

The Life of

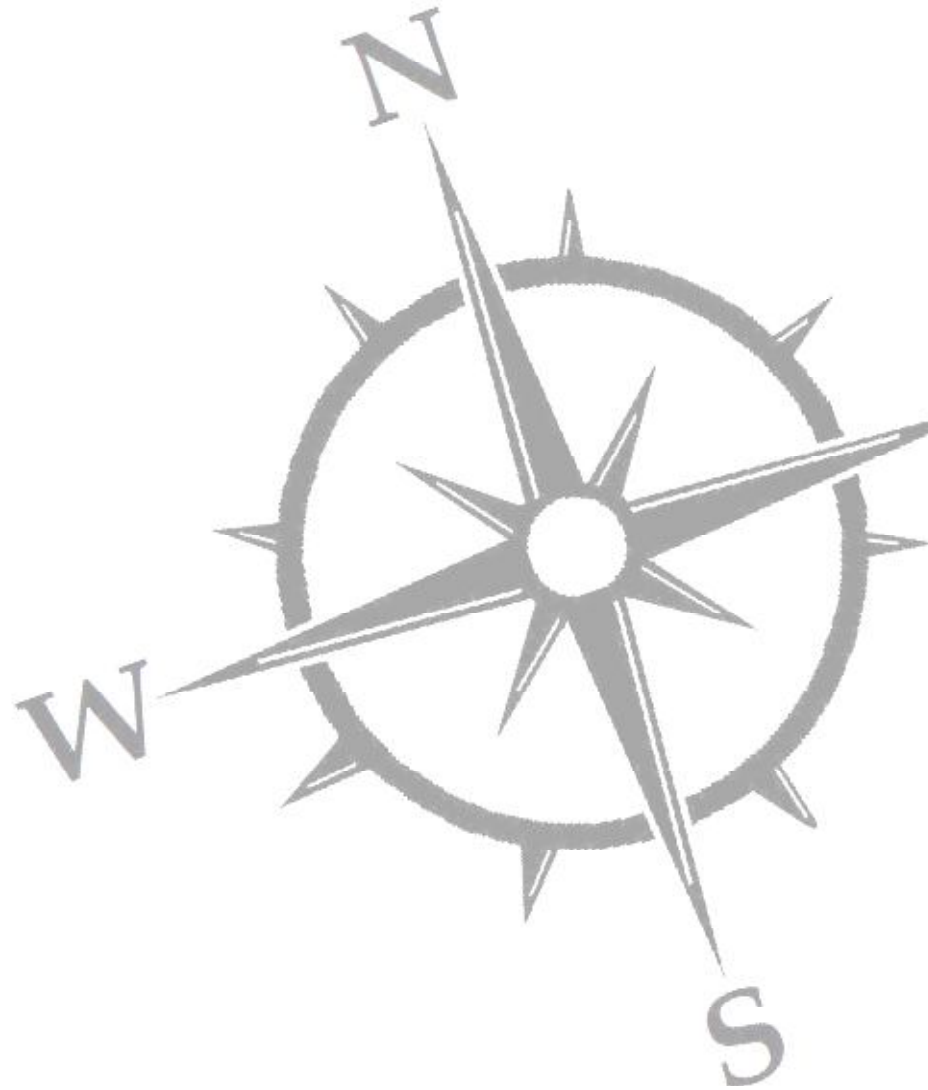
John Paton

(1824-1907)

Lesson: 3.3 – Lost Missionary Spotlight Series

This story reminds us of how important the soul of each sinner is to God. God loves the world and desires for everyone to be saved. The angels rejoice over every person who is saved. God had some big plans for John Paton, but John also needed to learn some things first. The first thing God wanted John to see was that he was lost and needed to be found.

