

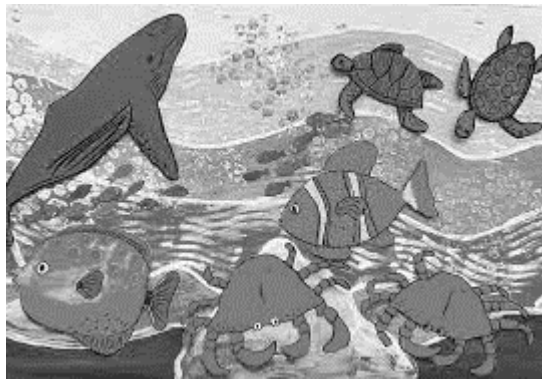
# **GOD IS LOVE**

## **Pacific Islands**

**Biographies**

**Year 6**

**Term 1**



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## Thinking Skills

Year 6 Love

<p><b>Missionaries 1</b></p> <p>A missionary in Ethiopia, a country severely affected by drought, wants to help provide clean water to the community. Give ideas on how to do this.</p>	<p><b>Missionaries 2</b></p> <p>A missionary in Communist China wants to support the underground church and provide Bibles. Give ideas on how to help, without being imprisoned.</p>
<p><b>Missionaries 3</b></p> <p>A medical missionary wants to educate a remote African community on good hygiene. Brainstorm ideas for what should be taught.</p>	<p><b>Missionaries 4</b></p> <p>A mobile maintenance mission team has arrived in a rural village in the Solomon Islands, to help build a kindergarten. They have tools, but all materials must be sourced from the environment. Make a list suitable materials to be sourced.</p>
<p><b>Missionaries 5</b></p> <p>A short-term mission team has travelled to Papua New Guinea. List 5 ways the team could share the Gospel.</p>	<p><b>Missionaries 6</b></p> <p>A missionary in Indonesia works with a local church to share the Gospel with people who are Muslim. What are the similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam?</p>

# Ratu Cakobau of Fiji

Biography



Ratu Cakobau was the great cannibal king of Bau, a small island off Viti Levu, the largest island in the Fiji group. He was a giant of a man, and terrifying. He had killed and eaten 1000 bodies before his conversion to Christ and at the time of his conversion he was at war with neighbouring communities on Viti Levu.

He heard the Christian message from both white missionaries and fellow Fijians and he thought, "Some day I'll become a Christian, but I still have a few wars to fight." He knew the Christian way was right and good for the people but he put off making a commitment to it himself. But as time went on, it became clearer that he would have to give himself to the Lord. The Lord wanted him and he could not go on saying "No".

Cakobau's wife had already become a believer and she spoke to him often of his need to become a Christian. One day Cakobau said to his wife, "Call the evangelist, I'm ready to become a Christian." And there in his house with his wife and the evangelist he "bowed his knee" to the Lord. He told the evangelist that at next Sunday's worship service he would make a public confession of his faith. But his culture did not allow him to simply make an individual decision. He sent out a message to the people of his extended family, which was quite large. They came together at the chiefly house, big enough for some hundreds of people to meet. Cakobau told all his family he wanted to become a Christian. He needed the approval of his family because without it they could just dispose of him and appoint another leader. So he said, "I want to become a Christian, and I want all of you to become Christians too."

One of the family members, an older man, stood up and said, "Well, Ratu, we approve of you becoming a Christian, but with the situation among the other tribes like it is we don't think you should do it yet." And for the best part of the day they talked it over. Many of them said, "Yes, we should all become Christians". Some said, "We don't want to stop it but we don't think the time is right."

They discussed the question all day, but at the end of the day they said, "Alright, we'll let Ratu Cakobau become Christian, and all those who want to follow him may become Christian too."

The next day he called together all the leaders of his kingdom and said to them, "I want to become a Christian." The same thing happened as had happened in the family; for another day they discussed whether or not it was safe for Ratu Cakobau to become a Christian. At the end of the day they reached the same decision.

This decision was important, because he was still at war, and he knew that if he said, "Well, the war is over, I'm not fighting any more, his enemy would still come down and want to fight. He had to be sure that all the groups of his kingdom would still be loyal. He was not free to make an individual decision without the support of members of his family and the leaders of the wider clan. Then, on the following Sunday, as good as his word, he came forward during the worship service and bowed the knee to the Lord in public, and about three or four hundred of his family joined him in a public commitment to the Lord.

They did not do it just because he did it; they did it because they, too, wanted to become Christians and also maintain the family and social cohesion. It took three or four years before these people were all fully involved in the church, but this event was the beginning of a people movement within the kingdom of Bau.

Cakobau had been a great leader of his people before his conversion. He remained a great leader as a Christian but his skills were used for the Kingdom of God. Not only was his personal life transformed, he also greatly helped in organizing the growing church.

On the island of Bau, where he lived, there used to be a cannibal killing stone. The captives in war, who were still alive when they were brought to the island, were killed on that stone in a savage manner. When Cakobau became a Christian, he told his people that the stone must never again be used for that purpose. He declared he would build a church house, and he pulled down all 17 of the heathen temples that were on Bau. From the foundation stones of these temples he built a church, the walls of which are three feet (1 metre) thick. Then he took the killing stone on which the war victims had been killed before being cooked in the cannibal ovens, and he said, "This stone will from now on be used for the glory of God."

The stone was brought to the church, and stone remains to this day as a reminder to the people of how God brought them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Adapted from: *Deep Sea Canoe*, Alan R Tippett, William Carey Library, Pasadena, California

# Taufa'ahau

## Biography



When Nathaniel Turner began his missionary work on the Tongan island of Ha'abai in 1830, he looked for a local man who could help him learn the Tongan language. He needed a good man who could help him translate the scriptures as well as speak the language. He chose Vi, a young man of chiefly rank.

Turner began work on translating the Gospel of Matthew. Vi listened enthusiastically to the stories about Jesus as they worked together on the translation, and heard the preaching in the worship service on Sundays.

"I want to turn from the old ways we have followed for so long," he thought, "we fight amongst ourselves, we are always unhappy because we are afraid of the gods we serve. People get drunk on the liquor the trading ships bring in, and that makes us fight all the more. This Christian way Mr. Turner talks about sounds much better for us. I must learn more about it."

Vi joined a Bible class run by Nathaniel, and soon he was baptised. Vi took the Christian name Peter and went on to become the first Tongan to become a church minister.

Peter found such peace and joy in following the Christian way. "I want all my friends and family to follow this way. We would all be so much happier," he declared.

Whenever he had an opportunity he talked with them about Jesus, and one by one they joined him in worship with the missionaries. It was around this time that Taufa'ahau, another man of high chiefly rank, and a relative of Peter Vi, began to show interest in learning about the Christian way.

"I want Christian missionaries on my island, Ha'abai, like they have on Ata," he declared. (Ata is an island in the south of the group.)

Taufa'ahau spoke to the missionary, Mr. Thomas, "Please won't you come to Ha'abai and teach the people of my island?" he pleaded.

“I’m sorry,” he replied, “I have been appointed to Ata by the mission board and must stay where they place me. I suggest you have Peter Vi stay with you and become your instructor.”

Peter agreed to this arrangement and began to teach Taufa’ahau first to read, then to learn about the Christian way. One day Taufa began to think about the old gods he used to serve, and the priestess on his island who served the gods. “I wonder who is greater, the priestess who serves the old gods, or the Creator God of the Christians? If God is the greatest, then He should be stronger than the priestess. I’m going to test her, to see how strong she really is.”

He went to his garden and cut a banana stalk, not a very big one, not too hard, but just right for what he wanted to do. He walked up to the priestess and hit her, not too hard, with his ‘club’ made from banana stalk. She fell to the ground, surprised at the sudden attack, but she did not fight back or react in any way. The onlookers were amazed. “Why doesn’t the priestess strike Taufa’ahau down?” they wondered. “Surely, if she has power over him she should show it by putting him in his place.” But she did nothing, and Taufa’ahau was encouraged.

“I’ll test the priestess in another way,” he thought. While he was sailing in his canoe with Peter Vi and a friend, he noticed a shark following them. Believing it to be the god he had offended when he hit the priestess, he tried to spear it, but the shark escaped. Peter and his friend were pushed overboard to retrieve the spear and bring it to shore. This they did without coming to any harm from the shark. Taufa’ahau was even more impressed and determined to become a believer.

“Yes!” he cried, “The Christian God is the greatest! I will follow Him!”

Some of the people still loyal to the heathen priestess were angry with Taufa’ahau, “You had no right to strike down our priestess. We’ll kill you for that,” they threatened.

They plotted to kill him, but someone discovered the plot, warned Taufa, and his life was spared. The young chief demonstrated an understanding of the Christian way of forgiveness by standing up in a public place to say, “You people who tried to kill me, I want you to know that I don’t feel angry with you, I forgive you. I won’t hold it against you.”

Some people were surprised at this change in Taufa’s character. “He doesn’t fight back any more,” they said amongst themselves. “The Christians’ God is changing him.”

Full of zeal, Taufa’ahau attacked the gods and burned their shrines around the island. This brought down the anger of the unbelievers on him once again. Finau, the chief of the nearby island of Vavau and a relative of Taufa’ahau, was visiting Ha’abai. Taufa celebrated his visit by preparing a great feast. During the feast a group of the heathen chiefs who were angry with Taufa’ahau for getting rid of their idols and burning their shrines, poisoned the food served specially to Taufa’ahau. He became desperately ill.

“Let’s call the missionaries,” said one of his friends, a Christian chief, “they will be able to help him.”

The missionaries came quickly to help. They treated Taufau to get rid of the poison from his body. While they treated him, a large group of Christian friends prayed for him throughout the night. By morning Taufau had recovered and Finau returned home to Vavau.

"I'm amazed that your God could heal you so quickly," he commented to Taufau. "I see also that the Christian way of life is changing you and all the Christian believers," he added thoughtfully.

Not long after this visit Taufau'ahau crossed the waters in his canoe to the island of Vavau to visit Finau. Taufau'ahau spoke to him about his faith in God.

"I know how being a Christian has changed my life. The Christian God is the greatest. My brother, you would have peace and joy in your heart all the time if you believed in Him. The old gods didn't make us happy, did they?"

Finau had to agree with Taufau, "No, they didn't," he said, "but how can I prove that the Christian God is the greatest?"

Finau thought for a minute, then he went off to the shrines where the sacred objects and idols were kept. Gathering them all together, he stood them up in front of him and spoke strongly to them, "I've brought you here to prove you," he said, "I'll tell you beforehand what I'm going to do, so you will have no excuse. I'm going to burn you. If you are true gods you will escape! If you don't escape, I'll know you aren't true."

