

Light Bulb Moments – Acts 10:34-35

Things Seen and Lessons Learned in Papua New Guinea (1/09)

It's good to be back

After 14 airplanes in 13 days – 6 of which were spent in the jungle . . .

There really is no place like home – Dorothy had it right

Talking about our recent visit to PNG, to support and encourage Brooks and Nina Buser – one of our Global Partners in that part of the world

So many of you prayed – and we're so thankful for that

To say the least, we saw things we didn't know existed, and learned things we thought we already knew

So much of which I can't wait to tell you

So if you're ready, I'd like to get to it; **Acts 10:34-35**

This is the main light bulb that went on in my heart and mind while in PNG, and I want to tell you why (read it)

- The backdrop to this comment involves a Gentile man named Cornelius . . .
Who God noticed for his dedication and generosity
And was told by an angel to send for the apostle Peter to hear what he had to say fr God

Peter meanwhile, had a dream in which God told him to go and speak to Cornelius

Which was a big no-no b/c Peter was a Jew and Cornelius was a Gentile . . .

And Jews considered Gentiles spiritually unclean and outside of God's plan

Look at v27 to that effect, where Peter is talking to Cornelius and his closest friends/relatives . . . rd v27-35

Peter had this light bulb moment that God accepts even the *Gentiles* – thought to be second class citizens . . .

B/c he saw for the first time that . . .

1. God spoke to them just like he spoke to him
Previous to that, Gentiles were thought to be *outside* of God's purview
But no more – they clearly heard from God; that was indisputable

The second reason for this light bulb moment was that . . .

2. He saw people who weren't supposed to fear God – fearing God
Not only did they hear him, but they displayed a reverent respect for what he said

3. What's more, they were hungry to hear more
In v24 it says that *Cornelius had called together his relatives and close friends* . . .
And they showed up; Why?
To throw a party? No! To hear more
They heard what Cornelius said, and wanted to hear more

Which is exactly how our church was started, and continues to grow

Having heard the Word of God, you go out and tell your closest friends/relatives . . .

Who upon hearing, want to hear more – so *they* come to church . . .

And then they leave to tell *their* closest friends/relatives – and so it goes

And not just here, but all over the world where the Word of God is being preached

4. He saw people who did what is right in God's eyes
Chief of whom was Cornelius, who gave to the poor and did what the angel said
Not to mention those who responded to his invitation to hear more
They were doing the right things

All of which brought Peter to this light bulb moment that God shows no favorites
He accepts *anyone* from *any* tribe, tongue, or nation – who fear him and do what is right

- And in many of the same ways, I experienced the same thing
Oh I *knew* that God wasn't partial to people's skin color or ethnic background
I know that he's at work all over the world – I've read the stories and heard the reports
But never have I experienced it so much, so close, for so long

Consequently, I now feel like I *truly* understand, more than I ever did before . . .

That God shows no partiality when it comes to those who fear him and do what is right

That it doesn't matter who you are, what you are, how you are, or where you are . . .

God accepts *anyone* who honors and obeys him – I get it

And I want you to get it too

So to that end, I want to share with you some of the things I *saw* and *learned*

And together, come to a greater appreciation for God's work around the world

And it starts with joy

THINGS I SAW

The light bulb first began to flicker for me when I saw the joy of the Yembi believers

• Joy

I saw it in their welcome as soon as we got off the plane – complete w/ a bit of face painting (**4 photos**) as promised

The paint was on our face, but the joy was on theirs

Made all the more apparent with pictures like these (**split photo**)

This is Prisca – before and after Christ; that's the joy of the Lord

The same before-and-after joy I see in many of you

God's not partial – I get it

• Boldness

The Yembi believers are bold; They speak the truth

Francis' deathbed; "Take a good look and say goodbye b/c he's going to hell and you'll never see him again"

Just one of many examples of boldness on the part of the believers – the same boldness I see in you

• A hunger for God's Word

Saturday evening was one of the highlights of the week for us

Worship gathering; 65 people in one hut; In between teaching houses

Showed up at 4:30; Banged drum at 5; Started about 6:15 with 25

But they were hungry to hear what was said . . .