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” – Luke 19:10







“You must go now,” one of my native friends said as he burst into my hut. He stopped only a second to catch his breath. “I have heard about their plans! They plan to kill you! They are coming here right now,” he continued. “You must leave now!” In a flash, I was running through the wild bush and trees that surrounded my hut. The hot sun caused beads of sweat to run down my face and into my eyes, but I could not stop. I had to find somewhere safe. I decided to head to a nearby village where one chief had been friendly towards me. I prayed for protection and started towards the village. Not long after, I came to a clearing in the trees and saw the roofs of the village huts. I weaved my way through the village to the Chief’s hut. Chief Nookamara had a worried look on his face. “The warriors who search for you might kill my people trying to find you,” He said. “My son will take you to a safe place... There you must hide until the moon rises.” Before I could even ask a question, Chief Nookamara’s son was there, and I soon found myself running quickly behind him. Finally, we stopped at the

bottom of a very tall Chestnut tree. This tree reminded me of the kind of trees that I used to climb back in Scotland. “Up there you will be safe,” the boy said as he turned to run back to his village.

I began to climb and soon was very high up in the tree. I made myself a hiding spot by cutting and pulling some branches together. Then I sat and waited. In the distance, I could hear the screams and war cries that warriors on the island make when they are about to fight. It seemed like fighting was all these people ever did. “If only they would understand that Jesus can heal and change their sinful hearts,” I thought to myself.

After a little while, my legs began to cramp. I was just about to move my leg when suddenly I heard voices down below. “The fire god will punish us unless we find the mission man,” the leader said. I peered through the leaves of my hiding spot and spotted the leader with red, white, and black paint on his face. There were several warriors with him. Each one held a sharp spear that flashed in the sunlight. They looked all around. Then one of them looked up right at me. I sat very still, hoping that he would not spot me hiding behind the leaves. Finally, after what seemed like forever, the warrior looked away, and soon afterward, they all ran off. I let out a sigh. At least I was safe for right now. I looked over and saw that the sun was still high in the sky. It would be quite a while until the moon rose.

I stretched my leg and rubbed it, trying to get rid of the cramp, and then leaned back against the tree, remembering

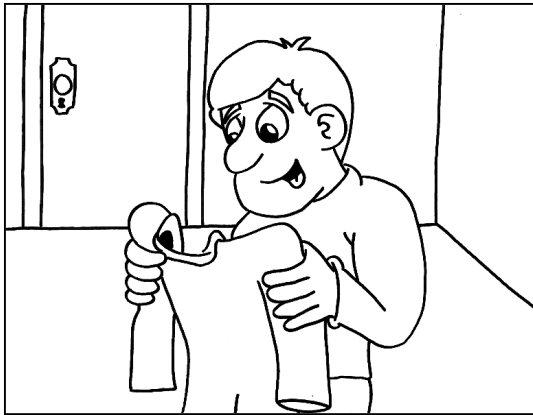
back to when I was just a young boy in the town of Torthorwald, which is in the southern part of Scotland. I would often climb trees just like this one right outside of our village and sit and look at our village and our home. Our cottage was the first one you came to on the road into our village. It was a small cottage, and yet all ten of my brothers and sisters and I managed to squeeze into it. One end of our cottage was the living area where my mother made the meals, and where our beds were. The other end of the cottage was where father’s big wooden frames were, where he worked day after day making stockings.

My parents loved the Lord. I remembered gathering around the table each night after dinner as my father read from the Bible and then talked to God. My father’s deep voice made God seem so near. I always looked forward to my father saying my name as he prayed for each one of us. I just knew God was listening to him.

“I’m so hungry,” one of my little sisters said one day. “I know,” one of my brothers chimed in, “it has only been one day without food, and my stomach hurts!” Mother hugged him and spoke quietly, “You know that your father has a long walk into town,” she said, “once he has sold all of his stockings, he will bring us back money and food. God will provide all that we need, my dears.”

“Does God care about us?” I wondered. That night, as my mother tucked us in, she told us something. “I have told the Lord all about our problem and asked Him to send us plenty to eat. I know that we can





I talked some more with my mother and realized that even though I was a pretty good kid, I still was a sinner, and I too needed Jesus to save me from my sins. I, too, wanted to pray to God like my mother and father and know that He would hear me and answer my prayers. That night, I prayed and asked the Lord to save me. My father came home early the next morning and was excited to hear the news about how God had taken care of us. He was even more excited later that evening when I told him that I had asked Jesus to save me from my sins.

