

Making Literacy and Scripture Use Memorable

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I am currently in PNG short-term as part of SIP. (Serve In PNG) My goal was to come and to help promote literacy in a specific language program while gaining valuable field experience. Although I work mainly with the STEP¹ course, I enjoy spending longer periods of time out in the village. So I jumped at the chance to join Liz Buesnel on one of her trips to Walagu. God definitely had a bigger plan in mind than just one 5-week trip. Liz and I worked very well together and we were able to take another trip out to Walagu before she left PNG. Now I am finishing the projects we began together and continuing to help the program in other ways. Thankfully this arrangement has grown with the blessing, encouragement and guidance of the long-term language workers, Beverly Mosley and Anne Stoppels.

1 John 4:9

On my second trip out to Walagu, an Onobasulu village in the Southern Highlands Province, I was pleasantly surprised to hear a young boy singing the words to Yone Soi Selelu 4:9 (1 John 4:9). Liz Buesnel and I had put this verse to music in order to help the children memorise it during our first visit. We had sung the song often during our structured Kid's Programme times and even just hanging around the house with the kids in the afternoons or evenings. It should not have been surprising that one of them remembered it but I did not remember this particular child even being around during our last visit. Maybe he was around but because he was more reserved he slipped under my radar or maybe his older brother who had been around taught him the song - we may never know. Nevertheless, I knew that the song had helped him to remember the verse and I was eager to see

¹ *Strengthening Tokples Education in Papua New Guinea*

other signs of what had worked in our previous trip and what we could learn from and adjust to make this time more effective.

During my first trip out to Walagu (Liz's third trip) we planned two weeks of morning Kid's Programme. We had prepared in advance colouring sheets to complement the stories and used resources such as the creation puppet, Bible Telling-Interactive Bible Learning, the Wordless Book with the PNG and Southern Highlands Flag, and already translated Onobasulu Bible stories complete with pictures from the *Baibel Piksa Book*. Our thanks go to the Scripture Use office in Ukaraumpa, John Walsh, Kathy Stoker and Anne Stoppels respectively for these ideas and materials.

Sock Puppets

The first week we did an overview of the Old Testament and the corresponding memory verse was Acts 4:24b. Each day focused on a different Bible story but there was always a time for singing, an outside game and either colouring or another craft type activity. The memory verse was taught



along with actions to help the children remember the words and it was reviewed multiple times each day, over the entire week. The whole schedule is included in Appendix 1, but I will just touch on some of the highlights. On Monday, after hearing the story of creation told with the creation puppet, the children played a creation memory game. Liz made the cards with the numbered days of the week in Onobasulu and the corresponding act of creation on the other card. This was very fun and the kids wanted to keep on playing.

For the Creation of People and The Fall we did not have

Onobasulu story books. Therefore we acted out the stories and told them in Tok Pisin while an adult translated into Onobasulu. Liz and I both used sock puppets when appropriate to help further illustrate the story. After hearing the story of the Creation of People, the children made their own sock puppets. We had pre-sewn eyes and let them choose their own hair. On our subsequent visit it was quite amusing to see that a little baby boy now wore his sibling's sock puppets as his Sunday-socks.

On the day we told the story of Noah we did water-themed relay races. And even though we had a Noah story book we decided to use puppets - a parrot, another bird, a kangaroo, a koala and a rainbow - to tell the story again. This reinforced the ideas from the story and was a fun way to show the adults how puppets could be used in Sunday School or in other classes. Some of

the Onobasulu translators helped translate the text and a Bible school graduate became one of the characters in the show. The children loved it so much that we did two showings, drawing a crowd of adults as well.



On that Friday we told the story of Abraham. I had thought that doing the song *Father Abraham* would be fun for the kids so we asked a couple of our helpers to translate the words. However, the tune and the commands that work well in English did not fit Onobasulu. Liz and I played around with different tunes and came up with something completely different but very catchy,

complete with shakers and noise makers (spice jars and cans filled with seeds, corn kernels or rice). We, with the help of one of the literacy workers, even added a verse about being like Abraham and having faith in God in order to become one of his children. This song is definitely now a favourite.

Puzzles

The second week we did an overview of the New Testament and the memory verse was 1 John 4:9. Once again each day focused on a different Bible story. We tried to keep the same schedule that had worked well the first week, with time for singing, an outside game and either colouring or another craft type activity. It seemed like some of the children had problems memorising the verse the week before so we tried to reinforce it more with the song Yone Soi Selelu 4:9 and a memory verse puzzle to emphasise word order. The whole schedule is included in Appendix 2 but I will just touch on some of the highlights. On Monday we used Abraham as a bridge to connect the Old Testament with the New Testament. This included singing the Abraham song again and doing another puppet show, once again translated by our helpers. The puppet show talked about the blessing which was promised to Abraham and the beginning of the Nativity story where the angels appear to Joseph and Mary. The puppet show was a great way to give the children more information that was not contained in the Bible story book.



