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# THE MOVEMENTS OF TODAY REST UPON THE SACRIFICES OF CENTURIES PAST



BY **RICK WOOD**  
EDITOR OF *MF*

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One hundred thirty three years later in 1517 an obscure Augustinian monk named Martin Luther burst onto the world stage by once again challenging the most powerful political and religious leaders of his day with the simple idea that our faith and practice as Jesus followers is based on God's Word, the Bible, not upon the edicts of an all powerful church or its leaders. Our final authority is Scripture alone—*Sola Scriptura* in Latin.

All the power of the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church was set to crush this troublesome monk and his "dangerous ideas." The problem for these powerful leaders was that Luther had become the most popular man in Germany among the common people—more popular than the Pope or the Catholic Church. Luther's writings published with the latest technology of the Gutenberg presses sold wildly and made the printers rich. Woodcut prints of Luther's likeness along with Luther's signature made Luther the first "celebrity" of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. It was this popularity and the protection of certain German leaders that kept Luther from suffering the same fate as John Huss who was burned at the stake in 1415 for spreading views of Scripture similar to those of Luther.

Luther was called to the German city of Worms (pronounced V-or-ms) to recant his writings before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Upon his arrival, Luther was greeted like a conquering king with an escort of 100 horsemen and thousands of cheering well-wishers.

When Emperor Charles V demanded that he recant his writings on April 18, 1521, Luther replied, "I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience." As Eric Metaxes makes clear in his excellent biography of Martin Luther, Luther's confession at the "Diet of Worms" (*diet* meaning assembly) was a turning point in human history where the freedom of conscience was first established as a bedrock principle of Western civilization, which lives on in the founding documents of the United States.

This breakthrough in religious freedom that Luther and others made possible is the foundation that all Bible translation and movements to Christ rest upon.

The **653 kingdom movements** multiplying around the world, transforming the lives of millions, growing faster than the overall population, would not be possible without the freedom that Wycliffe, Luther and pioneers like them have purchased for us.

How much do you love the Word of God? Would you be willing to lay down your life in order to not lose the ability to read it? For most of us in the English-speaking world, we take the Word of God for granted. We have always had access to Bibles in numerous translations. But it has not always been this way and the Scriptures are still not available for roughly 1,500 language groups that need a New Testament translation to begin. The price that many have had to pay for the freedom to read the Bible in their own mother tongue has often been very high.

Over 600 years ago in 1384 a fearless scholar named John Wycliffe invited a death sentence by translating the New Testament into English for the first time. Wycliffe believed that it was the Scriptures that should be the basis for the faith and practice of all Jesus followers. Wycliffe was the first glimmer of hope for those who wanted to read the Bible for themselves. He was one of the first pioneers of what would become the Protestant Reformation. Wycliffe died before he could be executed for his "crime" of translating Scripture so the Catholic Church dug up his remains and burned them anyway.

As we seek to translate the Bible into every language that still needs a translation, we stand on the shoulders of giants like Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Tyndale and thousands of others who have risked their lives and sometimes sacrificed their lives in order to bring the Word of God to every people in their heart language. Let's not take for granted the freedoms that others paid so dearly to secure for us. But rather, let's honor their sacrifice by completing the translation task that they so nobly began.

## THE PACE IS ACCELERATING

We are privileged to live in the greatest period of Bible translation the world has ever known. Great progress has been made over the last 100 years but it is nothing compared with what we are seeing today. In the year 2000 there were 366 complete Bible translations. Today, just 18 years later, there are 677. During this same time the number of complete New Testament translations has gone from 928 to 1550. That is a 67% increase in just 18 years. This is an even more remarkable figure when you consider that it took many decades of prior effort to get to 928. Most exciting of all is that the number of languages still needing a translation to begin has been cut in half from over 3,000 to just 1,559 in just 18 years. Recent progress is nothing short of astounding. So what is leading to this dramatic progress?

Around the year 2000 Wycliffe Bible Translators realized that at the rate they were going it would take 150 years for a translation to be started in every language group that still needed a translation. This was not acceptable to them, so they decided to re-evaluate and rethink everything they were doing in order to pick up


the pace of Bible translation. They set for themselves the goal of starting a translation in every language that still needed one by 2025. This issue of *MF* is all about what Wycliffe is doing to reach this goal.

As you read through this issue one thing becomes clear. Technology has enabled translators to not only speed up the translation process but to also improve the quality of the end product by including a wide range of people in the translation process. Increasingly, the people who will use the translation are becoming active participants in the translation process. This improves the usefulness of translation as well as the ownership of it by the people who will be using it. It does no good to do a translation if the people who need it don't use it.

There has been a revolution in Bible translation over the last 20 years and that revolution continues to grow as ever improving technology brings the completion of the initial Bible translation task into sight. With 3,334 languages now having some portion of Scripture in their language, we can now anticipate the day when every people group will have a complete Bible in their heart language. We will not have to wait 100 years for it to happen. There will always be a need for revision and updating of previous translation work, but in the not too distant future every people will have access to Scripture in their language if we will continue to press forward.

## A KAIROS MOMENT FOR MOVEMENTS AND BIBLE TRANSLATION

Around the world over 653 movements of discipleship and church planting are growing faster than the rate of the overall

population. Central to all of these movements is the focus on obedience to the Word of God. The future growth of these movements is dependent upon having at least some oral portions of Scripture available in the languages where these movements are taking place. Wycliffe has recognized the importance of developing an oral approach to the translation of Scripture. See the article, "The Voice of God Speaking to Siberian Hearts" starting on page 19 for an example of how oral stories from Scripture can transform lives. I do not believe it is just a coincidence that these Scripture-centric movements are growing and spreading at the same time that the availability of the Scriptures both oral and written is increasing. They build upon each other and serve one another. Both Wycliffe and the 24:14 Coalition have set the same end date of 2025 to reach their respective goals. Whether the global Church succeeds in bringing the gospel to every people in our lifetime will largely depend on whether these goals are met. 

## HELP MISSION FRONTIERS SUCCEED

*Mission Frontiers* supports and promotes the growing efforts to bring the Word of God and the gospel to every people on earth. In order to carry out this mission, we need all of our readers to become *vision-casters*. You can do this by actively sharing *MF* material with others while also giving and praying for *MF*. To donate, go to [www.missionfrontiers.org](http://www.missionfrontiers.org) and click on the Subscribe button in the upper right-hand corner.

Bible Translation as We Approach 2025:

# What's Been Accomplished and What Remains



BY **BOB CRESON**

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**Bob Creson** and his wife, Dallas, have worked with Wycliffe for over 35 years. Bob has served in a variety of leadership roles, including with Wycliffe Bible Translators International and SIL International. He was SIL field director in Cameroon and Chad, West Africa, International Vice President for Personnel, and International Field Director for SIL before his appointment as President/CEO of Wycliffe Bible Translators USA. He has been a member of SIL's board of directors, and currently serves on the board of the Wycliffe Global Alliance.



Between His resurrection and ascension into heaven, Jesus charged His apostles and followers with the Great Commission: to make disciples of all nations. At the time, the apostles could not have known just how wide-ranging that mission was (and is). Even the more well-traveled among them could not have grasped the size of the world and how its population would grow.

God often sets goals for us that are bigger than we could perceive, let alone achieve, on our own or in the span of our lifetime. The Great Commission is one such goal. Through the perseverance of Christians all over the world, we are approaching a milestone: the availability of the Good News about Christ in a language people relate to best, and in a form they can use.

For nearly 2,000 years, Christians all across the world have devoted their lives to this mission—bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to all peoples—and at the end of their journey passed the torch to a new generation who would build from their sacrifices and advance the work. *Mission Frontiers* has chronicled many of these diverse and arduous efforts, ranging from church planting and evangelism to the pursuit of justice for the enslaved and oppressed.

When Christian believers carry the gospel to unreached communities, there is no more potent medium through which to receive it than in the language most familiar to them: the community's native language—the language of their birth. It's what we at Wycliffe Bible Translators USA describe as their “heart language”—the language they think in, dream in and pray in. Scripture is God's primary way of speaking to His people; it is the foundation of the Church. However, the reality for millions around the world is that they still have no access to Scripture in the language they know best.

At Wycliffe Bible Translators, we recognize Bible translation as an integral part of the Church's global mission that all would know of God's unconditional and enduring love for them. Our goal is to eradicate Bible poverty and ensure that all have access to hear God speak to them in a language and form they can clearly understand.

## **Vision 2025: How Far We've Come and How Far We Have to Go**

Wycliffe's vision began as our founder William Cameron Townsend was challenged by a native Cakchiquel speaker, Francisco Diaz, to ensure that his people heard accurately this good news not in Spanish, but in his

northern tongue, Cakchiquel. In the 75 years since Townsend founded Wycliffe, we have sought to make this a worldwide reality, working alongside local communities and churches, and numerous partner organizations both in the United States and around the world. Through this collaborative work and the unmistakable guidance of the Holy Spirit, we have witnessed countless lives transformed by newfound access to the Bible.

Over time, we've discovered thousands of languages never imagined by Townsend, moving the goal line of Scripture access for all even farther away. By the year 2000, while many groups had access to Scripture in their own languages, many others did not. Our leaders at the time realized that at the rate we were going, it would be 150 years before a Bible translation project had even begun in the remaining languages around the world. As emerging local partners and churches exploded and technology radically cut the time needed to complete a translation, they knew we could do better.

The Church has never shirked at the enormity of the Great Commission, and neither did Wycliffe's leaders 18 years ago. They trusted God's heart for the people of the earth and their conviction so that, in faith, they raised the bar and set an audacious, aggressive, seemingly impossible goal of having a Bible translation project underway in every language by the year 2025. And they invited others to join in this vision. Believing that with God nothing is impossible, and when He calls, He also equips, Vision 2025 was launched. Together we rekindled our sense of urgency and committed to working in partnership, developing creative strategies, building the capacity of others, and working toward sustainability of anything started. We trusted in God's providence and adopted this vision as our mission statement: to see a Bible translation program in progress in every language still needing one by 2025.

We currently estimate there are about 7,000 spoken languages across the world. Almost one out of three has adequate access to Scripture. Nearly 2,200 language communities—the highest number on record—currently have translation projects underway. But roughly 1,600 language communities are still waiting for a translation project to begin and have no access to any Scripture in the language they know best.

When Wycliffe's work first began, Bible translation everywhere was largely done with a manual typewriter or by hand, and the occasional loss of physical manuscripts caused entire projects to be restarted from scratch. Communication with other translators required expensive

and unreliable international phone calls and dangerous transportation. Back then we didn't fully understand that languages rarely exist in isolation but we've since learned so much about the multilingual world in which these language communities function.

As articles in this issue detail, Bible translation today looks far different than it once did. Thanks to local ownership of translation programs, streamlined communication, transportation, Bible translation software, digital publication and other technological innovations, translators across the world are able to complete projects on a timetable that would previously have been unthinkable.

### **A Common Framework for Bible Translation**

Technology has dramatically sped up the translation process, but we do not allow speed to be our primary goal. Instead, the first commitment must be to clear, accurate and natural translation. As one organization working within a broader alliance, Wycliffe Bible Translators has adopted a shared set of missiological principles that constitute a "Common Framework for Bible Translation," which shapes everything we do.

The principles include relationship, partnership, stewardship, ownership and accelerated impact. This framework was promoted by Every Tribe, Every Nation, a coalition of 10 translation groups that have produced the vast majority of the Bible translations in existence today.

The "Common Framework for Bible Translation" prioritizes working with the local church to get translation projects started in every language that needs one. Isaiah 55:11 says, "it is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it."

### **Establishing and Maintaining Relationship**

One of our primary goals for translation projects is the establishment of deep, committed and enduring relationships among translation teams, impact partners and local communities within a geographic region. This also includes technical partners, donors and prayer partners within the target geographic region or community. The development of these communal and incarnational relationships is essential to helping the body of Christ grow and flourish, but also to the completion of translation projects themselves, which can be complicated and have historically spanned decades.

For example, in March of 2017 in South Sudan, a people who speak the Baka language celebrated the completion of the Baka New Testament. It was the culmination of a project over 30 years in the making. But it was a project that faced numerous challenges. When translators first encountered the Baka language, it was only a spoken language. The translation projects required the development of a written language as well as literacy training materials to ensure Scripture engagement. Illnesses as well as other circumstances within the local church caused several different partners to redistribute responsibility, resulting in a local pastor, Rev. Bennett Marona, becoming the project leader.

Furthermore, due to the civil war in Sudan, Rev. Bennett and the other translation team members were forced to relocate to a refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo and then on to Uganda before finally coming to completion back in what had since become South Sudan. At each stage and over every obstacle across those three decades, the project was able to persevere because of the strong relationship of a multinational team, selflessly committed to bringing the Word of God to the ears of those who speak Baka.







