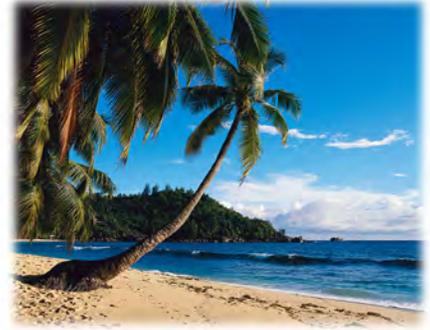


# Sleeping Coconuts Trauma Healing



## Description:

A follow-up lesson to “Sleeping Coconuts Cluster Projects,” including an interactive story to read and a wrap-up activity

## Aims:

- Children will recognize that God was with the survivors of Arop village, even amidst all their losses.
- Children will learn how Wycliffe helps people around the world to heal from their traumas.

## Audience:

Grades K–6

## Minimum Time Requirements:

25–30 minutes

## Scripture:

Psalm 23:4a

## Materials:

- Bible marked at Psalm 23:4a
- Assorted items for the students to use in a wrap-up activity. (See page 6 for the different options.)
  - Writing paper
  - Pens
  - Pencils
  - Drawing paper
  - Colored pencils, markers, or crayons
  - Bibles
- Optional: a copy of the sleeping coconut palm from page 8

If you have any questions or problems related to this lesson, please contact Wycliffe’s Children’s Communications team at [kids@wycliffe.org](mailto:kids@wycliffe.org).

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More curricula to engage children in Bible translation are available at [www.wycliffe.org/kids](http://www.wycliffe.org/kids).

## Pre-class Preparation:

- Read through the wrap-up activity suggestions on page 6, and gather materials for the ones you decide to offer to your students.
- Feel free to add your own ideas for wrap-up activities.
- Decide if you want to include the picture of the sleeping coconut palm tree from page 8. If so, make a copy of it or plan to project it with a data projector.

## Class Time:

Spent some time reviewing the “Sleeping Coconuts” story found in the lesson “Cluster Projects” by asking,

1. Where was Arop village located? (*It was on a long, narrow sand spit that separated the ocean from a large lagoon.*)
2. Why did John and Bonnie Nystrom feel safe there? (*They didn't think typhoons or hurricanes would affect Arop.*)
3. What happened on July 17, 1998? (*Disaster struck in the form of 3 huge, successive waves called tsunamis. The tsunamis crumpled all the buildings in Arop village—including the Nystrom's house—and washed them into the lagoon. A third of the Arop moms, dads, and children died that day.*)
4. How do you think the Arop people who survived felt? (*Possible answers: sad, fearful, helpless, etc.*)

### After taking a response, explain,

We call sad events like this “tragedies.” People cause some tragedies (either by accident or on purpose). Other tragedies we call “natural disasters” (like the big typhoon in the Philippines in 2013 or what happened to Arop village in 1998). People don't cause natural disasters.

### Say,

Raise your hand if you have ever experienced a tragedy or sad event.

### Respond,

We all go through hard things in our lives at one time or another. Let's find out how God helped the people from Arop village during their hard time.

### Then say,

The people of Arop village who survived the tsunami lost a lot. They lost their homes and possessions. They lost the land on which their



houses perched—the sand spit shrank and became filled with bad memories. They lost loved ones—family and friends who died. Some lost the use of an arm or a leg. But they didn't lose one important thing: Those who had accepted Christ as their Savior didn't lose their faith in God! They trusted God in the hard times, just like David in the Bible wrote when he was going through a hard time.

**Read Psalm 23:4a. Then say,**

In fact, if you haven't already done so, this is a good verse for us to memorize, so that if we experience a tragedy, we can remind ourselves that even in the midst of that tragedy, God is with us.

**Continue,**

It took a few years for the Arop people to rebuild their village and their lives. Once they felt somewhat settled again, they asked their pastor if he would start the literacy (reading) class again. So Pastor Emil, a member of the Arop Bible translation team, set the date, and 40 students showed up! Pastor Peter also served on the translation team. Together the two pastors reviewed the Arop alphabet with the students, and gave them some easy-reading storybooks in their language. But the students complained. They hadn't come to read storybooks. They wanted to read God's Word! So Emil and Peter had to scramble to gather up all the copies they could of the Gospel of Mark in Arop. How do you think the people felt then?

