



Steadfast through struggles

WEWAK, Papua New Guinea: In a rickety tribal house several feet off the dirt ground, 130 Siawis continue to gather five days a week to hear God's Word in their own language.

Missionaries Tom Brendle and Jason Swanson had moved their makeshift podium so the people seated on logs on the ground below could see them. The rough bark floor of the meeting house sagged from the load.

“We are encouraged with the number of people who are asking questions,” wrote missionary Linda Krieg, who is translating portions of Exodus into Siawi, “and with the responses to the questions that Tom and Jason are asking.”

But several men who attended the first week of teaching were absent. They had gone to another village to buy a pig. Others were at home sick. A mumps epidemic had started when the teaching began.

The missionaries looked for Siawi believer Bayek, who two days ago did not come to the teaching. Tom later found him in his house with Sabien, Yeneb and Okweb, who had begun to make cuts on his wrists and forehead, according to an idol-worship tradition, with Bayek's consent.

How the missionaries pray for this believer who only recently returned to the Lord from a sinful lifestyle!

At the podium, Jason weighed each Siawi word.

Last week, he taught that angels are invisible, like the wind. The Siawis misunderstood and thought God's Word confirmed their traditional belief that angels travel on the wind.

Restless toddlers crawled between muddied feet. Fussing infants and rowdy dogs fought with Jason for the people's attention.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Rocks slammed against a side wall. Some came flying through the window. Yelling erupted. Arms and legs scrambled to get away from the window. Someone was hurling rocks and sticks at the meeting house.

Tom went after the culprit. The people exchanged whispered hypotheses.

It was Nowa. He was angry at some boys who destroyed the seat he made out of wooden scraps. Tom sat the belligerent boy down on a porch. He gave up trying to reason with him, bowed his head and prayed.

The people shuffled back into place. The air simmered down to a hush. God's Word is most important, Jason reminded them. He wrestled to focus on the teaching. This is why he and his wife, Shannon, and their three young children had come.



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From the meeting house, the missionaries could see Okweb standing in the distance, but within earshot of the teaching. Sabien was pacing up and down the village, swinging his machete.

“We don’t know what he was thinking as he walked back and forth,” Linda wrote. “But how we would desire for him to come and hear again about the God who loves him.”

Pray for Okweb, Sabien and Yeneb to be softened to hear God’s Truth.

Tom is teaching today. Pray for him and his wife, Danielle, with their three children.

“He will be trying to explain why God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness ...’” Linda wrote. “The Siawis don’t seem to have a problem with the Trinity, but explaining how man is like God is a difficult proposition.”

Please pray.