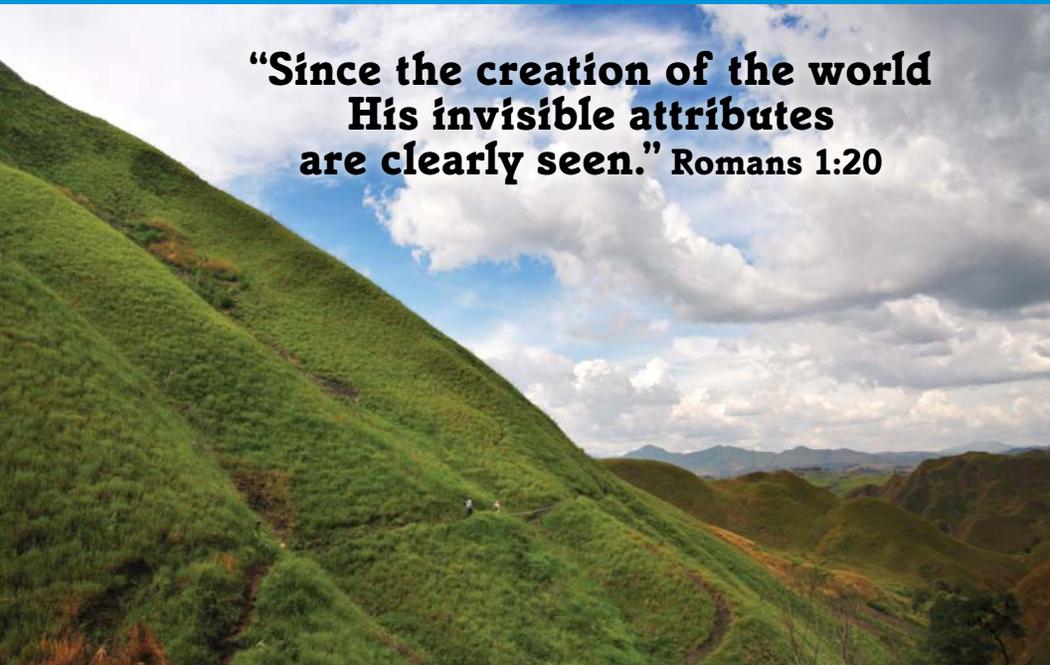
## A very important talk

Missionary Scott Phillips was sure that his high school speech teacher never would have approved of this. But he knew it had to be done. So he picked up a hunting arrow, pounded it on the ground and loudly shouted to the tribal people seated around him.

By carefully studying their culture, the missionary had learned that the Dao people of Indonesia have certain ways of signaling that what they are about to say is very important. It alerts their fellow tribal people to drop everything and listen intently to what is being said.

So when Scott gave the signal, the Dao people quickly quieted down and leaned forward to hear. They knew it must be crucial. With rapt attention they listened about the Great Creator God who loved them and gave His Son to die for them.

Listen to stories like this: [ntm.org/magazine](http://ntm.org/magazine)



**“Since the creation of the world  
His invisible attributes  
are clearly seen.” Romans 1:20**

photo by Curt Sharp, Interface participant

## INTERFACE opened my eyes

“I can still remember sitting under a tree at the New Tribes Interface campus in Papua New Guinea, jotting down my plan of action. During the five-week program, I became convinced that I should be involved in bringing the Good News to unreached people groups. But based on what I’d learned, I knew I would need all the training I could get!”

—Chantal Pilon, Konyagi tribe, West Africa

**Interested in a meaningful short-term trip? [ntm.org/interface](http://ntm.org/interface)**

## Doug and Kellee Tomlinson



Thailand

**Child:** Kees

**Ministry:** Church planting

**Sending church:** Paden First Baptist Church, Paden, Oklahoma

Doug and Kellee both trusted Christ as their Savior in their early teens. Doug read through the Bible and saw how God called out people to share His message of salvation. On learning that there were many people groups with no access to the Gospel, he committed to taking the Good News where it has never gone. Kellee also devoted her life in expanding the reach of the Gospel when she realized that God made her for a purpose.

“Our life verse is Ephesians 2:10,” the couple wrote, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

[ntm.org/doug\\_tomlinson](http://ntm.org/doug_tomlinson)

## quicklook

The **Nakui tribe** of Papua New Guinea has only seven words for numbers. One through five match what they call the fingers on one hand. Six is the word for belly button. They have no words for seven, eight or nine, but ten is the phrase “two hands.”

—Greg Greenlaw, Papua New Guinea

## SOMETHING FEELS STRANGE

Any of you ever get this feeling? One day over breakfast, 5-year-old Elijah shared the following: “I have the feeling something’s over-braining me!”

—Chad and Janeene Mankins, Papua New Guinea

# [ connect ]

## If only her hairdresser knew for sure ...

Some friends of ours, Rob and Jane, were at a coastal town in Papua New Guinea for a break. As they were walking around, Jane mentioned that she needed a haircut. So when Rob saw a salon, they went in to make Jane an appointment.

The gal in the beauty shop said, "I can cut your hair right now!" So Jane sat down and the lady began. As she was busy cutting, Jane was thinking, "My, she's cutting it short," but she was too afraid to say anything. When the gal was done, Jane left the shop and met up with her husband. He took one look and said, "Oh, my! What happened to you?"