**Allow some comments before continuing,**

Yes, they were very happy! Emil and Peter invited those who wanted to practice writing in Arop to return in the afternoon. Almost everyone returned! Can you guess what they wanted to write about first?

**Allow some suggestions before continuing,**

As hard as it was to do, they wanted to write down their tsunami experiences first. They were very quiet while they wrote. As the memories returned, some moaned or cried softly. Though it had been two years since the tsunami struck, they re-lived that scary experience right there while they wrote about it. When they finished writing their stories, Emil and Peter printed them in booklets so everyone could read each other's stories. God used those stories to help them begin to heal from that traumatic, or painful, experience. Let's listen to part of the story Pastor Peter wrote that day.

**Materials:**

- Bible marked at Psalm 23:4a



Read the following story.

### Peter's Story\*

After the earthquake, I sent my wife, Leoni, and my five children to the lagoon to get into our sea canoe with its outrigger\*\*. When I ran back to our house to get something, I looked out the window. That's when I saw a huge wave coming from the sea. I yelled to our neighbors, "Run quickly to the lagoon!" Then I ran to the lagoon, still yelling for people to follow me. I pushed off our canoe and jumped in. Just as we were about to paddle for our lives, our neighbor Julie, carrying her baby, followed by two other neighbor children arrived. They begged, "Please take us too."

**Ask,**

Should Peter and Leoni let them join them?

**After some comments, continue,**

Peter and Leoni didn't even have to think about it. They just helped them into their canoe.

After Julie and the children got into the canoe, Leoni and I began paddling as fast as we could. As I paddled, I looked back just in time to see a 30-foot high wave throw my neighbor's whole house into the lagoon like a little piece of driftwood. Then I watched the wave pluck up my own house like a blade of grass, and carry it into the lagoon, right toward us!

**Ask,**

What do you think Peter did next?

**Allow some comments before continuing the story,**

"Bow your heads. Let's pray!" I shouted. "Oh, Father God, this is a huge disaster. I know we can't live through it. Now we are in Your hands."

When I looked up, that monster wave towered over me. Before I knew it, I was tumbling under the water, turning over and over in a confused jumble of people, animals, broken buildings, trees, sand, and dirt. I wanted to swim to the surface, but I didn't know which way was up, and I

\*\*Peter's Story" is adapted from the book *Sleeping Coconuts*, written by John and Bonnie Nystrom, published by Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc., 2012, available at

[www.sleepingcoconuts.com](http://www.sleepingcoconuts.com) or <https://shop.wycliffe.org/>.

\*\* An outrigger is a piece of wood that hangs out over the edge of a canoe to keep the canoe from tipping over in waves.

couldn't fight the force of the water. Just when I thought I was about to die, the waves popped me up to the surface.

I called for Leoni, and was so relieved to hear her respond. I swam over to her. While I held her and Boaz, our baby, above water, a gentle wave brought a large log our way. That log gave us something to cling to. But where were my other four children? Tears came to my eyes as I thought about them.

Just then our son, Jesse, floated within reach, and we grabbed him. With all of us clinging to the log, I prayed in my heart, "Oh Father God, I have only one daughter. If she has died, I know she will go to Your hands. If she is still alive, I pray You will give me Hannah tonight, and I will hold on to her as I swim."

Right after I said "Amen," Julie, our canoe passenger, swam over with our daughter, Hannah! While searching in the water for her own baby, she had found our Hannah. I put Hannah on the log. Julie joined us.

"Dear Lord," I prayed, "thank You, that You heard us, looked after us, and gave Hannah back to us again. Oh, Father God, we thank You that You gave us Hannah, but we don't have our two other sons, Silas and Isaac. I don't know what has happened to them. If the two of them have died, they will go to Your hands. But if they are alive, Father God, You look after them until we can find them in the morning."

