

## Session 2c Wednesday AM Mayers Auditorium By Marilyn Laszlo

Speaker 1:

I'd like to introduce the speaker for this session. Her name is Marilyn Laszlo. She's a member of Wycliffe Bible Translators and has been for 35 years. Twenty-three of those years she spent translating in Papua New Guinea. So she has many stories to share with us, as John Elders was saying, about the faithfulness of God. And she's also going to be speaking about His supremacy, which is a big part of our theme this year: God's supremacy and how we see it working out in our lives. I'd also like to let you know that she has recently authored a book called "Mission Possible." It's available at the Wycliffe table in the upper sub. It's in a corner, so you can go there and pick it up, see what it's all about, talk to her. She's willing to sign it if you want. So as she comes, I just like you to welcome Marilyn Laszlo.

Marilyn Laszlo:

I'm going to refer to her. Well, thank you very much. It's great to be back here. It's been a long time. Both of these microphones are on. Is that going to cause a problem? Can I just do that? I think before I begin, I would like to have all my colleagues from Wycliffe stand up, because I think that they're going to be helping me answer some questions and dealing with the table. And we are in a very small corner up on the what's it the third floor. Is that third floor? What floor is that? Well, way up there. I don't think you can go any higher unless you go to heaven. But can I have all of you stand? I didn't see you. How many are you here? We're in the back. Okay. Su, Nice to see again, wonderful.

Marilyn Laszlo. I've been with Wycliffe for 35 years and been translating and working in Papua New Guinea, translating the Bible into the language of the Sepik Iwam tribe. And I finished that project. And the reason I'm home right now is because of my parents. We're a very close family. I'm a Hoosier farm girl, and we live on a little farm. I'm still living in the same house my dad built when my grandparents came from Hungary.

There's four girls in our family. I'm the oldest of four. And my sister Shirley, who is just 13 months younger than I am, working with me in New Guinea. My dad is now 89 years old, and he's totally blind and has Alzheimer's, and he's now forgetting how to eat. So these are kind of the final days of my parents. My mom is 83, and she's bedridden and will never walk again. She's kind of like post-polio syndrome, and so that's why I'm home. And so I called my sister home to help me. And so one of the neat things about being home is to be in college campuses, which is one of my favorite things.

And I'm here because I care. I really do care. And I know that my colleagues, Wycliffe colleagues who are here also care, about you finding God's perfect will for your life. Not necessarily that it will be Wycliffe, but we are here to talk to you and to pray with you and to encourage you. There are three predictable questions on the college campus. I just came from Northwestern in Minneapolis. St. Paul, Minneapolis. Oh, you're from Minneapolis. What are you doing here? No, you don't have to ask question. Now, this is a great school too. This is, really.

But the book does address these questions and I'm really going to focus a whole lot on that tonight. The most predictable question that I hear, and I know that you just did a survey, is that

right? You just did a survey on this campus about some of your fears about as far as mission fields and things. And it kind of supports what I've been hearing across the country in college campuses. One is, how did you know? How did you know that you were supposed to be a missionary?

How did you know that you were supposed to go with Wycliffe Bible Translators? And how did you know that you were supposed to go to Papua New Guinea? And how in the world did you ever know that you're supposed to go up this river 500 miles to a little village called Hauna and give over half of your life there? Well, I want to tell you, you can know. And we'll be talking about that. And it is what chapter it is in this book. I haven't read this book really after it got printed, but I think it's good. I don't know. Anyway, it's chapter 4. It's called Stadium Standoff. And I'll talk a little bit about that. Chapter 4.

The other predictable question is how do you cope with being single? I mean, why didn't you get married? And a lot of the--especially women come up to me and said, "I really want to be a missionary, but I really don't want to go single." And I'm going to hit that one hard tonight. That chapter is chapter three, Marriage or Missions. Well, it doesn't have to necessarily be marriage or missions, but with a lot of it, it is. And as I was looking all the different mission booths up there in the student center, I can predict that if you ask them, there are a whole lot more single women on the mission field than single men.

Now, when I got to New Guinea, Papa New Guinea, and we have a large mission center there because New Guinea has a lot of languages. There were about 34 single women, 3 single men.