None of the idols moved, so Finau ordered his men to burn the gods and the shrines where they had been housed. It was wet weather at the time, which dampened the wood so that it was four days before they were totally burned. During those four days the islanders sat around watching in fear and trembling, expecting that the gods would pay them back for the way they had been treated. But no act of revenge came, and at last the people knew that the gods had no power over them anymore.

"That is amazing," they all said, "those idols we worshipped are not powerful at all."

They talked about the event everywhere they went and right throughout the Tongan islands it became well known that Finau had defied the old gods and proved God the Creator to be the greatest.

"We want to know more about this God who is more powerful than our gods we've worshipped all our lives," they said. "We'll go to the missionaries and the Tongan teachers and ask them about this."

As a result, many people embraced Christianity as a group, but the real, personal, inner change that happens when someone knows he is a sinner and asks Jesus, Son of God, to rule his life, was not common. This was to change dramatically.

In 1834, on the island of Vavau, a local preacher named Isaiah Vovole was preaching to his village. Isaiah Vovole spoke to his people about God's love for them. "God loves us all, even when we do wrong things that hurt Him. He has loved us through all the years before the missionaries came to tell us about Him. His heart is longing for each

of us to come into His Kingdom and love and serve Him with our whole hearts. But you refuse to come to Him. Won't you turn and come to Him?"

There was the sound of sobbing amongst the people. They began to cry out to God for forgiveness. "Forgive me Lord Jesus, I'm sorry I have sinned against You."

"Lord God I want You to make me clean. Forgive my sins, please Lord."

"Thank You Lord Jesus that You have always loved me, even when I didn't know You."

The sound of crying and prayers of repentance soon drowned out the sound of the preacher's voice. But that was not important now, God was doing His work in the people's lives and there was no need of more preaching at that time.

When God had moved in their hearts and they had a sense that God had forgiven them, the people burst into joyful praise as they knew they had new life from God. Nightfall came and people were still praying and crying for forgiveness. The village people went home for the night, but there was little sleep; they were waiting for the morning when they would gather again to pray and praise their new-found God. From village to village the news spread as God worked in the lives of people all over the island of Vavau. Everyone was stirred, some villages holding as many as six prayer meetings a day, some in churches, some in homes. Schools were closed; priority was for everyone to attend the prayer meetings where God was sovereignly working.

Taufa'ahau in Ha'abai heard about the exciting events that were happening, but he hadn't been in church to witness them first hand. He had taken a second wife the previous year, which was not acceptable for a Christian. The missionaries had been praying constantly for him to return to his Christian faith, so Nathaniel Turner was pleased when Taufa'ahau came to see him. He asked Nathaniel, "I've heard people speak about amazing things happening to the people when they come together to worship God. What do these events mean? Are they evil or good? Why are the people crying and singing, and worshipping God all the time?"

"My friend," replied Nathaniel, "After Jesus rose from the dead, and went back to heaven, He sent His Holy Spirit to the disciples He had left on earth. When the Holy Spirit came people began to feel guilty and ashamed of their wrong-doing. They cried out for God to forgive them, and when they were forgiven they began to praise God. Thus is the same as what has been happening right here on Vavau, just like on the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts."

"It's amazing that God's Holy Spirit would visit us on this little island," said Taufa'ahau. "God has been visiting other places as well," Nathaniel went on, "In England in recent years there were great meetings where George Whitfield, John Wesley and Charles Wesley preached The Holy Spirit moved on the people there in the same way. There were wonderful revivals of Christian faith all over England and Wales."

"May I come and see these things for myself?" asked Taufa'ahau.

Nathaniel gladly went with him to a church at Feletoa. Taufa was surprised to see up to two hundred people lying on the floor, weeping before God.

The sound of weeping could be heard coming from other villages nearby, followed by the sounds of joy and praise to God that followed prayers of repentance. Taufa'ahau



was overcome by the Spirit of God; sometimes he knelt, sometimes he stood unsteadily. His wife also was challenged by Spirit of God. In the middle of the night Taufa sent a message to Nathaniel Turner, "Please will you come and help us. We feel so ashamed of ourselves for all the wrong things we have done. We are so unhappy. Please come."

The missionaries were overjoyed to receive the message. They had been praying for Taufa'ahau for some time, and now they could see the answer to their prayers. They prayed with Taufa'ahau, encouraging him to allow God to work in his life. At a prayer meeting shortly afterwards he fell on his knees, trembling and wailing, asking forgiveness of God. This was a truly life-changing experience. He received instruction from the missionaries and ten weeks later he became a local preacher.

The move of the Holy Spirit spread to Ha'abai, central Tonga, where there were two thousand conversions in a few days. Over all the islands people were deeply convicted of their sin, then followed repentance and joyous praise as they knew God had forgiven their sin. Over a period of six years, about 9,000 people became Christians in Tonga.

One significant result of this time was that people shared their experiences and began their own prayer meetings from house to house and from village to village. Visitors from other islands who saw the events in Tonga took the good news back to their home villages and islands.

It was this sharing, not only from house to house, but from island to island along the trade routes between Tonga, Fiji, Samoa and Tongatabu, that spread the Christian message throughout the South Pacific Islands, in many instances before any European missionary arrived. The stories of Wai on the island of Ono, and Joeli Bulu in Fiji are two such examples, but there were many other similar cases.

Taufa'ahau later became King George Tupou 1 of Tonga, using his Christian influence for good in his island nation. In the early 1850s he visited Cakobau, the Fijian warrior-ruler of Bau, Fiji who had resisted the Christian message for over twenty years. Taufa'ahau spoke to Cakobau about the Christian faith, "You really should become a Christian, my friend," urged Taufa'ahau. "Our people in Tonga are living happily together now that we are a Christian nation. We've stopped fighting and killing each other. The Tongan Islands are peaceful now." It was only a short time, a couple of years, after this that Cakobau became a Christian.

Taufa'ahau, now King George of Tonga, visited Christian churches in Australia as well as Fiji and was received with honour wherever he went. His descendants have continued the royal line as faithful Christians leading their nation with Christian values and Christian example.

The seven white missionaries who were in Tonga at the time of the spiritual awakening were from the Methodist Missionary Society. At their church conference in Tonga in 1835 the people expressed their desire to send missionaries to their neighbouring islands.

"Since we became Christians our people have all been at peace. We don't fight and kill each other anymore. We should go to our brothers and sisters in Fiji and Samoa. They would become peaceful places too if they would believe the Christian message."

Of the seven white missionaries at that conference, two were to lead a party of Tongans to Fiji and one would go with a group to Samoa. This generous missionary spirit has continued in the Tongan church and Tonga has always been well represented in church and missionary activity throughout the Pacific Islands to this day.

Adapted from:

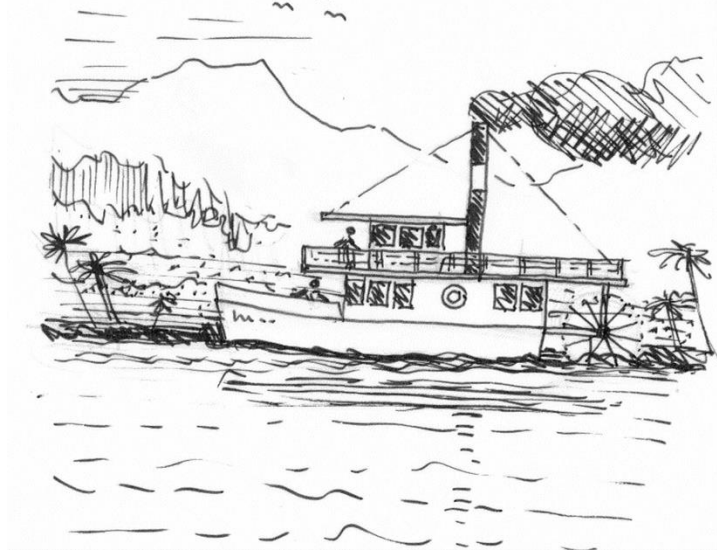
*Evangelical Awakenings in the South Seas*, J. Edwin Orr, Bethany Fellowship Inc. Minneapolis, Minnesota

*To Live Among the Stars*, John Garrett, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji

*The March of Methodism*, Cyril J. Davey, Epworth Press, London

# James Chalmers

Biography



In 1817, British missionary John Williams and his wife Mary set sail for the Pacific Islands. They were the first Christian missionaries to visit Samoa. They also visited Tahiti, Cook Islands, Rarotonga, and many people became Christians.

John William and Mary learned the local languages and worked on translating the Bible. In 1834 they decided to take a trip back to England to tell people about the work they had been doing. The Christians in England wanted to help John and Mary in their work, so they raised enough money to buy them a ship called *the Camden*. One day John and his friend were exploring the southern islands of the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), in *the Camden*, when they were killed by cannibals.

*The Camden* was taken back to England and sold. But the children in the Sunday schools in England wanted to raise money for a new missionary ship. This one was called *John Williams*, which sailed around the Pacific islands for 20 years, until one day it was wrecked on a reef.

So once again the children in the English Sunday schools raised money for a new missionary ship. This one was called *John Williams 2*. In 1866, missionary James Chalmers and his wife Jane, set sail on *John Williams 2*, with four other couples, bound for Rarotonga.

The ship stopped for a time in Australia before setting sail for the islands. They passed south of Fiji and sailed on to Niue. They unloaded some of the goods the ship carried for Niue, but the captain gave the order to leave the remainder of the unloading until the following day. However, during the night gale force winds blew the ship on to the reef causing the loss of both ship and all the cargo.

“How are we ever going to get to Rarotonga?” James Chalmers said to Jane. The missionaries now had to travel on whatever trade ships were available, going to whatever islands the ship was bound for.

On one leg of the journey the ship they were traveling on turned out to be a pirate ship, captained by a notorious man who went by the name of Bully Hayes. Yet, despite his name, Hayes turned out to be kindly towards the missionaries, treating them with the utmost respect. It was a great relief when they finally arrived at Rarotonga, fifteen months after they left England.

James and Jane settled in Rarotonga, and enjoyed their work there. But one day James said to Jane, "I like it here, but this place has been Christian for a whole generation now. There are other islands still not even touched by the Christian message. In my heart of hearts I really want to go to those islands to the west."

But it was not God's time for him to go just yet. The mission society asked him to stay on for another ten years, to train islanders to go and be missionaries in other islands to the west.

As well as training missionaries, James spent time learning the Rarotongan language, then translating and printing some books of the Bible. His work was so valued by the Christians of Rarotonga that nobody wanted him to leave, but in 1877 the time came when they were asked by the mission society to go to British New Guinea, now called Papua New Guinea

They sailed north along the east coast of Australia to the northern tip of Cape York. Then on to Port Moresby where they gladly stepped out on to solid ground again.

Mr. Lawes was the missionary in charge in Port Moresby. "Welcome to British New Guinea," he greeted the Chalmers and their team of teachers from Rarotonga, "We're very pleased to have more people to teach the islanders about God. There's such a lot to do."