It was an absolutely horrible haircut, hacked and uneven. Jane was in tears. That was enough for Rob. The next day, he told her they would go back to the salon and tell them what a bad job the lady had done.

When they got to the shop, Rob said to the ladies working there, "Look at my wife. She was in here yesterday and got her hair cut. But look how awful it is!"

The ladies were shocked. "We were closed yesterday," they said. "Only our cleaning lady was here."

Only then did everyone realize what had happened. The cleaning lady wanted to make a few extra bucks, so she hacked off Jane's hair. Jane wore a scarf on her head for the next several months.

—Annie Earl, Papua New Guinea

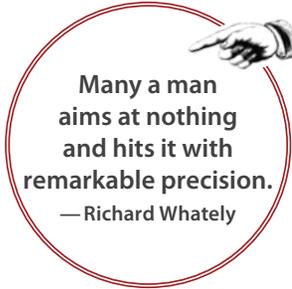
"Before, in our religion, we just jumped around and God's story was never clear. But when we heard the evangelistic lessons, they started from the beginning and it was so clear."

- Jinila, Tala Andig tribe, the Philippines

## \*praise

After returning from an evangelistic trip to Bolivia, 18 Ayore believers in Paraguay reviewed their goals and results. They saw God work in some lives but found a general lack of interest by most Bolivian Ayores. Please pray that God will stir the hearts of the people to desire His Truth.

More opportunities to pray:  
[ntm.org/magazine](http://ntm.org/magazine)



Many a man aims at nothing and hits it with remarkable precision.  
— Richard Whately

## How many what?

My first language blunder ... I knew it would happen. I just did not know when. I was visiting with our host couple and their 7-year-old granddaughter. Wanting to practice the Spanish that I have learned, I asked her, "How many children do you have?" She just looked at me with a puzzled expression. What I wanted to ask was "How many siblings do you have?" One blunder down. More to go!

—Jenna Currey, Paraguay



photo by Ken Johnston

Paul Burkhardt, New Tribes Bible Institute teacher, 1962

## Bart and Emily Allen



Papua New Guinea

**Children:** Luke and Titus  
**Ministry:** Church planting  
**Sending church:** Calvary Baptist Church, Meadville, Pennsylvania

Bart grew up as a missionary kid in Bangladesh and Emily grew up on a farm in Pennsylvania. They met at Cedarville University in Ohio. "Both of us had been planning on being involved in missions, but after we got married, we weren't quite sure where to go. Then we met a New Tribes missionary who told us about New Tribes Bible Institute. We were excited about getting great Bible training with an emphasis on missions. As the semesters of Bible school went by, we became convinced that the Lord was leading us to be involved in tribal missions. Even though we both grew up in Christian homes and were closely connected with missions, we had no idea that there were still so many people groups in the world that had no access to the Gospel in their heart language! After completing Bible school, the rest of the NTM training and then raising support, we arrived in Papua New Guinea in December 2009."

[ntm.org/bart\\_allen](http://ntm.org/bart_allen)

## Learning to be “intentionally relational”

**Relationship-building is emphasized during the NTM missionary training.** From the moment you step out of the canoe or plane or helicopter, you are meeting potential believers. You may be meeting the very first tribal believer or future elder of the church you’ve come there to plant. And your kind, selfless attention and friendship can often mean the difference between someone opening their heart to the Gospel or rejecting it.

Now we’re putting that knowledge to use here in Papua New Guinea. Often that means stopping what we’re doing and standing for 10 to 15 minutes, sometimes with the tribal person holding our hand, and just talking. And someday, their changed lives and destinies will make it worth all the “inconvenience.”

—Matt and Christine Hamb, Papua New Guinea

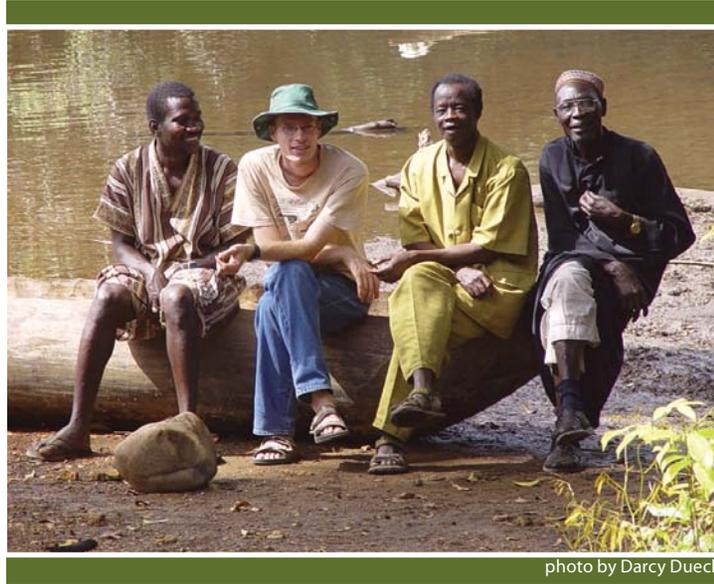


photo by Darcy Dueck

### \*praise

Simbari Bible teachers in Papua New Guinea are asking prayer for their efforts in a neighboring village. “Do not think that God is not working in this village. God is working in the hearts of the people so please be praying for them,” said one of the Bible teachers.