Other survivors joined us, clinging to a variety of floating objects. "Listen up!" I said. "We can't stay here, or the current will pull us out to sea. We must swim against the current to the other side of the lagoon and go up the river." Before we began to swim, I prayed for God to help us all make it to shore.

When I said "Amen," the sky lit up for 10 minutes. Using that unexplainable light, we inspected and bailed out four canoes we discovered. We put 31 women, children, and injured people into those canoes. When the people held hands, it formed a big raft. The rest of us pulled that "raft" as we swam against the current through debris from destroyed houses, branches, trees, dead dogs and



chickens, and drums of kerosene and gasoline. Though we felt exhausted, we eventually reached land. God had answered our prayer!

**Ask,**

How did Peter live out Psalm 23:4a? *(Possible answers: Pastor Peter kept stopping to pray; Pastor Peter thanked God, told Him his fears, and then made his requests; Pastor Peter kept telling God that the lives of his family were in His hands, no matter what the outcome; after the big wave covered him, Pastor Peter thought he might die, but he didn't fear death.)*

**Then ask,**

Does anything in Pastor Peter's story make you think God was with him during this tragedy like Psalm 23:4a says? *(Possible answers: God helped Pastor Peter see the wave coming so he could warn his neighbors; after the big wave covered him, Pastor Peter popped to the surface; one by one Peter found his wife and three of his five children; when Peter and his wife and baby needed to hang on to something, a gentle wave brought a floating log their way; when they needed light to inspect and load the canoes God gave special light for 10 minutes; God gave the exhausted men extra strength to swim against the current, through obstacles, pulling the four canoes full of people to shore.)*

**Continue,**

Later in the story we learn that the following day Pastor Peter learned that his father and his sons Silas and Isaac survived the tragedy. Pastor Emil's wife took care of them after she found them in the water.

**Wrap-Up Activity:**

**Introduce the activity options you've selected below plus your own ideas from which students can choose. Then provide the materials needed.**

- Write a poem or song based on "Peter's Story."
- Draw a picture of something scary that happened in "Peter's Story."
- Print out Psalm 23:4a in an artistic way to remind you that God will go with you through even the hardest situations—just like He accompanied Peter.
- Write a story about how you knew that God was with you or someone you know during a tragedy. (Don't worry, you don't have to share your project with anyone, so you can write whatever you'd like.)



Allow the students 10–15 minutes for students to work on their projects. When they finish, encourage them to share their project with their family.

## Closing and prayer:

Say,

Because Wycliffe Bible translation teams work in many countries, they learn about natural disasters and other tragedies around the world. For example, severe floods in Togo and Benin in 2011 left many people homeless. Many people had to escape from their homes in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other countries during civil uprisings. In some parts of India and other countries some people are persecuted (treated badly) because they are Christians. These kinds of tragedies can hinder or limit Bible translation efforts. So Wycliffe developed a course to train church leaders so they could lead trauma healing workshops\* in their churches. In these workshops God speaks to hurting people through Scriptures in their own language—just like Psalm 23:4a. As a result, many who attend those workshops begin to heal from their traumas.

**Optional: Project or hold up the picture of the sleeping coconut palm tree from page 8, and then conclude the lesson by saying,**

You could say that those who survive disasters are like sleeping coconuts. When the storms of life knock them down, God uses His Word and the trauma healing workshops to start them growing toward Him once again.