## Relying on Partnership

In Bible translation, partnership is paramount; translation goals, products and plans are determined collaboratively. Throughout the New Testament and the history of the Church, the body of Christ's growth has been the collaborative responsibility of the body itself. It remains a global community of believers fulfilling diverse yet vital roles, working toward the common goal. An uncoordinated body stumbles, but a coordinated one accomplishes much; so, too, does Bible translation work best in partnership.

Bible translation requires a wide breadth of collaboration: local language experts, linguists, translators, literacy workers, project advisors, donors, publishers and distributors. For this reason, Wycliffe is proud and honored to work with networks of Bible translation organizations like the Wycliffe Global Alliance. This collaboration saves decades of data-gathering, learning customs and cultural nuances, building relationships and many other efforts required to begin a translation. It's an unprecedented, globally unified effort of believers to pool knowledge,

resources and access to unreached people groups, and will play a pivotal role in closing the final gap and translating the Bible into every language in need on earth.

We saw this phenomenon in action in the Bible translation project for the Roviana people of the Solomon Islands. Christian missionaries first reached them with the gospel in 1902, 116 years ago. Since then, two separate advising agencies, a publisher, a recording company, a series of donor organizations and eight translators were needed to overcome a seemingly endless series of challenges. Finally, in May of 2017, the Roviana people celebrated a complete printed Bible and audio version of the New Testament in their heart language.

The project took immense collaboration, and the inspiring outcome could not have been accomplished by any single group. Their success demonstrates the incredible impact that the body of Christ can have through such cooperation and perseverance—something we look forward to seeing the Holy Spirit accomplish in many more communities.



### Prioritizing Stewardship

When Jesus entrusted the Great Commission to His followers in His absence, it required that we be faithful stewards of what He has given us. In Bible translation, faithful stewardship means that projects are well-developed, well-designed, well-resourced and well-managed with a high value on mutual accountability and transparency among all partners.

It means working with excellence: realizing the full potential of all available resources—from technology to personnel—to produce translations that are clear, accurate and natural to the local speakers in a way that honors them, our partners and God's eternal Word. This isn't just about physical resources, but also about our work and our time.

Our value for wise stewardship should permeate every other principle in the "Common Framework" because it is crucial to completing the task well, together and for God's glory.

### Celebrating Local Ownership

As Bible translation continues to evolve, it is most effective for the local body of believers to assume ownership of the vision and responsibility for Bible translation in their community.

« As Bible translation continues to evolve, it is most effective for the local body of believers to assume ownership of the vision and responsibility for Bible translation in their community. »

When the work of Wycliffe and our partners began, most translation projects were for isolated people groups with limited educational opportunities and little knowledge of the outside world. This meant that the first task for our translators was to shed light on their need for God's Word; the result, in many cases, was that we "owned" the project more than local communities did.

Bible translation has evolved as the world grows more interconnected—many language groups are now in a



position to own their translation projects if they have the right support. It's always been the case that when communities own their projects, not only are they more committed, but are also more likely to use the Scripture after translation and apply its teachings.

We've seen this at work in Peru. Mark and Patti Bean have been facilitating a translation cluster project, in which multiple distinct Quechua languages work together to achieve translation faster and with better accuracy. After recently finishing the Old Testament, they are revising their translations of the New Testament in hopes of printing the full Bible.

The team is a committed group of members, many of whom travel from great distances to work at the translation site, sacrifice time with their families and turn down more lucrative job opportunities to continue working together. For one member, the journey is a three-day walk and a ten-hour car ride. What keeps them coming back to work again and again? They believe in the power and importance of their task. It's their commitment to bringing the Word of God to their own people; nothing could be more rewarding or more urgent than sharing the gospel with their community in a language and form they can understand.

## Achieving Accelerated Impact

All of these principles coalesce in making an accelerated impact. With so many languages still without access to any usable Scripture, a central focus of the "Common Framework" is to accelerate impact by implementing short-phased projects that develop accessible Scripture products which respond to pressing ministry needs of the Church.

Part of the accelerated impact comes through adopting technological innovations, but the overall emphasis is on prioritizing projects that readily provide access to Scripture to those who have never heard God speak to them in their own language.

The Ilchamus people in Kenya demonstrate the expediency of providing Scripture in easily accessible forms at an accelerated rate. After translation attempts failed in the past, the Ilchamus people approached one of Wycliffe's partner organizations, Bible Translation and Literacy in Kenya, over concerns that material hardships and spiritual warfare were harming their efforts to bring Scripture to their people. The new, collaborative effort began by identifying portions of


Scripture that most closely addressed the particular needs of the community where receptivity to the gospel was highest—poverty was at the top of their list—and the best scalable distribution methods.

The partners decided to translate the Gospel of Matthew, because of its focus on God as provider, in both print and audio form as the most efficient way of having the greatest impact. After four months of careful development and design and six subsequent months of actual translating, the Ilchamus people published the Gospel of Matthew, distributing 1,000 printed copies and several hundred audio recordings. Because the book's teachings were particularly relevant to their communal needs, the Ilchamus people understood how the gospel applied to them. As a result, lives were transformed and churches gained more momentum for further translation projects.

By scaling the translation projects this way and aligning feasible goals with an unreached people group's specific needs, Scripture is able to have a meaningful and (relatively) immediate impact in those communities. Even more importantly, it introduces the gospel to more people who have no access to usable Scripture and allows the Word of God to speak to people at the heart level. We've witnessed the Holy Spirit amplify this seemingly small foothold in profound and powerful ways.

## Accomplishing Vision 2025

Fulfilling Vision 2025 will not be possible without continued collaboration within the global body of Christ. Other articles in this issue attest to the power of prayer in completing the task and the need for individuals and churches to invest time, money and other resources in God's global mission.

Vision 2025 is a bigger goal than we could ever achieve on our own. But by the provision of the Holy Spirit, the rich heritage and incalculable sacrifices of those who went before us, an evolving approach to Bible translation and a prayerful and committed global Church, we remain committed to accomplishing Vision 2025 and are closer than we've ever been to having a translation project underway for every people still waiting to experience God's Word for themselves. We hope you'll join us on this faith journey. 





# There's an App for That

## Technology Transforms Bible Translation

Ask someone what they imagine when they think of Bible translation, and they might describe a linguist sitting alone at a simple desk in a remote village, poring over a Bible word by word and writing or typing it into a local language. The work appears slow, painstaking and exacting.

While no less challenging or precise, today the work can look radically different. Where Bible translations once took 25 or 30 years to complete, advancements like customized software, computer tablets, apps and other tech have made it possible to get the Bible into people's hands faster, easier and in more ways than ever before in history.

Mike Cochran has served in language technology development with SIL International for 20 years, working with highly skilled teams to help increase the accuracy of translation work and the productivity of translation teams, from cultural anthropology to grammar and orthography.

« Where Bible translations once took 25 or 30 years to complete, advancements like customized software, computer tablets, apps and other tech have made it possible to get the Bible into people's hands faster, easier and in more ways than ever before in history. »

BY **KATIE KUYKENDALL**

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**Katie Kuykendall** has served for six years with Wycliffe Bible Translators USA, an organization dedicated to seeing a Bible translation project started for every language that needs it by the year 2025. She's passionate about educating the church in the United States about the need and impact of Bible translation around the world, and currently works as Wycliffe's Associate Director of Communications.

“Long ago, [SIL researchers] actually created a portable computer before there was one,” Mike said. “They also created hardware to process audio before there were cards and computers that did that. As an organization, we’ve always been pioneering in a technology space. Nobody else had anything like what we created.”

With the help of other organizations contributing their own expertise, today that pioneering innovation continues. Take a look at some of the cutting-edge tools changing the landscape of Bible translation around the world.

## Paratext Software

When linguist John Nystrom and his wife, Bonnie, first started translation work in 1990 with the Arop language group of Papua New Guinea, the majority of the work—like checking key terms and phrases for accuracy and consistency—was done by hand. Today, software programs like Paratext have become incredible tools to reduce effort and increase output.

Developed by United Bible Societies and SIL International, Paratext is the world’s leading software application for developing and checking new Bible translation texts, or revisions to existing texts. It gives teams a central location for reviewing word lists and biblical terms, storing project notes, comparing a translation to the original Greek and Hebrew or a source

text to ensure accuracy, and collaborating with team members remotely using the internet.

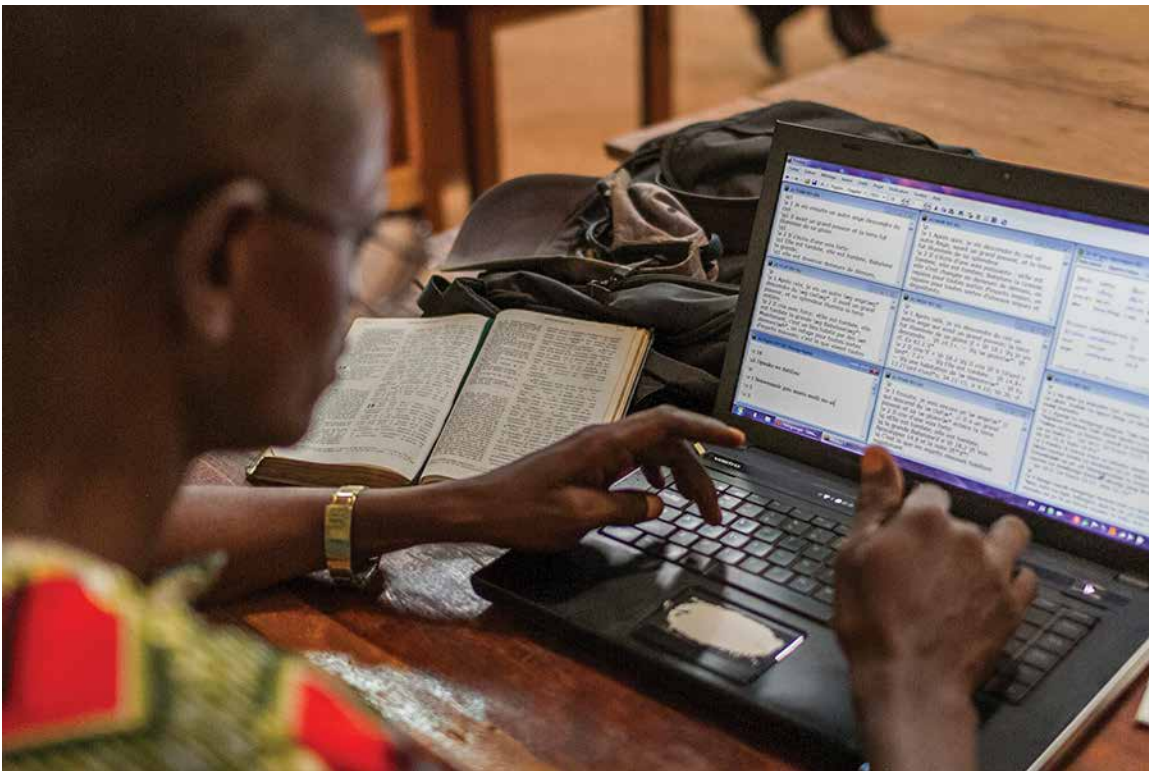
“Computers are better and faster than people at finding stuff and counting things,” John said. “But great translation tools use the computer’s finding and counting skills to set up what a translator wants to spend his time doing: deciding if what’s there is correct or if it can be improved.” That’s what Paratext has done for the Arop translation team and countless others.

When John and the team were translating the books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, for example, they needed a clear translation for the phrase “clean conscience.” Once they settled on the most accurate and natural phrase for the concept, they needed to replace all the existing instances of “clean conscience” with their translated alternative.

Previously that would have required serious time and effort, and ultimately the team still couldn’t be sure they’d caught all the references in the Scriptures. With Paratext, rather than searching the translation by hand they were able to identify all the instances of the phrase immediately. The software pinpoints each one and shows how it has been translated.

But what if you’re not a trained linguist? What if instead you’re a minority language speaker who wants to help translate the Bible for your own community, in a remote location with limited resources?





## A Lighter Option

While Paratext is ideal for many translation projects, for teams in some of the poorest, hardest-to-reach areas of the world, it can be impractical. Many of these teams are working with older computer models, most of which can't run the last three versions of Paratext, and there's no IT department in place to offer tech support.

In response to this complex need, teams from organizations like SIL International, Operation Agape, Distant Shores Media and Wycliffe Bible Translators USA are introducing a simple solution. They're partnering to develop Paratext Lite, a stripped back and more agile version of its robust counterpart.

"Paratext Lite is designed for a translator who hasn't been heavily trained in linguistics or isn't familiar with complex software," said Doug Hennum, chief innovation and information officer at Wycliffe USA. "It has a simple interface, does what they need it to do and then transfers it into Paratext so more highly skilled linguists and consultants can do what they need to do with it."