"You should stay here with us for a few weeks, to learn something of the culture, then you can take your teachers and explore the coast-line for a suitable site," said Mr. Lawes

Finally the mission team set sail from Port Moresby. Sailing close to the coast they searched for a suitable site and eventually found it at Suau.

"This place has a good harbour for the coming and going of boats," said James. The Rarotongan teachers, who were experienced in matters of sailing, agreed.

Rowing ashore in the small boat, James took the Rarotongan men with him and went in search of the village chief. They managed to communicate to him about setting up a place to stay, and were given permission.

James called together the chief and some of the village men and showed them the knives and tomahawks he had brought as trade goods. "We want timber from the bush to build our house," he said. "I'll pay you with these goods if you will help cut it for me." The men were keen to have the tomahawks and knives, so they willingly agreed to work for the missionaries. James explained the type of timber he wanted and what length it needed to be and they set to work. In the meantime James and Jane lived in the chief's house until their home was built.

The Rarotongan team members were kept busy getting timber from the bush to build their own homes, helping each other in true Polynesian fashion. At last the houses were completed and the members of the missionary team were ready to begin teaching the village people.

The Rarotongan teachers were quick to learn from the villagers. James appreciated them for this, as they could pass on their knowledge of language and culture to him. This helped him with translating the scriptures and preparing other books of teaching materials that the teachers would use.

Occasionally the missionaries were threatened by some of the villagers. "We don't want you here," they would say, "One day our warriors will kill you all."

But the missionaries ignored the threats and faithfully continued with their work. Many years later, when the Christian message had taken root in the lives of many of them, a village chief told Chalmers this story:

"One time the men in the village chose a group of warriors to kill the whole lot of you missionaries. I was in that group. One dark night we took our spears and clubs and crept up to the fence surrounding your house. It was a low fence, as you know, and we could easily have jumped over it. We had our weapons ready and were all set to attack you. Our warrior chief gave the word to go forward, but we couldn't move. Something stopped us from coming any nearer. It was a force we couldn't see, but it was very powerful. We tried again several more times in the following weeks, but that unseen power prevented us ever getting past that low fence. It must have been your God protecting you, because we knew you had no weapons to protect yourselves."

James and Jane were ever grateful for God's care and protection. James was always looking for new places for taking the Gospel.

"I'm afraid I'll have to leave you, my dear," he told Jane one day. "I must search along the rest of the coast for places where we can set up other mission stations. But the Rarotongan wives will be here to keep you company."

"I'll miss you, James," she replied, "but I know that you must go."

But while James was away, Jane suffered poor health. She came down with a fever and became very weak. The Rarotongan teachers' wives did all they could to relieve her fever, but her health continued to fail.

When James returned he decided that he would take Jane with him on his next trip, but she only became weaker. Finally they decided that Jane must go by ship to Sydney, Australia, to stay with friends. But she failed to recover and four months later she died. When James heard of Jane's death he was grief stricken. Although lonely, he continued his work in New Guinea.

Besides introducing Papua to the gospel, James Chalmers accomplished the seemingly impossible goal of promoting peace among the tribes all along the coast.

According to those who accompanied him on his visits to native villages, James had a remarkable influence over people. A fellow missionary wrote:

The local people called James 'Tamate'. One of the local people said of James: "Tamate said, 'You must give up man-eating': and we did."

During a typical first-time encounter with a savage tribe, James and a helper missionary would wait on board their boat until the local people on the shore had had a chance to notice the strange vessel and absorb the shock of seeing a white man for the first time.

Usually, an armed party of men would climb into canoes and approach the missionary boat. James would then make signs of peace, distribute presents, and say a few words, stating that he had come to make friends and planned to return for a longer visit in order to tell them of a great Being unknown to them. After a successful first visit, he would return for a longer visit.

In 1888 James married a widow, Lizzie Harrison, who had been a longtime friend of Jane Chalmers. The second Mrs. Chalmers provided the friendship and support that James had longed for since his first wife's death. She too, proved herself to be a brave and self-denying missionary. However, after 12 years, she also died.

In the last years of missionary service, James visited existing mission stations. But a visit to the Aird River Delta became his last mission trip. The people in that region were reputed to be fierce and unapproachable, even by Papuan standards. No white man had ever seen them. For a long time, James had wanted to make the dangerous trip there in order to win them for Christ. On April 4, 1901, the mission steamer sailed to Risk Point, off the shore of the village of Dopima. Immediately the ship was surrounded by the village people.

The ship was quickly over-run by village men who came out to the ship in canoes filled with bows and arrows, clubs, knives and spears. They clambered all over the decks, and refused to leave. James thought that if he went ashore it might persuade the intruders to leave the ship. Tomkins decided he would join James, so the two men got into the whale boat with some of the mission boys and set out for the shore. Half the village men returned to the shore, the rest stayed on the ship, looting all the goods they could find, and then they too went ashore.

The captain of the ship waited all day and night but Chalmers and Tomkins did not return. Next morning they searched along the coast without seeing a trace of the men. They sent a message to the government station on Thursday Island and three days later a steamer arrived with a government officer and ten men.

The investigation found that James Chalmers and Tomkins were attacked from behind. They were clubbed to death and died instantly. Their bodies were eaten. The news of the murders made headlines all over the world. Those who had worked closely with James Chalmers were shocked and grieved at the news of his death, but felt strongly that he would have wished to die as he did — engaged in service to the people of New Guinea.

Adapted from: *James Chalmer's Autobiography and Letters*, Richard Lovett, London

# John Paton of New Hebrides (Vanuatu)



John Paton was from Glasgow, Scotland, where for ten years he helped the poor, by providing food and clothes, preaching the Gospel and running Sunday schools for the children. But for several months he had been challenged by news of the death of John Williams, a missionary in the Pacific Islands.

“Who will go to these people, to tell them of the love of Jesus, God’s Son?”

Many times he had heard the appeal from his church.

“Somebody should go,” he thought. One day God spoke to him clearly, “Don’t expect someone else to go if you’re not willing to go yourself. Are you willing?”

John prayed about it. “I’ve completed three years of a medical course. I’ve done Bible training and I have ten years’ experience helping the poor.”

John knew that God wanted him to go. He knew that the young people in his Bible classes would miss him, but he knew God would raise up another leader to serve in the mission to help the poor in Glasgow.

He set out for the New Hebrides, (now Vanuatu) in 1858, at the age of thirty-three. He had just been married, and his new bride, Mary, knew that God was also calling her to be a missionary.

They sailed to Australia, and stayed for a short time, then received a message, “There is an American ship sailing for the South East Asian region. The captain is willing to take you to the New Hebrides on his way and land you at the island of Aneityum, the southern-most island of the group.”

John and Mary were excited.

“What is there on Aneityum?” they asked their friends.

“As you know, Tanna and Erromanga are islands a little further north in the New Hebrides group. It’s nearly twenty years since the missionaries John Williams and his

friend Harris were killed when they tried to land on Erromanga. John Williams had left three Samoan teachers on Tanna just the day before they died, but they became ill from the fever and two of them died. Since then there have been seven different attempts by the London Missionary Society to place missionaries on Tanna, but all have failed because of the hostility of the people and the constant sickness and fever. However, about ten years ago a couple from Nova Scotia, Rev and Mrs. John Geddie, settled on Aneityum. They have had a hard time, but with the help of Rev and Mrs. Inglis, who joined them four years later, they have a group of people around them now who are growing in their Christian life. You will go first to Aneityum to meet Mr Geddie and receive your directions from him.”

After a journey north along the eastern Australian coast they were eventually landed on the shore at Aneityum. John Geddie welcomed them warmly. “It’s so good to have you people here with us. The task is so huge and we are so few.”

Mr. Geddie explained to them, “Tanna is a most difficult island, and as you know there have been a number of failed attempts to set up a mission station there. I want you to go to Port Resolution, on the eastern coast. There are high mountains in the centre of the island. I’ll send a group of my young men from here to work with you. They can help you build your houses. They will be able to learn the local language more quickly than you can, and they can begin to teach the Christian message in the people’s own language, until you are able to master it yourselves.

The next morning they set out from Aneityum on the mission boat, called *John Knox*, and landed on the beach at Port Resolution some hours later. On arrival they heard a screaming group of warriors being chased by another group. One of their team, who understood a little of the local language spoke with a village man, “Why all this chasing and yelling and carrying of spears and clubs?” he asked.

“We always have war here,” was the reply. “The people who live in the mountain always fight with us people who live by the coast. We fight all the time.”

This was soon evident. There would be the yelling of warriors coming out of the bush, then close behind them their enemy, brandishing clubs, spears and muskets. A trader who lived around the north side of the bay had supplied the guns and ammunition.

The mission team looked around for a site suitable to build their houses on. They chose a position close to the beach. “We should get all the breezes from the sea here; it would be cooler than up the hill away from the water. And it will be easier for loading and unloading boats.”

With the help of the team members from Aneityum, they gained the permission of the village chiefs to build on this site, paid them with knives and axes, and proceeded with the building.

At first the new-comers were a novelty and the villagers stood at a distance watching proceedings, but after a time they became tired of observing the strangers and turned back to their old sport of fighting. One day the sounds of war were uncomfortably close in the nearby bush. The discharge of muskets, the horrible yelling of armed men rushing about, feathers in their twisted hair, faces painted red, black, white or yellow;



excitement and terror were on every face. The mission team left their building work and retired to the village house they had been loaned. There they prayed earnestly to God for the people to whom they were sent. As the afternoon wore on the noises of war gradually faded and towards evening they all went back to their villages.

Next morning one of the team members from Aneityum went to the nearby spring for water to make tea for the mission team. He returned without the water. "They told me that they killed six men from the mountains yesterday. Last night they had a cannibal feast near the spring and they've spoiled the water. I couldn't get clean water for your tea."

The village people began to make life more difficult for John and Mary Paton. One day a village head man came to see John. "You didn't give us enough knives and axes for our land that you took. You only gave us half. You must pay the rest or we'll kill you all. You must not do any more building until it is all paid." Although John knew he had paid what they first asked, he knew they would be killed unless they paid again. This kept the chiefs happy for a while.

The Paton's house down beside the beach was finished and they moved in, happy to have a place for themselves. But soon disaster struck. They both contracted fever and realised that their choice of building site was a mistake, for it was not only near the beach, but also beside a mosquito-breeding swamp. At night-fall the mosquitoes descended in their thousands, causing malaria.