More opportunities to pray:  
[ntm.org/magazine](http://ntm.org/magazine)



“The short years we have to live are far too short to waste on something that is not of God.”  
—Paul Fleming, NTM Founder, 1944

## How did you cut it?

How would you like to learn a language that has at least 15 different words for cutting? For a while I despaired of ever learning to say something even as simple as “I cut it,” because I needed to know the shape and size of the object being cut, the kind of motions or stroke used to cut it, and sometimes several other details before I could choose the right word.

—D.J. Searcy  
Punan tribe, Indonesia

## Are you OK?

One Sunday morning we were going to try to sleep in a little to recover from a long week and a late night. What were we thinking trying to sleep in like that?

In the tribe there is no such thing as sleeping in. About 6:30 a man was on our porch wanting something. Knowing by the sounds of his coughing (the way the people knock) that he probably just wanted to borrow a saw, hammer or something of that nature we just ignored it and tried to rest some more.

After about 15 minutes of clearing his throat and coughing at us, the man decided that it was way too late for us to have our windows closed and no sound coming from the house. He came to our bedroom window and started yelling, “Are you sick today? Are you OK? My friend, are you well?”

Realizing we had better forget the whole sleeping in late thing, we got up and yelled to him, “Yes, we are well, we were just trying to sleep longer today.”

His response made me laugh, “Well it’s already the middle of the day, so you should be up.” It was a good reminder to us that our lives are so different here, and also good to know that people are watching out for us.

—Joy Elliott, Morop tribe, Indonesia

**Tinotuan (Indonesian Soup) Recipe**

from the kitchen of Melissa Abbott

**Ingredients:**

- 1 1/2 cups white rice
- 6 cups water
- 1 tsp. ginger
- 2 stalks of lemon grass (found at any Asian market)
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 bag frozen corn (or 4 ears of fresh corn, cut off the cob)
- 1 bunch of spinach
- 1 bunch kangkung (a green vegetable found at your local Asian market, optional, but I love it!)
- 1-2 cans green beans (or 1/2 pound fresh green beans, cut into bite-sized pieces)
- 1-2 pumpkins cut into small pieces
- 1-2 sweet potatoes cut into small pieces
- 2-3 tsp. basil
- Egg noodles or Ramen noodles (1 large package)

**Method:**

1. Bring water to boil. Cook noodles and then set aside, saving the water. Add rice, lemon grass, ginger, salt, corn, sweet potato, pumpkin and green beans. Boil until soft, usually 30-40 minutes.
2. Reduce heat, then add spinach, kankung and basil. Cook until smells yummy and all vegetables are soft but not falling apart.
3. Stir occasionally to mix all the vegetables. Lastly, add the noodles.
4. Can serve with fish for a complete and delicious meal.

*Serves 6*

**\*praise**

Missionary Naomi Christenson prayed that the **Sekadau** men and women in **Indonesia** would put the Lord first in their lives and that the men would want to be a part of teaching God's Word in surrounding villages. Ke' Dian, a believer from Naomi's village, became an answer to prayer as he taught the Bible to a small group of 11 in a nearby village. Please pray that the Sekadau people will continue to grow spiritually and share their beliefs with others.

A Manobo couple in the Philippines left on a motorcycle with their two children and pig in tow to start their new ministry in a neighboring village. Mahan will be training three teachers who have already started the evangelistic phase of teaching. He will also teach God's Word at another village and will take the trainees with him for further training. Please pray for Mahan and Arsis and all the outreaches and training of teachers that Mahan will be involved in.

More opportunities to pray:  
[ntm.org/magazine](http://ntm.org/magazine)



“I believe!

Why wouldn't I believe this good talk?  
Jesus taking all my bad away  
when He stood in my place is good.”

—Manifoli  
Abau tribe, Papua New Guinea

**Transformation 101**

One of our New Tribes Bible Institute instructors, Mike Sullivan, would always tell us, “The Bible was not written for our information, but rather for our transformation.” My life was transformed through my time in Bible school.

—Tom Carlton,  
Papua New Guinea



It's the start  
that stops  
most people.

**A gift annuity  
is like a smile ...**

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A charitable gift annuity starts out like any other gift. You give to New Tribes Mission and receive a charitable tax deduction.

But you also get a fixed payment to one or two people for life. The remaining funds are used to support church planting efforts among the world's unreached tribal people.

Find out more about charitable gift annuities, or inquire about other ways you can invest in the work God is doing among tribal people. Please contact:

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# That's how long it takes.

by Debbie Burgett; contributing editor



photo by Dale Stroud

## NTM missionaries are often asked, “Why does the NTM missionary training program take so long?”

That’s a valid question. Two years of Bible school and then an additional year to a year and a half of missionary training may seem a little astronomical when compared to other programs.

But the answer is just as valid.

*That’s how long it takes to adequately prepare—both practically and spiritually—for the unique and specialized ministry of tribal church planting.*

That’s *how long it takes* to build a strong, spiritual foundation in your own life, before you can build a spiritual foundation in the lives of tribal people held captive by animistic beliefs and demonic activity.

That’s *how long it takes* to learn how to live, work and survive in un-

developed and isolated conditions for long periods of time.

That’s *how long it takes* to acquire the skills necessary to learn an unknown tribal culture and language without angering, offending or frightening people away before you can understand each other.

That’s *how long it takes* to develop and hone the techniques needed to accurately and clearly translate God’s Word into the heart language of the people.