Best of all, it's tablet based and runs on the Android operating system, which is widely available around the world. This makes it ideal for low-power devices that work well in rugged desert environments or climates with high humidity and rain. It also eliminates the challenges

presented by desktop computers with malware issues, laptops constantly trying to download updates, or spotty internet connections.

"I think it may well be a game changer," Mike said. "Android devices are cheap and low power, and will give us the ability to roll out [the software] to people who otherwise couldn't take advantage of the tools."

Earlier this year the team rolled out Paratext Lite in beta mode, testing it with 95 people in 32 countries. The program was released in June.

## There's an App for That

The explosion of apps (short for "applications") onto mobile devices in recent years has dramatically enhanced and expanded much of our digital experience. When communicating with friends and family, playing games, tracking our health and even managing finances, apps are now a pervasive part of daily life for many.

Apps are also changing the way people all over the world engage with the Bible. YouVersion's Bible app allows readers to interact with Scripture in more than 1,000 languages. The Deaf Bible app from Deaf Bible Society offers Bible translations in various sign languages exclusively designed for the Deaf. *Bible.is* from Faith



Comes By Hearing contains audio Bibles for oral cultures and the “JESUS” film, a video dramatization that depicts the life of Jesus Christ in over 1,500 languages. Still more apps like iDisciple and Olive Tree offer thousands of devotionals, sermons and Bible studies.

Bible translation is no exception to the app phenomenon, as developers are continually finding ways to adapt these globally embraced tools to make Scripture accessible in brand new ways.

“There are several key experiments moving us forward rapidly,” Mike said. One is a program SIL developed called Scripture App Builder. It helps you build customized apps for Android and iOS smartphones and tablets, where you specify everything from the Scripture files used down to the fonts and colors. Scripture App Builder will package everything together and build the customized app for you. You can then install it on your phone, send it to others by Bluetooth, share it on microSD memory cards and publish it to app stores on the internet.

Another exciting new tool is called Scripture Forge, an app for translation teams to facilitate online community Scripture checking. Many Bible translation projects today are engaging an increasingly geographically diverse group of mother-tongue speakers.

“Often those people are online, which gives us an opportunity to do things we haven’t been able to do before, especially regarding evaluating how effective our approaches are,” Mike said.

Scripture Forge allows teams to engage with the language community by uploading Scripture portions, asking targeted questions about the translation and inputting the responses back into Paratext. The Scripture portions can be shared widely through social media and other channels, broadening the reach of the translated Word.

“You’re improving quality as you go, and people are actually using it before you’ve spent 15 years in a community. You’re also changing the quality of your translation as you go, because it’s being used by more people in a greater variety of contexts,” Mike added. “And if halfway through [a translation project] a team member has to leave, or a project stalls [because of conflict, unrest or funding issues] the community can still use what’s already been produced.

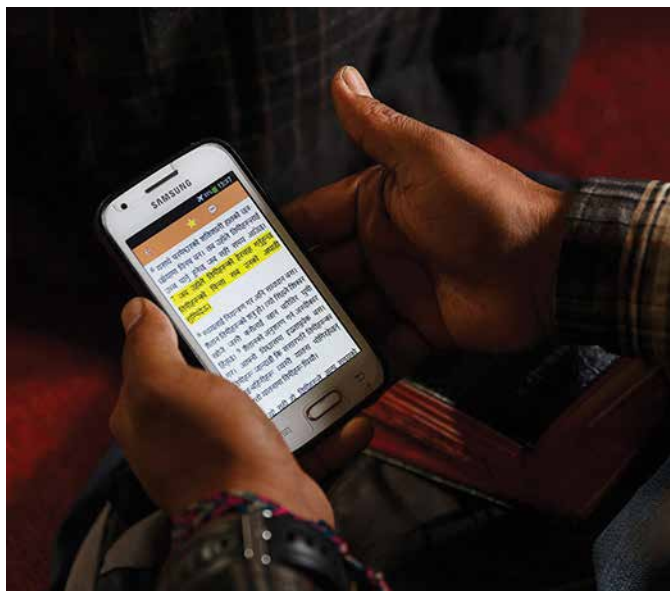
“Those things are very motivating for me with these technologies—the breadth, the reach. It’s motivating to reach the diaspora.”

« Ultimately the core goal behind any advancement remains the same: ensuring that every person has access to God’s Word in a language and form they can clearly understand. »

### Advancing Together

Ultimately the core goal behind any advancement remains the same: ensuring that every person has access to God’s Word in a language and form they can clearly understand. As Bible translation and distribution organizations, if we’re serious about that call our methodologies for completing this task are going to continue to grow and change.

One thing is abundantly clear: When it comes to technological advancements in Bible translation today, “it’s becoming much more of a collaborative effort than it ever used to be,” Doug said. “There are very few things we’re working on that we aren’t doing with a partner. The future is not going to be one organization making this happen. It’s got to be done in partnership.” MF



# Wow, Who Knew? Fonts are Needed for Bible Translation?

Such was the reaction of an American pastor upon hearing that font development was the ministry focus of Annie Olsen, a type designer for SIL International. It's not an uncommon reaction, either, at least among people who speak English (written with just 26 unaccented letters of the Latin script) as their native language. A fully developed digital font—a set of letters and symbols, plus underlying instructions—enables a computer or other device to print a script properly on a page, or display it on a screen.

## Then what, exactly, is a script?

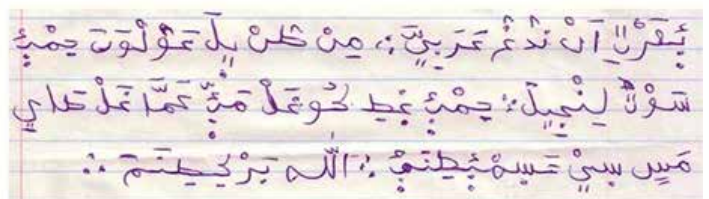
A script in this context is a system of symbols used for writing. The more than 7,000 living languages of the world use over 140 different scripts today. You're reading here the English language written using Latin (or Roman) script. Latin script is also used for thousands of other languages, though often with some modifications such as diacritics (accents or other marks) or slightly different letter shapes. You may also be familiar with other scripts such as Chinese, Hebrew, Greek or Arabic, recognizing their appearance even if you can't read them.

In our modern age, computers—and thus, fonts—play a crucial role in enabling people from every people group and nation to have access to God's Word in the language and script they know best. SIL International's Non-Roman Script Initiative (NRSI) team was formed to address the technical challenges encountered when using different languages and scripts on computers.

In some parts of the world, just using the correct script is not enough; the style of the script is also really important. The Arabic script, for instance, has several distinct styles of writing used in different parts of the world. The illustration below right shows a style of Arabic writing commonly found in West Africa. On the left is the same text printed using SIL's Arabic script font, Scheherazade, which is designed to match the standard (or Naskh) form of Arabic.

For people used to reading the West African style of Arabic, Scriptures printed using the Scheherazade font would look “foreign” to them, even if the language was correct. They would also find it harder to read because of the difference in style. For years this was a problem for

بَعُزْتُ أَنْ نَدْعُ عَرَبِيَّ، مِنْ طَنْ يَلْ عَوْلُونْ حَمْبْ  
سَوْتُ لِنَجِيلْ، حَمْبْ يَطْ كُوْعَلْ مَبْ عَمَّا غَلْ طَاي  
مَسِيسْ بِنِي عَسِمُطْنَبْ، أَللهُ بَرْكِطَنَمْ.



Left: Arabic printed using a font called Scheherazade, designed by SIL International.  
Right: Arabic writing style commonly found in West Africa.

BY **ANNIE OLSEN AND MARTIN RAYMOND**

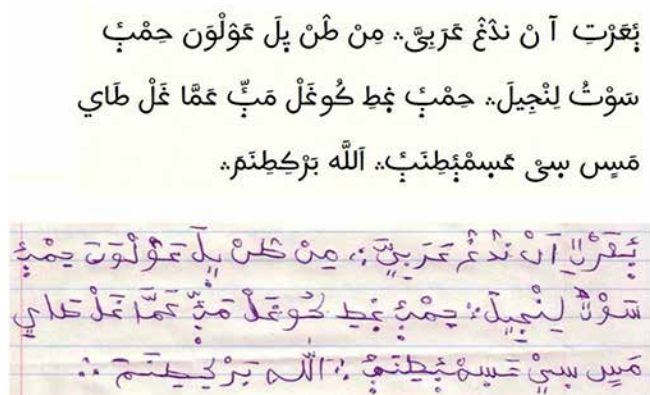
email: [annie\\_olsen@sil.org](mailto:annie_olsen@sil.org), [martin\\_raymond@sil.org](mailto:martin_raymond@sil.org)

**Annie Olsen** and her husband, Al, have served with SIL International since 1987 in field locations as diverse as Spain, Mexico, Tanzania and Kenya. Since 2003 Annie has worked in type design with SIL's Non-Roman Script Initiative (NRSI), making substantial contributions to the Andika font family, among others.

**Martin Raymond** has served as a member of the SIL NRSI team since 2008 as a programmer, administrator and project leader, and now as NRSI Director.

Bible publishers in that region, since there was no suitable font available to them.

In 2015, the NRSI team released a new font called Harmattan, which was designed specifically for the style of Arabic used in that region. Here is the same manuscript sample with NRSI's Harmattan font on top:



Arabic in the Harmattan font designed by SIL International (top) compared to the same West African manuscript (bottom).

It is easy to underestimate the impact a font can have on a language community that isn't accustomed to seeing printed documents in their style of writing. An inappropriate font can be a barrier that discourages people from reading Scripture and responding to it.

In 2014, when the Harmattan font was being developed, one of our West Africa field testers said that during an extended reading session with an older man he read almost twice as fast using Harmattan as opposed to Scheherazade. Around the same time, field testers met with a government agency responsible for literacy use of the Arabic script, and they loved the book of Genesis in the Harmattan font! Using the right font can break down a barrier, making Scripture more accessible.

## About Those Latin (and Cyrillic and Greek) Letters

NRSI was established to find solutions for challenging scripts like Arabic. However, there are also complexities in some languages that use Latin script. The first is simply having all the necessary letters and symbols. Even a single missing letter makes it difficult, if not impossible, to write a language correctly. All of SIL's Latin fonts—Charis SIL, Doulos SIL, Gentium, Andika—have comprehensive support for not only Latin script, but also Cyrillic letters and their many variants. Gentium also includes complete coverage for the Greek script.

The right letter shape is also important, especially for people learning to read. Literacy specialists have often

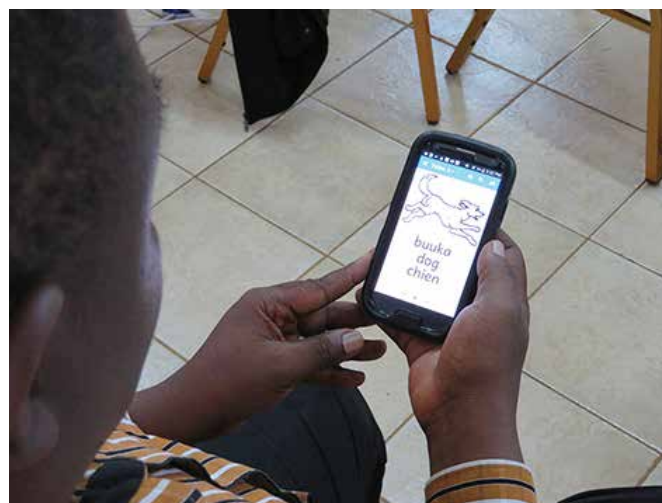
observed new readers being confused by letters whose shapes are too similar in some fonts. This design problem is addressed in Andika, a sans serif font based on decades of legibility research, resulting in clear, distinct letterforms.



Design choices made by the creators of the Andika font.

First released in 2009, Andika has been welcomed by educators in and out of SIL.

Just as the Harmattan font can remove a barrier for West African readers of Arabic script by displaying text in an appropriate style, so Andika can remove a barrier for new readers of Latin script by displaying text that is clear and easy to read.



An application built using SIL's Reading App Builder displays "dog" in Waama (a language of Benin), English and French using the Andika font.



