

April 18, 2011

Dear Friends of MBC,

We trust this finds you well and enjoying Spring! There's just something about being able to open up the windows and let in the sunshine. Our jasmine is blooming on the fence and it smells incredible. (And for you poor souls who are still up in the cold, hang on it shouldn't be much longer!)

We've been explaining our ministry focus on literacy and some of the key elements that keep us busy. In our last post we looked at the importance of missionaries finding a good orthography and how alphabets are not simply "one size fits all." (Now if you aren't much into grammar, this part might be boring to you...but don't you dare skip it! Keep reading so you know how to pray for us and the missionaries working with all the different languages).

After a good alphabet has been chosen, and before teams begin actually writing their literacy program, they need to organize all the linguistic information (this is the grammar stuff). We need lists of all the vowels and consonants, as well as diphthongs (two vowels that make one sound; such as boy, eye) and consonant clusters (consonants that blend into one sound; like gl, str, or -ng). We need to know which letters occur most frequently in the language because those letters would give us the most useable words for brand new reader to practice reading. We'll need a list of every punctuation mark used in the language. Again, languages are not "one size fits all." Quotations can be shown in many different ways. ¿Just how will questions be marked?

These lists are used by the missionary teams and consultants to make sure that every possible thing that will be written in the language is covered in the literacy materials. We want the people to be able to read God's Word with great comprehension! And even punctuation is part of really understanding what is written. So that's how it all fits together – with the goal of having great readers with great understanding of the Most Important Message ever written!

(Are you still with us? Good! We'll stop with the grammar stuff for now. But hopefully, this gives you a better idea of the ways we are helping missionary teams around the world).

**Update on Kunas in Panama** – In response to December's floods, last month many village chiefs banned the Kuna believers from meeting together. The believers were blamed for the devastation of homes and crops because they had angered the spirits by not walking according to Kuna tradition. Thanks for your prayers for the believers. The pressure has gradually lessened and in most villages the believers are able to meet together again.

Would you please pray for our Kuna friend, Pastor Edelfonso? Last week his dear wife died of hepatitis, leaving Edelfonso with 9 children, ages 3 months to 23 years. Edelfonso asks prayer that his children will not become angry or bitter against God. The believers in the village are having many opportunities to share of the hope they have in Christ. But some of the unbelievers are blaming Edelfonso for his wife's death, saying that he should not have taken her out to the hospital for medical help, but kept her in the village for the medicine men to have done their "thing."

In May Joyce & I will be traveling to Panama to visit with our Kuna friends and check through the revised literacy program before finalizing it for printing. We appreciate your prayers as we make plans and work to get all the materials ready for checking.

We are so thankful for your partnership in the literacy ministry God has given us together. May His Word go out stronger and clearer than ever before to the tribal groups around the world!

Jerry & Joyce McDaniels  
Serving with New Tribes Mission