

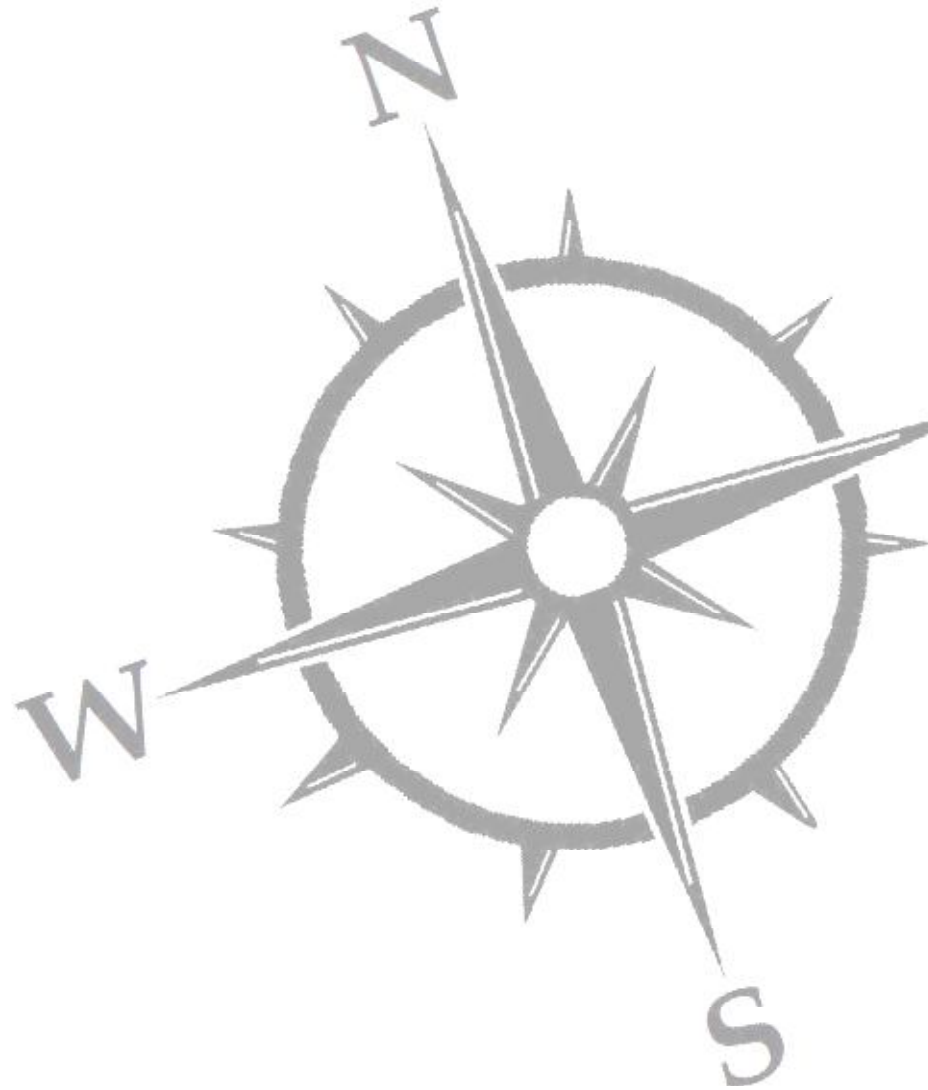
The Life of Cameron Townsend

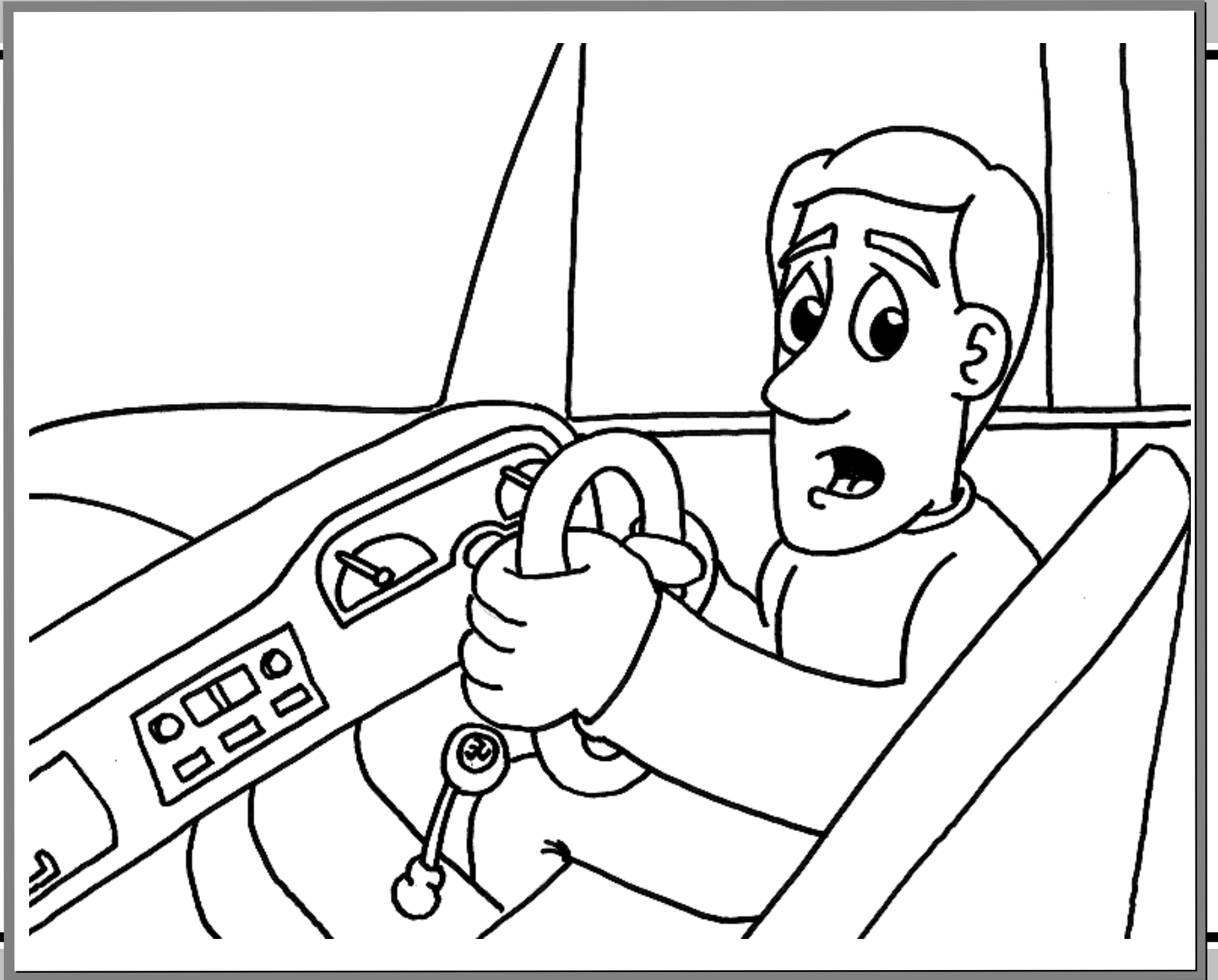
(1896-1982)

Lesson: 4.26 – Change Missionary Snapshot Series

This story reminds us that God can change the heart of even the worst sinner. God's wonderful gift of salvation will transform someone from God's enemy into God's child. God completely changes them. They are not just trying to live better or turning over a new leaf, they are completely new on the inside. Cameron Townsend watched God take those who were once God's enemies and transform them into His servants.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." - 2 Corinthians 5:17







Introduction:

Imagine driving at night with your mom and dad. Imagine coming around a corner and seeing that the bridge that went between two cliffs had fallen. If other people did not know that the bridge was out, they might drive off and be badly hurt or even killed. It would be best to drive back down the road and wave your hands and stop the other cars and warn them that the bridge was out ahead. Our story today is about a missionary to Central America. This missionary was trying to warn people that if they died without accepting Jesus they would have to go to a terrible place called Hell. Will they listen? Let's see what happens in this story about Cameron Townsend...

Missionary Story:

VROOM! VROOM! The engine revved up as I pressed the gas pedal of the car down harder. I looked in the rearview mirror of the car and saw big clumps of mud fly out from under the back wheels. I gripped the steering wheel tightly as my car and the big trailer I was pulling began to slide back

down the mountain towards the edge of the cliff down the muddy road behind us. I tried pressing the gas harder, but that only seemed to make us slide backward even faster. I tried pressing the brakes, but nothing was working. "Lord, please help us!" I prayed out loud as I watched us getting closer and closer to the edge of the cliff in the rearview mirror. Suddenly, with a loud thud and a grinding sound, the back wheel of the car slid off the edge. We all held our breath, waiting for the rest of the car to fall, but it didn't happen. Instead, the car teetered on the edge of the cliff with the back part of the car dangling three hundred feet above the ground below. "Very slowly, we need to all climb out of that side of the car," I told Elvira and Evelyn. As the car rocked back and forth, we carefully open the door and stepped out onto the muddy road. Once all three of us were out, we hugged each other closely.