That’s *how long it takes* to learn how to prepare and teach Bible lessons from Creation to Christ so that tribal people recognize the truth of the Gospel and believe it with all their hearts.

Some have said a more appropriate question would be, “Is the NTM missionary training *long enough* to prepare tribal church planters for the complexities of what they need to do?”

Based on the years of experience of successful tribal church planters who have helped develop and fine-tune the NTM training program and are now teaching it to the next generation of missionaries, the answer may be surprising.

“It’s only as long as it needs to be on this side of the ocean.”

NTM then provides ongoing training, seminars and workshops on the field, to help support missionaries through the whole process of tribal church planting—from learning the language

## NTM Training in a Nutshell

\* New Tribes Bible Institute offers you an affordable Bible education that teaches every book of the Bible with a focus on missions. **Find out more about the two-year program: [ntbi.org](http://ntbi.org)**

\* The Missionary Training Center course equips you to serve as a cross-cultural church planter or in a role to support church planting. We’re also vitally concerned about your walk with God because we know how important it is to hold fast to Him in an isolated, high-pressure environment. The course runs from one to two years, but most students attend for a year and a half. **Learn more: [ntm.org/mtc](http://ntm.org/mtc)**

\* On-field training helps new missionaries learn the language of the country where they will serve and understand the worldview, practices and laws of the country. The length varies by country, mostly dependent on how difficult it is for people who speak Western languages to learn the country’s language.

\* Continuing education takes place in two distinct ways. Missionaries travel from remote locations to attend seminars and workshops, often accompanied by the tribal people who are assisting them in learning the language and culture or in translating the Bible or lessons. Also, NTM consultants travel into remote locations to evaluate the progress of missionary teams, to help them overcome hurdles and to assist in charting a sound path for church planting.

to ordaining the first church elders.

NTM missionaries are reaping the benefits of that training and are so thankful they didn’t leave home without it, nor were left to fend for themselves after arriving in a tribal village on the edge of the world.

Here are some of their stories...

# What? More schooling?

by Kevin Kellenberger; Papua New Guinea

As a freshman in college I asked God to use my life—with a notable exception. I had no interest in becoming a missionary. But God had different plans. Two and a half years later I had an insatiable desire for missions and began searching for information.

I found Interface on the Internet and called the number. A kind voice on the phone answered all my questions. He asked me if I was really serious about a trip like this, since it wasn't your typical short-term trip. You spend five weeks learning about what it takes to be a tribal missionary—by actually doing the hard work yourself. I assured him I was serious. He called me