**Using the world's many different scripts (including Arabic, Latin and Tai Viet) on computers presents a variety of technical challenges that need to be overcome to enable those from every people and nation to read God's Word in the language and script they know best. Developing the right font for the right context is key to making God's Word available in written form to more people groups around the world.**

### **Tai Viet: A Lesser-known Script**

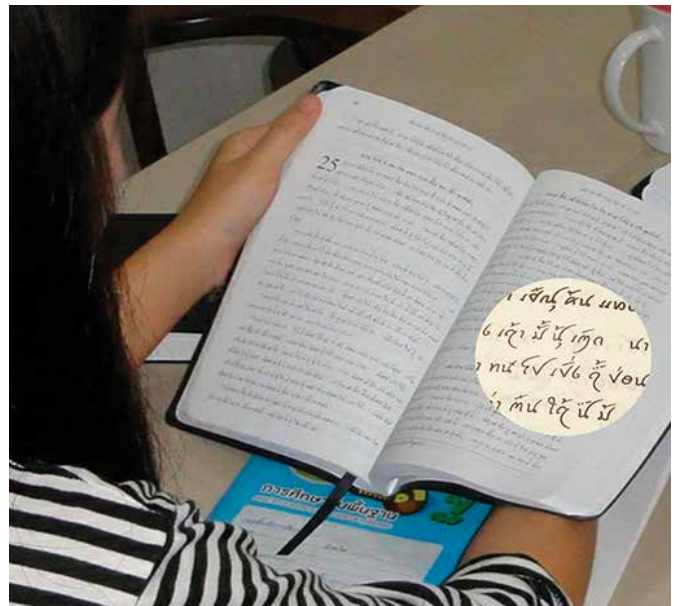
Some lesser-known scripts have a long history but few, if any, font options. For example, the Tai Viet script has been used for 500 years to write several different languages spoken in southeast Asia. In this complex script, vowels may be placed before, after, above or below consonants depending on the syllable. Consonants also indicate tone by a variation in shape. The letter shapes are not combined; rather a person writing this script learns to avoid collisions by careful placement. A computer font, however, needs those rules to be explicitly coded and added to the font.

Bible translation began in one of these languages, Tai Dam, in the late 1960s. Although the language has been written with the traditional Tai Viet script for centuries, in recent years the Latin and Lao scripts have also been used to write it, influenced by the national languages of the


countries where it is spoken. The first Scripture portions were published in 1978 in all three scripts—with the Tai Viet sections all written by hand!

A translation team member began asking how to turn this script into a computer-friendly font. Beginning with letters drawn by a Tai Dam artist, SIL's first Tai Heritage fonts were programmed for dot matrix printing. Then font technology changed again, and these fonts were converted to the new format in the mid 1990s. In 2007 all the letters and symbols of the Tai Viet script were added to Unicode, the computing industry standard for handling writing system data. Following this, the Tai Heritage font was once again updated and released in 2009. The most recent update was October 2017.

Three editions of the New Testament in the Tai Dam language were published in 2013 and 2014, one for each script. Some have been distributed to local speakers and are being studied by young people seeing these words in their own language and script for the first time.



*Reading the Tai Dam New Testament, published in the Tai Viet script (using SIL's Tai Heritage Pro font).*

Using the world's many different scripts (including Arabic, Latin and Tai Viet) on computers presents a variety of technical challenges that need to be overcome to enable those from every people and nation to read God's Word in the language and script they know best. Developing the right font for the right context is key to making God's Word available in written form to more people groups around the world. 

# The Voice of God

## Speaking to Siberian Hearts

As the gospel continues to spread to every corner of the earth, one of the ongoing needs in the mission field is to reach oral cultures. Unlike much of the Western world, books and documents are not the sources of knowledge and truth for communities rooted in oral communication—instead, new knowledge and truth is kept and communicated in these cultures through people telling stories.

For oral communities to hear God speak to them in their own language, they need access to the Bible in a format they will embrace. A written translation of the Bible likely won't have the same impact in a culture that is lived and shared orally. Rather, when they hear the Word of God in their own language in the communication form that they know best, they can hear the voice of God speaking to their hearts.

« When they hear the Word of God in their own language in the communication form that they know best, they can hear the voice of God speaking to their hearts. »

One of our top commitments in the work of Bible translation is making an accelerated impact in the communities that we partner with by focusing on smaller projects that significantly increase access to Scripture. In oral cultures, producing an accelerated impact in Bible translation starts with bridging materials that introduce them to the Scriptures and to Jesus in a way that resonates with their culture and draws them in.

We have begun to do this in Siberia through oral storying: recording carefully chosen Bible stories that together present the message of the Bible for people who speak their language every day but do not read it. Introducing portions of the Bible acts as a gateway for more traditional translation projects, allowing us to partner with native speakers who have become believers. Hearing God's Word in the form of communication they trust changes their lives, and they want to become partners in bringing the rest of the Bible to their people.

The gospel has begun to take root this way in the oral cultures of the Russian Far East—so far east that Russians no longer call it Siberia, so far east that the next stop is Alaska. This vast region measures about five million square miles with a population of a mere six million people, most of whom are ethnically Russian. But tucked away in this vast expanse are dozens of small people groups: the Oroch (47 speakers), the Ket (210 speakers), the Mednyi Aleut (350 speakers) and many other similarly sized language groups, the largest of which are the Chukchi (5,100 speakers) and the Yakut (450,000 speakers).

BY **MICHAL DOMAGALA** and  
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**Michal Domagala** and his family moved to Siberia in 2000. Michal has traveled extensively in many different parts of Siberia, including participating in a survey of dialects of the Even language, and more recently making several trips to the Kamchatka Peninsula to visit the Koryak people. He and his wife are from Poland, and serve with Wycliffe Poland. For the last few years they have been associate directors for SIL's work in Siberia.

**Michael Greed**, together with his wife, Teija, and two children, lived in Russia for 12 years as part of a multi-agency Bible translation team. They now live in Finland and are members of Wycliffe Finland. Michael now serves as communications director for SIL Eurasia, overseeing SIL's communication from the Sahara Desert to Siberia.

We were one of four teams going out from Wycliffe Russia to the Far East as part of a Bible storying project (communicating key portions of the Bible by telling its stories aloud to listeners to serve as a gateway to the rest of the Bible and to Jesus) with the goal of recording Bible stories in four Siberian languages: Koryak (1,670 speakers), Nanai (1,350 speakers), Nivkh (200 speakers) and Udihe (100 speakers). It wasn't our goal to translate the whole Bible, not yet. A few years earlier, SIL International had surveyed 16 languages with the most promising vitality in Siberia, resulting in recommendations for bridging materials to introduce the Scriptures.

Upon arriving at the village of the Koryak people, we connected with the believers, about 10 incredible women in their 70s and 80s reading Scripture using magnifying glasses. They danced in the Koryak style of worship, accompanied on the traditional Koryak drum. The gospel had taken root before we arrived, but the local believers were eager to be able to share God's Word in their language with others in their community. They already had some written portions of the Bible—but what they lacked was a way to transmit the gospel. For the rest of the community, the gospel was new, and for the Koryak accepting new truth comes through people and stories, not through written words.

**“If I had audio recordings with Bible stories in Nanai, I would listen to them with pleasure!”**

An experience from the team working alongside the Nanai people illustrates this need. Our colleague Anton was in conversation with a Nanai woman in a small village on the Amur River. He asked her if she ever read the Bible. “I tried,” she said. “I tried to read the Russian Bible, but I didn't understand a thing.” Anton was aware that a partner organization had published the Gospel of Luke in Nanai, so his next question was, “Have you read the Nanai Gospel of Luke?” He was gearing up to give her the natural line about how reading in the language of the heart makes a significant difference.

Anton was shocked when the woman said, “Yes, I tried. But it was even more difficult than reading the Russian Bible. I couldn't even finish one chapter.” When Anton got over his surprise, she went on to explain that they never use the

Nanai language for reading. “It's an oral language,” she continued. “If I had audio recordings with Bible stories in Nanai, I would listen to them with pleasure!”



It was like Paul's call to Macedonia in Acts 16:9, “Come over and help us!” The Nanai, Koryak and their neighbors did not need a book; they needed oral materials. They did not need recordings of the entire Bible; they needed oral Bible stories.

This model of oral storying has been, and continues to be, used in different forms in many projects across Siberia. In the case of these four language groups—the Koryak, Nanai, Nivkh and Udihe—we identified 25 Bible stories and began by making initial rough drafts in Russian with adaptations to Siberian culture. The stories ranged from Genesis to Revelation, providing a comprehensive overview of the message of the Bible: the story of Creation, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the early Church and our glorious hope for the future.

Our work with the Koryak, Nanai, Nivkh and Udihe speakers was a collaborative process. We worked with the mother-tongue speakers to retell the Bible stories using features typical of their oral traditions—only afterward was this text written down. The resultant text is, therefore, more of a free retelling than a verse-by-verse translation. Our primary tool was our recording device. We recorded our Koryak, Nanai, Nivkh and Udihe friends as they told the Bible stories in their own language, getting a sense for what felt natural and sounded good. Throughout the process, we had consultants on call in Finland and the UK to ensure the stories remained accurate to the Bible.

Similarly, a separate project with the Chukchi people worked on retelling the Sermon on the Mount in the



Chukchi language. In this passage, Jesus speaks of the birds neither sowing nor reaping nor gathering into barns, yet their heavenly Father feeds them. The Chukchi rendering came out as, “The birds do not process leather or sew, yet their High Father clothes them with feathers so they won’t freeze.” The translation consultant praised the team’s creativity—such a rendering was possible because we were retelling the stories of the Bible in a way the peoples of the Siberian tundra would understand.


Furthermore, integrating technology into oral storying projects like this has increased the number of people with access to God’s Word. For this project, the additional Chukchi Bible stories were recorded and made available (along with the accompanying written text) through an Android app built with SIL’s Scripture App Builder software. Chukchis can download the app onto a mobile phone to engage with the Scripture. Along with the recording, those unable to read the Chukchi text can also follow along in Russian, which is important because it connects the isolated Chukchi to the national body of believers.

Just this year, 25 Bible stories in the Siberian Even language were released, recorded by an Even villager high up in the Siberian mountains. Accompanying the recordings is a booklet that contains 41 attractive color pictures produced by an Even artist, showing the world of the Bible as it might be seen through the eyes of an average Even. The booklet is bilingual in Even and Russian, the Russian being a translation of the Even text. Similar projects like this are also ongoing in other languages in Siberia.

In our work with the Udihe language group, the smallest of the communities we worked with, the team was introduced to a woman named Onisia who offered to help translate and record the stories. Onisia was not a Christian; she faithfully worshipped the traditional Udihe gods. But on their second trip when the team was recording the story of Christ’s crucifixion, Onisia read out the words of Jesus, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” As she read she wept, leaving teardrops on the paper she was reading. The recording captures this pause as she weeps.

Once the project was complete two of the team members decided to live in the Udihe village for a year, and they witnessed the baptism of Onisia’s daughter, Alina. Though Onisia was attracted to Jesus, she was afraid of leaving her traditional gods. Alina heard the Good News of God’s love for her in her own language and had the courage to follow God despite social strain and spiritual pressure.



In the vast expanse of Siberia where news travels slowly, the gospel has begun to spread quickly. We have seen glimpses of light, the first fruits of these oral Bible storying projects. The Koryak, Nanai, Chukchi, Even and Udihe villagers now have the stories of the Bible retold using the distinctive features of their own oral tradition. Based on the success of these initial projects, Wycliffe Russia is setting up further projects so that an increasing number of Siberian peoples will have similar oral products within the next few years, providing Scripture materials in accessible forms in the language of their heart. 

As of 2000	As of 2018
<b>Languages with Complete Bibles</b>	
366	677
<b>Languages with Complete New Testament</b>	
928	1550
<b>Languages with Some Translated Scripture</b>	
2212	3334
<b>Languages Still Needing a Translation to Begin</b>	
Over 3,000	1559

# Judging a Book by Its Cover:

## Overcoming Barriers to Bible Access in Muslim Contexts



On my first visit to the Muslim people group with whom I work, a *mullah*, or an Islamic religious leader, suddenly grabbed me and pulled me around the side of a house. He clenched both of my arms and put his long beard and serious face only a few inches from my nose. He spoke in a low voice, “I need you to get me a Bible in a language that I understand.”

« **Hundreds of millions of Muslims are going from the cradle to the grave without ever even seeing a single portion of the Bible.** »

Here I am in the 21st century, and standing before me is an educated, well-traveled, multilingual religious leader who remains without access to the Word of God. I wish that I could say his case is an anomaly, but unfortunately it is all too common. Hundreds of millions of Muslims are going from the cradle to the grave without ever even seeing a single portion of the Bible.

Foundational to how we address this immense need is how one defines “Scripture access.”<sup>1</sup> The end goal of Bible translation is not a book on a shelf, but lives impacted as the Spirit of God uses His Word to bring people to faith in the Lord Jesus, and to equip them to serve God.

The foundation of God-fearing Bible translation work is a firm commitment to faithful and accurate translation. The love of God compels us to communicate the unchanging truth of the Scriptures in a way that is beautiful, clear and natural for each language group. The hope is for real people to meet, love and follow the living God. Thus, as Bible translators, we are working to overcome barriers that keep people from the Bible. Certainly, language itself is a major barrier, but communicating biblical truth is much more complicated than just words on a page.

