

Benjamin



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The year was 1838. John Hunt, who lived in England, had something big to do for God.

“I know that God has called me go to Fiji,” said John to his wife Hannah. “Will you come with me?”

“It is such a long way from England,” said Hannah, “and the journey by ship will be dangerous. But God will be with us. I know that the Bible tells us to go into every part of the world to tell others about Jesus.”

So John and Hannah sailed from England to Fiji.

They went to live on the island of Viwa, in the Yasawa group of islands. It was the time of cannibals. John and Hannah told people about Jesus and helped the Fijians see that killing people was wrong. Many people became Christians, and John and Hannah made good friends with the people of Viwa.

One day John and his friends were traveling in a canoe along the coast of a large island. They were going to visit a Christian village that was three days’ journey around the coast. It was late afternoon so they were looking for a good place to land and shelter for the night.

Pointing to some houses near the shore, John called to his friends, “Something tells me we should go to that little village over there,”

The men looked at each other, then at John.

“But you know the people living along that part of the coast are enemies of Viwa,” one of the men said. “It isn’t safe for us to land there.”

“Yes, I know that,” he replied, “but I believe God told me that we should go to that village, so we must believe He will protect us and guide us.”

They brought the canoe into shore a little distance from the village and there they found a young boy who was quite sick with leprosy. The Fijians from Viwa spoke with the boy and made friends with him.

“Please take us to your village leader,” they said.

Off they went with the boy to meet the village leader.

“May we stay the night on your shore,” they asked the village leader. “We have a three day journey ahead of us and we need shelter for the night.”

Then he added, “As we came here we met the young boy who has leprosy. He is very sick, but we could help him. There are medicines we have at Viwa that could help him, if you would allow us to take him back with us.”

The villagers talked among themselves for a few minutes, then their leader said, "Alright, we will allow you to stay on our shore for the night if you will take the sick boy to your island and make him better."

Now John and his friends knew they were safe, because of the agreement to help the young boy.

When John and his friends brought the sick boy back to Viwa he was given medicine and his sores were cared for. The boy also heard the true stories about God the Creator and His Son, Jesus.

"Please," he said to John Hunt one day, "I want to have a Christian name because I believe in Jesus Christ."

"What name would you like to have?" John Hunt asked him.

"I'd like to be Benjamin," replied the boy. So Benjamin was now his name.

One day the men on Viwa looked out to sea and noticed a war canoe approaching their island.

"I wonder who they are," said John, "I hope they are coming in peace, not war."

When the men in the canoe landed they were surprised and pleased to meet a chief of another island and some of his men.

"I have heard that you have good news for our people," said the chief to John. "I want my people to hear this good news. Would you send a teacher back with us to teach us your good news?"

"I'm sorry," replied John, "but we have no teachers on the island with us at present. The men we have trained are all out in the villages teaching now. There are none here ready to go with you."

The visiting chief noticed Benjamin nearby and turned to speak briefly with him. Benjamin had noticed the look of disappointment on his face when John told him there were no teachers available.

Suddenly Benjamin had an idea. He turned to John eagerly.

"Please would you let me go with these men?" he begged. "I only know a little, but I could tell them what I know about God until you have other teachers ready to send."

John looked at the boy. He could see that the leprosy was not better, but he could also see that Benjamin really wanted to help.

"Alright," said John.

So the next day they sent Benjamin with the visitors in the big war canoe. It was a three-day trip but Benjamin wasted no time. As the canoe cut through the water he told the chief all he could remember of the stories of Jesus and God the Creator. But Benjamin was growing weaker all the time, and as they came in sight of their harbour, he died.

But the chief had taken Benjamin's stories to heart and greatly desired to follow the Christian way.

"I want you to build a place where we can worship God," he announced to his people. "Then I'll tell you the stories our friend Benjamin told me about Jesus and His work. One day John Hunt will send us teachers to tell us more, but we can begin with all Benjamin told us."

And that is the story of how the Christian message came to Nadroga, Fiji.

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

More about John Hunt

John and Hannah stayed for 10 years in Fiji, from 1838 – 1848.

John worked on the translation of the Bible into Fijian, and finished it in 1847.

John and Hannah had two daughters, Eliza Jane and Hannah. Three other children died of dysentery soon after birth.

John died of dysentery in 1848.