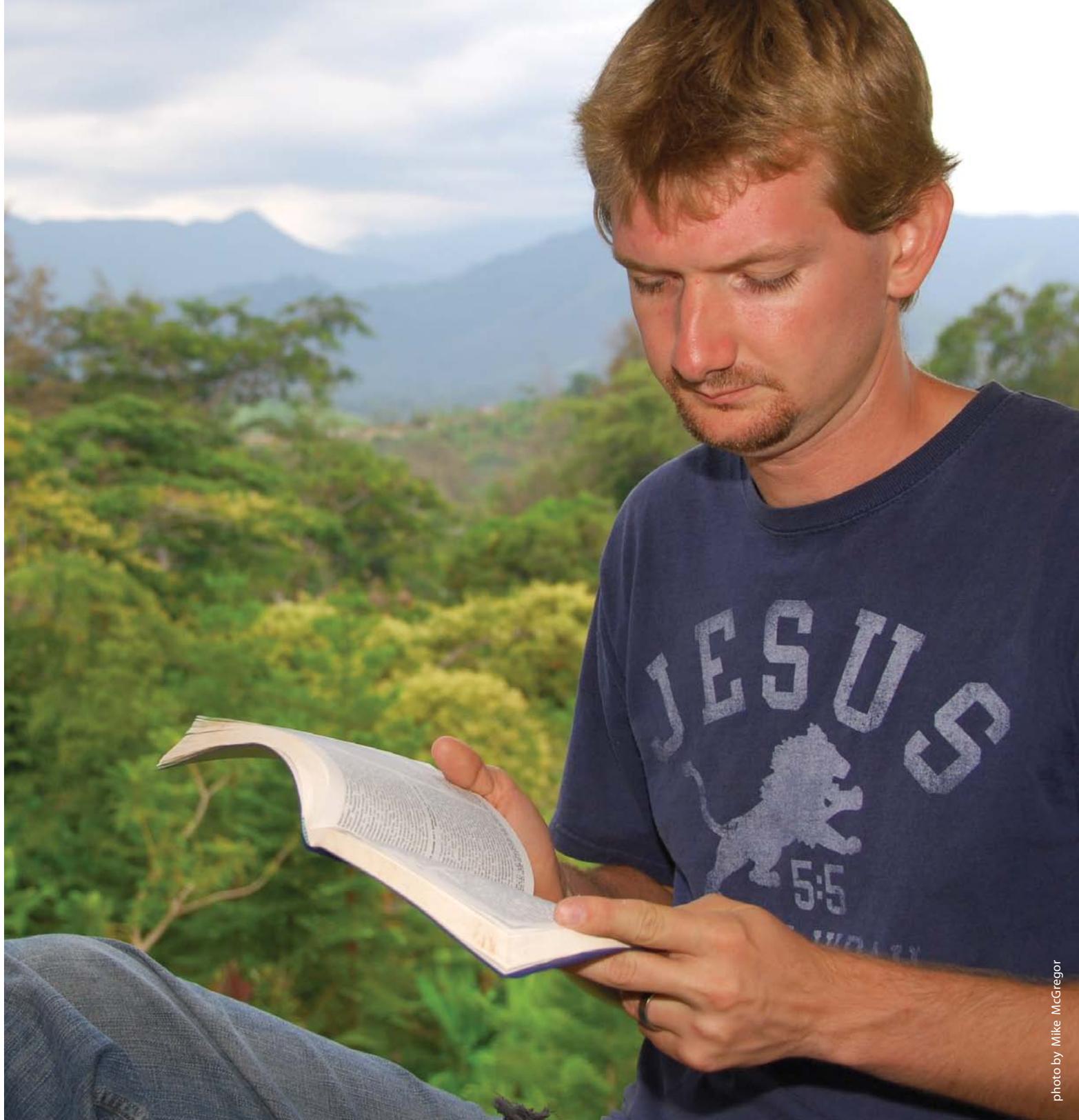




photo by David Watters

back in a couple of days and said my tickets were purchased and the plane left in one month. I didn't recall committing that seriously! But the Lord must have known what it would take to get me out the door.

I arrived in Papua New Guinea and soon learned about the organization called New Tribes Mission. I was impressed with their focus. It wasn't on numbers of baptisms and conversions, but rather on getting to know the people and how they were receiving the Word of God. Were they understanding the Gospel message? Were new believers equipped to grow and study the Word of God on their own? Was the Word of God available to them in a language they could understand?

I was sold. Back home, I finished my last six months of college, walked

across the stage, received my diploma, shook hands with the Dean and went home to pack my stuff for the NTM Bible Institute.

I was not at all thrilled about having to do more years of schooling. The last 16 didn't seem all that beneficial and were almost inefficient in my opinion. So during the first week at Bible school, I asked if there was any way to fast track through the classes—finish in a few months rather than a couple years. Nope, that was not an option. Now, I thank God it wasn't.

The first six months at Bible school were a bit—well, everything. Scary, disappointing, encouraging and joyful. At times, I felt I was surrounded by stoics. Where were the jubilant worship sessions? Where were the all-night prayer vigils? The focus was just on



photo by Renae Kellenberger



photo by Kevin Kellenberger

**Left:** A language check with Tufa, Kevin's main helper.

**Top:** Little Kai Kellenberger meeting Elsa, when visiting a Gende village.

**Bottom:** Renae planting bananas with Soheku. She and her five children enjoy playing with Kai and helping the Kellenbergers learn culture and language.

studying the Bible. I guess I thought the focus was supposed to be on feeling God move and work, almost expecting something mystic to happen.

Something else happened instead. For the first time in my life, God's Word began to come alive for me. It

demystified and became something concrete that I could understand. I found the answers to my questions. God's will for my life was clearly laid out in the pages. His work and His leading had been there the whole time. When I moved on to missionary training, I wished I could go back and do the whole two years of Bible school again (I still do).

The missionary training was great, but I didn't realize **how** great until we got to Papua New Guinea. Now I see the reason for the interpersonal relationship classes. There are lots of them here to deal with! The worldview class was incredible and also taught for a reason. I'm actually listening to the recorded worldview sessions over again right now. It helps snap things into focus—why the people do what they do, why so many seem to readily accept the Gospel message but never bear much fruit, why they want me to tell them stories all the time, and how these informal stories play a role in their understanding Truth in the formal Bible teaching. All of this information has been incredibly helpful.

So, here we are—using the valuable skills we learned. My wife, Renae, and I are learning the national language as we stay at the missionary center. We are picking up the culture as we venture out and spend time with the people. We have some very close friends from the village nearby. It's hard to imagine ever getting fully integrated into the culture here. Our backgrounds are different, our skin is different, and our circumstances are different. Nevertheless, we are sharing life with those around us listening to their stories, sharing our own while discovering how God is leading and guiding and moving His church here in Papua New Guinea.

# My teachers were so right.

by Cori Gervasi;  
missionary to the Sekadau tribe, Indonesia

I grew up on the mission field and knew all about the NTM missionary training program. So I was prepared for quite a stretching and challenging experience. I just didn't realize how fast that would begin.

In one of the very first classes, as we were having fun learning how to make all the new and exotic sounds we might run into, I couldn't get the uvular "r" no matter what I tried. That's the "r" sound you make when the dangly-thing (uvula) in the back of your throat vibrates. I only managed to sound like a cat trying to hock up a fur ball. But I wasn't worried. I knew I was heading to Indonesia and I'd never heard of any Indonesian tribes with that sound in their language.

No sooner had I moved into the village than I found out the dialect only half an hour away uses uvular "r's" instead of rolled "r's"! I still sound more like a cat than anything else, but practice really does help. I even spent some time with my head hanging off the bed like my teacher suggested, trying to isolate what worked.

The practical skills we learned also came into play right away. The first thing my co-worker, Naomi Christenson, and I did when we got to the vil-

lage was help install the solar system and wiring in our house. Our teacher always said that even his grandmother could install a solar system. He must have had a remarkable granny! We were so grateful to our co-workers who did the bulk of the work and figured out where to put everything and how to hook it all up. We were at least able to help install switches for the lights and operated the power tools.