Only four months after they landed on Tanna, Mary gave birth to a baby boy. She had had a bout of fever three days before the birth, but seemed to recover and both mother and baby were well. John and Mary were so happy to have a son. But after three days after the birth, Mary was again affected with fever and for the next fortnight she fought a losing battle against the disease, and after two weeks she died. John was devastated. Weakened from fever himself, depressed from the sudden loss of his loved one, left with a new baby to care for alone, he found enough strength from God to dig a grave beside the house. To add sorrow to sorrow, a week later the precious baby also died of fever, and he was laid to rest beside his mother.

There were a few weeks of dry weather, causing the village food crops to suffer. Two village chiefs visited John. "It's your fault that our food gardens are dying," they said accusingly. "You and your God are not welcome here, our gods don't like your God. If there is no rain very soon our people have orders to kill you. If the coastal people don't kill you then the mountain people will."

The Mission team prayed, and the following morning, Sunday, heavy rain began to fall. The village people met and agreed that it must have been the missionaries' God who sent the rain, so they would allow them to stay. It lasted for many days; hurricane winds blew, damaging trees and food gardens, causing the people to say, "It's because you are still here that this rain keeps on falling and our fruit trees are spoiled." However, they were still allowed to remain on Tanna.

John Paton, supported by his helpers from Aneityum, struggled on. Sometimes the task seemed impossible. Constantly they were confronted with cannibalism, worship of idols, strangling of widows, and belief in the power of witch-doctors. There were

few, if any, signs that the people were receiving the Christian message. However, John would look at the helpers from Aneityum who had been the same as the people of Tanna not many years before, and think, "If God could change their hearts and lives then He can, and will, change the people of Tanna." This was the hope he clung to, which kept him on Tanna in spite of friends and captains of passing ships, who tried to persuade him to leave.

One small, encouraging sign came when a small group of village men began visiting John after dark. They would check that all doors and windows of his house were shut so they could not be seen by anyone, then they would start asking all kinds of questions. One of this group, a chief, said to John one day, "I would like to be a Christian man but I'm afraid the others would laugh at me."

The wife of one of these men died, and the husband decided that he wanted a Christian funeral, that he had seen when Mary Paton died. Another chief called Nowar, also friendly towards John Paton, offered to conduct the funeral service. This would be the first such burial on Tanna. Nowar, though not yet a Christian believer, prayed a prayer to the Jehovah God he did not yet know, in the presence of all the people, many of whom were against the gospel.

One time John was struck down with another serious bout of fever, so severe he believed he was dying. He attempted to crawl up the hill to catch the refreshing breezes, but half-way up he fainted and could go no further. A faithful old helper named Abraham came to his rescue and with the help of his wife, Nafatu, carried him to a shaded spot on the hill-side. There they laid him, under a coconut-leaf shade, gave him coconut milk to drink, yams and taro to eat, and kept him living. He was semi-conscious for some time, but gradually regained strength. Abraham and Nafatu stayed with him faithfully for the remainder of his time on Tanna, helping him build the house on the hill and serving him in whatever way they could.

Around the other side of the harbour lived a trader, Captain Winchester. The white traders were not Christians and tried to take advantage of the people of Tanna. Captain Winchester presented the chiefs with guns and ammunition to encourage them to fight. In return they brought him pigs and chickens which he sold. The Christian gospel did not please him because it encouraged people not to fight. John visited him one day. "If you would stop supplying these people with guns and ammunition they wouldn't do so much killing of each other. You're only doing them harm."

But the trader took no notice of John and supplied even more arms and ammunition to the rival tribes who continued to fight and kill each other.

The younger brother of the war-chief, Miaki, came to John and said, "I don't want this fighting. It's not good to kill men. I want to leave the fighting and live with you."

But Miaki came and forced his brother, Rarip, to join the fight. He was placed among the warriors, right next to Miaki, where he was hit by a bullet from a musket and mortally wounded. John hurried to the village as soon as he heard of Rarip's death. He was given a Christian burial amidst much loud weeping and wailing.

But the wars dragged on until finally Miaki went to the trader. "You led us into this war. You deceived us and we began it. Rarip is dead, and so are many others. Your life will go for this." The trader pleaded for mercy. He asked John if one of the teachers could come and live with him to protect him. He begged to be allowed to stay at the mission house with John, but John Paton would not allow it. The trader ended his days on Tanna sleeping out in the harbour on his boat until a trading vessel came by and took him off the island, much to the relief of everyone on Tanna.

One day John took a long journey to help another missionary couple on the other side of the island. They were running out of supplies and were in poor health. So John decided he should go by a large canoe, with Nowar and some others who were friendly to him.

A large pot was filled with flour and packed well down with a lid tied firmly on top of it. The pot was then fastened firmly in the centre of the canoe. Paton was placed directly in front of a strong swimmer in case the canoe rolled over, for John could not swim.

The hazardous journey began, the men paddling the canoe as close to the shore as was possible, until they reached a point only a couple of miles from the mission station. But here the waves were breaking over the reef quite dangerously and the crew said, "We can go no further. We have to wait for a smaller wave and ride in to shore over the reef."

For a time they waited, watching each wave as it came towards them. Then suddenly their captain cried, "John, hold on. There's a smaller wave coming, we'll ride in on that."

The wave came rolling on; each man paddled with all his strength and the canoe was flying like a sea-gull on the crest of the wave towards the shore. Then the wave broke on the reef and the canoe emptied out its crew into the water. They struggled ashore and retrieved their pots of flour.

The missionary friends, the Mathiesons, were very pleased to see John Paton arrive, and to accept the flour. After they had prayed together and encouraged each other, John decided to walk back home to the other side of the island. His guide left him once the sun set, too afraid to walk through the bush in the dark. John was told he would be killed if he went on alone, for there were very hostile tribes in villages he would have to pass on the way back. Walking alone through the bush in the dark placed him at great risk, but waiting till daylight made it more likely he would be caught by hostile villagers.

He set out, following the shore line as far as he could, but when he heard voices he took to the protection of the bush until the people had safely passed, then groped his way back to the shore line, which was his only way of finding a path. Halfway on his journey he came to a perpendicular rock face which he succeeded in climbing, holding on precariously to roots and bushes until he safely reached the top. Trying to stay near the shore, but at the same time needing to avoid hostile villages when he happened to get too close to them, he missed the path he was looking for and found himself on the edge of a great rocky outcrop. He had to crawl along the edge of this huge rock, a sheer drop to the sea on one side, the bush on the other. He wrote later, "I could never

have done this even in daylight, but I felt I was supported and guided in that entire life or death journey by my dear Lord Jesus.”

Eventually he came to a land-mark he recognised, another huge rock which he knew was sheer down to the sea on one side, so groping around in the dark he found what he thought was the right side. He threw stones down to try and gauge the height of the rock above the sea, but he heard nothing. He threw down his umbrella, but it told him nothing. He knew it was unsafe to stay there till daylight; he must take action now. Trusting in God’s protection he fastened all his clothes around him as securely as possible, he lay down on the rock on his back, feet first and head held forward. He let himself down as far as possible, hanging on to a branch of a nearby bush, and then let go, throwing his arms forward and keeping his feet well up. For what seemed an age he was flying through the air, then his feet struck the water. It was low tide so he was able to wade ashore and quickly found the pathway around the beach that brought him to a village quite near his house. Here he promised some young men fish-hooks if they would guide him the nearest way home.

He was soon home and more than ready for a long refreshing sleep after this hazardous journey of fifteen or twenty miles on foot, in the dark and through hostile territory. When the village people heard next day about his remarkable journey they exclaimed, “How is it that you were not killed! Your Jehovah God alone protects you and brings you safely home.”

John Paton’s silent response was, “Yes, and He’ll be your helper and protector too if only you’ll obey and trust Him.”

John Paton’s life was constantly under threat, more than ever before. Once, at daybreak, he heard noises outside. He found that his house was surrounded. One of the chiefs told him they had come to kill him. Seeing he was at their mercy he knelt down and surrendered himself to God, for what seemed to him then the last time. The warriors were so surprised by this act of devotion they didn’t know what to do, and they did not touch him.

“Why do you want to kill me?” he asked them. “What harm have I done to you? I’ve only ever done good things for you.”

Some of the chiefs who attended the church services regularly responded by saying, “Our conduct has been bad, but now we will fight for you and kill all those who hate you.”

“Please don’t kill anyone on my behalf,” he pleaded, “God wants you to live in peace, not war.” The men finally left the house and once again Paton’s life was saved.

On another occasion the missionary heard loud noises outside in the nearby bush. On going out to investigate he suddenly found himself surrounded by warriors, spears at the ready to kill him. Immediately he raised his hands to heaven and began to pray for these men that God would save them. The men grew so ashamed that one by one they slunk away into the bush, leaving John unharmed. Like St. Paul he was in dangers often, threatened constantly by the people of Tanna.

Another source of trouble came from the traders who tried to bribe the chiefs of Tanna to kill John. The traders did not like John because he tried to stop illegal sandalwood trading. One day four vessels entered the harbour and cast anchor. The captains strode up to John Paton's house and said, "We know how to get rid of the people of Tanna!"

"Surely you don't intend to attack and destroy these poor people!" exclaimed John. "Sure," he laughed back, "We've sent the measles into their midst. It kills them by the dozen."

John learned that they had taken a boy from a nearby village and thrown him into the hold of a ship with a group of others who were all suffering from the measles.

"We'll put them ashore on other islands and soon the epidemic will spread all through the islands." laughed their leader.

Sure enough hundreds of villagers were affected by the disease. Because it was new to them they had no idea how to deal with it. When their bodies grew hot with fever they ran down to the sea to cool off in the water. This brought on pneumonia and death.

Thirteen members of the missionary team died, leaving so few that when the mission boat, John Knox, visited the island they all packed up and went back to Aneityum, leaving John Paton with his faithful friend Abraham and his little dog.

Of the six mission posts he had established around the island only one now remained, the one where John lived and worked. Determined to get rid of the last trace of this worship of Jehovah God, Miaki called a meeting of all the village people and did not rest until they had resolved to kill the missionary. One of the chiefs addressed John: "Our fathers loved and worshipped the devil, the evil spirit, and we are determined to do the same. We have killed or sent away all the others who came to tell us about Jehovah, and we are determined to kill you, too. You are changing our customs and destroying our worship and we hate Jehovah worship."

Other chiefs spoke in a similar way, then John Paton spoke with them kindly, and no harm was done to him that day. However, the threats to his life were becoming daily more persistent, until the day came when Miaki and his warriors broke down the locked doors and invaded his house. John narrowly missed being killed with a tomahawk. Then, to the amazement of all, he appeared on the verandah of his house with a pistol in his hand. It had been a gift he had never used and even now it wasn't loaded, but the sight of it had the desired effect. The warriors cried, "He'll kill us all!" And they fled into the bush.

When the excitement had abated Miaki came to see John, and said, "I'm very sorry for what happened to you and your house. It won't happen again, I promise."