Now, why do you think that's so? Well, I have my theory and I'm going to talk about that tonight:

why there are so few single men on the mission field? Well, one is they can't do it, and I will prove that scriptural. They just can't handle it. They do scriptural. We're going to talk about that.

When I was in junior high, back in my days in junior high, in high school, when you dated a fellow, you went steady. You wore the fellow's ring or the fellow's basketball jacket, and the speaker this morning referred to, did you ever see the movie Hoosiers? Well, that's our community. I mean, my graduating class in high school was 13, and we came from a very small farming community.

But all the years that I dated and went steady in junior high and high school, I wore the fellow's ring. And then all the way through college, I went to Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee, which is Christian liberal arts school, and I majored in history and physical education and taught school for five years. But all during that time, I went steady. Well, then how come I'm not married? Well, I talk about that. That was a hard thing. And all the men that I dated, well, I'm not going to talk about--I'm going to talk about this tonight. Just come tonight. Anyway, they weren't interested in missions.

Okay, the other predictable question on the college campuses is about the finances. How do you finance yourself? How do you take care of yourself? Where does your money come from? Well, Wycliffe is a faith mission, and from the president all the way down to the rest of the members, they do not get a salary. And so we go out and we raise our support. I probably have maybe 15 supporting churches, but most of them are individuals. And Wycliffe gives us a lot of help in this area, of partnership development and how to go out and raise your support. And so we have a lot

of help in Wycliffe, in doing this. But we are a faith mission, and that's how we are financed, and that's addressed in the book as well.

Now, as I share my story, there are three things that I really want to accomplish. First of all, to tie into your theme, the supremacy of God in God's grace. And this just automatically comes up. I want to make sure that when you walk through the doors at the last day of this conference, that you will be encouraged. Number two, that you will certainly have a new appreciation for the word of God. And it was very interesting. The speaker also mentioned this morning that we need to recover this book. I mean, this, my friends, is what makes it work.

I don't care if you go on to get PhDs and all the training that you want to get. And we need our training, and God uses our training, but that is not what makes it work. And it's very sad when I'm in churches and colleges across the country, I very seldom see anybody carrying this book. And the people that I went to work with in New Guinea, they have it with them all the time. They haven't had it very long. When they crawl under the mosquito nets at night in their thatched roof houses, the Bible is right beside their head on their sleeping mats. And they carry it in their string bags as they go out to gather food and hunt every day. So I trust that as I share that you'll really and truly have a new appreciation for this book, the Word of God.

And the third is that I trust that when this conference is over, that you'll have a bigger picture of just how powerful God is and that we do have this power within us. We have the power of the universe within us, and we need to act like it. And just like the speaker mentioned this morning, I mean, let's act like we're winning, not like that Shakespeare thing that was on the film, and they

all were downcast, and the leader got them all stirred up. And so I hope that we can accomplish that. We know how it ends and we win.

Well, we're involved in languages. If there was ever another proof of God, I mean, if the universe is not enough, if life is not enough, look at the languages. How many languages, how many living languages are there in the world? We have to know this in Wycliffe, because our goal in Wycliffe is to make sure that every language in the world has the word of God in their own language. So we have to know how many languages.

Now, all the countries in the world, this is a different situation in Papua New Guinea. Most of these languages were unwritten. They didn't have alphabets. But the whole world is changing, especially in Africa. My story is just one story, and I go way back. And when I joined Wycliffe, it was in 1965. When I was getting my linguistic training at the University of Oklahoma. I was so excited, I just resigned from my teaching position, gave up my apartment, gave up that paycheck.

And one of the most difficult things for me was, I had just bought a brand new car. It was a white Galaxy XL convertible. All I can say is I really do believe that there's going to be white convertibles in heaven. Otherwise, this is going to be really hard. When I'm in California, I just can't hardly stand because these convertibles are whizzing by me, and I'm very covetous of that. And I was saying, why can't I have a convertible?

Now, can you imagine a missionary driving around the convertible, pulling up to church unloading, and they're cutting my car? Well, to me, it's not fair. It's just not fair. Why can't I have a convertible? Well, anyway, I saw my convertible, and I went down to get this training. Well, in

1965, the focus of Wycliffe had changed from Mexico, South America, leaped across the ocean to the South Pacific. All of these languages: New Guinea, Indonesia, the Philippines.