But when we started having problems with the system, our co-workers were long gone. I'm sure it's a combination of all the "TechTips" classes during the training, the many, many helpful e-mails from the Tech Center, as well as some divine insight, that has allowed me to keep it running smoothly. I still keep waiting to do something wrong and blow up the village. My teacher graciously planted that fear firmly in my head!

I've also had to use what I learned about plumbing. One day the water pump to our house died, and we had to replace it. Of course, the guy who built the house and understood the plumbing wasn't there anymore and I had no idea what he had done. So I unscrewed the pipe from the pump down at the bottom of the hill. Instantly, I was drenched with all the water from our barrels, with the pressure of a 20-foot drop to really give it "oomph." That's when I found out the shut-off valve was in the bathroom. We eventually got the new pump installed and acquired a working knowledge of the water system in our house.



photo by Naomi Christenson

Preparing round eggplant for a wedding.

One misconception I had about the missionary training was that once I was finished in the USA, I was all trained and ready to go. It was a surprise to learn how much more training I still needed, even after coming to the field. Now I am grateful that the NTM training program doesn't stop once a missionary gets overseas. Ongoing help, workshops, conferences and consultation are provided along the way.

I'm currently finishing the phonetic and grammar write-up for the Sekadau language. I keep hearing my linguistics teacher's voice in my head, "Don't stress about it. Languages can do whatever they want." I can't imagine making heads or tails out of it without all the courses in grammar and discourse analysis. But I also benefitted greatly from an additional workshop that one of our consultants

came to Indonesia to teach. Now that I'm using the tools and charts she gave me, I'm finding that the right process plus the right tools can really unpack how a foreign language text is organized. It actually makes sense!

Another time, a group of expert literacy consultants came here to the village to help us improve our program. I needed all the help I could get. I never even thought I'd be teaching literacy. But when you're part of a team, you pitch in where you're needed. So for the past few months, I've been teaching the remedial class. I still don't know what to say when the people try to read the syllable "ma" three different ways. I've learned to keep tight control over my naturally expressive face lest they be embarrassed (a fate worse than death here).

One thing that was stressed during the training both by our teachers and visiting missionary speakers was that the ultimate goal of relationship building and culture learning was to finally feel at home in our host culture. They assured me that no matter how strange it seemed at first, I would eventually feel at home. But when I arrived in the Sekadau village, I truly despaired of that ever happening.

Everything was so different, from

the things they find funny to the subsistence-farming lifestyle. But I dutifully did what I had been taught and spent time with the people, doing what they were doing.

I went along to help in the rice fields and botched the planting process by either missing the holes completely or throwing rice in holes that were already planted. I went along to help gather vegetables and picked leaves so tough that the people wouldn't even feed them to their pigs. I went along to help clear a rice garden on the steep side of a mountain and spent the whole day clinging from one tree stump to the next for dear life. Every once in a while I would whack some hapless shrub to death just to keep up the pretense of usefulness. And I helpfully laughed when they laughed only to have them turn to me every time I was faking it and say, "You didn't understand that, did you?" Busted.

Recently I went to an engagement party at my neighbor's house. It is customary here for the bridegroom to pay a bride-price. Usually it is some clothes for the bride, a sarong or two, maybe some household goods and, of course, a ring. As I watched from the kitchen where we women can still see the action without having to stop

talking, I saw the mediator unpack the clothing to the "oohs" and "aaahs" of the gathered crowd. When he got to the women's underthings, he really hammed it up, holding them up to himself and modeling them for the appreciative group.

And I realized then how right my teachers had been.

Even though we have a lot of differences, people still have a lot in common the world over. Display a girl's underclothes in public and she'll blush. Give a guy a chance to make everyone laugh and he turns into a clown. Watch two young people shyly pledge themselves to each other for the rest of their lives and you'll get a little choked up. Invite a hopeless romantic to an engagement party, and she'll feel at home on the other side of the world.

I wouldn't trade a thing I learned during the missionary training. It has prepared me to handle living and working in a tribal setting for many long, satisfying years to come. And while I'm still not any good at planting literal seeds, I am hopeful that the spiritual seeds I'm planting among the Sekadau people will find fertile soil and grow to the honor and glory of the Father.



### Having a "Learner's Heart"

One principle stressed during the NTM missionary training is the importance of having a "learner's heart" toward the tribal people and their culture. That can be both hard and humbling when you've grown up thinking there is a right way to do things — your way! But when missionaries seek to fit into their host culture and learn all they can, showing respect and appreciation for the tribal ways instead of trying to change them, it opens the people to the real reason you came — to teach God's Word.

— Jen Rabe, Senegal



photos by Naomi Christianson

Left: Helping plant rice padi sprouts.

Above: If my Tech teacher could see me now!

Far right: Me with friend and believer, Iné Dian.

### We weren't prepared for this!

My husband and I spent a year in East Asia with another organization. A friend of ours had started a ministry and we were the first people they sent as overseas missionaries. We had no training other than talking to some other people who had spent time in the country.

When we got there, we had no idea what we were doing. We struggled with a lot of things. We knew the Lord had us there for a reason, but it was very difficult.

We came home and decided to join New Tribes Mission. One of the reasons was the training. We realized that any organization that takes the time to thoroughly train its missionaries is one that truly cares not only about the work they are doing, but also about them personally and as a family. We kept saying, "Wow! This would have been great to know before!"