From an early age, Muslims are both informed and misinformed about Christianity. Often they associate the whole of Western culture with Christianity, and they are taught that Christians are immoral, blasphemous and polytheistic. To many Muslims, Western politics and military hardware are the practical expressions of Christianity. In this context, they view the Bible as a symbol of cultural loyalty, a boundary marker between them, “the faithful,” and Christians, “the unbelievers.”

<sup>1</sup> Wayne Dye’s eight conditions are very instructive on this point. “The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement: Social and Cultural Factors Necessary for 1 “Vernacular Bible Translation to Achieve Maximum Effect.” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*. 26:2 Summer 2009, 89-98.

BY **ANTHONY WARD**

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**Anthony Ward** and his family have been living and serving in a Muslim context since 2009 where he is actively involved in three Bible translation projects. He has a master of theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary and a master’s degree in descriptive linguistics.

Even owning or reading a Bible is a threat to the order of their society. Features external to the gospel message itself (script, layout, icons, symbols, front material, color of the cover, etc.) potentially present massive barriers for a Muslim person even to touch such a book. What is printed on the copyright page tells them whether this book belongs to “us” or to “them.” In many ways, these barriers are about the identity of the book, not its message.

In overcoming these barriers and others like them, we must find ways to present the Scriptures without the geopolitical baggage. This means providing the local Muslim background believers with Scripture materials that do not force them to answer for Western civilization, but instead make the message of the text itself the central issue.

For example, in many areas the color black is associated with sorcery, and the symbol of the cross represents Western culture, which they have grown up viewing as imperial and immoral. A black Bible with a cross on it evokes an instant emotion of fear and disgust, and it presents a barrier to people reading the Bible with an open heart. These perceived ill-intentions of the Bible often cause readers to misunderstand the text. If a book is deemed to come from foreign, blasphemous, immoral enemies, then not only will the reception of the text be hostile, but the interpretation of the text will also be twisted in that direction.

« **Features external to the gospel message itself (script, layout, icons, symbols, front material, color of the cover, etc.) potentially present massive barriers for a Muslim person even to touch such a book.** »

The perceived source of Scripture material can also make a big difference in how it is accepted. Just about any Scripture product can be shared by expatriate missionaries with their group of close friends, coworkers and employees. The power of relationships does open doors and break down barriers. But what a person is willing to look at when

alone with a foreigner is often not the kind of material one can share back home with a father, an aunt or a cousin.

Expatriate Scripture distribution is great, but statistically it is only a drop in the bucket. We can do more by translating and presenting Scripture materials in ways that facilitate sharing from one local person to another. Many aspects of the message of the Bible will be a stumbling block to our Muslim audience, but when we can remove stumbling blocks external to the message, it allows the message of the gospel to be the central issue.

One helpful approach involves translating and presenting key Scripture portions, a method that has been around for decades.<sup>2</sup> Unreached Muslim people groups need a set of gospel-centered Bible stories today, not just a big dusty Bible in twenty years. Many Muslims are curious to know about the life of Jesus. Presenting well-chosen passages from both the Old and New Testaments can encourage that curiosity and open the door for people to meet the living Lord for the first time.

For example, Omar (a pseudonym) is a Muslim-background believer who has a whole Bible in his language. But because of its identity, style and presentation, he has never shared it with his family and friends. Yet when he received a beautifully printed book of Bible portions that had been put into a series of biographical stories (Adam through Jesus), he displayed it openly in his home and used it to talk about his faith. In another project, a local man traveled to several villages and read the book of Proverbs in the evenings with family groups. Based on how individuals responded, he was able to start conversations leading to the Lord Jesus.

The presentation of the Bible can project either honor or dishonor. In Muslim societies, important books are never printed cheaply, and certainly a Holy Book would always be printed with beauty and quality. Thus, if we can present the Scriptures (in any media) with local art forms, color and quality, then the Scriptures have a much better chance of being perceived as honorable, beautiful, trustworthy and authoritative.

The word choices and style of a translation can make the Scriptures either attractive or repulsive. Translators must consider not just their approach, like literal translation or paraphrasing, but also register, pragmatics, collocations, cultural frames and a host of other factors.

For example, when one Muslim-background believer was reading the New Testament in his own language, he told

2 See: Norman Mundhenk, “Preparing Selections: Specialized Translations,” *Bible Translator* 24.4 (Oct. 1973): 401-419; and Rick Brown, “Selecting and Using Scripture Portions Effectively” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*. 19:2 Summer 2002, 10-25.



my coworker, “I don’t think that the people who worked on this translation thought very highly of Jesus.” Of course, he was wrong; many of the people who worked on that translation had a very high view of Jesus! Nevertheless, the way the language was used in referring to Jesus came across stilted, monotone and disrespectful. Some minor adjustments to the style of the translation would have corrected this misunderstanding and accurately reflected the high view of Jesus as presented in the Gospels.

**We must  
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Each country, sect  
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We must acknowledge that the Muslim world is complex and far from monolithic. Each country, sect and people group brings a unique set of challenges. The kinds of translation products that will serve a diaspora community may not be the same as those needed by the people still in the homeland. The style and media for a minority Christian community may not be the style and media that allows the Muslim majority to access the Bible—even in the same language. This calls for a long-term commitment on behalf of the church to work through these complex logistical, social and linguistic challenges.

Meeting these challenges will require increased understanding and cooperation between all partners involved in the Bible translation movement. In the past, “Joe and Sue Translator” went out to the village, and the church trusted them and their sending agency to be the experts on that language and to produce a faithful translation. But in our information age, suddenly there is the potential for every translator’s word choices to be subject to instant international scrutiny.

This happens within a politically charged climate characterized by widespread fear of Islam. Even in the church, there can exist an atmosphere of disdain and hypersensitivity to anything bearing the slightest resemblance to Islamic art or idiom. We as the Church must be careful not to mistake missiologically nuanced and theologically robust contextualization for syncretism or compromise. While there are many examples of syncretism and compromise, we must avoid quick and emotional judgments based on misunderstanding and partial information, which have unjustly crippled the Lord’s weary faithful on the front lines of the mission field.

Throughout history, this kind of tension has always occurred when the gospel is translated for a new context.<sup>3</sup> The church is often threatened by contextualizing the message through translation. This was the experience of Jerome, Luther, Wycliffe, Tyndale and others. They incurred the wrath of those defending “the gospel according to us” at the expense of opening the door of understanding to others.

To see a Bible translation in progress for every language that needs it, the Church must engage in unprecedented communication and cooperation with the Bible scholars and theologians doing Bible translation within the Muslim world. We as the translators need to joyfully submit to the scrutiny that comes from the larger global Church engaging in the process of Bible translation. The long-term benefits far outweigh the cost. And in turn, the appeal is for church leaders outside of any given Muslim context to humbly listen to members of these language communities and to the insights that dedicated mission practitioners have gleaned from years of study and living daily life with their Muslim friends, neighbors and coworkers.

Bible translation is much more than a once-for-all placement of proper Greek and Hebrew words in a grammatical order in a given language. Bible translation is a communication process that brings the meaning of the unchanging text of the holy Scriptures into the dynamic forms and expressions of real people who need a relationship with the living God. It is only by understanding each of our Muslim audiences that we will be able to serve them best. How we translate and present the Bible can make the difference between a dusty book and lives changed for eternity. 

<sup>3</sup> Sanneh, Lamin O. *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. 2nd ed. American Society of Missiology Series, no. 42. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2009, pp. 40ff.

# A New Day Dawns for the Deaf:

## A Visual Bible for Each of Their Visual Sign Languages

Bible translation has been around for centuries, with missionaries venturing out into people groups near and far to make God's Word accessible to people in a language and form they can clearly understand. As we steadily count down the number of languages left without Scripture, a people group seems to have gone overlooked by many, even though they live among all societies in every city, state and country around the world: the Deaf.

Deaf Bible Society is an organization with a mission to provide God's Word in every sign language. In collaboration with their partners, Deaf Bible Society reports that there are more than 400 distinct sign languages in use today. Yet only one completed New Testament exists, in one sign language, making the Deaf one of the most unreached and unengaged people groups in the world.

The staggering statistics indicate that only two to three percent of Deaf people worldwide have been introduced to the truth of a Savior, and almost all Deaf communities are without God's Word and biblical resources in a language and form they can understand.

But why do the Deaf need Bible translation at all? Why can't they just read the written Scriptures?

Sign languages are not based on "simple" gestures or pantomime representing the national spoken language. They are true languages, rich and complex, with their own syntax and grammar. Sign languages employ facial expression, hand and body movement, and palm orientation to create visual grammar. Deaf people who use sign language as their primary mode of communication depend upon all of the components of this visual grammar to convey meaning, just the same as a hearing person depends upon spoken language grammar to project ideas, purpose and sense of identity.



BY **DEE COLLINS**

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**Dee Collins** is a writer and a Deaf advocate for Deaf Bible Society. She and her husband entered into the mission field with Wycliffe Bible Translators, specifically called to serve Deaf ministry, 12 years ago. Dee has a serious, growing passion for capturing and telling the narrative of the Deaf individual and communities who are finding love and hope in Christ for the first time.

**The staggering statistics indicate that only two to three percent of Deaf people worldwide have been introduced to the truth of a Savior, and almost all Deaf communities are without God's Word and biblical resources in a language and form they can understand.**

### **A Visual Bible for a Visual Language**

Deaf Bible Society and their partners are dedicated to getting God's Word in the heart language of every Deaf person, and must consider all the specific and detailed nuances that go into constructing biblical content and resources for the Deaf. Instead of the traditional 2D linear words on a page, which fall flat, sign language is dynamic and active, and must be in an accessible multimodal medium to be viewed.

The broad availability of video technology has blazed a trail for reaching Deaf people with Scripture in a visual form, but there remains a major challenge of translating God's Word into an estimated 400 sign languages.

The output must use the face, the hands, body movement and expressions all collaborated with clear, natural and accurate signs, which can be unique for every culture and sign language. This presents a challenge that requires cutting-edge technology.

Machine learning has been around since the 1950s, but it has never been on the lips of mechanical engineers, software developers and computer scientists like it is today. It wasn't that long ago that the general public wasn't ready to accept things like artificial intelligence (A.I.) and learning bots into their private space. Then along came Siri from Apple and Amazon's virtual assistant, Alexa, and the world of A.I.

exploded. Since then, new gadgets and smart electronics have emerged with life-enhancing algorithms.

Eastern and western populations alike gobble it up daily.

But how can Christian evangelists and ministries take advantage of this sailing ship? Can this kind of advanced technology be used to assist the acceleration of Bible translation and Scripture engagement? If digital assistants can be capable of turning off lights and ordering dinner, then certainly programs can be designed to perform specific, complex tasks like language acquisition. But, can advanced technology like A.I. be used in sign language acquisition? Better yet, can machine learning be used to assist sign language Bible translation?

### **Thinking Inside the Bot**

When a hearing person talks about a translation of the Bible, they refer to the variety of different text and audio versions available like the King James Version, the NIV or the New Living Translation. The reader or the listener rarely connects the team or individual who worked on the translation directly with the final product.

Sign language Bible translation work requires the Deaf person doing the translation to show their face on camera, making that individual permanently connected to the translation. Problems arise when the character of the person overrides the message of Christ and becomes the focus. This can lead to scrutiny when the community recognizes the signer, and the reputation of the person can directly impact the reputation of the translation. In regions hostile to God's Word, the signer risks putting their entire family, the translation team and the project in danger. The challenge becomes protecting the identity of the signer.

Deaf Bible Society is taking advantage of new technology to build software called Chameleon, which uses machine learning (A.I.) to mask the identity of signers on camera behind visually realistic avatars. Chameleon uses neural networks that are trained with real-time data and are fed information to identify an elbow, an eyebrow and how the lips form in conjunction with a particular facial movement. They work like an active brain to learn the motions and expressions while responding by recognizing bodily connections and coordinated movements. It is like a baby who sees his parent over and over and suddenly starts to smile when the parent walks in. The baby responds based on what he is learning. When the output of the neural network is driving the avatar, the signer's identity remains hidden—fully capturing his movements and signing style while eliminating the risk.



Neural networks have enabled Chameleon to leap years ahead of what was thought possible. “It’s really the dreamers who keep things moving forward,” says the Chameleon team leader. “It wasn’t that long ago that neural networks were considered unpopular. People didn’t think it was possible for computers to learn and self-correct on their own, but look at what God is doing for His glory!”

### Awareness Builds a Movement


Historically Deaf people have been marginalized, forgotten and unreachable. Misunderstood and reduced to a homogenized culture, they are often looked down upon and socially regarded as “disabled.”