But Nowar, a friendly chief, warned John, "Don't believe Miaki, he's telling lies. The warriors are planning to attack again tomorrow."

Nowar sent a canoe for John to escape from the danger, but he refused to leave his place.

Next morning John looked out his window to see great numbers of warriors emerging from the bush and decided finally that he must leave to save his life. Quickly he grabbed his Bible, his scripture translations in the local language, and a blanket and ran to Nowar's village. Even there he wasn't safe so another friendly chief from a mountain village came to his rescue and offered to escort him over the mountains to the mission post held by his friends, the Mathiesons. They were followed by hostile warriors on their way and their lives were miraculously preserved several times. At last they reached the Mathieson's place.

"Thank God you are alive!" cried Mr. Mathieson when they saw him. "We heard that your place has all been burned down and we feared you were dead."

They praised the Lord together and prayed for His protection as they continued to face the threat of ever-present warriors. That night they lay down, exhausted from all the fearful excitement, but trying to keep watch in case of another invasion of the Mathieson's house. But they fell asleep.

During the night a flickering light in the room woke his faithful dog, which had stayed with him through all the turmoil. John was instantly alert at the sound of its alarmed barking. A quick glance out the window told John that the reed fence surrounding the house had been set on fire. In a few minutes the house would also be ablaze.

Taking his harmless revolver in his left hand and a tomahawk in his right, John pleaded with Mr. Mathieson to let him out of the house and lock the door behind him.

"No, I can't do that," objected Mathieson, "Stay in the house and let us all die together!"

But John persisted, so Mathieson let him out of the door, locking it from the inside once again. Immediately he attacked the blazing fence, chopping it into pieces which he threw back into a pile where they burned without allowing the fire to spread to the house. As he was completing this task he realised there were seven or eight warriors surrounding him, with clubs ready to attack.

"Kill him! Kill him!" some of them cried. But their hands were restrained, and not one of them could strike the fatal blow. God was still in control. At that point an amazing thing happened. There came a rushing, roaring sound which they all recognised immediately as an approaching tornado, bringing powerful winds and rain. The wind blew the flames from the burning fence away from the house and poured down a deluge of rain that completely extinguished the fire, though not before it had destroyed the church.

The warriors fled from the scene, seeking refuge from the tornado, but overawed at the sudden turn of events. "This is Jehovah's wind and rain," they said to one another. Truly their Jehovah God is fighting for them and helping them. Let's get away from here."

John Paton returned to the door of the house, "Let me in!" he called, "I'm all alone. It's safe." Together they praised the Lord for once again preserving their lives."

Next morning a group of friendly villagers came weeping around the missionaries. "They say that today they are going to kill you all, plunder your house, then set fire to it. You can hear them coming now." Sure enough the shouting of the warriors could be heard approaching their house. But then, above the sound of warriors came another, welcome sound. "Sail O!"

Were they imagining this or was it real? But the cry was repeated, "Sail O! Sail O!" The shouting of approaching warriors suddenly faded; the people seemed to have melted away. Was this just a trick to get them out of the house? John Paton cautiously peered out the door, and saw it was no trick, there was a ship sailing in to the harbour. The missionaries on Aneityum, having heard of the troubles on Tanna had sent Captain Hastings on his ship, the *Blue Bell*, with twenty armed men to rescue the missionaries, if they were still alive. The Mathieson's belongings were packed and loaded on the *Blue Bell* with the help of the helpers from Aneityum and the next day they arrived safely at Aneityum.

The Mathiesons were both in poor health and Mrs. Mathieson died not long after they left Tanna, her husband only survived her by three months, which meant that John Paton was the only missionary left who could tell the story of those pioneering days on Tanna.

John Paton had seen the urgent need for a boat owned by the mission that could help them care for the islander teachers and missionaries stationed in isolated posts around the islands and extend the work of evangelism. Obtaining a boat meant raising money, so John agreed to visit Australia to stir up interest in such a project and gain the financial support of church congregations. After his visit to Australia, he returned home to Scotland to do the same. There he met his second wife, Margaret, who accompanied him back to Aneityum, in their own new mission boat called the *Dayspring*.

The islander people were amazed as the boat sailed from island to island. "How is this?" they exclaimed, "We drove them away, we killed many of them. We plundered their houses and robbed them. If we had been treated like that we would never return. But these people come back with a wonderful new ship and more and more missionaries!"

The Patons agreed not to return to Tanna, but to settle on a nearby island, Aniwa, about fifteen miles away. The *Dayspring* had to call at Tanna on the way to Aniwa and bad weather caused them to anchor in the harbour there for some days. The old friendly chief, Nowar, came out in his canoe to visit the Patons on the ship. "I'm very sad that you are not going to stay on my island," he said, "Won't you change your mind?" After further discussion Nowar realised the Patons would definitely be living on Aniwa. So he called the Aniwan sacred man to him, removed the white shells, the token of chieftanship, from his own arm and tied them on the Aniwan's arm. He spoke firmly to the sacred man, "By these you promise to protect John Paton and his wife and child on Aniwa. Let no evil come to them, or I and my people will avenge it."

Settling on Aniwa meant first obtaining a plot of ground and negotiating with the village people to secure it. From past experience on Tanna they knew it must be higher ground, away from the swamps. Their first choice was not approved by the villagers

who suggested another site covered with mounds that had to be cleared away. On clearing them they discovered heaps of bones, the remains of cannibal feasts from ages past. No-one but their sacred men were allowed to touch these bones and it became clear that they had been offered this land in the hope that their gods would strike them dead. The villagers stood around watching the missionaries and their islander helpers digging and clearing away the bones with no bad effect. The people of Aniwa had seen that the Jehovah God of the missionaries was stronger than their own idols and this understanding, even before they had heard any teaching about the Christian message, made it easier for them to receive and believe it.

The first Christian believer on Aniwa was an old chief named Namakei, on whose land the missionaries had built their houses. One day he brought his daughter, Litsi, to the mission house with the request, "Please, John, would you train Litsi for Jesus?" She was the appointed Queen of her tribe and her conversion exerted quite an influence on her followers. Shortly afterwards Namakei's brother brought his daughter to the mission house also, for the mothers of both girls had died. As often as they cared to, these two girls returned to their villages and told their relatives what they had learned. As a result many parents brought their children to the mission school and begged the missionaries to teach them about Jehovah God and His Son Jesus. Some of these children became the best missionaries for they spoke favourably of the mission and also spread the message of the gospel as they learned it.

In the early days those who attended Sunday worship came fully armed, bow and arrow, spear, tomahawk or club always at the ready. People were still very fearful and did not trust their neighbours. Much of their fear was generated by their life-time service of evil spirits. One morning a village man came to John saying, "I've killed the devil! He came to catch me last night but I called all the people and we fought him around the house with our clubs. At daybreak he came out and I killed him dead. We will have no more bad behaviour now. The devil is dead!"

John Paton went with the man to view the dead snake, which turned out to be a huge sea-snake. "You didn't kill the devil, my friend," explained John, "You just killed a snake. But it was good that you were brave enough to kill it." John knew that in time past snakes were the symbol of evil and men were afraid to kill them.

One day, as John was working on an extension to his house, a village man named Nelwang, tomahawk in hand, hovered nearby. "Can I help you, Nelwang?" asked Paton.

"If you will help me now I'll be your friend for ever," declared Nelwang. "I want you to help me get married."

"What do you want me to do?" asked John.

"The trouble is, the woman I want to marry is a chief's widow, Yakin, who lives up in an inland village."

"Then why don't you ask her to marry you?"

"There are thirty young men in the village looking for wives. Each one of them wants her, but no one is brave enough to take her because the others would kill him. Now, if you were in my position, what would you do?" asked Nelwang.

After some thought, John suggested a plan. Two of Nelwang's trusted friends were placed as lookouts one at each end of the coral rocks above the village. Nelwang cut



a passage through the fence at the back that led into the bush. Then, at dead of night he carried off his bride and escaped into the seclusion of the bush. In the morning there was some outcry because Yakin's house was deserted, then on checking all houses, Nelwang's was also found to be deserted, so the conclusion was reached that they had run away together. For revenge their houses were plundered and the village people enjoyed a feast at the expense of the missing couple. It was thought they had escaped by canoe to Tanna.

Three weeks later Nelwang appeared again at the mission house when there was no one else around. "Hello," said Paton, "where have you come from? And where is Yakin?"

"I can't tell you yet, but I've come to keep my promise. I will help you and Yakin will help Mrs. Paton and we will be your friends. We will come and live with you until peace comes to our island."

So began a wonderful partnership as Nelwang became a faithful disciple helping John Paton in many ways, while Yakin soon learned to attend to cleaning, washing and cooking to assist Mrs Paton who spent much time teaching the women and girls to sew and to sing. They loved the music and were fascinated by the organ she played.

On the first Sunday after Nelwang and Yakin returned, John persuaded them to appear in church to announce their marriage. Nelwang came in a little cautiously, tomakawk in hand, just in case, and sat as near as he could to John. Then Yakin appeared at the door on the women's side. Nelwang held his tomahawk at the ready, poised across his shoulder, proudly watching as his bride entered the church. The day ended in peace, the village men accepted Nelwang's claim of Yakin as his bride, and bloodshed had been avoided.

Aniwa was a coral island, so there were no high mountains to attract rain clouds, which meant that shortage of water was a constant problem. John showed the people of the island how to dig a well to obtain underground water.

The village people did not believe that water could be obtained from the ground in this fashion.

"Come tomorrow," said John, "and I hope and believe that Jehovah God will send you the rain water up from the earth."

There was a great faith in John's heart that there would be water, despite the doubts that it may be salty. The next morning he went out early to inspect the hole and sank a small hole a further two feet down. Suddenly water gushed up and began to fill the hole. Muddy though it was he tasted it eagerly. It was slightly brackish but not enough to prevent anyone drinking it. The chiefs had gathered nearby, waiting expectantly. John waited for the water to settle and clear, then he got a jug, allowed the chiefs to see it was empty, then went down the ladder to fill it with water from the well. The chiefs gathered round. Namakei shook the jug to see if it would spill. He touched it to see if it felt like water. Finally he tasted it, rolling the liquid around in his mouth for a moment. Then he swallowed it and cried, "Rain! Rain! Yes, it is rain! But how did you get it?"

“Jehovah God gave it out of His own earth in answer to our prayers and hard work. Go and see it springing up for yourselves.”

Although every one of them could scale a tree or a cliff without any difficulty, not one of these men dared to walk to the edge of the well and look in. To them this was miraculous, something to be feared. However, they overcame their problem by forming a line, holding hands, and one by one the man at the front looked into the well to view Jehovah’s rain, then passed to the end of the line until everyone had seen the water in the well.

