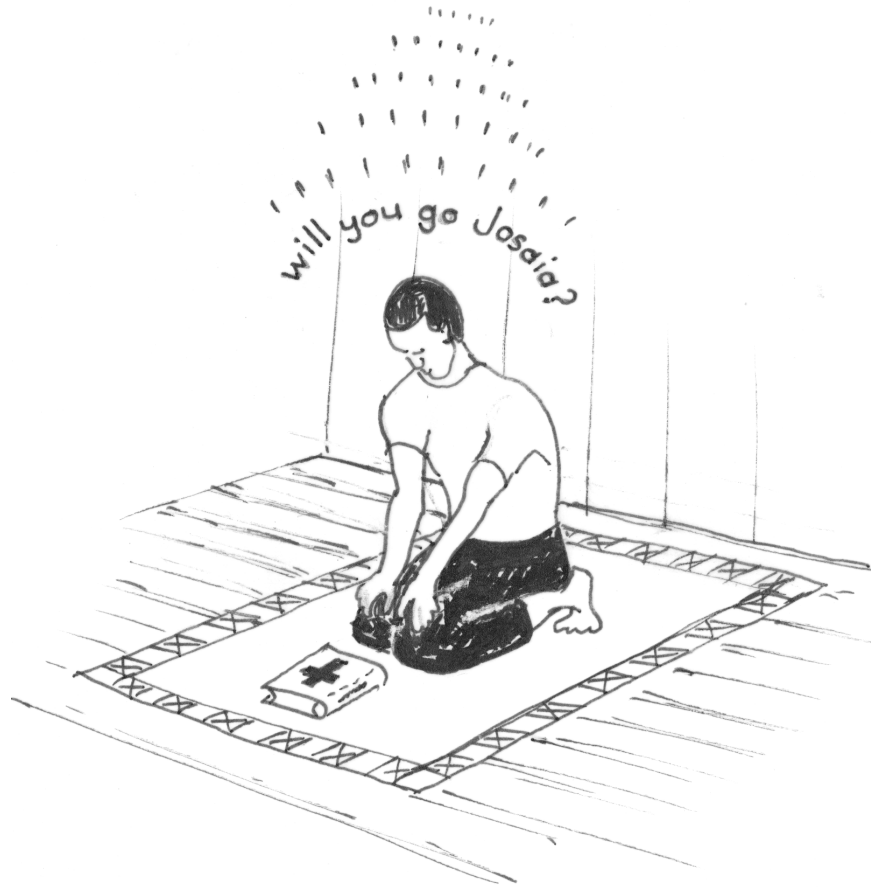


Wai of Ono, Fiji



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Two Fijian men were traveling on a trading ship to Lakemba, on a trade route between Tonga and Fiji. One was Wai, a messenger for his people on the little island of Ono, about 50 miles south of Suva. The other was Takai who had worked on a number of trade vessels traveling between the island groups.

“I’m tired of all the fighting and drunken behaviour amongst the people on my island,” said Wai. His heart was heavy because of the sorry state his community was in. There is so much sickness and unhappiness. I wish I could find a way to improve our life together.”

“Yes, I know what you mean,” replied Takai. “As I’ve traveled around on the trade vessels I’ve seen some very unhappy communities. I’m sorry to say that these traders make it worse by bringing in the drink to sell to the people. It makes the fighting so much worse when they get drunk.”

Takai sat silently with Wai for a few moments, then he said thoughtfully, “But I’ve seen some places where the village people were all at peace with each other. I went to Tonga a while ago when the Christian missionaries were teaching the people about their God. The people were so changed when they believed in the Creator God and His Son, Jesus. They stopped fighting with each other. They didn’t want to buy the drink to get drunk on. When I saw that, I thought it was the best way to stop the wars in my island. One day I’ll find a teacher to go to my island to teach us about the Christian way of living. That’s what I want for my people too,” Wai declared. “I’m going to find out all I can about this Christian way and get someone to teach my people about it.”

Wai returned to his island determined to try and follow the Christian way. All he knew about it was what he had heard from Takai.

“The Christians meet together to worship their God every seventh day, and they do no other work on that day,” was the one thing Wai remembered. He called together the chiefs of Ono and told them what he knew of the Tongan Christians.

“The best thing about it is that they don’t fight amongst themselves any more. The people in the villages are happier and healthier. They don’t buy the liquor from the trading ships any more, so they don’t get drunk. Surely this is what we need for our people.”

The council of chiefs talked together about this for a time before they spoke again to Wai.

“We’ve had enough of war. We’re tired of fighting and drunken behaviour. We want to serve a god who will look after us. We want to live the Christian way and be at peace with each other,” they said. “But, tell us, Wai, how do we do it? We need a teacher.”

“The Tongan Christians worship every seventh day. On that day they don’t do any work,” Wai replied.

“Very well, then,” said the chiefs. “We’ll start to worship God every seventh day.”

On the agreed day they came together to worship. But no-one there knew the Christian God. Nobody knew how to worship. So Wai went to see the pagan priest who worshipped the local heathen gods.

“Would you come along to our worship meeting,” he asked. “We want to worship the Christian God, Jehovah. We want you to pray to Him for us.”

Here was a pagan priest with a group of people who didn’t know God, but wanted to, praying to an unknown God. This is what he prayed:

“O Lord, Jehovah, these people want to worship you. I’m not speaking for myself. I want to serve other gods. But please look after them and bless them.”

Could God answer such a prayer? Certainly He did, in a remarkable way. About that time there was a deep-sea canoe sailing out at sea between Tonga and Fiji. A severe storm struck the canoe and the men on board feared for their lives. Amongst those on board there was a small group of Tongan Christians.

“Help us, Lord! Save us from this storm!” they cried out to God.

They were tossed about in the raging sea for some time, until through a break in the rain, they sighted a small island.

“Let’s make for that island and find shelter till the storm passes,” suggested one of the men. They all agreed and set the canoe to skull in to land before the rising wind. They were soon pulling the canoe up on to the sand away from the heavy seas.

The people on this island offered them shelter and food until the storm had passed. They stayed on the island for a time while they repaired the damage to the canoe. They told the travelers about the people on the island of Ono, not very far away.

“Wai, their messenger, heard about Jehovah God of the Christians in Tonga. Wai wants his people to serve this God too, because He brings peace to the people. All they know is to worship Him every seventh day. But they want someone to come and tell them all about Him. They really want to know this God for themselves.”

The Tongan Christians from the canoe were very interested to hear about the people on Ono. One member of the group thought and prayed about them when he was alone that night.

“Josaia, I want you to go to Ono where Wai lives and tell those people about me. They really want to know me so I’m telling you to go to them.”

It was as though he heard an audible voice directing him, but he knew it was the voice of God. He thought of the story in the Bible about Ananias whom God sent to meet Saul, who became Paul.

“Yes, Lord,” responded Josaia, “I’ll go.” And he went across in the canoe to teach these people who were hungry to know the Christian God.

This story happened before there were any white Christian missionaries in Fiji, but it demonstrates how God works in the hearts of people who really want to know Him.

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