As I stood there on the side of the road, I thought back to all that God had taught me here in Central America. I remembered back to when I first came here. I had only been in Guatemala for a few weeks and was still getting used to the heat and heavy rains, the beans and tortillas to eat, and the rough trails that you had to walk on to get anywhere. I remembered going out that first day to try and talk with the people about Jesus. Mr. Bishop was a veteran missionary here and had encouraged me to try out the Spanish I had learned. I remembered noticing an older man walking towards me on the side of the road, by the time he was close enough to speak to me, my heart was beating so fast that I couldn't get any words out. Frustrated,

I turned around and tried to catch up to the man, but once again couldn't bring myself to say anything. "Lord, I need you to help me here," I prayed silently. Then I thought of something. Maybe asking them "Do you know the Lord Jesus?" would be a good way to start a conversation. I reviewed my Spanish: the word "Lord" in Spanish is "Señor" and Jesus is pronounced "Hay-SOOS." As I came around the next corner, I saw a young man who was about my age. I walked up to him and said "Excuse me, but do you know Señor Jesús?" The young man smiled and said, "I wish that I could help you, but I am a stranger in this town too and I don't know who that man is or where he lives." I stood there confused for a second, but then I realized that "señor" was also the word for "mister" and "Jesús" was a common boy's name there too. The young man had thought I was looking for a Mr. Jesus living in Guatemala! "Not a very good first day as a missionary," I said as I walked back to the mission.

Little did I know that God had more that He wanted to teach me and something special that He wanted me to do. I remembered another time where I was handing out tracks near the border of El Salvador. "Do you have one in Cakchiquel?" an Indian man asked. Cakchiquel was the main language of one of the Cakchiquel Indian tribes who lived here. "There are not any," I said, "I am sorry!" The man shook his head and said, "well, if your God is so great, why can't He speak my language?" Sadly, I had no answer for the man.

Another time, I was selling Spanish





Bibles in San Antonio. I went into a beer garden, which was an open grassy area where men sat drinking alcohol. “Would anyone like to buy a Bible or take a tract?” I said. Most of the men turned and faced the other way, some made mean comments, but one Cakchiquel man stood up and walked over to me. “Would you like a tract?” I asked. The man shook his head. “Nah, I would take one,” he said, “but what is the point? I can’t read it.” As I continued, I wondered how I could share Jesus with these people. Ten minutes later, I heard someone running up behind me. I turned to see that it was the same man who had just refused the tract in the beer garden. “Wait,” the man yelled waving his arms, “I just remembered I have a friend who can read. Sell me one of your Bibles.” I smiled and handed the man a Bible. “Why don’t you come to the chapel on Sunday morning?” I said, “I will be speaking and will look out for you. What is your name?” The man took the Bible and told me that his name was Tiburcio.

The following Sunday as I looked through the crowd, I spotted Tiburcio sitting

near the back of the room. He looked a little uncomfortable, but I was excited that he had come.

The service lasted for an hour. When my sermon was over, I asked if anyone wanted to become a Christian. Tiburcio jumped to his feet and rushed up to the front of the room. “Yes, I do,” he said in a loud clear voice. For many years after that, I prayed for Tiburcio, but only much later did I learn what truly happened to him. Tiburcio was a heavy drinker and was often drunk. But after accepting Jesus that day, he was never drunk again. His wife was very happy with the changes in him, but his friends were not. His friends were angry with him and even threatened to hurt him, but Tiburcio would not give up his new faith. He began paying off his debts and soon got a good job. He never got tired of telling people about all that Jesus had done for him.

When I heard that story, I remembered back to wandering into that beer garden and speaking with him that first time. God had worked such a miracle in that man’s life. Many more Cakchiquel Indians needed to hear about Jesus! Just like Tiburcio though, many of the Indian peoples couldn’t speak or read Spanish at all. They had their own languages, hundreds of different tribal languages, and they each needed a Bible in their own language! I was determined to give each of these people a Bible in their own language so that they could understand how much God loved them.

