

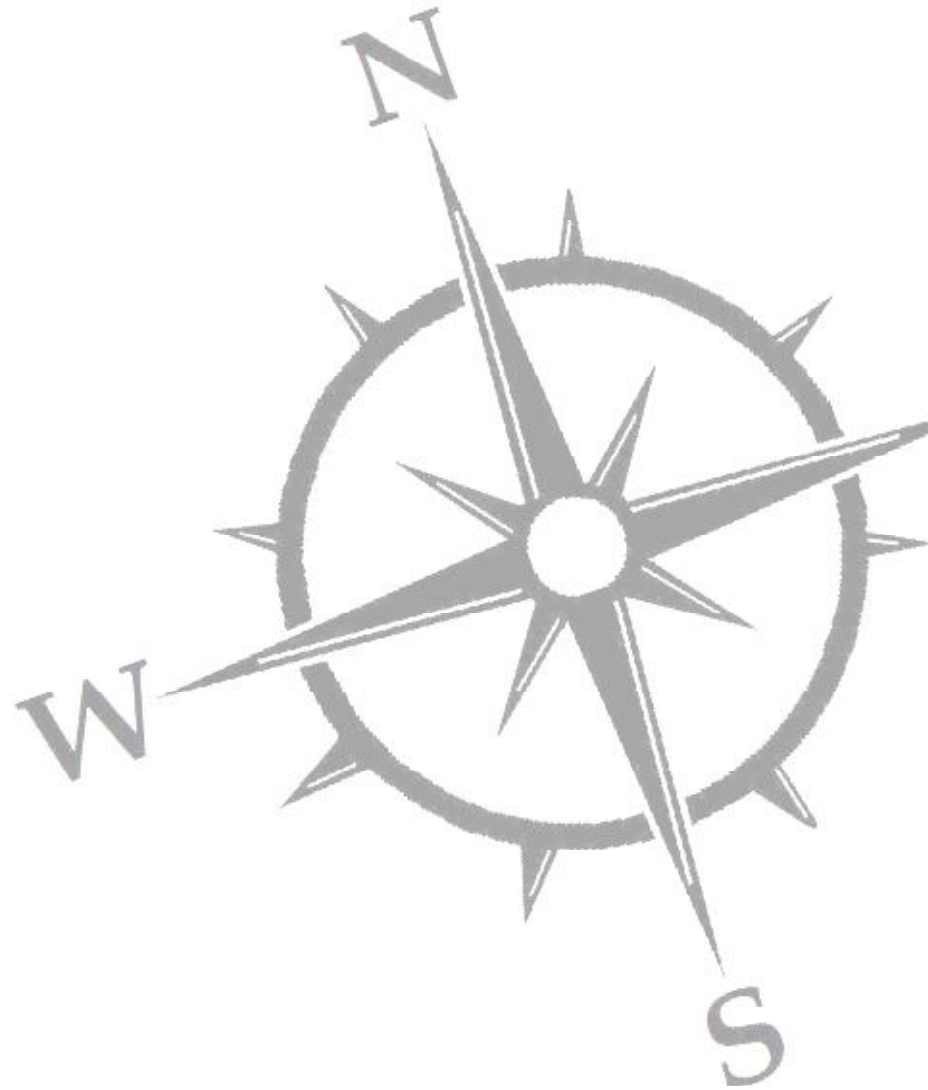
The Life of John Paton

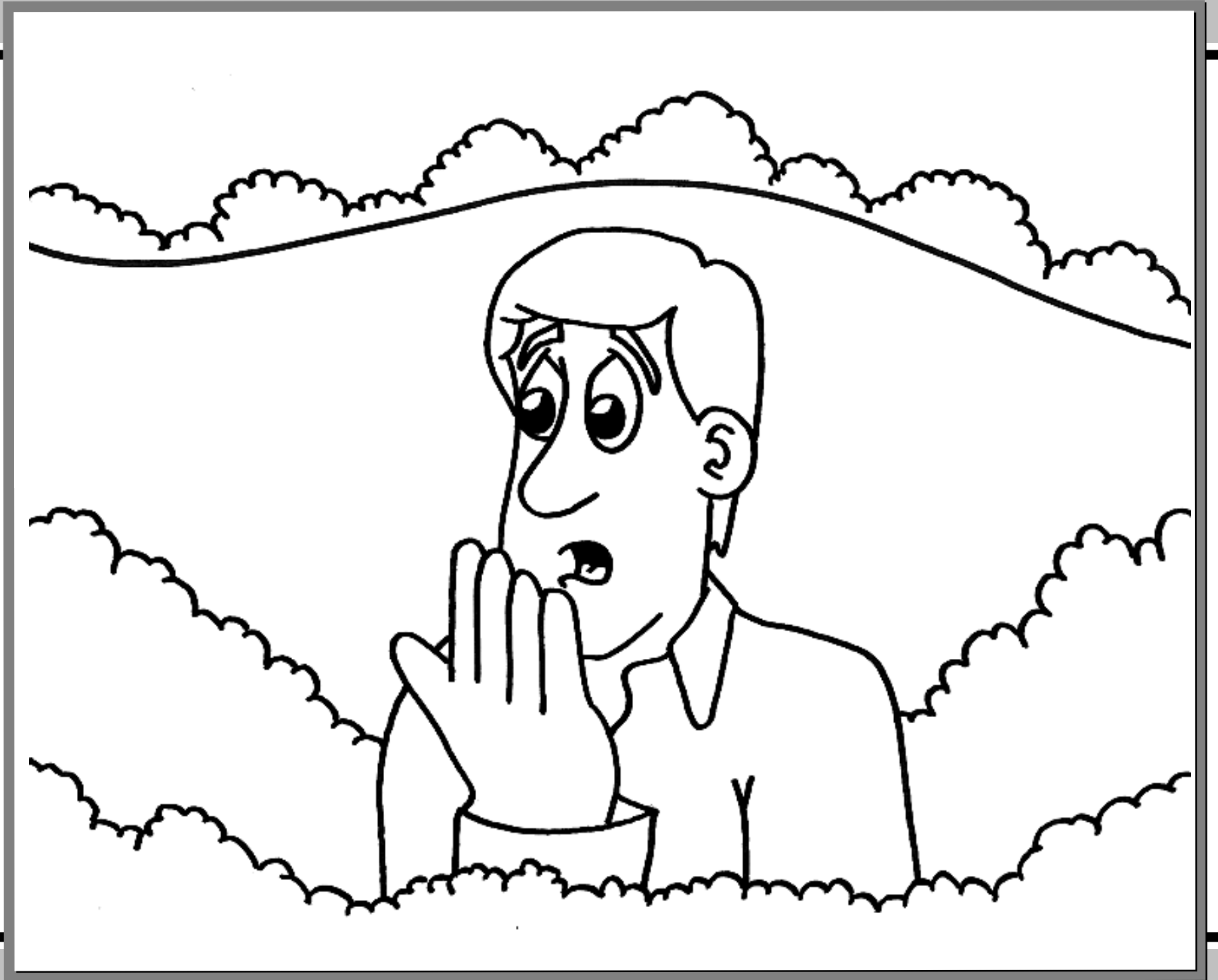
(1824-1907)

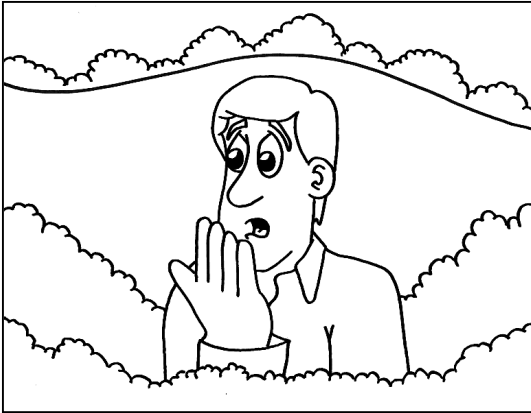
Lesson: 3.9 – Proclaim Missionary Spotlight Series

This story reminds us of the importance of witnessing to the unsaved. Salvation is free to all, but many have never understood its message. Go and tell the good news to all people. John Paton knew that the gospel message about Jesus was the most important message for the world to hear.

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” - 2 Corinthians 4:3-4







Who remembers where we left off last week?

(Read the last paragraph from last week's lesson to begin this lesson as a review).