When they had all seen the water with their own eyes the chief said, “How, wonderful is the work of your Jehovah God! No god of Aniwa ever helped us in this way. The world is turned upside down since Jehovah God came to Aniwa. But will it always rain up through the earth? Or will it come and go like the rain from the clouds?”

“There will always be water in the well, my friend. It is a good gift from Jehovah God for us to use,” John assured him. “You and your people and all the people of the island can come and drink and carry away as much as you please.”

The chief looked thoughtful for a moment, then asked, “What can we do to help now?” “You can help me build a fence around the well to make it stronger,” said John.

No sooner was this said than everyone rushed for the shore to bring back coral rocks and stones which John placed carefully in position, round and round the wall of the well.

When the well was finished and neatly fenced in the old chief Namakei said, “John, I think I could help you next Sunday. Will you let me preach a sermon?”

The people believed that the miracle of water appearing from the earth was due to the fact that John knew how to pray to his God. The chief thought that he too needed to pray to John Paton’s God, in order for the water to keep springing up.

Word was passed around that the chief would be speaking on the Sunday so everyone was there waiting to hear what he had to say. “Friends,” he began, “we have seen and heard many strange things since John Paton came to Aniwa, things too wonderful for us to understand, and we said they must be lies. The strangest of all was when he said rain could come from out of the earth. But now the world is turned upside down. We have seen rain come from the earth. Only John Paton’s God could do this, our gods never could. The water was there under the ground all the time but we could not see it until the coral and sand were removed. Now it has been cleared away and we can see the water. I have been blind and could not believe in Jehovah God, but the sand has been taken from my mind and I promise to follow Him for the rest of my days. I am old now, but when I die I shall see Him with my own eyes.

If any of you listening to me feel as I do, then go and fetch the idols from your houses and bring them back here. We will burn and bury them. Let us follow Jehovah God and learn from John how to worship and serve Him.”

That afternoon the chief and several of his friends returned to John's house bringing their idols to be disposed of. Day after day people in small groups came to add to the pile of idols outside the mission house. To the accompaniment of loud sobs and tears, there was a great, excited burning of all the wooden idols. A deep pit was dug in which stone idols were thrown, and a few were loaded into canoes and dropped out in the deep sea.

After the initial grand disposal of their idols, two men were appointed to search out anyone who pretended to get rid of everything heathen but was still holding on to an idol. These men had the task of encouraging the undecided to be wholehearted in serving God. John Paton wrote in his diary at that time, "In these intensely exciting days we 'stood still and saw the salvation of the Lord.'"

There was a complete change in the way of life of the people on Aniwa. They began to say a prayer of thanks before every meal, they conducted family prayers in their homes morning and evening. The total population attended the Sunday worship service. One remarkable change was the increase of trust of each other regarding property. Before the mass conversion to Christianity everyone carried all their valuables with them; a brood of chickens or a litter of piglets would be carried in bags if the owner travelled any distance from his home. As a result there were some lively episodes during the Sunday services, with the chirping of chickens, the squealing of pigs and yapping of puppies accompanying the singing and preaching. The missionaries tolerated the interruptions rather than offend any of the people, until the time came when the people themselves voiced their objections.

"Surely now we are Christians we should be honest with everybody's property," the chiefs urged, "Couldn't we all leave our things at home, then there won't be interruptions to the worship times and we will all learn to be honest and trust each other." A meeting of all the people was called to discuss the problem. Dishonesty was soundly condemned and everyone agreed to leave their animals at home.

They agreed on a system of fines for those who stole someone else's property, and the chiefs worked hard to enforce the law. John Paton also encouraged the chiefs to use the Bible teaching they had to develop other laws fitting for their village way of life, repressing crime and encouraging a Christian way of life.

Soon the schools were crowded, for the islanders were eager to learn to read and write and study the Bible in their own tongue. John Paton had lost the printing press he had on Tanna, but there was an old dilapidated one on Aneityum with parts missing. He was handy with tools, so he made replacement parts from scrap metal or wood and eventually had the press in working order. He soon had passages from the book of Genesis, a hymn book and other smaller books in the local language printed on the renovated press.

The teachers from Aneityum were wholehearted in their support of the school teaching program and as the Aniwan learned enough of the Christian way of living they in turn became teachers of their own people. One of the most helpful of these was the good chief Namakei who became very interested in how John Paton could 'make books speak' When the passages from Genesis were printed Namakei listened eagerly as John Paton read from it.

“It speaks my language! Give me the book!” Namakei grasped it eagerly, waiting for it to speak to him, then when it was silent he handed it back to the missionary, a look of great disappointment on his face.

“It will not speak to me. Show me how to make it speak!”

“My friend,” said John, “you don’t know how to read yet, how to make it speak to you; but I will teach you to read, then it will speak to you as it does to me.”

Paton realised that Namakei was straining his eyes in trying to see the print, and suspected that his eyes were affected by age, so he found a pair of glasses that suited his eyes. After an initial reluctance to put on the glasses, fearing some magic, he looked through them and exclaimed in delight, “Oh I can see it all now! This is what you told us about Jesus. He opened the eyes of a blind man. The word of Jesus has just come to Aniwa. He has sent me these glass eyes and I’ve got back the sight I had when I was a boy. Missi, please make the book speak to me now.”

John took Namakei out to the village public ground where he drew three large letters in the dust, A, B, C., then showed him those letters on the first page of the book. Soon he was back.

“I have lifted up A, B, C, They are here in my head and I will hold them fast. Give me another three,” he said.

This was repeated time after time until he had mastered the whole alphabet and then was spelling out some simple words. He was so keen to learn that he actually memorised the whole book just by hearing John Paton read it to him, before he could actually read all the words. When people came around him he would say, “Come, hear how this book speaks our Aniwan language. You say it is hard to learn to read, but be strong and try. If an old man like me can do it, it ought to be easier for you.”

He had a very retentive memory so he quickly learned to read what Paton printed and was his right hand helper in the conversion of the Aniwan people.

Another source of wonder and a useful tool in teaching the Christian message was the organ which Mrs. Paton played. The people loved the ‘singing bokis’ and whenever they heard it being played they flocked around to enjoy the singing. No sooner did they hear a song played than they would insist on learning it by heart and singing it as they worked on their plantations.

After three years of building, teaching and ministering on Aniwa people were becoming Christians and being baptized. Whenever John had to leave the island he could depend on the island leaders to maintain their Christian worship and the Christian village way of life.

In 1883, when he was 59 years old, he left the work on Aniwa, his son succeeding him, and spent the next 24 years still working hard to further the work of missions. He visited Great Britain, his homeland Scotland, North America, Australia, speaking frequently to churches and mission groups, raising financial support, and most importantly, inspiring young people to volunteer for mission work, which expanded until every island of the New Hebrides group had been evangelised.

When he was 76 years old John Paton and his wife returned to Aniwa to spend a year among their beloved friends, but Mrs. Paton was in poor health so they returned to live in Australia. Mrs. Paton died in 1905 and John Paton a year later, at the age of 83, a grand old man with long white hair and long, flowing white beard, honoured and revered by Christians world-wide. An extract from some of his last writing speaks of the man he was:

“If God gave me back my life over again I would lay it on the altar to Christ, that He might use it especially among those who have never heard the name of Jesus.... God gave His best, His Son, for me, and I give back my best, my all, for Him.

Adapted from: *John G Paton, Missionary to the New Hebrides, 1824-1907*, J. Theodore Mueller, Zondervan, 1941

# GOD IS LOVE

## Pacific Islands

History, Geography and Culture

### Year 6

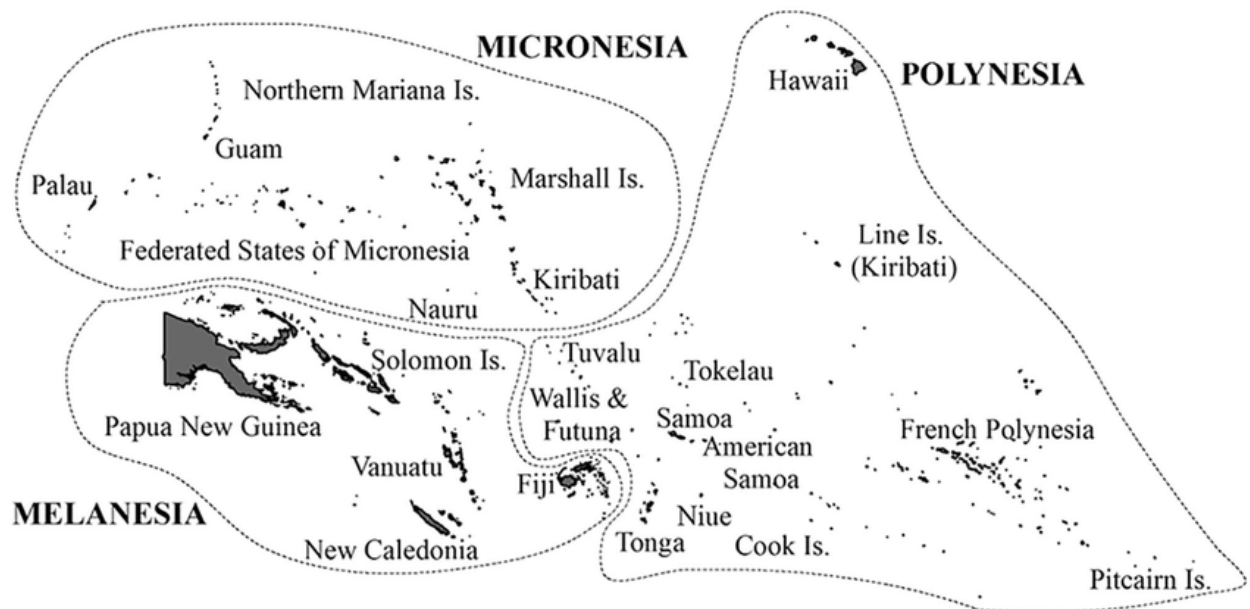
### Term 1



# The Pacific Islands: History, geography and culture

Pacific Islands are islands that are in the Pacific Ocean. There are about 20,000 or 30,000 of them. These islands are sometimes called Oceania. The Pacific Islands are in three groups. These groups are Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. People who live on these islands are called Pacific Islanders. These islands can be made by volcanoes or made on coral reefs. The islands made by volcanoes are bigger, and more people can live on them. The islands made on coral reefs are smaller, and fewer people can live on them. One big economic advantage for the Pacific Islands is tourism. The islands attract those interested in snorkeling, fishing, swimming and diving.

Island countries in the Pacific Ocean, such as Malaysia, Philippines, East Timor, Japan, Taiwan and most of Indonesia are not considered Pacific Islands since they do not lie in any of the three Oceanic regions. People inhabiting those islands, therefore are not Pacific Islanders.



## **Geography of Polynesia and Melanesia**

Polynesia and Melanesia, two distinct sub-regions of the Pacific Islands, have contrasting geographies which contribute to their unique landscapes and natural features.

