



IN OUR WORDS

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From the Director's Desk

It is a privilege and an honour to address and seek your prayer support in this issue of *In Our Words*. We've taken in a lot in the last eight months and this month we are celebrating the 40th Independence of Papua New Guinea.



The month of August has brought us heavy losses among our colleagues with four deaths: Steven and Elizabeth Thomas' daughter, late Karol Thomas; late Arua Tepi; Betty Ttopoqogo's cousin brother, late Ube Dzabiero; and Thomas Pohonum's uncle, late Elias Pohonum.

These people so dear to us and the ministry, when they suffer the whole body does. These challenges bring about a sense of loss, grief, pain and anxiety. We have so many questions to ask ourselves and the Lord Almighty.

After an exciting celebration of the past 35 years, BTA is hit heavily by the above losses. We have covered a lot of ground taking BTA forward and our enemy, Satan, is putting up a battle. However, I am confident that the Lord is on our side because BTA's mission is to deliver the word of God to the people of Papua New Guinea.

We have seen God demonstrate his glory exceedingly during the *haus kra* (wake) of Karol Tomas and Arua Tepi. This can remind us to reflect on God's faithfulness in the last 35 years, lest we forget and think that we have been successful thus far and going forward using our strength, skills and resources. I have taken comfort and assurance from Psalm 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain." Solomon in all his wisdom, knowledge, influence and wealth, writes this song of worship to acknowledge that without God his labour is in vain.

Thank you for standing with BTA in prayer these two months. I ask that you continue to stand with us in prayer and continue to encourage our bereaved families. ★

Tony Kotauga - Executive Director

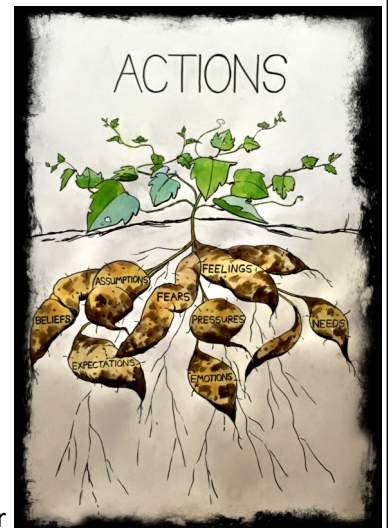
Culture Meets Scripture

By Ana Opungu

Culture Meets Scripture (CMS) is a workshop which introduces a process of taking one's cultural practice to the light of Scripture to help people make culturally meaningful choices that honour God. A CMS "Training of Trainers" was held at the Training Centre in Ukarumpa from 8-15 July 2015 attended by 77 participants from 21 Papua New Guinea languages along with expats from 7 different nations. This was organized by BTA Media and SIL Scripture Use office.

The participants were divided into table groups and three large "clusters" so each team could report their cultural findings to the rest of their cluster. Reporting to each other in the large group stimulated and encouraged each other's thinking and it developed a very powerful synergy.

Each group enthusiastically participated in their assignments "digging deep" into their cultures. Half way through the workshop they began to uncover hidden beliefs, motives, pressures and emotions that drive their ritual practices. A catalyst was one lady who told the whole group, "I'm a pastor, a teacher and a church leader. But I now realize I've been doing all the rituals in my place just because we've always done them. I didn't bring to the surface their purpose, I just did them because my mother did them, my parents were doing them—everyone was doing them. Now I realize there were things that violated all God said. Now my question is, Can I be forgiven?"



Underneath the actions are the beliefs and reasons which must be dug up in order to understand what drives people to do what they do. These are the things taken to Scripture.

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Staff Profile of the Month

A BETTER CHOICE FOR BARTON MAINO

My name is Barton Gabi Maino from Rigo from Central Province. I am 32 years old. On April 10th 2015, I graduated with a Masters Degree in Communication Studies from the Papua New Guinea University of Technology in Lae, Morobe Province.