We had more of an emphasis this week on the memory verse. In

order to introduce the idea of the Bible verse puzzle, we brought other puzzles so that the children could work in groups and get the idea of putting the pictures together before moving onto the more difficult word puzzle. It was helpful that some of them had been at our house the previous week playing with puzzles and getting to know how to put them together. Each day we sang the entire song which included the whole verse but we only taught a section of the verse at a time. This way it was easier to remember in shorter portions and there was time for more repetition. The puzzle was also given to them in these shorter segments and colour-coded accordingly so that they could see the words but also have the shapes and colours as clues to how it should fit together. All of these things together helped the children to get a little more of the big picture each day and by the end of the week the children

who had been there every day knew the verse very well.

On the day we told the story of Jesus’



Death and Resurrection, Liz presented the wordless book. The week before she had read it in Tok Pisin and then it was translated on the spot into Onobasulu. This made the presentation very long therefore taking away some of its effectiveness. So over the weekend one of the translators translated the text into Onobasulu. It was great for the children to hear the wordless book presented just in Onobasulu. After hearing the story and the wordless book we set up stations where they could put together necklaces with the colors from the wordless book. Needless to say the children loved making necklaces as did our adult helpers.

Over the course of our time in Walagu it was very fun to see

pictures that the children had colored hung up on the walls of their houses and sometimes even on the front door. Each day's coloring sheet had scripture as well that either went with the days lesson and/or gave further context to the picture. Although not every child took their pictures home, most of them did and were very excited to show their family what they had done during the day.

Bible Story Drama

During our second trip together out to Walagu, Liz and I did not have time to do full week-long Kid's Programs again. So we chose just the three Fridays we were there to have a shortened afternoon program for the children as well as any adults who were around and wanted to join in. Because we had learned that they enjoy the memory

verses set to song, we spent a long time getting the tune for our next memory verse, Matthew 22:37, just right so that the children would enjoy it and remember it. When we sang this song to a family after dinner one evening the Grandfather's surprised response was *nokene koleba* or *narakain olgeta* (altogether



different). But despite the mixed reviews from the adults, the children seem to like it and catch on to the tune very quickly.

Once again I have included the schedule for the three Fridays (appendix 3) but will expand on a few highlights. On the first Friday we focused on the mini-theme keeping our eyes on Jesus.

We had set the Onobasulu words to *I'm Keeping My Eyes on Jesus* in the previous visit. This fitted well with the story of Jesus and Peter walking on water. Since we only had the text from Matthew and not a Bible story book to work from, we decided to act out the story while reading it. We invited some kids to come and sit down in the boat with me as I played Peter. They loved being included in the action. The colouring sheet just had the verse on it so the children could draw their own picture of Peter and Jesus walking on water. Once they had drawn Peter, we had googly eyes to be glued onto their drawings to give him the wide-eyed scared look. Drawing their own picture completely was difficult for some of the younger children but it was nice for them to get a chance to try something different.

On the last Friday we focused on the mini-theme of Blindmen. The gospels have three accounts of Jesus healing blindmen on his way into Jericho before the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We used the Bible story book and read the account in Mark about the blindman named Bartimaeus and then we read and acted out the account in Matthew where there are two blindmen mentioned. It was nice to be able to show the children the connection between different parts of the Bible. There were also quite a few adults who joined us on this day and they enjoyed watching us act out the story with the help of one of the men from the community.

On that last Friday we had just about a week before we were leaving and so we left everyone with a Bible verse challenge. We handed out cards with the memory verse printed on it and told them if they could memorise the verse they would get a prize. Previously we had given the kids small Onobasulu Bible story books as prizes if they memorised the verse, and they would get stickers if they could say only part of the verse or just for trying. Some of the kids had been successful in saying the verse but Liz and I were both surprised at how many of the adults took the challenge very seriously. We had a few afternoons where people

would sit in groups on the grass outside the house and read and re-read the verse until they had it memorised. The books they received as prizes became treasured possessions and we would often see them reading the books at other times. One man even quoted Matthew 22:37 in the church service that week when the pastor asked if anyone had a memory verse to share. It was very encouraging to see them memorising and using Onobasulu Scripture.

Face Painting

Even though we did not do a formal children's program every day Liz and I took other opportunities to play with the Walagu children, share stories, colour and do other activities. Face paints were an especially fun addition to our normal activities. On Independence Day Liz painted my face with the flag from PNG: a yellow bird of paradise on one cheek, the Southern Cross stars on the other and a background of black and red stretching across my nose. This of course attracted a lot of attention from adults and kids alike. Once we had a group of children gathered, Liz



shared the wordless book with the PNG flag and if children could remember what the colours represented then they received either a balloon or a PNG flag tattoo sticker. After she read the book Liz painted flags on the faces of the children who had listened. Liz and I both shared the book a few more times over the entire day. We tried to make sure that every child who came to play and/or get their face painted also heard the wordless book. Liz painted over 20 faces and even a belly! This was a very fun way to celebrate PNG culture while sharing the gospel.

On another day we decided to take out the puppets and perform the Noah puppet show again. Some of the children had not seen the puppet show before and those who had were still eager to see it again. It was nice for us to use something that was already translated but that has a good message for those who take the time to stop and listen. Afterwards Liz and I painted rainbows on cheeks, foreheads and across noses. Then we all played with the puppets and the children were given an opportunity to make the parrot squawk or make a kangaroo jump. It was not anything formal or planned but we used the materials we had on hand and the children had fun too.

