

Ten Life-changing Weeks Summer 2007 Interns

Our summer was spent in three villages, each vastly different from the others. The Lord used our experiences in these places to teach us some valuable and personal lessons that will last us the rest of our lives.

Pasinkap was the first village we visited. It is remote and located in the lowlands of Papua New Guinea. Due to its location it is often much hotter than many other villages. While there, we did a lot of basic language and culture learning and made some of our first national friends.

Vicki is certain that the Lord is calling her to be a Bible translator, and she is excited to give her whole life to serving the Lord. However, she has a very petite build, and her first three-hour hike in Pasinkap was the first of many physical activities that required more strength from her than she thought she could give. After such a difficult day she wondered if she could hope to live a missionary life—one that may often demand hard work and much physical labor—if even a hike is difficult for her.

Josh is one who loves cold weather. He finds that heat saps his energy more than it does most people, causing him a lot of discomfort. How could he make it through the summer in PNG if heat is one of his greatest weaknesses?

Both Josh and Vicki pondered these things as the summer continued. However, by the end of the summer they both had experiences in which they were able to physically do far more than they had hoped or expected to do, because they had sought the Lord for strength. He was faithful to show them that by His grace they can do whatever He calls them to do.

After a long (yet also fast) eleven days in Pasinkap we again found ourselves flying in a small plane over the vast green tropical forest of PNG. The sky was filled with clouds and mist, but as Sarah stared out the window she was blessed to see that once in a while the clouds would part, revealing villages and homes dotting the mountain ridges that had once been hidden by the haze. She was reminded that nothing is hidden from the eyes of the Lord. He sees all people. They are all loved by Him and are created for His good and perfect purposes. This truth stuck with her throughout the rest of her summer as she continued to meet and get to know all different kinds of people.

After spending nine days in Madang we departed for Igoi, where the small village was in the midst of preparing for a great celebration. The first scripture book to be translated into the Sob language—the book of Jonah—had just been completed! Caleb was especially impacted by Igoi. He noted that villagers everywhere tend to do and talk about the things which are necessary for their survival. This occupies most of their time. In Igoi it seems as if growing in the knowledge of Scripture is becoming as important as all the other daily survival activities of life. There were many nights before the dedication ceremony when villagers would gather under the small thatched roof of a shelter and begin to sing praise-and-worship songs to God. Sometimes a man would read a passage of Scripture from the Tok Pisin (trade language) Bible and preach to the people. What a great example to us of how we should also hold the Word and the Truth in such high regard and incorporate it into every part of our lives!

Eliya was also impacted by her stay in Igoi. One night she sat with the villagers around the fire as they sang and preached late into the night. Glad to have the blessing of worshipping the Lord with her brothers and sisters in PNG, she looked above her into the sky. The infinite expanse of stars reminded her of how great and powerful God is. She was reminded of the fact that the Lord has said in His Word that one day people from every tribe, tongue, and nation will worship Him. Looking around again at the people surrounding her, she realized that God has already been—and is continuing to be—faithful to fulfill that promise. What a mighty God He is!

Our final destination was the village of Angguna. There we were given more specific tasks. Some of us worked on developing literacy material for the elementary schools, while others constructed bookshelves and taught villagers how to use power tools. This village stay was especially impactful for Lindy. She was often placed in situations where she realized that she was (or would be in the future) responsible for things that she did not want to be responsible for! For example, many languages do not allow for ambiguity in scripture text. Therefore, when an ambiguous statement must be translated, who decides how it will be clarified? The translator does. This is a very serious responsibility! Lindy left Angguna with a deeper sense of holy fear. She is certain that God is calling her to work as a Bible translator, but realizes more now that she must be totally dependent on the leading of the Lord in every way in order to accurately translate His Word.

Julie will long remember the time in Angguna when a group of village girls, some other intern girls, and she all went out to go fishing one day. They were gone all day long and headed back home just as the sun was setting. Once it was pitch black except for the light from their flashlights, the village girls asked one of the interns to pray for everyone's safety. Because Julie had recently studied the practices of animism she knew that such practices were prevalent in places such as Angguna. She was impressed that these children recognized the fact that God is powerful, strong, and able to protect them from any evil thing that they may fear.

It has been a great summer! Ten life-changing weeks have not only opened our eyes to the needs and realities of the mission field, but have also been used by our Sovereign God to teach us more about Himself. He is so faithful to us, and we are certain that He will continue to lead and shape us as we seek Him now and in the future.

