VISION - VANUATU

August 2009

Hello, dear friends and family! It is winter here in Vanuatu, with "bone-chilling" temperatures between 68 and 84 degrees Fahrenheit. Winter is also our dry season. Last week, we had 5.5 inches of rain in three days. So much for "dry!!" All year round, however, the foliage is green and beautiful, with a vast array of unique flowers.

SNAKE

There are very few predatory animals in Vanuatu. We don't have lions, tigers, hyenas, baboons, monkeys, or crocodiles as they do in many other tropical countries. We do, however, have some large snakes. Thankfully, none of them have deadly bites.

Recently, our neighbor lady, Nalene, spotted a large snake (five feet long) coiled in a tree above the garden near our house. She quickly gathered a dry shrub for making a torch. After attaching the bushy plant to a long piece of bamboo, she set it ablaze and thrust it up under the snake on its high perch.

Naturally, the snake did not appreciate the heat, whereupon it dropped to the ground. Nalene had placed her long bush knife (machete) close at hand and quickly rushed forward to separate the snake's head almost completely from its body by one swift blow. Nalene proceeded to burn the snake with the torch until it stopped writhing. She said that if the snake had dropped from the tree onto our heads, we might have sustained a painful bite from the one-half-inch-long fangs. Nalene was our heroine of the day!

TRIBAL CHIEFTAINS

While Vanuatu has a parliamentary form of government, it also has a chieftain system that governs in tandem with the parliamentary structure. Most of Vanuatu is bush/jungle country. (There are only three cities/towns of any size on the islands.) Much of Vanuatu is so remote and isolated that the government would be unable to enforce laws and maintain order without the help of the tribal chiefs in each area.

Every tribe of people (there are over 100 different language groups) has a chief. The Tiali-speaking people, among whom we live and minister, have Chief Robert, a very friendly, outgoing man, as their leader.

Chief Robert is the younger brother of George, our neighbor. George is a simple bushman who

never had the opportunity to learn to read and write. He gave his heart and life to Jesus many years ago, and he is a wonderful light of the Lord to the Tiali people.

Chief Robert was one of those who initially invited the Assemblies of God to come to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Tiali people. Because of Chief Robert's lack of clearly understanding God's Word, he has over the years developed a following of people who believe that he has a source of "holy water" near where he lives in the bush, which will heal them if they bathe in it or drink it.

Great respect and honor is accorded Chief Robert because he provides the "holy water." We are told that some who profess to be Christians pay their tithes to him because of the benefits they perceive coming from the water. Since the "holy water" detracts from faith in Jesus as the Healer, we believe this is spiritually detrimental to Chief Robert, his family, and the Tiali tribe.

Recently, Gary and I had an opportunity to talk to, and pray with, Chief Robert and his wife Joyce. They came to the clinic because Joyce suffers with extreme hypertension. She was recently hospitalized in Luganville near death because of it. I assured them that true healing (body, soul, and spirit) comes **only** through Jesus. Both Chief Robert and Joyce seemed to be very open.

Chief Robert and Joyce

Please pray that the Chief, his wife, their nine children, and numerous grandchildren will open their hearts to the True Healer and to the real Source of Living Water.

CHIEF NORMAN

Norman is Chief Robert's oldest son who is in line to succeed his father (who is in his fifties) as chief. Chief Robert has already appointed Norman as chief of one of the major villages among the Tiali people.

Norman, approximately 26 years old, at one time faithfully followed the Lord. However, over the years he has lost his way. Recently, we have seen (he lives near Hope Clinic) glimmers of hope for Norman's return to Jesus. Please pray for him, his wife Salome, and their four beautiful children.

CHIEF DANIEL

Norman's ten-year-old son Daniel is in our Sunday School class. Someday, he will follow his father as Chief of the Tiali tribe. Please pray with us that as the Word of God impacts Daniel's young life, he will accept Jesus as his Savior and become like the Daniel of old: a man who will lead the Tiali people to godliness and a true commitment to Christ.

THANK YOU

It is always our joy to thank all of you who have so faithfully stood with us in your prayers and financial support over the years. Without your partnership we would never have been able to minister as effectively where God has taken us these past 13 years. We count on your continued prayer and faithfulness. Thank you so much! We appreciate and love you all! May you experience God's grace and blessings in your life today. Blessings on you! Colossians 3:1-17.

Love in Christ,

Gary & Priscilla Ross

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