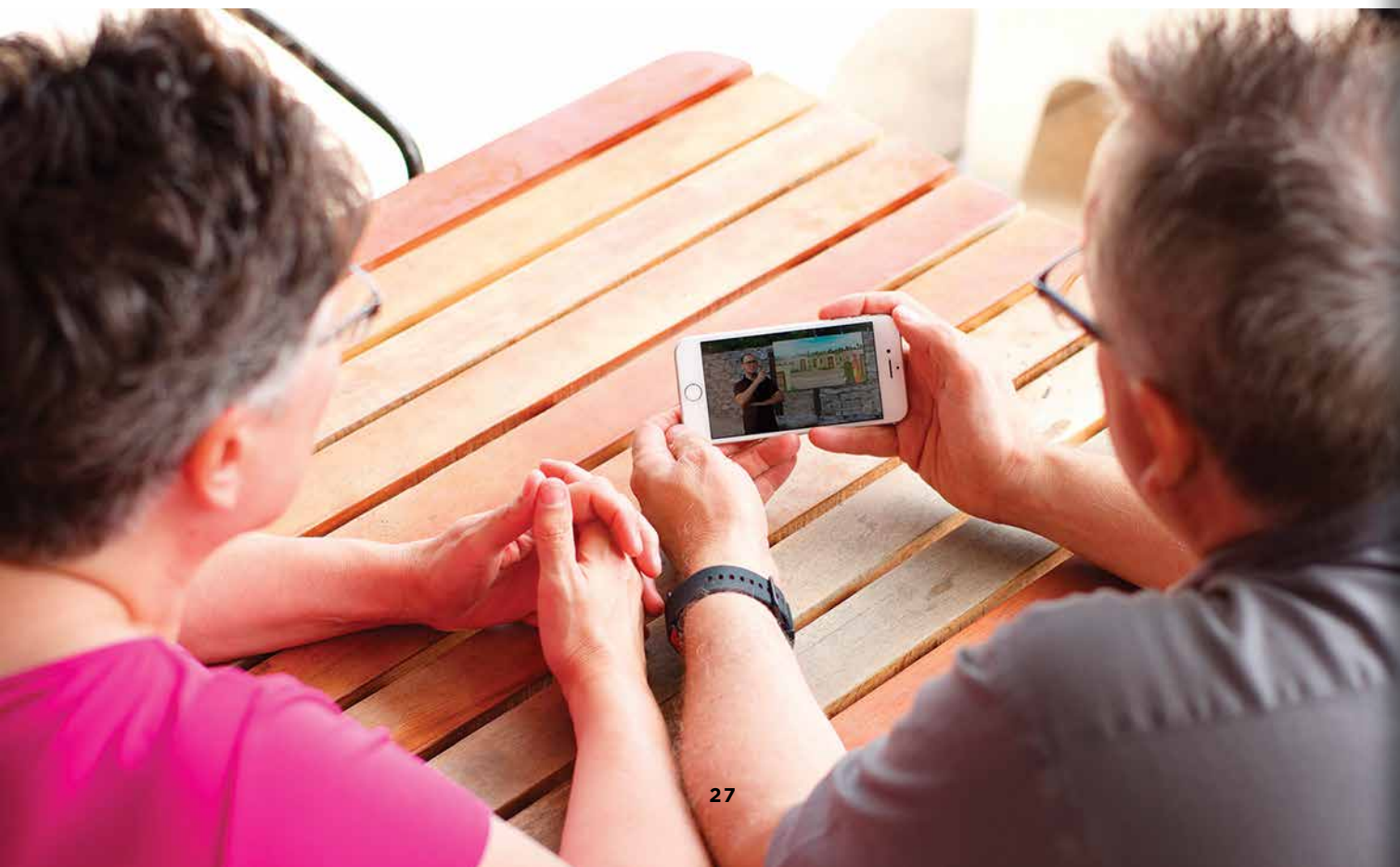
In some countries, Deaf people are labeled as leprous, and their deafness is considered a sign of sin. There are many countries where deafness is considered shameful, and Deaf people are cursed and ousted from society. Deaf children and adults are often hidden away, left by their parents, or separated into the very lowest sect. We’ve heard stories of terrible crimes and atrocities committed against Deaf people because they cannot speak out for themselves.

Missionaries seeking Deaf people must often knock on doors to draw out the withdrawn and isolated. When they do reach a Deaf population, churches often mistakenly approach them with services and resources geared toward a hearing audience, which Deaf people must try to fit into.

**Sign languages must come to be fully recognized as true languages, cherished by the Deaf as their heart language.**

But as sign language Bible translation makes its way into the light, Deaf culture is being recognized more and more. Advanced technology and social media touch every place around the globe, creating a place for acceptance and change. It is a time when Deaf people must be identified and honored as intrinsic people groups, as an exclusive culture within a culture. Sign languages must come to be fully recognized as true languages, cherished by the Deaf as their heart language.

Deaf Bible Society believes that the Great Commission is true for all people, including the Deaf. We believe the Deaf have a right to access the Bible in their sign language resulting in a personal relationship with God and community within the Church. To learn more about Deaf Bible Society, who we are, and our projects, please visit [DeafBibleSociety.com](http://DeafBibleSociety.com). 



# The Power of Prayer

## in Completing the Task

My wife and I have served for 23 years with Wycliffe Bible Translators, an organization dedicated to making Scripture accessible to every language group that needs it. You can imagine over the course of all those years the number of prayers we have prayed and the number of ways we have seen the Lord answer those prayers. Here are a couple examples from early on.

When I wanted to become a missionary pilot with JAARS, a Wycliffe partner organization that supports Bible translation, I needed to log an additional 170 hours of flight time. My prayers asking for God's provision led to me crossing paths with a gentleman who let me use his 1946 Taylorcraft airplane for a year. Instead of paying \$70 per hour, I paid \$5 per hour!

Only four months into our first assignment in Papua New Guinea, our one and a half year old daughter Emily spiked a 104 degree fever in a village half a day away from the nearest clinic. She was not responding to the malaria treatment, there were no cell phones and no 911 emergency response team. That's when we had our first encounter with a "jungle" doctor. Our daughter did not drink the special river water that he

prescribed to force the evil spirits out of her body. Instead my wife and I, and a half dozen elders of the local church anointed her with oil and prayed the prayer of faith. Emily was up and running and bouncing off the walls—back to her normal self—the next morning.

**Whether prayers for openings in the clouds over jungle airstrips or prayers for God's wisdom, guidance and provision, each prayer springs from a common source, out of our faith in a promise from God's Word.**

Whether prayers for openings in the clouds over jungle airstrips or prayers for God's wisdom, guidance and provision, each prayer springs from a common source, out of our faith in a promise from God's Word. As the Word of God is foundational to our faith, it is foundational to our prayers. It is our faith in God's promises that gives our prayers their effectual power.

I have never claimed to be a theologian, but in my thinking there has always been a separate category of promises that I refer to as "unlimited." These are the ones reserved for the

Abrahams, Davids and Pauls of Scripture. These are the promises that nudge my faith to an entirely different level. I believe this is the Holy Spirit's intent. I believe that John 15:7 ought to arrest our imagination when it says, "But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted."



BY **DOUG HAAG**

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**Doug** and his wife, Jo, joined Wycliffe Bible Translators in 1995. Their first assignment was Papua New Guinea (1997 to 2000) where Doug served as a missionary pilot. Doug and Jo moved to Wycliffe's headquarters in Orlando in 2001 where Doug currently serves as the senior director of Strategic Prayer and Partnerships. Doug and Jo have two daughters, Ashley (25) and Emily (22).

The same goes for Ephesians 3:20, “Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”

God’s unlimited promises were never intended to be glossed over or pulled down to our common sense level and emptied of their power. They were meant to lift our faith and lead us to a level of experience that is filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God. If there is a promise we have not experienced yet, we ought not rest until we have!

In 2007, I experienced a series of events that the Lord would use to help forever change my perspective on His unlimited promises and the way I pray.

In September of that year, I rode a bicycle 2,650 miles across the United States in 35 days, raising \$51,000 for a Bible translation project with Wycliffe USA. The fundraiser had far exceeded my expectations, and the coolest part was that I had the privilege of choosing the project. I felt like the richest man in the world.

About a year earlier, I had heard a presentation about the impact of audio Scripture and the ministry of Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH), an organization Wycliffe USA has partnered with regularly in the past. At that time, Wycliffe and FCBH were co-funding projects among language communities that had a high priority need for audio Scripture listening groups. I couldn’t think of a more dynamic partnership or a more exciting project to sponsor, bringing Bible translation and dramatized audio recordings together.

When I saw the Kekchi of Guatemala on the list of potential projects to fund, I was reminded of an Assemblies of God (AG) missionary sent out by our home church in Orlando, and I got even more excited. Damien had been working among the Kekchi for some time, a group of over 700,000 speakers of Mayan descent located throughout central Guatemala. They had the printed New Testament, but there was minimal engagement because the Kekchi typically share and receive important information through oral stories.

I emailed Damien, telling him about the ride, the available funds, and asked if the audio players and the training would benefit the work he was doing among the Kekchi. He acknowledged the need, how easy it would be to launch the listening groups within the local Kekchi churches and what a tremendous blessing it would be to the pastors. I began to dream of the possibility of bringing the pieces together to create synergy and to multiply the engagement

and impact of the Kekchi Scripture. My dreams became desperate prayers, and my desperate prayers became steps toward doing whatever it would take to make it all happen.

I reached out to FCBH sharing my desire to fund the launch of the Kekchi listening groups and to do it in partnership with the Guatemalan Assemblies of God—and working in partnership with the National Church was FCBH’s preferred strategy! I asked Damien if he would reach out to the Guatemalan AG leadership, and he agreed. Meetings were scheduled, plane tickets were purchased and I was off on my first trip to Latin America.

In April 2008, half way into my five-day trip to Guatemala, I found myself in a large conference room with representatives from Faith Comes By Hearing, SIL, the Guatemalan Bible Society, the General Superintendent and all the department heads of the Guatemalan Assemblies of God church. The two people I knew in the room, I had met just two days before. Except for me sharing the first few minutes about the bicycle ride, there was not another word of English. One hour later, what was to be a 30-minute meeting concluded with smiles, handshakes, formalities and one *gringo* with a deer-in-the-headlights expression on his face.

On the way to the car, the Americas Area director for FCBH apologized for not having time to interpret and gave me a one sentence summary. “That,” he said, “was a very good meeting!” It so happened that very good meeting was the answer to every prayer I had been praying for nearly a year. I was right in the middle of it, and I didn’t even know it!



The meeting at the Guatemalan Assemblies of God headquarters catalyzed an ad hoc five-way partnership that over the course of the following months led to the launch of over 900 audio Scripture listening groups in the Assemblies of God churches throughout the Kekchi



speaking region. Audio players (called Proclaimers) and the training for facilitating listening groups was provided for several hundred AG pastors and lay leaders.

This connection with Guatemala became a benchmark experience in my faith journey. I had never prayed for something as intently or as long that involved as many people, churches and organizations with as much potential to touch a people group. (His Word will not return void!) Many times I have read, and sung, Psalm 2:8, “only ask, and I will give you the nations” with a very real cry in my heart wondering what it could mean for me personally. My experience in Guatemala, the bike ride, the funds raised, the partnership, the more than 900 listening groups launched (each with the potential of becoming a church), all my answered prayers for a “nation”—the Kekchi—changed my perspective. I went from simply believing in the power of God’s unlimited promises, to actually experiencing it.

*The invitation is open to us all.*

*“Come to me with your ears wide open.*

*Listen, and you will find life.*

*I will make an everlasting covenant with you.*

*I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David.*


*See how I used him to display my power among the peoples.*

*I made him a leader among the nations.*

*You also will command nations you do not know, and peoples unknown to you will come running to obey, because I, the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, have made you glorious.”*

— Isaiah 55:3-5

This experience gave me a taste of the Lord’s mighty power that is at work within us. So much more is accomplished when we start where God starts! His eyes search the whole earth looking to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him, those who would believe and pray His unlimited promises into existence. Yes, the bike ride to help fund the Kekchi listening groups was incredibly fulfilling in itself; but looking to the horizon, longing and praying for the nations and for unity in the church brought about a multiplied blessing not just for me or the Kekchi, but for FCBH, for Damien and for the church in Guatemala.

Discovering the power of prayer for completing the task begins by simply taking God at His Word and longing to know Him the way He longs to be known. 



Kekchi village in Guatemala



Kekchi speakers



Kekchi receiving Proclaimer



# Heart Returns on Investment

Janet Vaughan shares Bible translation with anyone who will listen, including her Sunday school class and her trainer at the gym. She says, “Everyone I tell is interested, but it’s just a story to them. Being a part of the work of Bible translation reinvigorates your own faith, and it makes you so happy for those receiving God’s Word for the first time.” Although Janet may sound like a linguist or a Wycliffe Bible Translators missionary, she’s actually a passionate financial partner of Wycliffe Bible Translators USA.