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The Night that Changed Thousands of Lives

by Chris Urton

Twenty-some years ago, I wasn't a Christian. I worked for a vending company and would go out after work to have a few beers. One Friday night, I was supposed to pick up my daughter from the babysitter. My wife was at work. Around 5:00 p.m. she got a call from the babysitter, asking her to come get Stephanie, since I hadn't come. It was a busy Friday night at the bank, and there was no way Lori could leave work to go get Steph. She continued waiting on customers, trying to figure out whom she could call. A few minutes later, Lori got another call from the babysitter, saying that I had finally picked up Steph, but that I was drunk. Lori was livid, to say the least.

When Lori got home from work that night, she let me have it. She was sick of my drinking, but worse than that, I had driven home drunk with Steph in the car! I didn't yell back; I just left the room.

I lay on our bed and thought to myself that I wasn't on the right track. I didn't like my life anymore. Lori had a Living Bible lying on the nightstand. I picked it up and started reading in Revelation. It scared me. I knew I needed to change my life. I came out of the bedroom and told Lori that we were going to go to church on Sunday. Three weeks later, I accepted Christ as my Savior and was baptized.

Ryne was born a year later, and I really started getting involved in church. I didn't want to work anymore for the vending company. I wanted to work in the church.

Several years later, I enrolled in Lincoln Christian College, wanting to earn a degree in Christian Education. During my freshman year, I took Greek—because it was required for my degree. I found that I loved working with languages! Each day my professor had the name of an unreached people group written on the board, and we would pray for them. For my missions class—another required course for my degree—I wrote a paper on Papua New Guinea. As I wrote, I felt called to the people, the country, especially when I learned that there are over 800 languages in this tiny island nation, most of which don't have any vernacular

Scripture. I felt the Lord calling me to be a Bible translator in Papua New Guinea. After much prayer, Lori and I agreed that we would be missionaries in PNG and do translation work for an unreached people group.

Think of it: Because Lori had a Bible that was written so that I could understand it, my life was changed. I then felt compelled to change someone else's life by giving them Scripture in the language that they understand best.

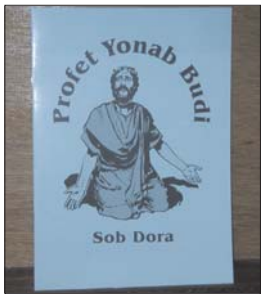
On July 21, 2007, the Sob language group of PNG received their first vernacular scripture portion. They can now read that God loves them and that He speaks their language.

Why *Jonah*? It doesn't seem to be a really important story in the Bible. Why not start with something more important?

For one thing, PBT had developed a new handbook on how to translate the book of *Jonah* in a workshop-type atmosphere. I thought it would be a good way to get the Sob people involved in the translation work: *Let them take ownership of the program from the beginning. Let everyone see how much work is involved.*

Jonah talks about loving your neighbors, even if they aren't loveable. In Papua New Guinea, fighting among people groups is a very real thing. *Jonah* also talks about doing whatever God asks of you, even if it's hard and you don't want to. We pray that, because of *Jonah*, the Sob people will not only learn to love their neighbors but also discover that following God isn't always an easy thing to do.

Best of all, *Jonah* is a redemption story. God rescued me from the belly of my whale and sent me to a people who needed to hear the message of love and restoration. Little did I know—that night over twenty years ago—that God's Word would not only change my life and my family's lives, but also the lives of a language group halfway around the world.





“But it’s just a little book . . . ”

by Lori Urton

In April, when we were in the village, I kept thinking to myself, *Why all the bother of a dedication for such a small book? These people don’t have much money; will they have sufficient food to provide for the dedication?* Some of the people didn’t seem excited about the dedication. Some complained it was too much work; they didn’t have enough garden food. Where would the pigs come from? You see, in this culture, if you host a party, you provide the food for everyone who comes.

I talked to Chris about things, and he said that whatever the people decided is what we were going to do. It’s *THEIR Jonah!* So, as we shopped, planned, and packed for the dedication, my excitement grew about this small book.

One day as they were preparing for the dedication in the village, they were practicing “walking” *Jonah* across the village. As I realized what they were doing, it hit me: *This is a **BIG** book! This is*

*the **FIRST** book of the Bible that is in the Sob language, the language that they understand the best.* I cried.

I cried because of my American thinking. I have the Bible in a version that I can understand. Someone took the time years ago to translate the Bible into English so that I can read and understand it. When we are home, I can go into any store and usually pick up a Bible. The Urton family alone probably has eight or nine different versions of the Bible—in English. How much do we take that for granted? Do we sing and dance when we purchase a new Bible?

The people in our village can’t go to a store and buy a Bible in Sob. It’s not finished yet! But we are working on it. There are four translation teams working in the village on rough-drafting *Matthew, Luke, John, and Acts*. Chris has the *Somau Garia Mark* on his computer, trying to convert it into Sob with the *Adapt-It* computer

