

# Praying For the Doa

Last year I spent three weeks in the uttermost part of the earth—the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya.

Located on the western half of the island of New Guinea, Irian Jaya is nearly all jungle with less than 100 miles of roads in the province—an area twice the size of the state of Georgia. The last leg of my flight was in a single-engine plane over 200 miles of impenetrable jungle to a tiny airstrip hacked out of the trees.

While at the missionary compound, I read a survey report submitted by a team of translators who had just discovered a never-before-known tribe of people. These tribal people—who called themselves “Doa”—lived on a shallow river hundreds of miles from the nearest settlement.

A Wycliffe pilot had spotted their tiny village while flying over an uncharted section of the jungle. Later a two-man linguistic survey team from Wycliffe set out to try to contact the villagers. The men traveled several days in a dugout canoe up the winding jungle river. When the river became impassable because of rocks and logs, they carried their canoe through the snake-infested jungle until they could put it back in the water. They finally located the tribe.

The “Doa” people had no alphabet and no written language, and had never seen a white man. Their entire tribal population was less than 300. They stayed alive by hunting with bows and arrows and fishing in the river.

Tragically, they had never heard about God.

“When can you send a translation team to the Doa people?” I asked Dick Hugonit, director of Wycliffe’s Indonesia branch.

“It will be years,” he said. “There are more than 200 tribes in Indonesia. They all speak different languages. We are working in only 17 of those. The Doas will have to wait.”

When I returned to the States, I couldn’t shake my burden to intercede for them.

I wrote Wycliffe headquarters in Huntington Beach, California, to ask if anyone was praying on a regular basis for the Doas. Wycliffe has a program whereby one can write, obtain the name of some Bibleless tribe someplace in the world (there are 3,600 tribes like the Doas all over the world) and agree to pray for them until someone takes them the Word of God.

A Wycliffe representative, Betty Baptista, wrote back that no one was praying for the Doas. She sent me a little card which I taped on the wall next to my word processor to remind me to pray daily. The card read: “I am praying daily for the Doa people of Irian Jaya until they have God’s Word in their own language.” It was accompanied by a verse of Scripture from Psalm 65:2: “O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come.”

I confess I was both excited and frightened over this commitment. I had never prayed for a tribe of people—especially people I didn’t know. Then there was the factor of *daily* prayer. Could I discipline myself to pray *every* day?

Every morning when I come into my study,

By Jamie Buckingham

I turn on my word processor. After I turn on the machine, it takes about 30 seconds

to “boot up”—that is, to load my program into the computer. Normally that is “dead” time. I just sit there each morning while my disk drive whirs, rattles and whines, waiting for the monitor screen to light up and indicate it is ready for me to go to work. Since the card was next to my computer, I decided to use those 30 seconds to pray for the Doas.

But something happened. Each morning as I prayed during that “boot up” time, I began to receive little “visions.” I could picture those little grass huts on the sandbar along the river. In my mind’s eye I could see the brown-skinned people wandering around the tiny village. Children were playing along the river. Women were working with the materials their men brought in from the jungle. Men with their bows and long arrows were roaming the jungle or paddling their dugout canoes in search of food.

Then I saw them afraid at night—afraid of the demons, afraid of the snakes and crocodiles, afraid of the dark. I could see the witch doctor trying to use his power to hold back the spiritual darkness. On several occasions I actually began to cry as I prayed for those unknown people—lost and without hope. Often my 30-second prayer time went to five, sometimes ten minutes.

I asked God to send them a Bible translator who would move into their village, learn their language, translate the Bible and teach them to read the Word of God.

Six months later I was in California to speak to the combined boards of Wycliffe. We were meeting in a retreat center in the high mountains above Los Angeles. During one of my sessions I mentioned I was praying for the Doa people.

At the close of that session, one of the board members who had just arrived from Indonesia came forward. He was excited. “Just last week,” he said, “Peter and Mary Jane Munnings, Wycliffe members from Canada now living in Irian Jaya, entered the Doa village as translators. They were years ahead of schedule, but word came that the Doas wanted someone to move into their village and live with them in order to translate the Bible...and...the Munnings ‘just happened’ to be available.”

To my knowledge I was the only one in the world praying for the Doa people. That left little doubt as to whose prayer God answered.

Now I have a second card taped to the wall next to my card for the Doa people. It is to remind me to pray for Peter and Mary Jane Munnings—whom I have never met. But since they are helping my friends the Doas, they need my prayer support also.

NOTE: If you want to pray for a Bibleless tribe, write: Wycliffe Bible Translators, Huntington Beach, CA 92648.

God is answering everyone’s prayers these days.

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