“How do I pray? How do I know God hears me? What do I say?”

Cross-legged on the veranda, I leaned against the cinderblock of our classroom. Our flashlight beams cast more shadows than light, and the other women sitting with me were only glimmers of teeth and eyes. Toddlers crawled into their mother’s laps as incense from the smoldering mosquito repellent coil drifted upward. “Please,” they asked again, “how do we pray?”

I was serving on staff at a month-long literacy course held in Saidor village, Papua New Guinea, where twenty-one participants from eight local languages were learning a variety of skills, including curriculum development, storytelling, leadership, disease prevention, and Bible study methods. One night after devotions, several of the women approached me. They nudged each other shyly until Betty stepped forward, her voice soft. “We have questions. Would … would you help us?”

I smiled. “Let’s sit down together.” Excited grins darted across their faces as they snatched up their bilums (string bags) and hustled me out of the classroom.

“Here’s here to answer our questions!” Lillian announced. Tossing aside the typical pleasantries, the five women immediately pulled out scribbled lists and began eagerly firing questions.

“How do I pray? How do I know God hears me? What do I say?”

Every night for a week, I pulled out my Bible and prayed fervently for wisdom and the language ability to respond to their hunger. Without God’s Word in their own languages, Jesus had always sounded like an unintelligible foreigner shouting through a pillow, far removed from their own lives and desperate questions.

Later, Betty touched my arm and asked, “I know that it costs thousands of kina* to attend a course like this. So how is it that I’m able to come? Who paid my school fee?”

“Many churches and people in our home countries have sent money to help pay your school fee for this course,” I explained. “They believe it’s important for you and your community to be able to worship God in your own language.”

She grasped my hand with both of hers, her eyes wide and sparkling. “Please, please thank them for me!” Laughter burst from her, and she couldn’t stop grinning. “This course has helped me so much!”

* Catherine is a translator working in Papua New Guinea.
** The currency in Papua New Guinea.
Lately I’ve been asking myself that same question.

As more people have access to Scripture than ever before in the history of the Church, the start of the final Bible translation program is within our grasp. But what will we give up to see it happen? What will we be willing to set aside so that God can use us?

Catherine gave up her American dream to help people in Papua New Guinea who are hungry for God’s Word, like the women she tells about in this issue of InFocus. Her partnership team has given of their resources, prayers, and time to make her ministry possible.

If you’re getting this letter, you have also sacrificed something to partner in the work of a missionary like Catherine. On behalf of those who will one day hear God’s Word in their own language because you shared, thank you.

Warmly in Christ,

Bob Creson
President/CEO
Wycliffe USA