— Jessica George, Papua New Guinea

# Help!

## This tribe has no numbers!

by Marg Jank; missionary in Latin America

Thank God for consultants! As well as providing the necessary training ahead of time, NTM also provides its tribal missionaries with a team of consultants who are trained in providing additional help, guidance and ongoing support after they get to the field. And nowhere was that more of a lifesaver to me than in the daunting task of Bible translation.

Nothing reduced me to tears more often than struggling to do justice to the Word of God for a people who have no concept of legal systems, agriculture, geography, other cultures

or even numbers. So when the Bible speaks of laws, cattle, oceans or nations, for example, I had to choose between borrowing a word from Spanish and hoping they would eventually understand it, or amplifying the text to explain what was meant.

But when it came to numbers, Spanish was the only option.

Since the Yanomami numbering system consisted of only one, two and many, we were already teaching Spanish numbers to anyone willing to learn them. As the people began to deal with a world beyond their horizons,

we knew they would need to understand a complete numbering system in order to use watches, calendars, medicines, weights, money or even to find a page in a book or a chapter in the Bible.

So I started right off using Spanish numbers in the translation as well. But to make sure it would be understood correctly, I would try it out on some of the local people. Those comprehension checks were full of surprises.

“Listen to this!” I said to Samuelito one morning, full of confidence. “You’re going to like this story!” I began to read him a rough draft translation of the parable about the shepherd who had 100 sheep and how one of them had wandered away.

In retrospect, I don’t know why I thought it would be easy. Sheep and shepherds had never been a part of Samuelito’s world. And neither had

numbers, although by now he could count to a hundred in Spanish. And even when it came to things he was familiar with, like mountains, he usually wanted more specific detail than the Bible offered.

Samuelito bowed his head for a moment and tried to visualize what I had just read to him.

“OK,” he said. “Let me tell the story back to you and we’ll see if I understand it right. The sheeps’ uncle apparently left one of them behind somewhere, and then he couldn’t find it. . . .”

(That’s right. He said the sheeps’ uncle. I had referred to the shepherd as “the one who cares for the sheep” and Samuelito understood that to mean the animals’ “uncle” which is a term they use for the owner of a family pet.)

“Well, no,” I said. “The sheep wasn’t left behind by its uncle. It wandered off on its own.”

“All right,” he nodded, thinking he now understood, “Ninety-nine sheep wandered off somewhere, and their uncle left the other ones on the mountain. . . . Where, exactly, on the mountain?”

Since the mountain was the only concept he really understood, he thought he should know exactly where the sheep were—near the top, near the bottom, or near the sides—so he could really see it in his mind and give it back to me accurately.

I decided on the spur of the moment that the sheeps’ uncle had left them part way up the mountain, since nothing more specific is recorded in Matthew 18:12 anyway. Then I gave him a quick review before he made a new attempt.

“OK,” I said hopefully, “So 99 sheep were left on the mountain. Part way



photo by Bobby Jank

up. And there was just one of them that was lost somewhere.”

“Then where were the hundred? Didn’t you say there were 100 somewhere?” Samuelito was now hopelessly confused and increasingly frustrated. Sheep were coming and going and he couldn’t keep track of them anymore!

“Well, yes, there were a hundred altogether . . . .” My voice suddenly trailed off as I realized that being able to count to 100 was not going to solve this riddle for Samuelito. He also needed to be able to subtract!

That’s when the consultant’s words began ringing afresh in my ears: “You’ll

### Don’t leave home without it!

There is no way I would want to leave my family, my church, my home country and all that is familiar and wonderful to me to go to a foreign country and — because of lack of preparation — risk that the people will not understand the message I bring. The stakes are too high and I have no interest in wasting my life to only spread confusion. That is why the training we received through NTM is priceless. We learned how to make the message clear — and it’s changing lives.

—Beth Carlton, Papua New Guinea



Samuelito helping with a language check.

photo by Daniel Matheus

have to expand the text, to make the message clear. Amplification is not just OK, it’s absolutely necessary.”

So I decided to leave the offending passage to one side for a few moments, and just relax with a cup of coffee and talk about the application. All the furrows in his brow disappeared when I quit torturing him with numbers and began to talk about Jesus as our Shepherd. Now he was on familiar territory.

“Ah! That’s so true!” Samuelito said, his face glowing with happiness. “There are believers that nobody takes into account at all, but God does. He keeps track of each one, and loves all the ones that nobody else thinks are important — all of His little ones! He’ll never let us go astray.”

The final draft that went to the printshop said: “Leaving the 99 that were left on the mountain, he went searching for the one that was lost.”

The addition of the phrase “that were left” solved the problem.

And I’m glad I wasn’t one of the ones “that were left” out there all alone to do Bible translation, without help, advice, second opinions, fresh insights and ongoing training, from those who have far more knowledge than I do. So as I said, thank God for consultants!

## The Woman in the Corner

by Debbie Burgett; contributing editor

I’ll never forget our visit to the village that day. It was our first meeting with a tribal man who wanted to help us learn his language. I was both excited and worried. What if we said something wrong? What if we offended someone?

With a strange mixture of eagerness and trepidation, we stepped into the smoke-filled hut — and almost gagged. How do they breathe in here? Or see?