Two years ago Janet and her husband, Chip, felt God was guiding them to make a significant gift through a family fund established by Chip’s parents, Cy and Jean Vaughan, to support kingdom work. Prayer, research and counsel from their advisor with Ronald Blue Trust, a Christian financial planning company, led them to consider investing in the work of Wycliffe Bible Translators. Janet says, “We wanted to get the funds out to do God’s work. And what’s more key than giving God’s Word for each individual language? If people don’t hear the gospel, they don’t know.”

The couple’s first meeting with Wycliffe representative Amanda Fewless also happened to be Amanda’s first visit in her role. Amanda was excited to get to know Chip and Janet—to learn about their family, and the things and places they care about most. “One thing that stood out during that first meeting was their desire to be wise stewards,” Amanda said. “They had not been involved in Bible translation before, and they were asking great questions about it.”

The more the Vaughans prayed and thought it through, the more Chip felt like his parents really would have wanted to support work in Africa. They began learning more about the Dodoma project—a project in Tanzania that was doing translation work in a cluster approach, where four related

languages worked together to complete their Scripture translations. Each language was in a different phase of Bible translation, ranging from an unreached people group with no written language yet, all the way to a language that was almost ready to dedicate their New Testament. It provided the Vaughans with a spectrum of Bible translation needs toward which to contribute.



Chip and Janet reviewed the Dodoma Cluster project materials with their adult children, and decided as a family to make a gift to support the work. Chip felt that his parents would be both honored and humbled to play a part in providing Scripture to so many who had never had the chance to hold a Bible in their language. Amanda kept them linked to the project by introducing them to staff working on the translations and forwarding on prayer requests and updates from the teams.

“You start out giving to help people that don’t have God’s Word,” Janet said. “You forget that in the process, your connection will bring the work to life. It’s not just giving money, it’s so much beyond that. It makes you a participant in the project.”

BY **MELISSA STILLMAN**

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**Melissa Stillman** has served with Wycliffe Bible Translators USA for 16 years and is currently the Associate Director of Development. She loves hearing and sharing the stories of gospel patrons—like Janet and Chip Vaughan—that God has called to be a part of Bible translation through financial investment.



That's the moment that Wycliffe is inviting people into: discovering how God is calling you to participate in Bible translation and receive the blessing that comes from obeying that call. Representatives like Amanda are able to minister to donors by building relationships and finding the way God is leading them to partner in the work—through prayer, giving of their time and talents and financial investment—and facilitating opportunities for them to be involved.

The Vaughans represent thousands of generous partners, around the United States and around the world, who are supporting Bible translation efforts. Individuals, families and businesses from Ghana to Singapore, Panama to Indonesia, are stepping into the work through their prayers and financial investments.

### An Unexpected Invitation

A few months after the Vaughans' gift, Amanda surprised the family with an invitation to visit the Dodoma cluster project. Health concerns and scheduling challenges kept Chip and their kids from going, but Janet eagerly accepted the offer. In August 2017 Janet and Amanda traveled with a small group to Tanzania to visit the work the Vaughan family had been involved in through prayer and giving. They were even able to attend the New Testament dedication for one of the languages in the Dodoma cluster, the Burunge!



The sights and sounds of the dedication day are something that Janet will never forget. "We took a van to the ceremony and from our van we saw people walking long distances along the road, dressed up for the celebration of their Bible dedication," Janet recalled. "We heard pastors speak and pray, the choir sang three or four times and there was worship through dancing. Several hundred people were standing the whole time in the hot sun, holding babies in their arms. But they came there for

a purpose—walked all that distance, waited all that time—because they so wanted the Bible in their language. You saw the people kiss their Bibles and hold them up to their chests like a precious gift. It caused me to treasure my own Scriptures more, and it changed my heart as much as I knew it was going to change their hearts."



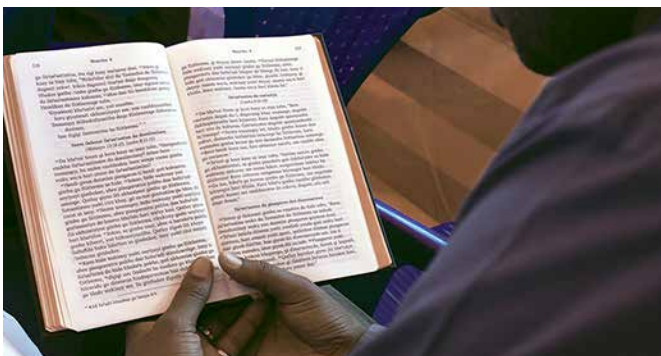
« "We were blessed to see the entire process—to go into the translation office and see translators diligently work through a passage of Scripture, then to see a community check where people in a village sat and read the text together and talked about it." »

As meaningful as the celebration was, Janet was most moved by the opportunity to see where each of the four languages were in the translation task. "We were blessed to see the entire process—to go into the translation office and see translators diligently work through a passage of Scripture, then to see a community check where people in a village sat and read the text together and talked about it," she said. We even went out one night when they showed the JESUS Film. Everything culminated with the Burunge celebration where translation has been accomplished and they were passing out their new Bibles. It was a quick encapsulation of what takes years to happen."





One of the ways that Wycliffe conveys to financial partners their key role in the task is by connecting them as closely with the work taking place on the field as possible. Wycliffe wants donors to see the true impact of their investment through regular project reports and prayer updates. After months of supporting the Dodoma teams from the U.S., it felt like a reunion of sorts for Janet to meet those serving in the Dodoma project. She says, “Going over and meeting the missionaries and the nationals that are doing the translation work for their own language fills you up. It was amazing to see the passion, determination and drive the team has for bringing God’s Word to people in their heart language.”



## Working Together Toward Completion

Traveling to Africa together formed a bond between Amanda and Janet. “Getting to know Janet, and seeing her use her spiritual gift of giving, has been awesome,” Amanda said. “For her to be willing to pick up from here and go visit the work, it really drove it home. Her spirit of generosity and desire to bless people became very clear on the trip. And she and her family are ultimately giving a gift that will impact those communities forever.”

Janet and Amanda remain close, with the Vaughns opening their Atlanta area home for Amanda to stay with them when she’s passing through. The ladies often find that brief meetings turn into visits that are several hours long. In fact, they enjoyed a road trip together to South Carolina this past spring. Janet says, “Connecting with Amanda was

wonderful. She is easy to be with, so we formed a good friendship quickly. She’ll call to say, ‘This is happening, does it interest you?’ And I feel free to call her with questions. That personal relationship draws you into the ministry.”



Chip and Janet want to stay involved with the Dodoma project in the near future. Because of the connections Janet made, the Burunge people are always close to her heart. She says, “I feel blessed when the team emails us to ask for prayer. And Amanda keeps us updated on what’s happening in the project. I have a heart for Africa, and we’re anxious to be a part of accomplishing what we saw there.”

Through Wycliffe, we’re giving so people can receive the completed Scriptures in their heart language.



“The Dodoma cluster is a four-language project, and right now it’s our hope to help work through that to the completion of one or two more of them. Having seen people’s response to God’s Word in their language, I don’t want to jump into something new. We want to see completion in these groups, and help put Bibles in their hands. Through Wycliffe, we’re giving so people can receive the completed Scriptures in their heart language.”





# A Desire That Would Not Die:

## God's Word for a People in Exile

BY **MELODY DUBOIS**

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**Melody DuBois** has served in communications roles with SIL International since 1994, first in the Philippines and now from the US as global communications coordinator. A wide team of colleagues collaborated with her in telling this story of a people seeking hard after God's Word in the midst of much difficulty.



## « How hard would you work to have the Bible in your own language? Even if you didn't know how to start? »

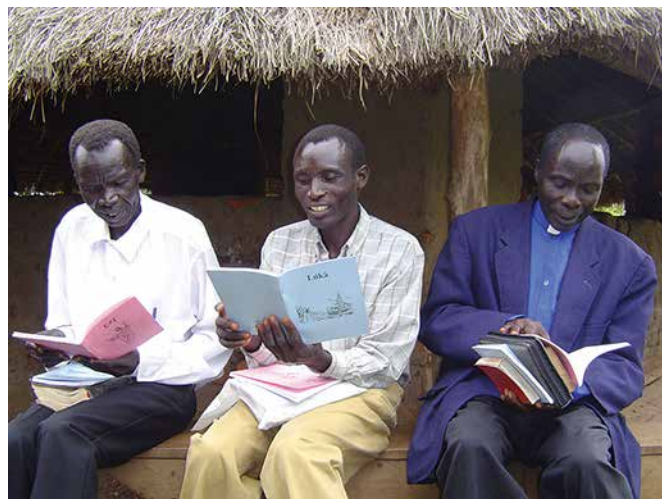
How hard would you work to have the Bible in your own language? Even if you didn't know how to start? Or if, after getting some help, the work ceased for ten years because of war? Or if the community who spoke your language ended up scattered across three different countries, and mixed in with speakers of many other languages?

This has been the experience of the Keliko people of South Sudan. In 1983 Rev. David Gale, a Keliko pastor, gathered with Christians from many language groups at a Christian conference near Juba in South Sudan. Each person was asked to sing a worship song and read the Word of God in their own language. Rev. David was unable to comply with this simple request because he found himself weeping.

At that time, although the gospel had been shared with the Keliko as early as 1915, all their worship and access to God's Word was through neighboring trade languages such as Bangala and Bari. Despite their long history with Christianity, the Keliko people had no Scriptures in their own language. Coming face to face with this reality for his people, Rev. David was overcome with sadness. He asked for prayers from the group gathered at the conference, that the Keliko would be able to translate the Bible, songs and liturgy into their own language. Opening the Bible he was using, he found Matthew 7:7 and read, "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you." The group prayed for him, and he returned home.

After Rev. David got home, five churches of the Keliko parish met for their annual conference. They had heard that other language groups in the area were receiving translation assistance from SIL International staff located in the area, and they believed they should also have their own Bible. After two years of fundraising, they sought assistance from SIL. In 1986, research began in the language, and within a year a writing system was completed and a story, a song and a few Scripture verses published in pamphlet form. The work had begun!

But then, full-scale war broke out. Most Keliko left their home area and became refugees in Congo and Uganda. SIL staff were evacuated, and the person assigned to assist the Keliko returned to her home country. For the next 10 years, no further progress was made.



Then, in 1998, Rev. David's grandson, Bishop Seme, was studying in northern Uganda. An SIL couple visited his theological college to talk about Bible translation. Rev. Seme told them about the stalled work on the Keliko translation and asked for help. As a result, SIL specialists were assigned to help finalize the writing system and provide training in translation principles. Using the writing system, a number of Keliko learned to read and write their own language. The Keliko Bible translation project finally began making steady progress. Genesis was published in 2004, followed by a series of other Scripture portions.



In November 2016, as the Keliko translation team was involved in the final checking process of their long-awaited New Testament, the Keliko homeland was ravaged by violence. People were killed, women were raped, houses and churches were looted.

At the time of the attacks, the translation team was already working from several locations. Most of the team



members were based in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan. Bishop Seme lived approximately 150 miles away in Panyana, an important church center in the Keliko homeland. He served part-time as a translator and advisor, checking translation work over the phone and making occasional trips to Juba to meet the other translators.

But when the fighting intensified in the homeland, Bishop Seme had to flee, along with many Keliko people. Weeks later, the violence spread to Juba. The rest of the translation team fled to northern Uganda. Again, work on the Keliko New Testament translation was interrupted. But it did not stop. Despite being displaced, the team continued to work on the Keliko Scriptures.

« **Though the war has disturbed us and traumatized most people, we still work with them and continue to encourage them because there is no other way. We continue to promote the mother tongue though we are not in our own land.** »

“Most of our life is just in war,” explained Bishop Seme. “Though the war has disturbed us and traumatized most people, we still work with them and continue to encourage them because there is no other way. We continue to promote the mother tongue though we are not in our own land.”

Throughout the life of the Keliko translation project, and despite the challenges brought by war and migration, the translation team remained motivated to see God’s message of hope available in the Keliko language. And that persistence is bearing fruit. In August 2018, the Keliko New Testament was welcomed with great joy at a celebration in northern Uganda.



This great milestone for the Keliko people also happens to be a significant milestone for SIL International, Wycliffe USA and other key partners. The Keliko New Testament marks 1,000 New Testament translations completed with involvement from these organizations. It also represents the growing number of translation programs in environments characterized by migration and multilingualism.

### Migration and Multilingualism

In response to this trend, a special task force of SIL scholars, translators and language program managers are studying how migration and multilingualism, along with urbanization trends, impact communities of non-dominant language speakers. One of the key findings of the research is that language situations vary. In order to understand and more effectively address that variety, the study group has identified two questions every translation team should ask:

1. What are all the languages this community uses?
2. Where are all of the communities that use this language?

Answering these two questions has become more complicated—and more important—in recent years, as minority language communities increasingly migrate into urban centers across the globe, and as those staying in the homeland also become increasingly multilingual. The situation can vary even within a given language community; not everyone who speaks the same set of languages uses each one of them equally well or in the same ways.