And so there were about 300 of us there, taking the linguistic course, learning how to analyze unwritten languages and taking cultural anthropology courses and all of this. And so when I resigned from my teaching position, I heard about all of these languages that didn't have the word of God in their own language. That just kind of blew my mind. So back to my question: do you have any idea how many living languages there are in the world? Just give me a number. Somebody give me a number. How many do you think?

What? Sixteen to 20,000? 20,000 going here. Sixteen to 20,000, anybody? Is he right? How many, 21,000? 1 million back there. Fifty or 60,000? Oh my goodness. You know what? You don't know, do you? You have the answer? You're just guessing. But I think she has the answer.

How many languages? Sixty-seven hundred. Almost 7000. I think the last count I got was like 6,792 living languages. Now once in a while we find a new one. We added to the list. But you know, we have a very accurate count. But the number that you need to remember that over 4,000 of those languages do not have the Bible in their language.

Now my friends, if these people want to know anything about Jesus, if they want to know anything about God, they've got to do it through the white man's language or through the national language. Oh yes, God works through the white man's language and through the national language. Now I'm going to give you a quote and I'll probably quote it again tonight. I was down in Florida doing a tour and I was in Orlando and we were going through Campus Crusade. Now

we work very closely with Campus Crusade because they do the Jesus film and the languages that we're working in a very powerful tool.

And I remember seeing on the wall, as we were going through their headquarters and said something like this: "No man should have to learn a foreign language to find out how to spend eternity with God." Does that sound right to you? No man should have to learn a foreign language to find out how to spend eternity with God. Well that's what Wycliffe really is all about.

Now that's not to say that God doesn't use other languages to lead people to Jesus, but I think it's very hard for the church to really grow and mature without the word of God. And we work a lot through the trade language in New Guinea where that's the only way we can communicate when the people don't have the word of God in their own language and nobody else outside of that language group speaks the language. And so if you look at the languages, if that isn't another proof of God, I don't know what it is. Because one thing for sure, I know. I have never heard the evolutionist explain the languages.

Now in the Sepik Iwam language, there's about 3,000 speakers, seven different dialects, covering about 100 square miles. In New Guinea I still have a very difficult time counting to ten in the Sepik Iwam language. 'Well, you're a slow learner.' Well, I probably am a slow learner. I don't know. But you know why it's difficult? It's because there's seven classes of nouns. And before I can count paper, of course, they never had seen paper, but use this as an example anyway. Before I can count books, papers, chairs, people, pencils.

First of all, when I look at this, and I don't know how to say one, there are seven different ways to say one. How many classes of nouns do we have in English? If I count books in English, it's one. If I count pencils in English, it's one. The Sepik Iwam language, I've got to figure out, is this animate, inanimate, female, male, sharp, long, soft, hard? I got to know. And so I'm thinking how do I say one? And it's very difficult. And they're grammatical structure. The suffix is on the end of a verb. It takes us a whole sentence to explain what one word in their language means.

Now, anything that God creates and this is the supremacy of God, anything that God creates has order, has system, has rules, has a pattern. It's beautifully put together, like our bodies, like the universe. There's no such thing as a Gibberish language. And if there ever was a theme that went all the way through this book, starting with the Abraham Covenant, it's a theme of the languages, the nations, and the cultures of the world.

I remember there was an anthropologist from Cambridge that was spending about two years in Papua New Guinea, and he was going to write his PhD on where all the languages came from in New Guinea. Well, he had been in Papua New Guinea for about a year and a half, and he was working his way up the river. Now, he didn't know we were there. We're about 500 miles up this river, not easy to get to. And he came into the village, and then he discovered that we were there and that we were also linguists.

So he asked me, "Where do you think all these languages came from?" Well, I knew he wasn't a Christian, and I said, well, you know, I can save you a whole lot of trouble if you just turn to Genesis 11 and write your PhD on that, because you're never going to figure it out. I mean, he

was hitting a stonewall trying to figure out where these languages came from, and he got to us, the Sepik Iwam tribe. I could go 20 minutes down river, and I run into a totally different language and an enemy dialect. I can go 30 minutes up this other river behind us and I run into another totally different language and then an enemy dialect. None of them are related to the Sepik Iwam tribe. Where do we come from? How did we get there?