It wasn't long before school started up again. As I walked towards the schoolhouse, I noticed all the other boys in their fancy new suits. I looked down at my scuffed-up boots, my baggy socks, and my pants that had more patches than actual clothes, and wished that I too could have nice clothes like those boys from the wealthy families. Later that week, my mother noticed as well and said, "John, I just don't know how you will be able to wear that suit one more day." My father gave me a pat on the back, "John, we'll pray and ask the Lord to provide you with a new suit." For the next several nights, when father prayed, he asked God to provide a new suit for me.

A couple of weeks went by. Then one night, while father was praying, I heard the latch of the door of the cottage open and shut. When my father finished praying, I ran over to the door and found a large bundle there. I opened it and found a suit that was just my size. "God hears our prayers," mother said. The next day at school, I proudly took my seat. "That's a very nice

suit," the schoolmaster said with a grin. I excitedly told the schoolmaster all about how father had prayed, and the mysterious package had arrived. Only much later did I learn that my schoolmaster had been the one to buy and drop off that new suit for me.

Though the schoolmaster was kind, he also had a bad temper and many times would punish me for not doing anything wrong. One time, he whacked me with his cane several times just for my pencil falling off my desk. I remember begging my parents that night not to make me go back. "But you love to read," my father had said, "you should stick with it." However, the very next day, the schoolmaster gave me several more whacks with the cane for making one mistake out of thirty questions. I ran out of the school and ran all the way home. When I got to the door, I heard my parents' voices inside talking about the school. I wondered what they would say. I went in and told my parents what had happened.

My dad walked over and picked up a large apron. "It will be hard work on the looms," he began, "We work fourteen hours a day with only two breaks!" He looked down at the large apron in his hands. "And your mother will surely have to cut this apron down a little. Would you like that, John?" I smiled. "Oh, thank you, father," I said. "At least I'll never be late for work," I said, glancing at the other side of the room where my bed was. My father and mother both laughed, and I began my first day of work.

I worked hard learning to use and repair the looms. In my free time, I studied Greek and Latin. "Why do you do all that

trust Him," she said. I wondered if God had heard my mother's request. I thought about it until my eyes were very heavy and I fell asleep.

The next morning, we hurried to the table only to see that it was still empty. Before any of us could say anything, though, we heard the loud sounds of a horse cart pulling up in front of the cottage. That sound meant only one thing... Granddad had sent us some food! We all helped to unload the sacks of potatoes, flour, cheese, and other items and take them into the cottage. It wasn't long before my mother had made a fine meal. Later that night, I sat with my mother by the fire. "Mother, how did Granddad know we needed food today? And how were you so sure God would help us?"

"Because I've seen God take care of us before... time and time again, John," she said. She then told me stories about her dad and how he worked as a blacksmith. "I was always amazed watching my father work at how strong he was," mother said, "Yet when he talked about how Jesus had saved him from his sins, he would get tears in his eyes."





to and from town, practicing my Greek and Latin. Things went well at my job, and I enjoyed learning how to draw, measure, and make maps. I was sure a skill like this would be very helpful to me someday. On top of that, with the money that I was making, it would be no time at all before I had what I needed to go to college.

One morning, I was surprised when someone told me that the boss wanted to see me in his office. “We are very impressed with you, John,” he began. “We want to offer you an even better job. How would you like that?” I was surprised to hear this and very excited to hear what he had to say. “For this job, we will send you to London for some special training. Taking this job would lead you to a well-respected position. You will be paid by the government for your training, but it will also mean that you will need to sign up to work with us for seven more years.”