More Games

Each trip out to Walagu has added something new and interesting to our repertoire of children's games. Many of the children are now puzzle pros, which gives us the challenge of creating new puzzles that will be interesting and more difficult for them. Sometimes these puzzles are made from old calendars, sometimes they are made from pictures of the kids themselves. Lots of the children also look forward to having colouring sheets where they can be creative and use whatever colours they choose. And they have even become better at just drawing pictures from their own imagination on blank pieces of paper or envelopes. Liz's Garden Game is also a favourite. The older children play it without the

garden cards, just like we would play Chutes and Ladders. They also seem to remember and sing on their own the Bible verses and other songs that we have taught them. It is interesting for us to listen because without us singing the language becomes more natural. After all, they are the native Onobasulu speakers. The newest game addition was a matching game made from all of the pictures of their faces painted for Independence Day. They loved trying to match the faces and many of them rose to the challenge and became quite good at remembering which faces had already been seen. I look forward to continuing to find new games and activities to bring out to Walagu and of course continuing to improve on the old favourites.

Ongoing Work

It is very difficult to come into a language project short-term and actually make a positive lasting impact. However, the ability to follow up and finish projects plays a big role in helping the long-term team they are not left with more work in the end. Spending more time out in the village also helps to strengthen relationships with the people who will hopefully benefit from using the various materials produced. I am planning to make at least two more trips out to Walagu before I leave PNG. In addition to continuing relationships, these trips will allow me to complete the Onobasulu Picture Dictionary and finish a few other literacy and Scripture Use projects that have already been started. I hope that the literacy and Scripture Use materials produced will be able to be used within the already established Onobasulu schools and churches, furthering the ongoing goals of the long-term language team.

Appendix 1 - Programme for week 1

Week 1	Monday 25 May	Tuesday 26 May	Wednesday 27 May	Thursday 28 May	Friday 29 May
	<p>Creation</p> <p>Genesis 1:1 - 2:4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • story (with creation glove) • memory verse • card game • revise memory verse • outside game - <i>geso, geso, dojene</i> (duck, duck, goose) • creation worksheet • prayer 	<p>Creation of people</p> <p>Genesis 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • song - <i>Guni, kubale (head and shoulders in Onobasulu)</i> • story • memory verse • outside game - relays • revise memory verse • sock puppets • prayer 	<p>The fall</p> <p>Genesis 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • story • memory verse • outside game - tag • revise memory verse • wordless book • colouring • prayer 	<p>The flood</p> <p>Genesis 6-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • story • memory verse • puppet show • outside game - water relay • repeat puppet show • revise memory verse • read story in groups • colouring • prayer 	<p>Abraham (God's promises & birth of Isaac)</p> <p>Genesis 12:1-9; 18:1-15; 21:1-7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • story • Abraham song • memory verse • game - dodge ball • revise memory verse • group reading • colouring / kids say verse • prayer

Appendix 2 - Programme for week 2

Week 2	Tuesday 9 June	Wednesday 10 June	Thursday 11 June	Friday 12 June	Saturday 13 June
	<p>Jesus' birth</p> <p>Matthew 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • Abraham connection • Abraham song • puppet show • story • revise memory verse • introduce - new verse • game - tag • teach memory verse • read story in groups • colouring • prayer 	<p>Jesus heals the paralytic</p> <p>Mark 2:1-12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • story • memory verse • puzzles • game - inside relays • revise memory verse • group reading • colouring • memory verse song • prayer 	<p>Jesus calms the storm</p> <p>Mark 4:35-41</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • story • memory verse • puzzles • game - dodge ball • revise memory verse • group reading • read Scripture • colouring • prayer 	<p>Jesus' death & resurrection</p> <p>Matthew 26-28</p> <p>Luke 24:13-35</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • story • memory verse • wordless book • game - ball relay • revise memory verse • beads • prayer 	<p>The ascension & Pentecost</p> <p>Acts 1:1-11 & ch2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • story • memory verse • game - blind man • singing - <i>Guni, kubale</i> • revise memory verse • read Scripture • colouring • kid's say verse • prayer

Appendix 3 - Kids Club programme

Matthew 22:37	4 September	11 September	18 September
	<p>Jacob and Esau (Jacob and Esau story book which matches with verses being village checked)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing • prayer • story • memory verse • game - octopus tag • memory verse review • colouring • prayer 	<p>Peter Walking on Water (Matthew 14:22-33)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing - <i>Na Yesu sidafia su lolu (I'm keeping my eyes on Jesus)</i> • prayer • memory verse • read and act out story • game - relays regular and with balloons • revise memory verse- with song • colouring • prayer 	<p>Blind man (Bartimaeus story book and Matthew 20:29-34)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing (memory verse song) • prayer • story - Bartimaeus • game - blind man bat game and relay races with balls • revise memory verse • read and act out the other blind man story • colouring • picture slideshow • prayer