My intention after graduating with my Masters was to go out into the working world and make it big. Dreams of a thick wallet, nice house, car and all the earthly possessions humans crave after. That was my dream BUT God had something else in mind for me.

Since joining BTA in April this year it has been a spiritually rewarding experience for me. I may not have all the things my flesh wants but I am engaged in supporting the work of Bible translation in my country so that the translated word can transform lives.

Being selfless in giving myself to God means He now is totally responsible for my daily needs as affirmed in Matthew 6:33 by Jesus who said, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you".

I am blessed to be serving this great King at BTA. ★

(Culture Meets Scripture... continued from front page)

Language groups discussed ways to align their ritual practices with God's Word in culturally meaningful ways.

On the last day there were 31 language groups and individuals who shared their plan to the whole group of how they want to apply what they learned in the workshop. We prayed for each "action plan" and at the very end Miss Jo Shetler commissioned the participants with the words of Moses when he commissioned Joshua.

Elizabeth Thomas who recently lost her 25-year old daughter said, "The CMS workshop prepared me for this. When I attended the workshop I did not know I was going to be in this situation. What I learned made me strong. It helped me to say 'no' to the pressures of my family." Part of her report after the course was, "Pray and share with my family and BTA families of what CMS is and its purpose and the need to know how to deal with those practices in each of our cultures." Little did she know she would need it for herself very soon after the workshop.

Five Baruga men who attended the workshop went home and organized a CMS workshop and invited a team to help them run the course. One participant who made a covenant with the spirits said, "A week from now I was

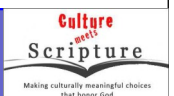


A group praying for Elizabeth Thomas (center) after sharing her "action plan" at the CMS workshop in July.

planning to kill the murderers of my only brother. Now, I can see, revenge is the Lord's, not mine. I have given my life to the Lord. I will not be following through with this covenant." Another man shared, "I, too, was about to poison the person who had poisoned my sister...Now I see that I should not do that. I want to give my life to the Lord."

Dr Amy West and Joanne Shetler from the USA developed this CMS process through their work and research among the Balangao people in Northern Philippines. In 2013 they were invited by SIL to facilitate workshops in Wewak and Buka and a third workshop was held in Port Moresby. However, when word spread about this workshop many became interested. Thus, this 'training of trainers' so that others can teach and train many more to do this workshop. ★

If you want to organise a CMS workshop for your church, group or village, you may request for help and resources (notes and DVDs) through BTA or the SIL Scripture Use Office or SALT coordinators. For further information email: media@pngbta.org or LR-SU@sil.org.pg or SALT-Pacific@sil.org.pg



Our Loss God's Gain

Arua Tepi— a member and faithful supporter of BTA, a long-time employee of SIL PNG for 36 years, and a deacon for the Tok Pisin Lotu in Ukarumpa, has passed on to glory on 22 August at the Goroka General Hospital after a recurrent illness. After his memorial service in Ukarumpa he was buried in his hometown in Pangia, Mendi, Southern Highlands. He was called a man of peace and prayer, respected and loved by all in the Aiyura valley. Pray for his wife Rose and children Christy, Moses, Joshua, and Jasmine.

Karol Tandani Thomas— second-born daughter of Steven and Elizabeth Thomas was taken suddenly ill and shortly afterward joined her Saviour on 23 August at the POM General Hospital. She celebrated her 25th birthday last May. She worked for the Kenmore Group of Companies in Port Moresby. She was buried in her father's village in Mulitak, Tumundan, Enga Province. Although she was not born there the family decided to bring her body home for burial. Steven prayed for an opportunity to share God's Word to his people and took this opportunity to share of Karol's hope in the God whom the family serve. To God be the glory! ★

"When Steven went to work with BTA I knew that he worked for God. I underestimated Steven's God. Through Karol's death ... I could not believe the support people from Papua New Guinea and around the world gave. If I did not know his God...now, I know." Steven's relative, Mr Pepeta.