This language group, I can't get a whole lot of help from my colleagues who are working in all these other languages. How exciting. God has it all together, doesn't He? God has it all together. Romans 1. Another one of those very interesting chapters, Romans 1, starting with verse 18. It says, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by the wickedness."

Well, now, that could be a headline in this country. Couldn't any newspaper in the United States, right straight across the country? Anyone that suppresses the truth of God by their wickedness? Have you ever seen so many incredible things happening in our country? The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven. Just name some. What do you see happening that we've never--I mean, it's just incredible.

From nature, what are some of the things in nature that you see happening from heaven that just really-- certainly California, there's one thing you got to worry about in this country, in this state. What? Earthquake. What else is happening? Tornadoes and floods and just this accident not too far from my hometown, this train accident and the Oklahoma bombing and on and on and on and

on. Since what may be known about God is plain to them? Well, now, that's interesting. It's plain. Because God has made it plain to them.

For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen and understood. From what has been made, so that men are without an excuse. Well, in all, if that's true, why in the world has the church and Wycliffe sent two single women to Papa New Guinea? It's plain. There was not an excuse. And I want to tell you something, my friends. The first month that I was in this village, I witnessed our first funeral. I'll talk about that.

But what I also witnessed is that they had such an incredibly high moral standard. And there were some of these older--I remember the Kaku's, husband and wife, I would have sworn that they were believers. There's no such thing as divorce in this language group. There's no such thing as an orphan in this language group. There's no such thing as an uncared for widow in this village, or an uncared for older person. Very tight social structure. And the family unit is incredible. And I remember when I was witnessing this first funeral, the first month that we were in the village, and I heard the wailing get very loud in the middle of the night.

And we sat up in our mosquito nets, and I said to my partner, "Judy, you know, what's happening? Somebody must have died. Somebody must have died. Something's happening." We were on a hill in the center of the village, and around that hill was the rest of the village, 54 houses up on stilts. All the brothers live together with their wives and children. Big long houses,

and every single house had at least three medicine men, all of whom were capable of demon possession.

I don't know about you, but I had never seen a person demon possessed. You read a lot about it in the New Testament. Jesus referred to it. He was dealing with it all the time. But, you know, this country, which is basically a Christian country, this is a Christian college, so Satan is very limited in what he can do here because of the power of the Holy Spirit in all of us. He just can't just come in here and do whatever he wants. That's the power of the Holy Spirit.

But I do want to say this about these medicine men. They are jungle doctors. And when I go back in August one of the things I'd love to do in the 23 years that I spent in that village, I would love to be able to write a book on all their medical practices. And we're learning a lot from these men out in the jungle. They are jungle doctors, and there's a whole lot of things that we can learn.

You know, the special herbs and leaves that they use on these sores and infections. And the skins of certain types of fruit, like the banana skin and the papaya skin. Listen, if you have a bad infection, get a hold of some papaya or banana skin and lay it on the sore. That's much more effective than penicillin. And we're starting to look at all these things. I'd like to write a book about all their medical practices. They're just calling on the wrong source of power, which is like it says here in Romans.

So as I was working my way up to the grave, we were watching the people the next morning, all heading towards the higher part of ground to bury somebody. And as we looked across the river from us, we saw somebody was wrapped up in bark, and they were carrying him and all these people following and wailing. It's just incredible sound. So hopeless. It seems so hopeless. And as I worked my way up towards the grave, very little, I mean, we knew very little language. I'd only been there less than a month. We knew a little bit of the trade language, but the people didn't know the trade language and looked down the grave.

It wasn't very deep. And what happens when somebody dies in this culture? They take that person's canoe, and everybody has a canoe from five years old on up. We have traffic jams with canoes in our village, 800 and some canoes. Actually, everybody has about two canoes. And so when that person dies, they take that person's canoe and cut it up into strips, and then they put pieces of that on top of the grave. They don't throw dirt right on top of the body. And then they take a great big leaves and put it on top of these pieces of canoe and then they shovel a mound of dirt on top of that.

