

# Taylor Tidings

**Matt & Christy Taylor**  
 Kaitlyn, Nathan, Justin,  
 Julianne & Elijah

*Partners in Bible translation  
 with the Nukna people  
 of Papua New Guinea*

## God meets the Nukna culture

When the light of God’s word shines into our lives and cultures, amazing things can happen. In September, the Nukna people took part in the Culture Meets Scripture (CMS) course, and **God showed up in a big way!** The Nukna were divided into thirteen groups, and each group chose one specific cultural practice to examine through the lens of God’s word. Some of the topics chosen were singing and dancing to the spirits to bring rain or sun, making offerings to the spirits who are believed to have created the Nukna clans, the use of sorcery to kill another person, and speaking spells over objects like stones, ginger, tree bark, lime powder or certain plants to gain power from the spirits. And the group Matt mentored chose fear of the spirits of the dead as their topic.

These topics are not usually talked about in the open. We wondered if the Nukna would be willing to expose these practices and discuss them honestly in a public setting. On the third day we became aware that there was a “glass woman” (a spiritual medium, one who claims to speak to the spirits of the dead) present among the course participants. We noticed that she was shaking and chanting under her breath. She was also sitting next to people from her home village, speaking quietly to them, “Don’t listen to these lessons. Follow the ways of the ancestors.” Matt approached her and asked, “Are you a glass woman?” and she replied, “Yes, last night the spirits of the dead came to me and I spoke with them.” A public prayer was offered, **asking God for protection against any powers that sought to disrupt the course.** We told the glass woman that she was free to stay, but was not allowed to interfere with the course anymore. She continued to come every day, just sitting quietly and listening. During the next two weeks, we were able to share the gospel message with her, and read verses to her that show that speaking with the dead is wrong, and now we continue to pray that God would change her heart.



*Our teaching team, led by Scripture Engagement worker Lynda Wick, consisted of six Papua New Guineans and two Americans*



*Nukna children enjoyed the excitement of the helicopter bringing our team to teach the course*



*Matt and the teaching team were welcomed by a traditional Nukna sing-sing*



*One of the 13 groups, praying before beginning to study their chosen cultural practice, with the glass woman looking on through the leaves behind them*



Presenting on what the Bible says about fear of the spirits of the dead (above) as the Nukna community listens attentively (left)

Through this incident, it was very clear to us that spiritual opposition was present as the Nukna people contemplated big changes in their beliefs and practices. About one week into the course, a challenge of another kind occurred. **A massive 7.6 earthquake struck Papua New Guinea.** The epicenter was just 35 miles from the Nukna area, and just 40 miles from the translation center at Ukarumpa, where Christy and the kids were. Widespread damage was reported around the country, but fortunately damage in the Nukna area and at our house in Ukarumpa was minimal (unfortunately, some of our missionary friends' houses sustained more serious damage). But in the early hours of the following morning, in the village where we were holding the CMS course, we heard wailing coming from a nearby house. The body of a Nukna man named James had been found down by the river, killed by a landslide triggered by the earthquake. He left behind a wife and two young children. The CMS course was put on hold for two days while we joined the Nukna people to mourn his passing and conduct the burial and funeral. Many of the Nukna people believe that when a person dies, his or her spirit wanders the earth for a period of time, and often causes trouble or sickness, especially among those whom the person wasn't friendly with. For the Nukna group that was investigating "fear of spirits of the dead" as part of the CMS course, their topic all of a sudden became very immediate and relevant.



Nukna children at the freshly-covered grave of James

As the course continued, we encouraged the people to dig below the surface, to identify the roots of their cultural practices. For example, when people talked about their fear of the dead, they asked themselves, "Why are we afraid?" And the answer was, "We're afraid that they have power over us, to harm us." The groups then spent time looking at what the Bible says about who truly has power in the lives of Christian believers. They studied many verses that talk about God's power and protection, and looked at passages such as the story of Job. **They realized that God is the one who has power in our lives,** power that is much greater than any power that the spirits have. Their final conclusion was, "We need to stop doing things out of fear of the spirits. We need to trust in God!"



Matt with the group he mentored

On the last two days, all thirteen groups publicly presented their topics to a large gathering of the Nukna people. As each group presented, people from the community would ask questions, make comments, and voice their support for each group's findings. They were open and even eager to publicly discuss these practices that are normally not mentioned openly. For each of the cultural practices and beliefs investigated during the course, all thirteen groups concluded their presentations by saying, **"We need to stop doing these things! We need to change and honor God with our actions!"** We give God all the glory for leading the Nukna people to make these courageous statements, and we ask you to join us in prayer that they would rely on God's strength to follow through and make real and lasting changes in their villages, families and individual lives.



The Nukna people said, "We need to change not only for our own sake, but for the future of our children!"



*Nathan graduated from high school in May*



*Kaitlyn is now in her second year at Malone University (left) and Nathan is in his first year at Liberty University (right)*



## Family News

A lot has happened since our last family update in May. Kaitlyn flew to PNG to visit us for a month, and we had the joy of witnessing her baptism at the local river. Nathan attended Banquet (similar to prom) and then graduated from high school a couple weeks later, as class salutatorian. Over the summer, Kaitlyn, Nathan, Justin and Matt traveled back to the U.S. In the midst of visiting friends and family, and taking care of various medical issues we can't get care for while in PNG, we also enjoyed a visit to Malone University, where Kaitlyn attends, and also to Liberty University, where Nathan was about to begin attending. Settling Nathan into life in the States, including getting him a driver's license and a bank account, was also an important item on our to-do list.

Christy, Julianne and Elijah stayed back in PNG, where Christy continued her duties as part of the secondary school administration. The three of them had a chance to take a fun trip with friends to the coast.

In August, Matt worked with the Nukna translators to finish the team check of the book of John, and start the check of the draft of 1 Corinthians. Demand for the written and audio Scriptures continues to be high among the Nukna people. We reprinted the 10 Epistles (Galatians through Philemon) for the third time, and have just ordered our fifth box of Scripture audio players. We're excited to see so much interest among the Nukna people!



*We were so thrilled to have Kaitlyn visit us in PNG!*



*Julianne, Justin and Nathan at their school's choir and band concert*



*Nukna translators (right 3) hold partially assembled copies of the third printing of the 10 Epistles*



*Kaitlyn's baptism in the Bae river, near Ukarumpa*



*Nathan and his date, Rachel, at Banquet*

## Giving

**By Mail:** Make a check payable to Wycliffe Bible Translators, with a separate note indicating "preference for the Wycliffe ministry of Matt and Christy Taylor." Mail to Wycliffe Bible Translators, PO Box 628200, Orlando, FL 32862-8200.

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