

God in the mission field

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Sometimes the mission field isn't safe. Sometimes being true to God's calling calls us to step out on faith. Pat and Melinda are friends of ours who answered God's call to go into the world and help people hear and experience the Word of God in their own language. For over twenty five years they were with Wycliffe in Papua New Guinea helping translate the gospel in a new language. They completed this task and returned to the States.

Shortly after their return, God called them again. This time, the call was to go to Nigeria to teach people how to do translation, so that they, too, might be able to have the gospel in their own language.

During their ministry, Pat and Mel have had many strange and wonderful experiences, but never like the one I'd like to share with you now. Here is their story.

On the first Friday night of our course, the staff gathered in the evening to watch a movie. We were all sitting in the living room, except Melinda, who had been sick and was asleep in the adjacent bedroom. We had just finished watching a short video clip by Campus Crusade, when one of the women in the kitchen let out a scream. I turned to look and saw a man with a pistol to her head and another holding a rifle.

We all hit the floor at their command, faces to the ground. They began frisking everyone, taking all of the cell phones. Then one of them fired a shot, which struck fear into everyone. Within minutes they had gathered up nine of our laptop computers and projectors for class and disappeared.

Thank God, no one was hurt, but three of us, including Melinda and I, found that our new laptops and passports were now gone, along with Melinda's wallet, money, driver's license and credit cards.

During the week following the robbery, we tried to phone the US Embassy about our stolen passports. We could only get a recording telling us to email them about any emergency and visit their website for more information.

We also kept trying to get a police report to verify the theft, but they would not cooperate.

Finally we decided to make the 6 hour drive to the Capitol and see if the embassy would issue us new passports without the report. We would miss at least 2 days of the course, probably more. We planned to leave on Sunday, but on Friday afternoon we heard that our passports had been found. On Monday, someone had found a black plastic bag by the highway in front of our house and turned it in to the principal's office at the nearby elementary school. It sat in the office until Thursday, when they looked inside to see to whom it belonged.

Someone recognized a photo of one of us and sent word that they had found something of ours. We picked up the package and sure enough, in it was our passports, Mel's credit cards and driver's license, car keys, and various translated chapters which Pat's language group had spent months writing out. Only God could prompt thieves to neatly bundle together these items and surreptitiously return them to us!

Pray that what has been translated will bear fruit in the lives of those who hear it and that the translators will be able to complete their assignments over the next couple of months.