And eager to read the Scripture in their own language

That's what you see Lucas (**photo**) doing here just before the meeting started
He's reading Acts 20 for very first time in "Talk Place" – his own language

Imagine if you walked in here each week and received a print-out of the Scripture text for the *first time* in your own language, your heart language
Previous to which, if you even had a Bible, you read it in a second language like Sp/Fr
That's what it's like for them every time they meet – and they're hungry for it ***

It didn't matter if the worship didn't quite trip their trigger – they didn't even have worship that night
It didn't matter that they could hardly see the paper b/c it was dark and there was only one lantern hanging 4 feet off the floor in the entire hut
It didn't matter that one of the little kids (about 18 months old) almost fell through a hole in the floor
Which would have been a non-event except that his mom slapped him on the leg for causing a commotion, and he started crying
None of that mattered, b/c they were hungry to read God's word and hear it applied

Read v33b; Then, here, or there – if you're hungry, God will feed you

• **A commitment to the truth**

I remember the guys at the Men's Meeting on Sat night after the service saying . . .
"If it's not in the Bible, we're not believing it"
"We've been told too many lies for too long; and we're done with that"

And Paul, another of the men, said, "the Col's talk (referring to the teaching I had just done fr Col 1 – **2 photos**) . . ."
He said, "It's spreading in the village like a 2-edged knife, cutting to the heart"

I looked at Brooks and asked him if Paul knows he's pretty much quoting Heb 4:12?
You know, the verse that says – *The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit . . . discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart?*
Brooks said – he has no idea about that verse ***

No wonder they're committed to the truth – they've experienced it firsthand in their soul long before they even know they're supposed to
And it's *nothing* like the lies of animism, or the futility of religious works
I know many of you would bear witness to the same thing

All of which led to another light bulb moment – that a commitment to the truth is a commitment to the truth no matter *where* you are
And it's acceptable to God no matter *who* you are

• **A concern for the lost**

Just like us, they're concerned about the eternal well-being of their mothers, brothers, fathers, sisters, husbands, and wives
One of them, Andrew, even asked at the Men's Meeting how he can best live with his unbelieving wife so that she'll eventually believe
His concern was so great he ached; And we spent a good deal of time talking about it

Others have already started telling their sister villages the beginnings of God's story – even though it's a 6 hour hike through the jungle to get there

Why? Why such a concern for the lost?
B/c they take seriously the certainty of hell, and the hope of heaven
And they want *everyone* to know
Another light bulb moment that God accepts anyone who fears him and does what is right

• **Perseverance**

Just like here – the YY believers are the aroma of life to those who believe, and the aroma of death to those who don't
The difference, is that you can't get away from it there, in such a small, communal tribe
And it sometimes causes sparks resulting in persecution – verbal as well as physical

Like with Paul (**photo**), who I mentioned early
As one of the more articulate/biblically astute believers, he's had to endure much
In the tribe, he's a marked man by those who oppose the gospel
One man has openly said – "I have a spear in this hand for Brooks, and a spear in this hand for Paul"

Worse than that, is his wife – who has been so opposed to the gospel and his acceptance of it, that they've come to blows over it
And yet he perseveres, along with the other believers . . .
B/c they know whom they have believed, and that he's able to keep them and protect them, until the day of his return ***

God accepts that
And that's why I understand more than I ever have before, that God shows no favorites when it comes to his family, his kingdom
Light bulb moments for sure

I also *learned* some things, especially about missions – which provided a few more light bulb moments
Like the fact that . . .