And so they were getting ready to they were doing this I looked down the grave and there was this little boy, maybe eleven, near years old, ten or eleven, it's hard to know how old. And they started to put the pieces of this boy's canoe on top of the grave. But the boy was breathing. He's still breathing, he's in a coma.

And I said, Duty, they're burying this boy. And my initial reaction was, wait, you can't bury this child. He's in a coma. He has malaria. We have medicine. Then I realized speaking in English

nobody understood in English. So then I started to speak the trade language, which I didn't know very well either. I said, 'Wait, [foreign language] This child, he's still breathing, he's still pulling wind. You can't plant him.'

Oh, man. I mean, this was awful. I think about all my training. We are very well trained, but no matter how much training you get, and you've got to get all that you can get because you don't know what you're going to deal with. And pretty soon the leader of the village, and I didn't know he was the leader of the village, very powerful medicine man, leader of the [foreign language] came up to me and he said, [foreign language], "You fasten your mouth. You don't know anything."

And he was right. I didn't know anything. And so what rights do I have? Zero. I'm an outsider. I'm a foreigner. I'm a stranger. I'm a white skinned woman. I'm a guest. I don't know the language. I don't know these people. And they buried the child. One of the things tomorrow, I hope I have time to do this, but obviously they have a different definition of life. Jesus has come, and we might have life. Give me a definition. I mean, is it breathing? Is it seeing? When does it begin? When does it end? When you pull the plug?

It's a controversial thing, isn't it? They seem to know. And I want to tell you something. These medicine men, and because they love their children, the whole social structure centers around the children. And these medicine men are working and trying to bring healing. They have never seen a person come out of a coma. And so after a certain length of time, they no longer speak, they no

longer hear, they no longer eat, they don't respond. The feet are getting cold, the hands are cold. And then the medicine men will say, plant him. The spirit is gone. That's just the body.

I don't know. I mean, I don't know. And they buried him. And as they were leading us away, I kept saying, Judy, Judy, we got to go back and we got to give this child some quinine or a penicillin shot. He can't live for several minutes in this grave. And they constrained us. And what if we had gone back? That would be the end of my story, and we could all leave. That would probably have been the end of my ministry. And that's why I'm so appreciative of our training. We have to understand these people, their culture, why they do what they do.

Well, it took us about seven years, first of all, to find the word. And I hope I can do this tonight. I hope I have enough time to tell the story. But if I don't, I'll tell it tomorrow. How we found the word for 'soul,' that which lives on. That's what leaves the body, the eternal life thing. "For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him." "Although they knew God." And we have a word for supreme beings. Talk about that tonight. We have a word for Supreme Being. Like every language in the world does. "They neither gave thanks to Him, but they think he became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

That's the key. And I want to tell you something, my friends. That's when it became very clear to me. When Jesus says, "Ye are the light of the world." It only takes a spark. And if we just darkened all these lights and we lit a match and then it just became so clear to me why I was there. There is absolutely no way for these people who have turned away from God can escape

this darkness without us presenting the word of God. This is the light. What an exciting story this has become. They're locked in this darkness.

I couldn't understand when I got to this village and we pulled it to the village that very first day and we're walking through the village, we could smell the gangrene sores and all the sickness. And there they're sitting in their houses and flies all over the sores and they're dying. The life expectancy is between 30 and 35 years of age. The infant mortality rate was 90%. In fact, one of our villages, the infant mortality rate was 100%. Not a single baby lived the first seven years we were there.

And I think, why do they just sit here and die? They're very intelligent people. They could be writing the encyclopedia books about the jungle that we don't know anything about. I think about our forefathers who came from Europe. We came from Europe. We settled along the eastern coast. Now, they really had it hard. A lot of people lost their lives so we could have this religious freedom.

And they came and carved themselves out of a homestead and built having houses and tried to get through the winter. And then we went on and we invented the light. We invented the car and we invented the airplane. We invented the telephone. These people aren't any different.

And so why are they in the darkness? And you know something? The people that are walking around the streets in Los Angeles and in Chicago and New York and wherever, they are no different. They're locked into darkness. And there's only one way they can penetrate it, and that

is the word of God. And although they claimed to be wise, they became fooled and exchanged the glory of the immortal gods for images. Oh, my goodness, we have more images. I mean, their creation stories centers around the python and the crocodile and the cassowary bird and the wild boar.