God had brought a rainstorm right in the nick of time to put out the fires and scare off the Tanna warriors. The following morning, the warriors began their war cries again, but then became suddenly silent. I crept out of my house and crawled on my belly up to a small ledge to take a look around. I peered through the reeds to try to figure out what was going on. And then I spotted it... a ship! I jumped to my feet, grabbed a blanket, and tied it to a stick, ran back outside, and waved it over my head. It wasn't long before I was shaking Captain Hastings' hand. "We were told to get you all away from here if we found you alive," he said.

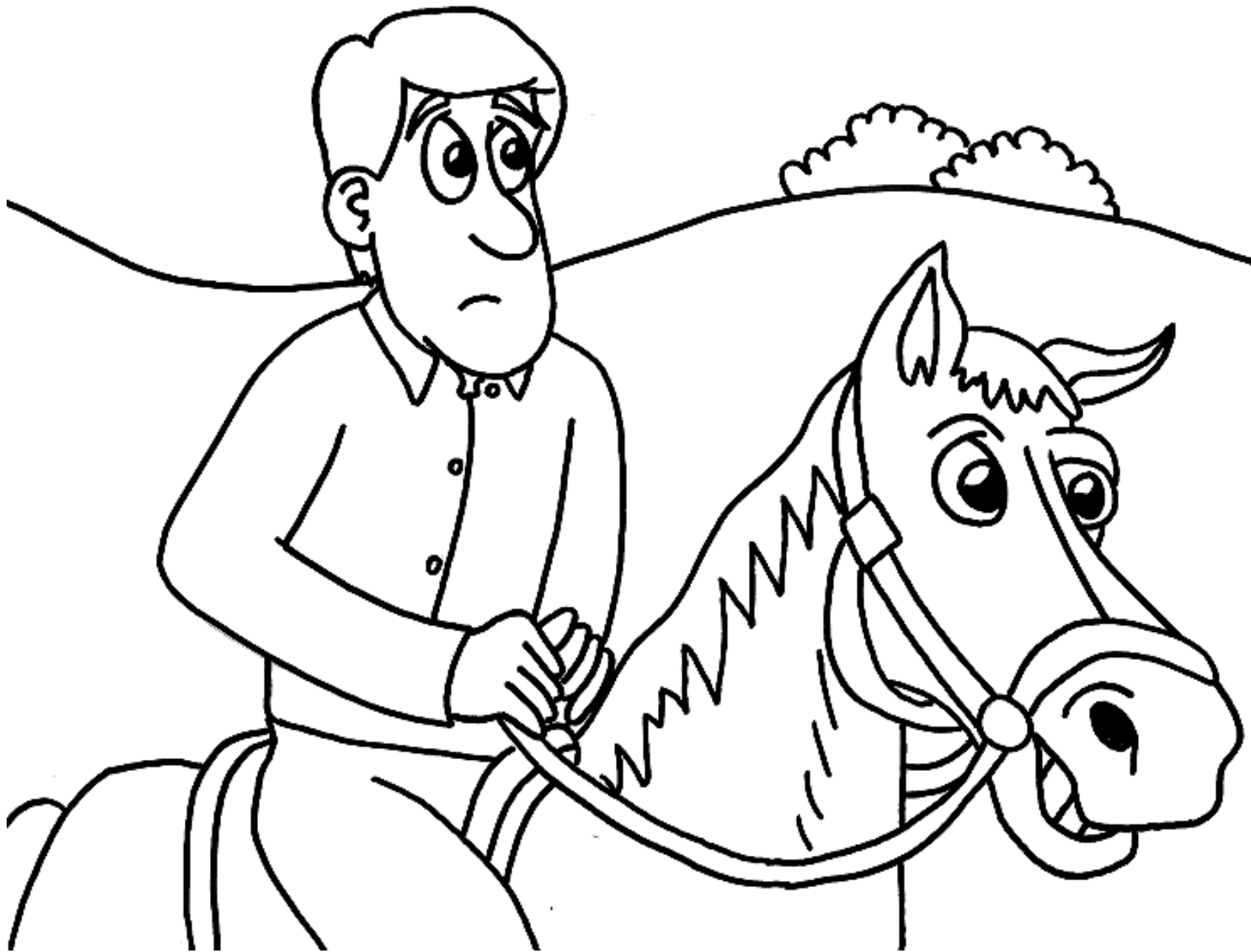
Twenty men from Anatom helped to load the rest of the Mathiesons' supplies onto the ship. "Should we travel around to your

