

Rescue Hold – Tagbanwa Story

I shared God's Rescue Hold at the Tagbanwa Believer's Conference in Payatpat in April, 2004. I first explained the concept with the translator Ed Ruch beginning with the trapeze hold of a catcher who is there for an acrobat flyer to latch onto. The translator made some changes and suggested other verses—then he was ready to present it to the Tagbanwa people who were gathered together. Lori Burke, my daughter, and I were the visual aids of the Rescue Hold.

As Ed explained in Tagbanwa the concept, Lori and I grabbed hold of each other's arms. I first extended my arm to her (initiative [grace]), then Lori latched onto mine (response [faith]). *"By grace through faith"* (Eph. 2:8-9). Then Lori released her hand, but I held tightly on. Then Ed introduced the concept of *"Though we are faithless, He is faithful, He cannot deny Himself"* (from 2 Tim. 2:13). As Ed continued to explain the truths to the people, you could see the lights coming on. They got it! *"No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand"* (John 10:29).

Ed then turned the meeting back over to the Tagbanwa man in charge who then reiterated and endorsed what Ed had explained. Ed leaned over to me and exclaimed, "They REALLY got it!"

Almost immediately, the elders began planning to speak to Berto, a former elder, and tell him what they had just learned about God's nature and faithfulness. They asked themselves who would be the best representative to share this vital truth with a 'sheep that had gone astray!' They decided on a man named Kultit. However, Tara Island (where Berto lived) was two hours away by boat. Plans were soon underway to spread this news. We decided to go along as Tara Island was our final destination. When we arrived, Kultit went immediately to Berto's house. The next thing we knew was that Berto was fellowshipping with the others who were then meeting at Kultit's home. The truth of God's Rescue Hold was spreading fast.

The next evening, Nonoy, a national missionary from a neighboring island, shared God's RESCUE HOLD with the group gathered while Lori and I again were the visual aids. They too got it!

The following morning, we were invited to see how the new chapel construction was progressing. There we met with the twelve elders who had gathered. Berto was among them—smiling. We took a few photos and had to make preparations to leave quickly, due to an oncoming typhoon. As we departed we shook hands with each of the elders. But, they had created a new handshake. First they would offer the regular handshake, then release it into a Rescue Hold, grabbing above the wrists! A double shake! How creative, and with such meaning! We were in awe!

As we left the pier in our boat, our hearts were blessed at what we had just witnessed. Then, about two hours out in the South China Sea, while changing positions, Vinny, Lori's 15 yr-old-son, grabbed onto a pole to support himself. The pole gave way; he fell into the ocean, went under, but came back up in time to reach up for an outrigger brace (there were four of them; he got the third one). Nonoy cut the engine and he and Vinny's father quickly extended their arms down to Vinny in the ocean. Vinny grabbed onto both of their arms—a double Rescue Hold—because of what they all had just learned. God spared him! *"He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He drew me out of deep waters"* (Ps. 18:16).

Nine months later, back in the States, we shared this entire story with a church in Chesapeake, Virginia. They loved hearing how the Lord worked! The next morning (Sunday morning) the pastor handed me a hand-carved replica of the Rescue Hold made from a 'cypress knee.' He used his new Dremel tool and also inscribed on the base the verse, *"I laid hold on that which has laid hold on me"* (from Phil 3:12).

As we filed out of the church we again experienced the double handshake/Rescue Hold that the Tagbanwas had taught us. Also, for a few days following, we met other believers giving us the same double handshake. The story of God's RESCUE HOLD had preceded us. God is faithful! So Faithful and Precious! *"Unto you who believe, He is precious"* (1 Pet. 2:7).

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