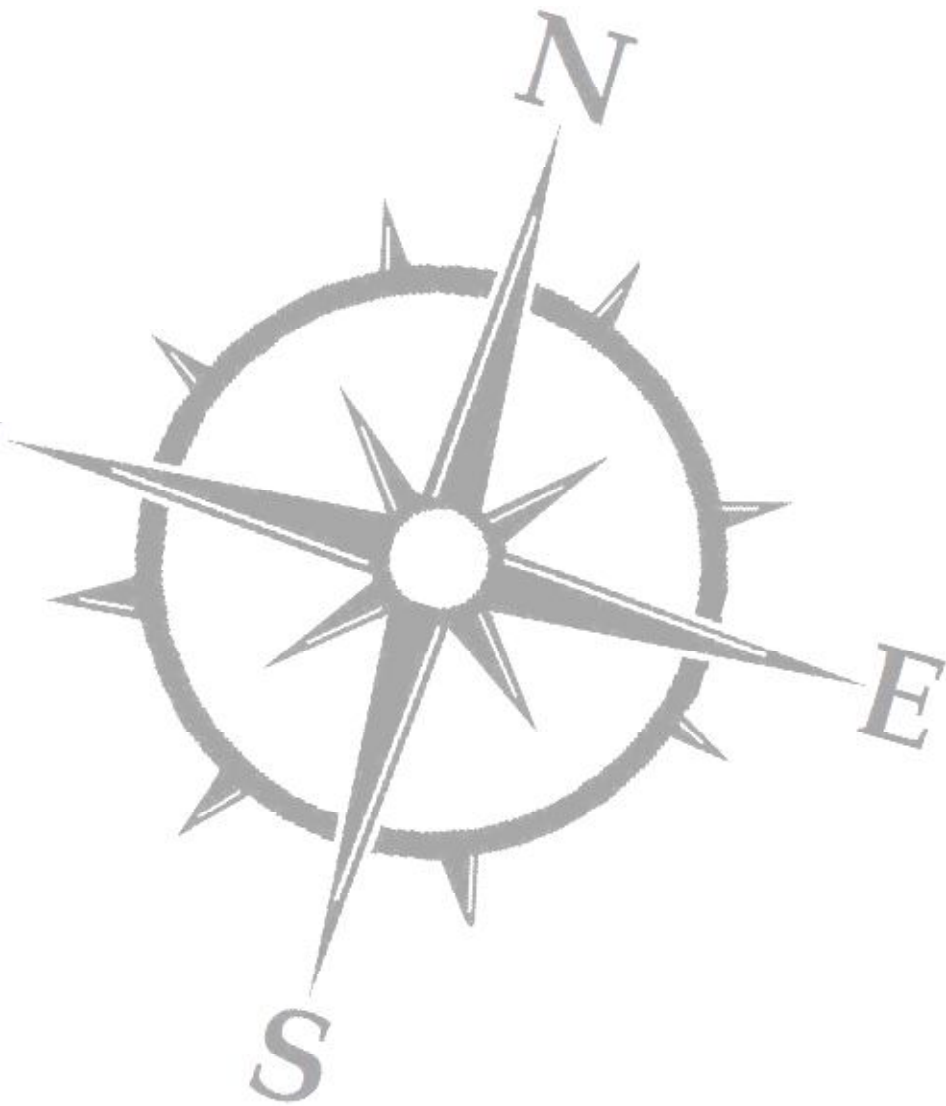
“Seven years?” When he said that, I got a small lump in my throat. “Sir,” I began, “that is a very kind offer, but I cannot promise to stay for seven years... you see, I already made a promise to someone else.” My boss frowned and shut the book on his desk with a loud thud. “What do you mean... who have you made a promise to?” he said. I told him that several years before, I had given my life to the Lord to become a missionary and tell people all about Jesus. My boss wrinkled his face and stood up at his desk. “You fool,” he said, “this is a wonderful opportunity! Either you accept this job that I am offering you, or as of this moment, you are fired.” I put my head down. What was I going to do?

studying?” my little brother, Walter, asked me one night. “Walter, I have read about places where the people have no Bible. The people live each day in fear of the witch doctors and the curses that they might put on them. They need to hear that Jesus loves them. I want to go to a place like that someday and help the people as a missionary.” Walter thought that sounded great, but he asked what I would need to do to become a missionary.

I explained that becoming a missionary meant that I needed more schooling. To get more schooling would mean I needed to have a better-paying job to pay for it. My father had just recently told me about a job making maps in the nearby town of Dumfries. Having that job would mean a four-mile walk into town each day, and a four-mile walk home each night. I applied and was offered the job! Some people may not have liked to walk that far each day, but I was happy because I knew that this would give me even more time to study. It didn’t take long before people got used to the strange sounds that I made each day walking

What do you think John will decide to do? Will he accept the job, or will he be fired? To find out, come back next time.

*(For additional information, discussion questions, and materials on this lesson, please refer to **lesson 3.3** on **page 136** in your *Vanuatu 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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