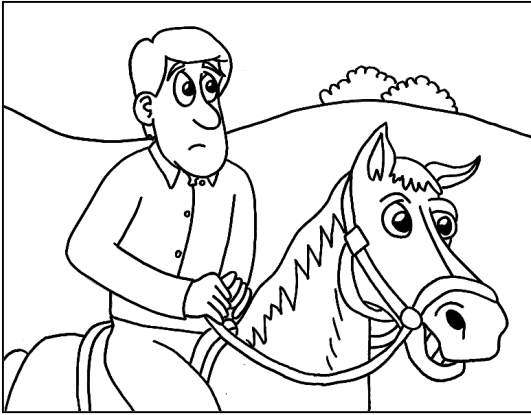
house as well?" Captain Hastings asked. I was certain that my house had been looted and destroyed by Miaki and others by this time. At least I had my Bible and the books that I had translated into Tannese with me. Soon, the ship was headed back to Anatom. Dr. Geddie took one look at me and told me I needed to go to Australia for some rest. "There is a great need for Christians in Australia to hear about the work on the islands, John," he said. "We need money for a ship to travel between the islands and reach these people for Christ!" I knew that he was right.

I climbed on board the ship, and after many days, I found myself in the busy city of Sydney in the cold winter. One Sunday, I saw a bunch of children going into a church. I followed them and asked the Pastor if I could speak to everyone after the service. The children listened very closely to my stories of life on the island of Tanna. The adults listened too. I told them about the cruel way the islanders lived and that they needed someone to tell them that Jesus died for their sins. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a ship so that missionaries and supplies could be taken to many other islands just like Tanna?" I asked. The people were excited to help. Before long, I was asked to speak all over Sydney and southern Australia. I showed the people some of the stone idols and weapons of Tanna. I even came up with the idea that everyone who gave money for our ship became a part-owner. We even gave them a certificate showing they were part of the great shipping company for Jesus. Everything seemed to be

going well.

Though things were going well, I did run into a couple of problems along the way. One of the places I spoke was a farm that was nine miles away. I tried to hire a horse, but couldn't find one available to rent, so I decided to walk. I threw my bag of stone idols and weapons over my shoulder and set off. Before long, the trail became a muddy mess, and my shoes began to get stuck. I climbed over a fence and began walking through a plowed field. I got chased by a dog and finally made it back to a road. I was glad to see some men coming towards me. They told me they were going to free a farmer's cow that was stuck in the mud, but pointed to a light in the distance. "Go over the fence and head straight for that light," they said. I thanked them and headed off. By now it was getting dark. The mud wasn't just at my ankles; it was now stuck up to my knees. Each step seemed to make me sink deeper into the swamp. What's worse, I couldn't see the light anymore and wasn't even sure which way to go. I shouted for help, but there was no reply. At midnight, I thought I heard men's voices. I shouted for help, and before long, two men arrived with a rope. "We've got to get you out of here, or you'll be dead by morning," one of the men said. They threw a rope to me and told me to tie it around my waist. Before long, they had pulled me out, and I arrived at the farm a dripping, muddy mess. The farmer and his family were kind and welcomed me into their home. The next day, I shared with many people from surrounding farms about Tanna and the need for the ship.





A couple of days later, a young lady said that I could borrow her horse to get to the next town, which was twenty-two miles away. I thanked her as I was supposed to speak at a church there. This was my first time riding a horse, and it was not as easy as it looked. A friend rode with me for the first mile. "Follow the arrows that are cut into the tree trunks, and you'll find your way easily," he said before turning to head back home. I trotted on slowly. Before long, three other riders came up behind me. "Relax a little and let the horse trot a little faster," one of them said, "you'll find it a lot easier to ride if you go faster. Besides, there is a storm coming, and you want to stay ahead of the rain." I told them that I was not used to riding a horse and that I felt a lot safer going slowly. They laughed and shook their heads. They rode on ahead and soon were out of sight.