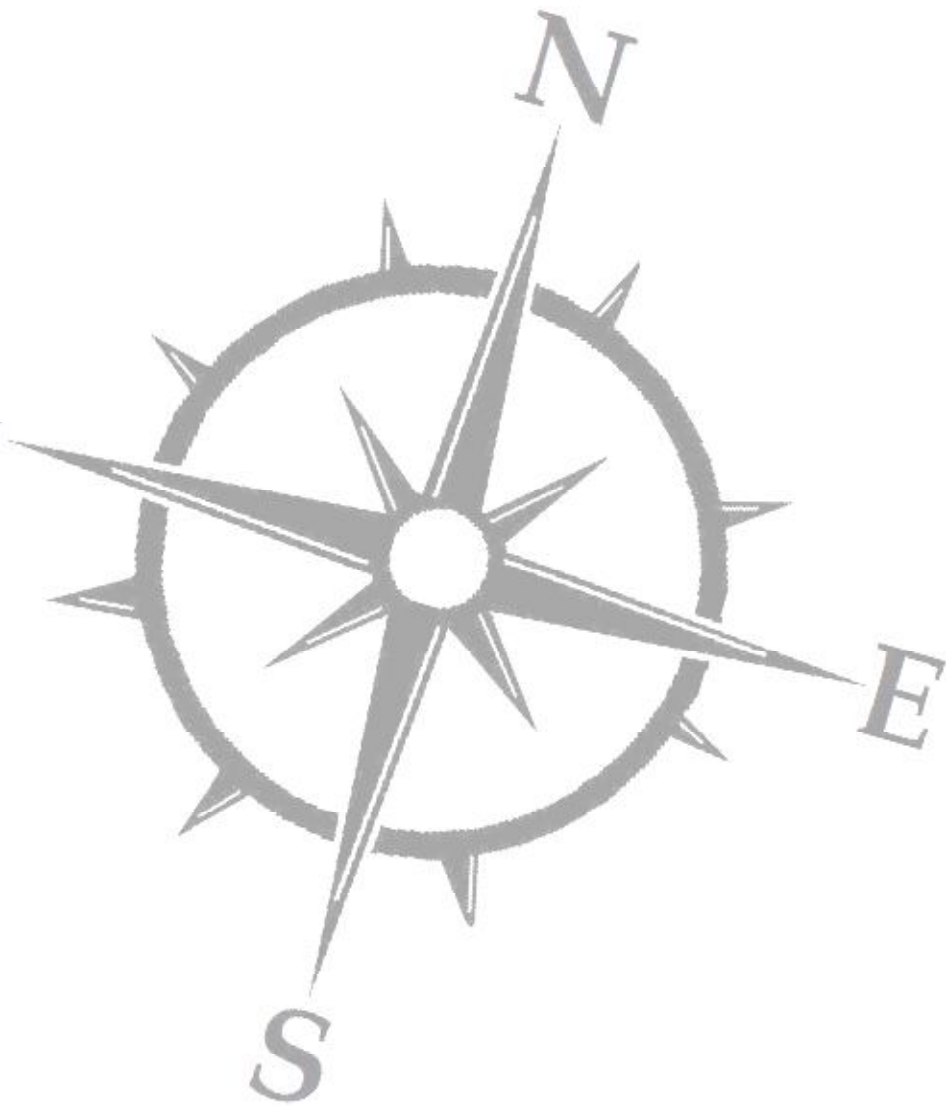
Application:

You know, boys and girls, Ezekial

36:26-27 tells us that God can save even the worst of sinners. He can change our dirty hearts and make them clean and new through His salvation. Some people are afraid to tell others about the Lord. Cameron Townsend was not afraid to tell people about Jesus. Cameron knew that no heart was too sinful for God to be able to save them. But how would the people know that they were sinners in need of a Savior if they didn’t have a Bible?

Cameron Townsend worked in Central America for nearly 35 years. Cameron started three ministries: Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Summer Institute of Linguistics to train people to translate the Bible, and the Jungle Aviation and Radio Service. These ministries are still making an impact today. Because of Cameron’s efforts, and the work of the ministries he founded, the entire Bible has been translated into hundreds of native languages. Over 1,000 people groups have a New Testament in their own tongue. By 2025, Wycliffe Bible Translators hope to have started a translation project in every language group around the world. Cam’s Jungle Aviation Service allowed missionaries to reach remote tribes across Central and South America. Many great missionary pilots like Nate Saint and Betty Greene worked for this ministry. Cam was determined that everyone everywhere had the Good News in their own language!

*(For additional information, discussion questions and materials on this lesson please refer to lesson 4.24 on **page 90** in your India Expedition - Leader's Guide.)*



References

For further reading or to obtain more information on this portion of the life of this missionary, please consult the following sources from which we obtained our information:

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