THINGS I LEARNED

• **Missionary life is hard**

It doesn't matter whether you're in the jungles of PNG, or the over-crowded cities of South Asia . . .
Cross-cultural living is difficult, made all the more so by the remoteness of your location

Which is the case with Brooks and Nina
The best way I can describe their house, is to imagine Swiss Family Robinson in the middle of Jurassic Park (**4 photos**)
It's simple, functional, clean, and they've learned to manage it well

But there's no getting around the fact that it's hard ***
Made all the more so by the heat and humidity of the jungle . . .
And the loneliness at times, especially if your team members aren't there, which is the situation with them until August

- **Support teams are critical**

I'm referring to those people in Wewak at the New Tribes' base

They're the ones who fly the airplane, manage the supplies, check translations,
communicate via radio each day, and do all they can to encourage the missionaries
It takes a team to reach a tribe; It's a package deal

The same is true no matter where you go in the world – inner city or jungle swamp

Support teams are critical

- **Tribal people aren't dumb**

Oh, I never had that thought explicitly, but it was there as a preconceived notion

And it probably is with you, too

But nothing could be further from the truth

In fact, most of them are *very* wise

And they have to be, in order to survive in the jungle

The problems, dangers, and needs are too many to just muddle through

And not only wise, but some of them are very intelligent, despite their lack of formal education

Gloria is sharp; Paul is sharp; Mariana is sharp; Andrew is sharp

You can see it in the quickness of their responses

You can sense it in the depth of their questions

You can hear it in the choice of their words

- **Knowing that people are praying for you, makes all the difference in the world**

Not only did God *answer* your prayers for us . . .

But just *knowing* that you were praying, increased our confidence in his sovereignty
and control of the situation

I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt, that if anything happened – it was totally within
God's will

And that he would work it out for his glory / our good, no matter what initial circumst's

That's what prayer does (among other things)

It increases your confidence and trust in the sovereignty of God

And gives those for whom you pray, the freedom and courage and boldness – to speak,
act, and accomplish all that God wants

Which underscores the necessity, not only of praying for our Global Partners – but *telling*
them that we're doing so

It makes a world of difference – literally

- **If we're faithful to speak, God will give the words**

At the Men's Meeting on Saturday night, we talked for about 4 ½ hours from 8 p.m. to
12:30 a.m.

Most of which consisted of them asking me question after question, about everything
from marriage and baptism . . .

To the purpose of the Beatitudes, to what it means that we have died with Christ . . .

And anything else they could possibly think of – or at least it seemed like it

All from men, who at the most, were only 9 months in Christ

And God was bringing thoughts and Scriptures and especially illustrations to mind, that
I had no idea would speak so strongly to them

➤ Like toward the end of the night when the lantern batteries ran down, and the kerosene
lantern started leaking . . .

Brooks hooked up a light to a big battery – flooded the area with light

Just after that, we were talking about how to live as believers, among *unbelievers*

Mt 5:13-16 popped into my head on that note – where it says that as followers of Jesus
Christ, we are to be salt and light in this world

Salt, in that we are to enhance every situation we're in as followers of Jesus . . .

Just like salt enhances food; Unless it's spoiled and has lost its saltiness

An illustration that spoke volumes to them, b/c their food is bland and they put salt on
everything

And then I turned to the bright light that we had just hooked up, not knowing that
darkness is a huge issue in the jungle

Where on a cloudy night, you can't see your hand, let alone the creepy crawly's lurking
in the brush

Not to mention the fear of spirits that darkness brings for them from their old
animistic way of thinking

And I walked over to that light and said nobody hooks up a light like this, and then covers
it with their shirt – that's crazy

You hook it up so that it will shine, and shine brightly, and dispel the darkness

The same is true of our lives in Christ

We are to live them openly in a dark world, so as bring righteousness to bear on
unrighteousness

That all may see our good works, and glorify our Father in heaven

If we cover up our lights, nobody will see, and no glory will be given

To which I heard (sucking sound)

Which means – “ya, that; we resonate with that”

➤ Whether here or there – I learned that if we're faithful to speak, God will be faithful to
give the words

Light bulb moments for sure

So that now, *I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation* [in
every tribe, in every tongue] *anyone who fears him and does what is right is*
acceptable to him.