In Polynesia, the geography is characterized by flatter landscapes and an abundance of coral reef systems. The islands in Polynesia have been mainly formed by ancient volcanoes (from the time of the Great Flood), that have collapsed into the sea, resulting in the formation of atolls. These atolls are circular or horseshoe-shaped islands that surround a central lagoon.

The white sandy beaches, crystal-clear waters, and vibrant coral reefs make Polynesia a popular destination for snorkeling and scuba diving.

Melanesia is located in a volcanic zone known as the Ring of Fire. This region is marked by towering cliffs, rugged mountains, and active volcanoes.

The landscapes of Melanesia are characterized by lush rainforests, jagged peaks, and waterfalls. The volcanic formations contribute to the rich soil, making Melanesia fertile and supporting a diverse range of plant and animal life.

## **Wildlife and Marine Life in Melanesia vs Polynesia**

Melanesia is renowned for its diverse bird species, with brightly colored birds that are a delight for birdwatchers.

Papua New Guinea is home to hornbills, cockatiels, and sunbirds, while Fiji boasts the Kadavu shining parrot, Kadavu fantail, and Kadavu honeyeater.

In terms of marine life, Melanesia is part of the Coral Triangle, a region known for its incredible underwater biodiversity. With over 2,000 types of reef fish and several species of turtles, the waters of Melanesia are teeming with life.

Polynesia also offers spectacular wildlife and marine life encounters. The islands are home to a variety of bird species, including seabirds like the albatross.

The marine life in Polynesia is equally impressive, with opportunities to swim alongside playful dolphins or observe majestic humpback whales during their annual migration.

Snorkeling and diving in Polynesian waters reveal a world of vibrant coral reefs and abundant marine creatures, from colorful tropical fish to graceful sea turtles.

## **Origins of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia**

The origins of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia can be traced back to Southeast Asia.

The people of Polynesia are believed to have migrated from Southeast Asia in large ocean-going canoes, embarking on a remarkable journey across vast expanses of the Pacific Ocean.

Their navigational skills, using the stars and other celestial cues, allowed them to settle and explore the islands of the eastern Pacific, establishing communities and cultures that thrived in their new island homes.



The ancestors of the Melanesians have roots in African populations. Over time, they developed their own unique cultural traditions and artistic skills, resulting in the diverse languages and artistic expressions found in Melanesia today.

We must remember that ALL cultural groups are descended from the sons of Noah, whose genes contained all the expressions of skin colour, eye colour and physical characteristics. As people spread out in groups from the Tower of Babel, the different physical traits were narrowed down, so that one group may express curly hair for example, and another group straight hair.

## **Facts about some Pacific Island nations**

<b>American Samoa p. 5</b>	<b>New Caledonia p. 10</b>
<b>Cook Islands p. 6</b>	<b>Papua New Guinea p. 11</b>
<b>Fiji p. 6</b>	<b>Samoa p. 11</b>
<b>French Polynesia p. 7</b>	<b>Solomon Islands p. 12</b>
<b>Guam p. 7</b>	<b>Tonga p. 12</b>
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<b>Marshall Islands p. 9</b>	<b>Vanuatu p. 13</b>
<b>Nauru p. 9</b>	

## **American Samoa**

### **Geography**

Area: 199 sq km

A large group of islands in the Polynesian Pacific.

**Population** (in 2017): 68,505

**Capital:** Pago Pago

**People living in cities:** 93%

**Official language:** Samoan, English

**Largest Religion:** Christian (95% of population, but many nominal Christians)

**Government:** A Commonwealth of the USA

### **Challenges for Prayer**

Remarkable growth among cults (especially Mormons) exposes the nominalism, too-long entrenched, in the mainline churches. Pray for awakening and renewal in these rapidly declining churches.

### **History**

Tongan, Tahitian and then Samoan teachers and pastors from the London Missionary Society were responsible for many converts to Christianity throughout the Samoan Islands from 1830s. Missions were established and by 1834 books in the Samoan language were being printed. With the missions came European education and schools.

## **Cook Islands**

### **Geography**

The 15 islands in the Cooks are located in the heart of the Pacific, halfway between Hawaii and New Zealand. Rarotonga is the main island.

**Area:** 236 sq km

Over 100 coral atolls and volcanic islands 3,500 km northeast of New Zealand, 15 of which are inhabited.

**Population** (in 2017): 19,933

**Capital:** Avarua

**People living in cities:** 75.3%

**Official language:** English, Cook Island Maori

**Largest Religion:** Christian (96% of population)

### **Challenges for Prayer**

The strong Christian legacy of over 150 years is fading rapidly. Increasing numbers are nominal or even non-religious, and Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are the fastest growing groups. Pray for reversal of these trends and for new life to come to the mainline Churches.

Many smaller islands have no known evangelical witness. There are evangelicals in several Pentecostal and Independent churches and small groups within the older churches. YWAM's new base in Rarotonga could be instrumental in rejuvenating the churches of the Cook Islands and beyond. Pray for an outpouring that would see older churches revived, new churches planted and every island with the presence of active believers.

## **History**

The Cook Islands were first inhabited by three Tahitian men who arrived with a boat with a number of women. These are the ancestors of the Cook Islanders. In 1200 Tongila, a Tahitian, and Karika, a Samoan explorer, ruled Rarotonga. In 1728 Captain James Cook sailed by without landing. Makea Nui Ariki was a female chief of Rarotonga. In 1885 she started to build close ties with New Zealand and traveled to Auckland to meet the Prime Minister. In 1901 the Cook Islands became a New Zealand colony.

## **Fiji**

### **Geography**

**Area:** 18,274 sq km

Two larger and 110 smaller inhabited islands, both volcanic and coralline.

**Population** (in 2017): 854,098

**Capital:** Suva

**People living in cities:** 53.4%

**Official language:** English, Hindi and Bau Fijian commonly used

### **Religion**

Largest Religion: Christian 65%

Hindu 30%

Muslim: 7%

### **Challenges for Prayer**

The Indians of Fiji form the largest non-Christian community in the Pacific. As few as 3% of them claim to be Christian. The greatest challenges for Indian-majority churches are developing (and retaining) mature and experienced leaders and integrating with the rest of the body of Christ.

b) Sikhs and Punjabis retain more of their culture and language, but there is little specific outreach to them. Many are emigrating to Western countries.

d) The Muslim community is tightly knit, very resistant to the gospel and increasingly Islamized via Saudi and Pakistani influence. Little is being done to reach them; the few converts to Christ suffer from considerable persecution and from the churches' failure to integrate them. Several Fijian villages have become Muslim.

Pray for:

a) Christian literature. The Bible Society of the South Pacific is based in Fiji. Pray for translation work, printing and distribution of God's Word throughout the Pacific. Translation and revision work in Fijian and Fiji Hindi are both needed, since good Christian material is lacking in these two languages.

b) Ministry to young people. Fiji has serious sociological problems among its youth, yet there is a responsiveness that needs to be met. Pray for those specifically ministering to young people in Fiji and the Pacific. The University of the Pacific in Fiji has students from every island territory and is strategic for impacting many islands which have much nominal Christianity.

c) The more remote communities are much less reached and resourced by the Church. YWAM's Mobile Ministry seeks to reach these communities by ship and by truck, sharing the gospel and providing medical and dental care.

d) Media ministry. Fiji has Christian TV and radio stations run from within the country. Pray that they might be fruitful in reaching and discipling many. Radio program and the JESUS film are available in all the major languages of Fiji.

## French Polynesia

### Geography

Area: 3,521 sq km

Five island archipelagos and 118 islands – (Society, Tuamotu, Marquesas, Austral and Gambier) in south-central Pacific. Tahiti, the largest island at 1,042 sq km, is where over 70% live.

**Population** (in 2017): 272,394

**Capital:** Papeete

**People living in cities:** 51.4%

**Official language:** French and Tahitian

**Largest Religion:** Christian: 92%

### Challenges for Prayer

a) The outer island groups are largely Catholic with little evangelical presence. Some people groups cannot easily understand the Tahitian language, and have little of the Bible in their own languages.

c) The Chinese have a few Protestants and Catholics but most Chinese are secular.

d) The French community keeps separate from the rest of the population and has little contact with any Church.

e) The Jewish community, newly arrived and in need of their Messiah.

### History

James Cook made several visits between 1769 and 1777

Christian missionaries arrived in the early 1800s and saw many conversions.

1842 the French took control.

1860s the first Chinese arrived.

1914 - 1945 1000 Tahitians served in WW1 and WW2.

1957 Officially recognized as "French Polynesia"

1963 Nuclear testing program on Maruroa Atoll and later on Fangataufa Atoll. France tested 44 bombs in the atmosphere and 131 under the ground. Agricultural workers decreased from 50% to 9%. The coffee and vanilla bean industry collapsed.

1997 Due to international protest, testing was finally stopped.

## Guam

### Geography

Area: 541 sq km

Most southerly and largest island of the Marianas Archipelago; 6,000 km west of Hawaii. Also included here (but not as part of Guam itself) are the three tiny US Territories of Johnston Island (2.8 sq km; 1,300 km from Hawaii), Midway Island (5.2 sq km; 2,350 km) and Wake Island (6.5 sq km; 3,700 km).

**Population** (in 2017) 179,893

**Capital:** Hagatna (Pronounced Agana)

**People living in cities:** 93.2%

### People

The Chamorro people are the indigenous people of the Mariana Islands. Other inhabitants include Americans, Spanish and Filipinos.

**Official language:** Chamorro; English

**Largest religion:** Christian 96% (Predominantly Catholic)

## **History**

1521 Magellan, a Portuguese explorer was the first European to land on Guam.

1668 Jesuit missionary, Diego Luis de San Vitores founded a Catholic mission, and a Spanish colony was founded

1898 USA captured Guam in the Spanish American war.

1899 USA took control of Guam

1941 In World War 11, Japan invaded Guam

1944 Guam US forces were liberated.

Today Guam has a military base and a strong military presence in Guam.

## **Challenges for Prayer**

The Prison Fellowship of Guam has a ministry to prisoners that is also penetrating the indigenous population in a small but significant way. Pray for resources to teach and train converts who remain in prison.

## **Hawaii**

**Capital:** Honolulu

**Population:** 1,900,000

### **Geography**

Hawaii is a state of the USA. It consists of eight main islands: Niihau, Kauai, Oahu, Maui, Molokai, Lanai, Kahoolawe and the Big Island of Hawaii.

Hawaii is the most isolated population center on the face of the earth. Hawaii is 2,390 miles from California; 3,850 miles from Japan; 4,900 miles from China; and 5,280 miles from the Philippines.

Under-sea volcanoes that erupted thousands of years ago formed the islands of Hawaii.