BOOM! The men were right about the storm. As the thunder crashed around me, my horse was spooked. He lay back his ears and raced off down the path. I couldn't control him. The men were right again that moving faster was easier to ride, but going

this fast was a little scary. I soon caught up to the three men and went racing past them. I must have looked like quite a sight, covered in rain and mud and clinging for dear life to the back of the horse. We came out of the forest, and the horse continued to sprint up a large slope. Ahead, I could see a large house with a family sitting on the front porch. They were expecting the missionary to arrive soon. Surely this wild man on a runaway horse couldn't be him... or could it? A brave young stable boy ran out, opened the gate, and grabbed hold of the horse's bridle as we came by and slowed him down. I fell off the horse, and the world was spinning. The family seemed surprised that I was indeed the missionary who was coming to speak to them. My clothes were soaked, and the farmer let me borrow his suit, which was way too big for me. As I got up to speak that night, I told everyone the funny story of my wild horse ride, and everyone had a good laugh about it.

After being in Australia for a little over a year, I had raised over five thousand pounds, which was more than enough to build our ship. Then one day, a letter arrived from the mission back home. "We have heard what a great speaker you are. You must return to London and Scotland and tell the churches here about Tanna and the need for more missionaries," the letter said. Before long, I found myself back in London, getting on a train bound for Scotland. I was excited to see my family once again. It had been a very long time since I had seen them. I traveled around Scotland and spoke in many places, telling the people about Tanna and

the need for missionaries to go there. Each place I spoke reminded me of how much I missed being in Tanna myself. While I had been in Sydney, a couple from Scotland had helped me out quite a bit. When I got back to Scotland, I met the woman's sister, Margaret. Very soon, we both knew that God had brought us together, and we got married. Margaret was excited to return to the islands with me. In October 1864, we set sail for Australia. About 3 months later, we arrived in Sydney, where I was excited to see our new ship, the *Dayspring*, which had been completed while we were away. It was a fine ship that would serve us well. We also had another wonderful surprise. God blessed us with a healthy baby boy named Freddie.

Though I wanted to go back to Tanna, the mission decided that it was not safe for me to go there. Instead, they sent me to the smaller nearby island of Aniwa. The people of Aniwa spoke a different language than the people of Tanna. I kept my ears open as they spoke and tried to figure out what they were saying. It took me some time, but finally, I was beginning to understand what the Aniwa people were saying. One of the chiefs, Chief Namakei, seemed very interested in what I was doing. He often came and talked with me.

As I started to build a house, some of the people came out to help. One day, I ran out of nails. I grabbed a smooth piece of wood and wrote a note on it to my wife. "I need something. Will you take this to my wife?" I asked Chief Namakei. "But what do you need?" he asked me in return. "The wood will tell her what I need," I said to the





chief. Chief. The Chief got an angry look on his face. “Whoever heard of wood speaking?” he said with disgust. “The marks I have made on the wood are the names of the things that I need,” I explained, “take this to her, and you will see what she does when she looks at the wood.”

A few minutes later, Chief Namakei came back with the nails and an amazed look on his face. “The wood does speak,” he said. I explained to Chief Namakei that just like the wood spoke through the markings, God has also spoken to us through markings in a book called the Bible. I explained that I had come to Aniwa to share God’s markings and message with the people of Aniwa.

Soon our house was finished, and we had moved in. Then, I started working on another problem on Aniwa. Just like on Tanna, the people had very little freshwater. I decided that I must dig a well for them. “Rain comes from the sky, not from the ground,” Chief Namakei said, shaking his head. I explained that God has put water up in the sky, but He has also put water beneath the ground. “We will dig a deep hole right

here. Once we find the water, your people will be able to freely take it and will no longer have to pay the witch doctor for water.”

“Anyone who helps me dig this well today can have one of my sharp, metal fish hooks,” I said. I was glad to see some of the men pick up tools and begin helping me to dig the well. After a little while, a scream came from down in the hole. I jumped to my feet and rushed over to look inside. We had already dug about twelve feet down. The scream came from one of the men in the hole. One of the walls had caved in just a little bit. A small amount of dirt had fallen around one of the men’s feet in the well. “The Earth gods are angry at what you are doing and will judge you,” someone said. The people became very scared and refused to help me dig anymore.