When our eyes adjusted to the dim light, our helper sat by the fire and grunted something as he motioned us to sit down. A woman crouched in the shadows of a corner. She seemed agitated and kept pointing to us and saying something. What was she saying? Was she OK? Were we OK? I wished the spears leaning against the wall near her were someplace else.

We exchanged the greetings we had learned and now our helper offered us something — to eat? Some pasty black substance with a putrid smell. We nibbled at the nasty stuff and smiled like it was candy.

We had already learned a few simple phrases in the tribal language like, “How do you say . . . .” So now we began pointing to objects around the hut and asking our language helper how to say it. He obligingly answered. We tried to write the sounds as close as we could and then repeated it back to him to see if we wrote it right. Sometimes



photo by Dale Stroud

he would nod and grunt. Other times he would laugh, say something to the woman in the corner and correct us. She didn’t seem as amused as he was.

Finally, it was time to go. We used the phrase we had learned for “Thank you” and he nodded and grunted as we stood. We nodded to the woman in the corner and said “Thank you” to her as well. The tribal man leapt to his feet and made a shrill screeching sound and gestured emphatically that she was not to be spoken to or noticed.

*Oops! We’ll definitely remember to ignore her next time.*

We stepped out into the sunshine — and fresh air. It was over. We had survived our first language-learning session in the mock village set up at the NTM missionary training center to simulate tribal scenarios we would encounter overseas. Now our class had some new words to learn and culture to wonder about and record as we did our homework. But what we would wonder about most was the woman in the corner. Who was she? And why was she supposed to be ignored?

But first it was time for lunch!

# Beware of Shortcuts

by Greg Melendes; missionary to the Waxe tribe, Papua New Guinea

When it comes to rigors of missionary life, I'm glad that Laura and I didn't take any shortcuts.

During the course of the training, our friends would often ask us why we were spending years preparing to be missionaries, when we could earn a *real* college degree instead. Or, if taking the Gospel to unreached tribes was as urgent as we said it was, why not get out there as soon as possible?

Being young in the Lord — and just plain young — I'm sure we tried to say something that sounded far beyond our years. Yet we really had no idea how the training would affect our lives and the lives of others. Those years were anything but a waste of time. They were an investment that has borne eternal dividends.

NTM did what it could to prepare us for the expected. With decades of field experience behind them, our trainers provided hands-on, practical training. We learned how to perform emergency medical procedures. We produced mock primers that allowed us to understand principles of literacy. While they could not teach us the unknown languages of remote groups we might work among, they did teach us the full array of sounds we might encounter along the way. Then they taught us how to actually learn a language with the help of local speakers.

Since language and culture are inextricably bound together, we were also provided excellent training in cross-cultural living, communication and analysis. And we were given a taste of

Bible translation by seasoned translators — just the first in a series of steps to hone much-needed translation skills, but an impactful one.

NTM also did what they could to prepare us for the unexpected. That required a strong spiritual foundation. Our Bible Institute teachers and mis-

sion trainers were men and women who had walked with God in various mission contexts for many years. They didn't just *tell* us to walk with God, or tell us *how* to walk with God, they demonstrated it. They weren't perfect men and women, but they had witnessed God's protection and provision

in their own lives and His life-changing power in those they went to reach. These trainers lived among us, discipling us both formally and informally. And when they sent us off to our various countries of service, they left their marks on our lives. Far more important than the technical skills they taught us,



photo by Max Parada

we left knowing that God would do for us what He had done for them.

By God's grace, we utilized what we were taught and spent 18 years evangelizing and discipling the Waxe people of Papua New Guinea. Today two churches exist in this remote people group of 600, and soon they will have the New Testament in their own language.

After 21 years with NTM, I served six years as a missions pastor and became familiar with missionary training programs offered by other organizations. I can honestly say I found none that matched the comprehensive nature or quality of NTM.

We have since returned to NTM to complete the Waxe New Testament. As a translation consultant, I am

privileged to be a part of the mission's commitment to ongoing training. Translators are made, not born, so our worldwide network of field consultants continues to train, guide and quality check a translator's work until the project is complete. Similar consultant programs exist to assist missionaries with literacy and church planting projects. So even after the

initial investment of training, somebody is there to walk alongside the missionary as needed.

By His grace we avoided the shortcut in our training and took Robert Frost's road less travelled. And as with his traveler, that has made all the difference.



### Why is worldview so important?

NTM training stresses the importance of learning to look through the tribal peoples' worldview.

As we serve here, we see firsthand the devastation caused by missionaries who did not take the time to truly understand the people they were trying to reach.

If you came to visit us, you might think we're surrounded by believers. There are churches, people pray regularly and many of them try to live decent lives. But deep down, they have no idea about Christ and His sacrifice for their sins. The God of the Bible is just another spirit included in their list of spirits to appease through their traditional animistic rituals. This is called syncretism.

Thankfully, we came prepared for this. If we had not been taught to look and dig deeper into their underlying assumptions and beliefs, we would have run the risk of considering them already reached and left them in darkness with no real access to the Gospel.

— Tom Carlton, Papua New Guinea

Greg went back for a visit with Waxe believers.

### Now I see what he meant.

John Glass, a good friend and missionary to France, once told me, "If I had only five years to serve the Lord, I would train for four and go for one."

At the time, I didn't want to hear that. I wanted to get to the field ASAP. Now after two years overseas, I see what he meant.

— Bryan Abbott, pilot, Indonesia





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