### **Agriculture**

Hawaii is the only US state that grows coffee. More than one-third of the world's commercial supply of pineapples comes from Hawaii.

### **People**

There are no racial or ethnic majorities in Hawaii. There is a "mixed plate" of ethnic groups: 38% of Hawaii's population is Asian, 25% is White, 10% is Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders, 9% is Hispanic, 1.6% is Black or African American. 24% of all Hawaii residents are of mixed race (multi-ethnic).

**Languages:** Hawaiian, English and Pidgin (combination of Hawaiian and English)

## **History**

1778 Captain Cook was the first European to land in Hawaii

1779 Captain Cook speared to death by Hawaiians

1805 the sandalwood trade begins with European traders

1820 Arrival of the first missionaries

1825 Whaling trade began

1835 Sugar plantations began

1840-1889 Father Damien, Belgian missionary to the leper community of Molokai, worked with the people of the island until he eventually died of the disease.

1893 Overthrowing of the Hawaiian monarchy and USA took control

1941 Bombing of Pearl Harbour

1959 Hawaii became the 50<sup>th</sup> state of the USA

1993 The president of the USA made an apology for the overthrow of the monarchy in 1893.

## **Marshall Islands**

The Marshall Islands, officially the Republic of the Marshall Islands, is an island country located near the equator in the Pacific Ocean, slightly west of the International Date Line. Geographically, the country is part of the larger island group of Micronesia. The country's population of 53,158 people (at the 2011 Census) is spread out over 29 coral atolls, comprising 1,156 individual islands and islets. The majority of the citizens of the Republic of Marshall Islands are of Marshallese descent, though there are small numbers of immigrants from the United States, China, Philippines, and other Pacific islands. The two official languages are Marshallese, which is a member of the Malayo-Polynesian languages, and English. Almost the entire population of the islands practices some religion, with three-quarters of the country either following the United Church of Christ, Congregational or the Assemblies of God.

### **History**

The first Europeans to visit the Marshall Islands were the Spanish. Magellan's ships passed through in 1543 and Spanish ships continued to visit through to 1568. Then the Spanish ignored the Marshall Islands.

In the 1850s whalers arrived, then missionaries from the USA arrived in 1857. In the 1860s a German trader set up business, and the Marshall Islands came under German control, which ended when Japan took control in 1914, at the start of World War 1. In 1944 USA troops captured the Marshall Islands. King Judah at the time was the leader of the Bikini people. In 1945 he agreed that the Bikini people would move so that atomic testing could occur, but he was misled about the impact upon the islands when he negotiated with the USA.

Bikini islanders were moved for the first weapons tests in 1946. When US government scientists declared Bikini safe for resettlement some residents were allowed to return in the early 1970s. But they were removed again in 1978 because their bodies registered high levels of radiation from eating foods grown on the former nuclear test site.

People who live in the Marshall Islands have a short life span and suffer poor health. They cannot grow their own food any more due to the consummated soil, so have to import all food. They mainly live on food from tins and packets.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands was established in 1984 and the capital is Majuro.

## **Nauru**

### **Geography**

**Area:** 21 sq km

A raised coral atoll ringed with sandy beaches, with a central plateau of phosphates from fossilized bird droppings; 300 km west of Banaba, Kiribati.

**Population:** 10,254

**Capital:** None, but administrative centre in Yaren

**People living in cities:** 100%

**Official language:** Nauruan, English

**Largest Religion:** Christian: 91%

### **Challenges for Prayer**

Spiritual awareness grows as the economy shrinks. Materialism has become more important to many than their faith. However church life is reawakening and evangelical numbers are growing. The Nauru Independent Church is the largest evangelical group, but there are believers in the other denominations as well. The JESUS film has been seen by almost the entire population.

### **History**

In 1899 the first Protestant missionaries arrived.

In 1902 the first Catholic missionaries arrived.

In 1907 the mining of Phosphate began.

1940-1942 Germans bombed the phosphate works

1942 Nauru bombed by the Japanese

1947 Nauru became a United Nations Trust Territory

1951 Nauru's local government council was established

1968 Nauru became an independent nation and took control of the phosphate industry.

## **New Caledonia**

### **Geography**

**Area:** 18,734 sq km

One large 400 km-long island, the Loyalty Islands, and other smaller coral islands 1,400 km northeast of Australia.

**Population:** 268,767 (2014)

**Capital:** Noumea

**People living in cities:** 57.4%

The people are a mix of Kanak people (the original inhabitants of New Caledonia), people of French-European descent, Polynesian people (mostly Wallisians)

**Official language:** French **Other languages:** 30 different New Caledonian (Melanesian) languages spoken by the Kanaks

**Largest Religion:** Christian 81%

### **Challenges for Prayer**

a) The 11,000 Muslims of Javanese or Arab descent retain their religion but not their languages. Little has been done to reach them.

b) Polynesian Islanders have kept both their culture and their language. There are a few evangelical believers among the traditionally Catholic.

c) The Metropolitan French (bureaucrats or business people) usually stay only a few years. Very few are involved with a church.

d) Bible translation into Kanak languages is needed. Pray for the calling and equipping of new translation teams.

### **History**

1840 The first Protestant missionaries arrived (Polynesian)

1843 The first Catholic missionaries arrived.

1853 The French took possession.

1863 Nickel was discovered by French engineer Jules Garnier.

1863 – 1897 French prisoners, (convicts) were set to New Caledonia

## **Papua New Guinea**

### **Geography**

Area: 462,840 sq km

Eastern half of New Guinea, the second largest island in the world, and many smaller islands in the north and east together make up the nation of Papua New Guinea (PNG). A land of high mountains, dense forests, lowland swamps, coral islands, torrential rainfall, many rivers and great biodiversity.

Population: 6,888,387 Annual Growth: 2.40%

Capital: Port Moresby

People living in cities: 13%

Official language: English, Tok Pisin (Melanesian/English Creole) and Motu Languages: 830

Largest Religion: Christian: 95%

### **History**

Papua New Guinea was governed by the British and called “British New Guinea”. British New Guinea became the Territory of Papua, and formal Australian administration began in 1906, although Papua remained under their control a British possession until the independence of Papua New Guinea in 1975.

### **Challenges for Prayer**

There are many challenges facing the churches:

- a) Effective discipling is the most urgent and prevalent need. Nominalism, and pollution of Christianity with spiritism and the occult are sadly widespread.
- b) Failure to engage with Scripture due to lack of Scripture translations and widespread illiteracy. Pray for more Bible and discipleship material specifically developed for oral learners.
- c) Continued disagreements and fighting between tribes.
- d) Denominational division among churches
- e) Attempts to convert PNG to an Islamic nation are underway and will be an increasing challenge to the Church. Pray for adequate preparation and equipping that will enable Christians to wisely.

## **Samoa**

### **Geography**

Area: 2,831 sq km

Two large volcanic islands, Savai'i and Upolu, and seven small islands covered by lush tropical rainforest.

**Population:** 178,943

**Capital:** Apia

**People living in cities:** 23.4%

**Official language:** Samoan; English

**Largest Religion:** Christian 96%

### **Challenges for Prayer**

Samoans have been Christian for over a century, and every village has at least one church. But there are social problems that continue. Much of the Church suffers from nominalism, and rivalry among denominations does not generate a good spiritual atmosphere. Pride and politics influence church life too much, and the financial demands on a poorer population are heavy. These problems, as well as the challenges of domestic strife and crime, make up a society that is much in need of prayer.



## **Solomon Islands**

### **Geography**

**Area:** 27,556 sq km

Six of the seven major volcanic islands of the Solomon Islands, also numerous smaller coral atolls. The seventh, Bougainville Island, is part of Papua New Guinea. The major island and island groups are Guadalcanal, Choiseul, New Georgia, Santa Isabel, Malaita, Makira/San Cristobal, Gela, Santa Cruz and the Russells.

**Population:** 535,699

**Capital:** Honiara

**People living in cities:** 18.6%

**Official language:** English. Trade language Solomons Pijin, spoken by more than half the population

**Largest Religion:** Christian 95%

### **Answer to Prayer**

The Solomons have a history of revivals – in the South Sea Evangelical Churches in 1935 and 1970, then in nearly all denominations after 1982. In the 1980s and 1990s, evangelical and charismatic believers grew in number across almost all denominations.

### **Challenge for Prayer**

The civil war of 1998-2003 did damage to the nation on a number of levels and left many thousands uprooted and in need of practical help and spiritual counselling. There is need for fairer elections and political processes. Pray for true forgiveness and reconciliation that come only through repentance. Without these, the nation can never really progress.

Pray for more health workers, as incidence of malaria and other diseases is high. There is also a need for health care for mothers and babies.

## **Tonga**

### **Geography**

**Area:** 747 sq km

Archipelago of 171 coral and volcanic islands, 36 being inhabited, 600 km east of Fiji.

**Population:** 104,260

**Capital:** Nuku'alofa

**People living in cities:** 25.3%

**Official language:** Tongan

**Largest Religion:** Christian 96%

### **Challenges for Prayer**

Tonga's rich Christian heritage is a blessing, but has reached the point of becoming nominal. There is competition among churches. The economic situation is difficult. Pray that Tongan Christians would seek ways to contribute to the Kingdom of God rather than seeking the church that benefits them the most.

## **Tuvalu**

### **Geography**

**Area:** 24 sq km

Nine low, coral atolls in the central Pacific, eight of which are inhabited.

**Population:** 9,970

**Capital:** Funafuti

**People living in cities:** 50.4%

**Official language:** Tuvalu, English

**Largest Religion:** Christian 97%

### **Challenges for Prayer**

Tuvalu faces an uncertain future. Very limited resources, possible rising sea levels and modern/global external influences make this traditional culture fragile, both environmentally and socially. Pray that wisdom would prevail in preserving Tuvalu as a nation and culture, and that the long-standing presence of the Church would play a major role in this.

## **Vanuatu**

### **Geography**

**Area:** 12,190 sq km

Twelve larger and 70 smaller islands, southeast of the Solomon Islands in the southwest Pacific. Formerly New Hebrides.

**Population:** 245,786

**Capital:** Vila

**People living in cities:** 25.6%

**Official language:** Bislama (Pidgin English), English

**Largest Religion:** Christian 94%

### **Answer to Prayer**

Thousands have turned to Christ, coming out of the “John Frum” cargo cults, despite these groups forbidding contact with Christians and the gospel. (These cults emerged from WWII and a belief that loads of supplies on ships and planes would come from “John from America”.) The JESUS film has seen thousands of positive responses to the Gospel.

### **Challenge for Prayer**

Vanuatu’s motto is “In God We Stand”. Pray that leaders of this complex little nation may be examples in doing so. Committed Christians played a major role in attaining independence, and they continue to help lead the country - not least is the President himself.