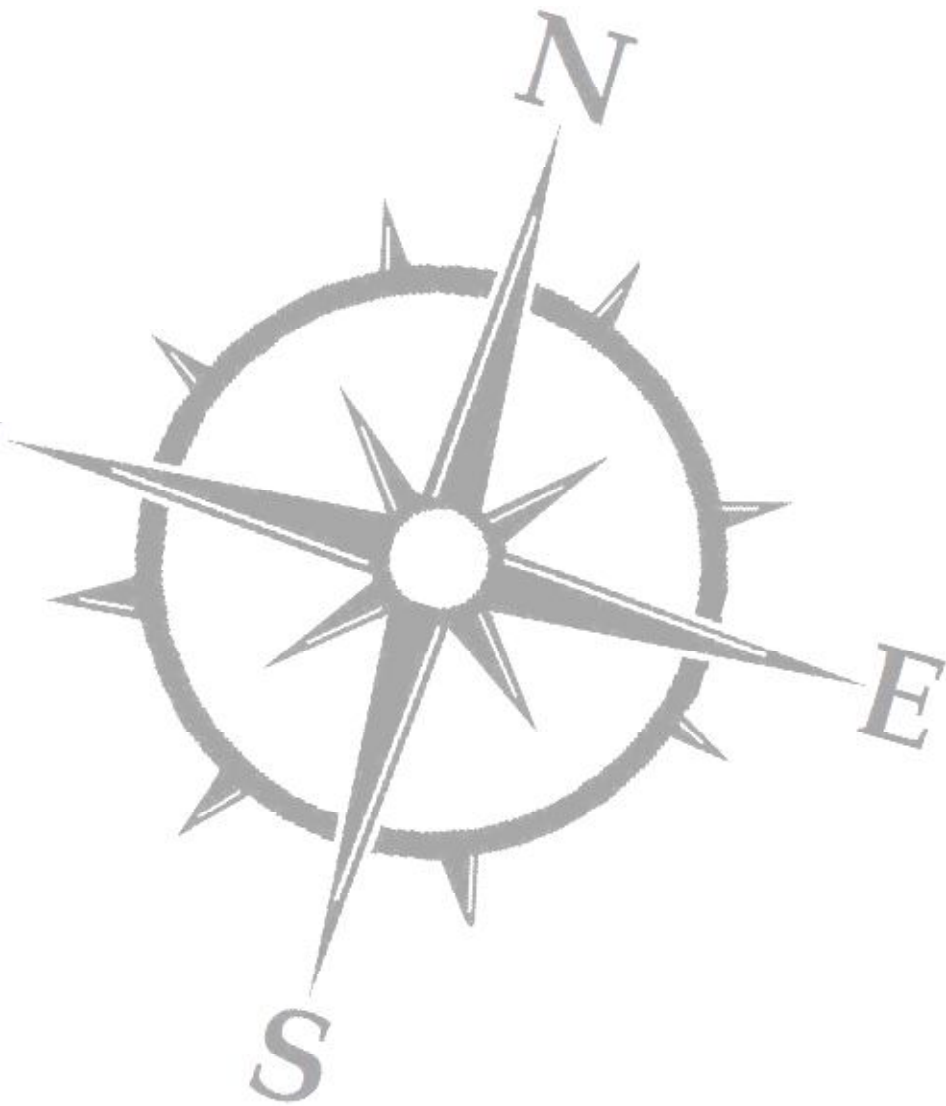
“If you will not help me, I will dig alone,” I told the people. All that day, I dug the hole. On the second and third days, I continued to dig all by myself. The people watched me from a little distance away. At the end of the third day, the hole was about thirty feet deep. Suddenly, water started to pour in around my feet. I was so excited that I could hardly keep my cup steady as I scooped up a cup full. Even though the water was filled with dirt and mud, I could tell that it was sweet and fresh. I gave a cup to Chief Namakei. “Rain does come from the ground,” the chief shouted, “no god of Aniwa has ever helped us in this way.” I could tell the Aniwans were puzzled. No one had ever offered to help them. It wasn’t long before Chief Namakei asked Jesus to save

him from his sins. I was excited to see that God was beginning to work in Aniwa.

One day, I noticed a pile of green coconut leaves lying out behind our mission house. Every morning, there seemed to be more and more leaves. “What is going on?” I wondered. Later that night, there was a loud banging on the door. “Open the door,” a voice rang out, “something terrible is about to happen!”

What do you think is going to happen? To find out, come back next time.

*(For additional information, discussion questions, and materials on this lesson, please refer to **lesson 3.9** on **page 136** in your Vanuatu Expedition - Leader's Guide).*



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