

How I became a Bible Translator

Edmond Teppuri, March 2016

Nukumanu translator Edmond Teppuri was kidnapped into Bible translation in 2002... and he quickly came to love it.

Before I got involved in Bible translation, I had no idea whatsoever about this task. I have never thought or even dreamed about becoming a Bible translator. This task was not even marked with a small dot in my heart and mind. BUT it was in the year 2002 that I got called by God to be involved in Bible translation, and this is how it happened.

In 2002, I had been elected as the Chairman of the Nukumanu Council of Elders. All the Council of Elders chairmen in the Region were asked to attend a workshop in Buka, so I boarded the MV San Kamap 1 to attend the workshop. And it so happened that Kennedy Tunehu, who had been appointed by Rev Abraham Vaelani to attend a Bible translation training course in Ukarumpa, boarded the same boat, and there was a requirement that at least two people from each language group should attend the course, but Kennedy was all by himself.

While still on the ship Kennedy approached me and ask if I could accompany him to the TTC1 course and I said, “**NO, I am busy**, if I were free I would join you to go to the course,” but really, I did not mean what I said. And upon arrival in Buka, (that was on a Wednesday in the morning) the first person to meet me was Abraham Vaelani, and he asked me the same question Kennedy asked: “Why don’t you accompany Kennedy to the TTC1 course?” Still my answer was, “**NO, I am busy**.” Our conversation took place on the ship’s deck and when I got off the ship, I was confronted by Sue Andersen (SIL translation advisor) and she repeated the same question to me, but I answered her saying, “**NO, I am committed and cannot go**.” I made myself very clear to her why I came to Buka and she understood me and all my reasoning, but after our conversation she said, “You think about it and tomorrow morning at seven o’clock we will come to get your final answer.”

An SIL flight was supposed to have arrived the same day we arrived in Buka, but it was delayed until the next day, that was Thursday and that was also the day that Sue and co. would come back to get my final thoughts.

I spent the night on the ship and was already making plans to avoid this group in the morning. Now another Jonah’s story is about to unfold. I got up very early on Thursday morning (according to my plans) before 7:00 am and dashed off to the airport to get away from those who wanted me so badly. I hung around the terminal until 8:30am. And since it was already 1½ hour after the scheduled time for them to look me up and get my answer, I assumed that by now they must have missed me. Now I had to get out of the terminal in a hurry because their flight would be in 30 minutes time. So I walked out of the terminal with the intention to flee to the market. To my surprise, there stopped in front of me the SIL-Buka van and everyone who was flying to Ukarumpa was in the bus. They did not come at 7:00am to get my answer but were on their way when they met me near the terminal. Another excuse I told them was to go and get permission from the parliament member of the Atolls, Taehu Pais, thinking that they would give up their interest in me with a complicated assignment to do within 30 minutes of the flight, but Sue will never give up. They left me and jetted off in search of the member. I laughed when they left, thinking that they would never bother me again.

I took off to the market, bought 2 crayfish and went back to the ship with a sigh of relief that I had dodged all the bullets from Sue Andersen and co.; why? because it was already after 9:00am. I sat down to eat and did not even get a chance to taste the crayfish when Sue stood on the wharf and called: "Edmond! Edmond!" Hearing Sue calling I rushed down the ship's ladder without a second thought whatsoever, took hold of my travelling bag and on to the wharf into the bus and took off to the airport. There was a huge excitement in the bus with hi-fives and Sue putting up a victor's smile. Another delay of the flight, this time only 30 minutes, but it was a very vital 30 minutes which proves the difference and more importantly my turning point.

During the flight I was so furious and wondering why did I ever joined the group? I was really upset with myself.

I was given no chance at all to talk with my family when I was kidnapped to go to Ukarumpa. This also resulted in my wife Evelyn being very ill and she almost lost her life. She is now very supportive and is a very good checker, especially in proof reading.

However, my interest grew enormously just after one week of the TTC1 course and I started planning to resign from my job as the chairman, which I did in 2003. So I am now a full time translator. Now that the New Testament in my own language is finished, I will be helping other Polynesian projects as advisor.

Praise God for appointing me to be who I am today. I hope to serve him to the fullest with the best of my ability and potential that he has blessed me with.