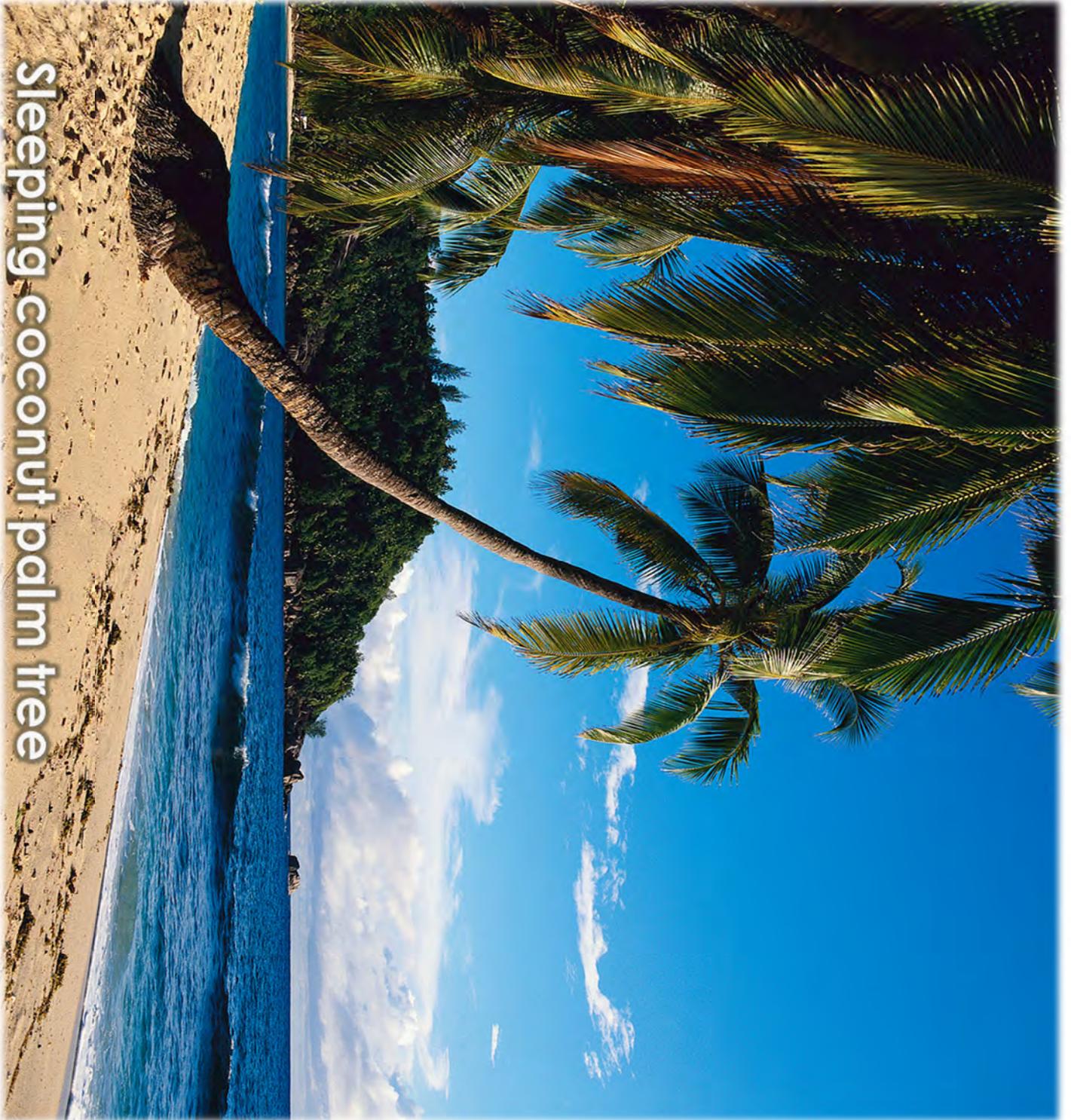
**Close in prayer, thanking God for staying with us even when bad things happen. Ask God to heal people involved in Bible translation who have been affected by traumatic events. Pray for God to make church leaders able to lead trauma healing workshops. Ask God to bring healing to individual people, communities, and nations as a result of the trauma healing workshops.**

## Materials:

- Assorted items for the students to use in the wrap-up activity.
  - Writing paper
  - Pens
  - Pencils
  - Drawing paper
  - Colored pencils, markers, or crayons

\**Healing the Wounds of Trauma* by Dr. Richard Bagge, Pat Miersma, Dr. Harriet Hill, and Margaret Hill; along with student books and leader's manuals titled *Bringing Healing to Traumatized Children* by Margaret Hill, Debbie Braaksma, and Lyn Westman are available at <https://shop.wycliffe.org/>.

- Optional: a copy of the sleeping coconut palm from page 8



Sleeping coconut palm tree