And so on the front of their canoes, they'll have crocodile heads, they'll have snake heads. They exchanged the glory of God for images made to look like mortal men and birds and animals and reptiles. Well, today and that does what time am I supposed to be finished here? What time? Quarter after. Okay. Wow. Okay. Today in Hauna Village, and I'll expand on this story tonight. Out of 800 people now, the life expectancy is now between 50 and 55. Just with a little bit of the medical help that we've given to them, treating them for malaria, treating them for TB. Our training gives us a little bit of this medical training. We go through a book called "Where There Is No Doctor." And now the infant mortality rate has dropped.

You know what was happening with the infant mortality rate, why it was so high? It's because when the babies got diarrhea, the mother stopped all liquids because that was the problem. Well, that makes sense, doesn't it? That was the problem. And so the babies were dying. All these babies were dying of dehydration. And before we could learn, until we learned the language, there was no way to explain this.

I can hardly explain all of that in English, let alone the language. But there are very few babies that are dying. So the population has doubled. There was 400. Now there's over 800. And 500 of those people are believers. Yes. Tonight, one of the exciting stories that I want to tell you is that

the team that God gave to me when we started to do translation. When we started to do translation, there were 14 little boys that were running around the jungle naked. Five, six and seven year-olds. They were kind of the gang of the village.

They were afraid of our white skin. They'd come up the steps of my little thatched roof house and pierce through the screen. And every time we went to get near them, they would scream, run and hide. Because we were neither male nor female for a long time. We were "its". I said I'm an "it." My word. I've got a BA degree in history. I've got a master's degree in education and psychology. I got four semesters in linguistics and anthropology and I'm an "it." Exactly. Well, God, one says, oh, yes, you need your education. You're not going to get into some of these countries unless you have a degree, because you won't get a visa. Used to be the missionaries could go with just the word of God. You can't do that anymore. Got to get your training.

And you know as well as I do that was a very humble beginning and we realized very quickly that if anything was going to happen in this village, it wasn't going to be because we had a degree. It wasn't going to be because of all that technology and the computers and all that kind of stuff. Yes, it's wonderful to have it and God uses it, but that's not what makes it work. It's the word of God.

One last story. I was walking through the village and I was gathering words and developing this alphabet. That's our first six months goal. This old man, his name is Nokian. He wanted to adopt us as his daughter. He was one of very powerful leaders in his clan. He was a medicine man as well. And so he wanted to adopt us as his daughters. He wanted to be a village father. And I

remember he came in, he couldn't understand after being there for six months why we still weren't learning the language.

And he had a village meeting when he finally figured out that we were writing his language. They had never seen paper. The word for paper is [foreign language], which means banana leaf. And the word for pencil is [foreign language], which means thorn. And the word for writing is [foreign language], which means carving. My friends, you know, for 23 years I've been carving on this banana leaf with this thorn, in their language.

But when he found that out, he called the village beam, got the hall there together. He says, you know what these two are doing? They're carving our talk. Our talk's got power, like the white man's talk. But I don't know what's wrong with those two. They've been here six months and they still don't speak the language right. And he had to stand up in front of the whole village.

He said, you know, this is what they're doing. And he looked right at us. He said, "You know, what's wrong with you too? What's wrong with your heads? This is a simple language. It's not a difficult language. It's easy. In fact, the whole village speaks this language. You know what your trouble is? You're not eating enough of our food." And so I got a campaign going and brought all these incredible, wonderful jungle delicacies, which I'll talk about tomorrow morning. It's also in this book.

Meet us at the table, because my story is just one, and maybe this is not something you're interested in, but there's a lot of things that how many jobs are available in Wycliffe besides

translation, Arthur? Or about 350 right now are available, yeah. So you stand up. Ron, you stand up. Name some of these jobs, because a lot of you don't--maybe you don't want to be a translator and go to the jungles but what's available? Just name some of them then they can come to the table.

Computer people? Right now we have over 2000 requests just to go in Africa. Africa? Those people are very educated. You start at a different level than what you did in the beginning so come and see us and it's wonderful to be with you. I'm here all day to talk to you so come and see us.