The language needs and preferences of all sectors of a community must be considered to successfully communicate a crucial message. “We want to see the Scriptures available for all people in languages and media that are accessible to them,” explained Dr. Steve Quakenbush, leader of SIL’s Multilingualism, Urbanisation, and Scripture Engagement (MUSE) task force.

« They first accessed Scriptures in neighboring trade languages, Bangala and Bari. Many Keliko even consider Bangala to be a “holy language,” perhaps because the gospel first came to them in Bangala. »

The Keliko are quite familiar with the issues and challenges of a multilingual environment. They first accessed Scriptures in neighboring trade languages, Bangala and Bari. Many Keliko even consider Bangala to be a “holy language”, perhaps because the gospel first came to them in Bangala. Some Keliko churches use the Bari language for the liturgy in their services, as well as using available Keliko Scripture portions. Other Keliko people living outside their traditional homeland also speak Lugbara, Swahili or Juba Arabic. Bishop Seme himself speaks five languages, choosing which one to use depending on the particular context in which he finds himself. However, this multilingual fluency is not universal among Keliko speakers. Many whose formal education years have been disrupted by war have not had the same opportunities to learn other languages. The desire to have the Scriptures in their own language is strong.



In the recent years of forced migration, the question of where all the communities are that speak Keliko has become especially critical for the Keliko translation team.


Keliko communities are now scattered into three main areas: the bush or mountains of South Sudan, Uganda or the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). But most Keliko speakers are now in refugee camps, either in Uganda or the DRC. How are these Keliko to benefit from the Scriptures in their own language?

In the refugee camps, Keliko people often live together but they mingle with people from other language communities. Children speak Keliko with their families, but might switch to a different language when playing with children from other communities.

Wide representation from as many Keliko communities as possible is key to increasing awareness and engagement with the Keliko Scriptures. When translating and recording the JESUS film (a video dramatization depicting the life of Jesus with voice overs in minority languages) in Uganda last year, the Keliko team recruited Keliko speakers living in South Sudan, DRC and Uganda, including some living in refugee camps, as voice actors for the film.



As a result of connections with far flung communities such as those in DRC, many Keliko made plans to travel to the celebration in northern Uganda and even pledged to help with the costs. This was no small offer, especially since they no longer have access to their lands and thus their traditional agricultural livelihood.

The Keliko people were not completely without access to God's Word before. Many of them also use other languages, and had come to faith through hearing the Good News in those other languages. There will be occasions when they still want to worship and study the Bible with others who use other languages. Yet their desire for the Bible in their own language would not die. As Bishop Seme explained, “It is only the Lord helping us. Many people died in the war, but still we are alive. It is very important to have the Scriptures.” 

# 24:14 Goal



## Movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025 (88 months)

by Stan Parks, Curtis Sergeant and Steve Smith

### Core CPM Distinctives

For the last 30 years, there has been a growing awareness and involvement in efforts to reach the world's unreached people. Yet the population of those who have no access to the gospel has grown – from 1.8 billion with no access in the mid-1980s to 2.2 billion today.

While many efforts to reach the unreached have occurred throughout Christian history, global efforts to identify and reach *all* remaining Unreached People Groups were launched in the late 1980s. In these efforts, some groups accepted a God-sized vision: to see an entire people group (*ethne*) discipled. They saw this vision in the Great Commission where Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples of every *ethne*.

« **A Church Planting Movement (CPM) is defined as the multiplication of disciples making disciples and leaders developing leaders, resulting in indigenous churches planting churches which begin to spread rapidly through a people group or population segment.**



Given the overwhelming task of discipling people groups that often had millions of people, these early catalytic teams and their prayer partners went to God in desperate prayer. These teams became willing learners as God led them to put aside human tradition and search the New Testament for strategies of discipling and church planting. God began to use the dependence and humility of these servants to start “book of Acts-like movements” (Church Planting Movements) reproducing this faith and obedience with others.

A Church Planting Movement (CPM) is defined as the multiplication of disciples making disciples and leaders developing leaders, resulting in indigenous churches planting churches which begin to spread rapidly through a people group or population segment. These new disciples and churches begin to transform their communities as the new Body of Christ lives out kingdom values.

When consistent (multiple-stream) 4th generation reproduction of churches occurs, church planting has crossed a threshold to becoming a sustainable movement. While it may take years to begin, once a movement starts, we usually see this 4th generation threshold crossed within three to five years. Increasingly, CPMs are starting new CPMs within other people groups and population segments.

The three of us—Stan Parks, Curtis Sergeant and Steve Smith—have the privilege of being connected directly or indirectly with leaders of most of the Church Planting Movements in the world. Curtis was one of the first pioneers used by God in these modern movements and Steve and Stan were part of the second wave that learned movement lessons from Curtis and other pioneer CPM catalysts. In a few instances we have personally helped catalyze a movement, but we mainly connect with movement leaders via prayer, training, coaching, learning, advising and networking. We love the brothers and sisters God is using to catalyze these movements and are highly committed to their work and well-being.



From the outside, our personal styles and approaches appear quite different. From a first glance one might think our systems and methodologies are radically different. Sometimes various networks invite us in because they want greater emphasis on one CPM methodology over another. Yet in reality, we are committed to one overarching goal: that CPMs become sustained and saturate every people group and place of the world. We are convinced that CPMs are the only church planting approach whose fruit exceeds population growth. Because of our undying commitment to see God glorified through movements, our various styles and methods are actually built on the same CPM distinctives and are much more alike than they are different. This is because we all believe in biblical core components of movements that cannot be violated. We all adhere to these principles and employ various methodologies to cooperate with the Spirit and see the same principles bear fruit in different contexts.

CPM networks and practitioners who realize this truth invite us and/or other CPM coaches around the world to assist them in their movements because we are 1) committed to the same biblical principles but 2) might bring a different perspective or flavor to help address some areas in which a movement may be stuck.

This commitment to CPMs has also led us to form a larger coalition of practitioners who employ varied methods but are absolutely committed to the core distinctives of CPMs. 24:14 is a coalition of disciples from around the world, collaborating to see biblical kingdom movement engagements in every unreached people and place of the world by 2025.<sup>1</sup>

CPM practitioners, with their variety of methods, are still a subset of the larger church planting and missional world. It is time to unite CPM practitioners toward a common objective, as well as to help other ministers of the gospel know how to step into CPM ways of operating. The distinctives that unite the various streams of CPM methods are much stronger than the minor differences of praxis.

The three of us started this journey when there were just a handful of movements. Now, with over 650 movements around the world, it is time to revisit the core elements which unite us all. It is very popular in today's parlance for missional workers to claim they are using movement practices. Unfortunately, many of these workers are not committed to a few irreducible distinctives of CPM efforts. Those distinctives are as follows.

## CPM Distinctives

A CPM approach is one in which:

1. There is awareness that **only God can start movements**, but disciples can follow biblical principles to pray, plant, and water the seeds that can lead to a "book of Acts" type multiplying movement(s).
2. The focus is to make **every follower of Christ a reproducing disciple** rather than merely a convert.
3. Patterns create **frequent and regular accountability for lovingly obeying what the Lord is speaking to each person and for them to pass it on** to others in a loving environment. This requires a participative small-group approach.
4. **Each disciple is equipped in comprehensive ways** (such as interpreting and applying Scripture, a well-rounded prayer life, functioning as a part of the larger Body of Christ, and responding well to persecution/suffering) in order that they can function not merely as consumers, but as active agents of kingdom advance.
5. **Each disciple is given a vision both for reaching their relational network and for extending the kingdom to the ends of the earth** with a prioritization on the darkest places (with a "no place left" mentality). They are equipped to minister and partner with others in the Body of Christ in both of these environments.
6. **Reproducing churches are intentionally formed as a part of the process of multiplying disciples.** The intent in CPM approaches is that **1) disciples, 2) churches, 3) leaders and 4) movements can multiply** endlessly by the power of the Spirit.
7. The focus is on igniting movements of **multiplying generations of churches**. (The first churches started in a people group/population segment are generation one churches, which start generation two churches, which start generation three churches, which in turn start generation four churches, and so on.)
8. **Emphasis** is not on the specific model of CPM/DMM used (e.g. T4T, Discovery [DBS], Zúme, 4 Fields, etc.) but **on the underlying biblical principles of multiplying kingdom movements**.
9. A value is placed on **radical evaluation and willingness to change** and grow to make sure **that each element of character, knowledge, disciple-making skills and relational skills are 1) biblical and 2) able to be emulated by other generations of disciples**. This requires intentional simplicity as well.

<sup>1</sup> 24:14 was launched in 2017.

For more information, see 2414now.net.

One way to look at it is that T4T, DMM (DBS), Zúme, and other related approaches are various processes using the same principles, and the common result is Church Planting Movements.

## Raising the Sails

Obviously, none of the disciples and churches in these movements are perfect. Nor do we claim that certain steps and methodologies can guarantee a movement. Some movement practitioners use the “Sailboat Analogy” to describe the dynamic. You can be in a sailboat and have your sails up and ready, but unless the wind blows, you will not move very far. In the same way, unless the wind of the Holy Spirit blows, there will be no Church Planting Movement. On the other hand, if you don’t put up your sails, your boat will not move very far even in a strong wind. We have found through study of Scripture and learning from the Holy Spirit’s work around the world that there are ways we can be ready for multiplication (sails up) and other ways we can hinder multiplication (sails down).

We don’t control the wind of the Spirit, but we can control our readiness to go as far and as fast as possible when He moves! One danger is that some want to argue “their CPM approach” is better than other CPM approaches. In reality none of these approaches are “owned” by any of the practitioners. All of them have come from a Spirit-led biblically-based learning and obedience process involving thousands of leaders refining and learning together.

God is using an increasing number of customizations and hybrids between different CPM approaches. In fact, unless a movement approach is customized to the context, it is usually not very fruitful. Quite a few movements have started before their leaders had any exposure to the different approaches mentioned above. As one leader said, “Nobody taught us this -- we just learned about movements from the Holy Spirit!” God loves variety. Each and every Church Planting Movement is beautifully unique.

## Common Outcomes

At the same time, we can identify common principles and results. Once a CPM has started – regardless of the approach used – the resulting disciples and churches have very similar DNA with similar outward expressions.

- **Praying**—CPM is always accompanied by a prayer movement. Once a movement starts it is also marked by extraordinary prayer. Those coming to Christ are highly aware that only God can birth new disciples and churches. They are highly motivated to see God break through the darkness in the lives of their friends and neighbors.
- **Scriptural**—In CPMs, the Bible is taken very seriously. Everyone is expected to be a disciple and sharer of the Word, and to interpret and apply Scripture.
- **Obedying**—The churches are devoted to listening to God’s Word and obeying it individually and corporately. Obedience is expected and everyone is held accountable for it. Jesus told us that if we love Him, we must obey His commands.
- **Indigenous**—The outsider looks for Persons of Peace and households of peace (Mt. 10, Mk 6, Lk. 9, 10) that God has prepared within a society. When these people and groups come to faith, they are immediately equipped to reach others. Since the insiders are the disciple-makers, the new churches can grow in ways that are both based on Scripture and adapted to the culture.
- **Holistic**—By focusing on obedience to Scripture, believers become eager to show God’s love to people. The disciples in these movements love those around them in practical ways, such as caring for widows and orphans, ministering to the ill and fighting oppression.
- **Rapidly Reproducing**—Just like the early church in Acts, these modern-day movements multiply rapidly. Every disciple and church is equipped to reproduce and taught to rely on the Holy Spirit to empower them. On average, churches in movements take about one year to reproduce another church, which often leads to doubling the number of disciples and churches every 9-18 months.

As you contemplate your involvement with movements, ask yourself if you are committed to the distinctives of a CPM. We encourage you to collaborate with others having similar commitments, even if their particular methodology differs from yours. You will find that in the process, you learn from the strengths of each other’s methods, attitudes and approaches.

To make the 24:14 commitment and join in seeing kingdom movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025, go to [2414now.net/commit](http://2414now.net/commit).



# The DMM Price Tag

## What Does It Cost to Start a Disciple Making Movement?

by C. Anderson

Visiting the U.S.A. after living many years abroad can be a shock to the system. Walking into a grocery store to buy a few things, I am assaulted by the prices. “What? It can’t possibly cost that much for this. I usually buy these items for a fraction of the cost! Are these apples worth that to me? Do I want to pay this price for them?”

Adjusting to my home culture’s prices is a challenge. It takes time, usually a few weeks. Purchasing groceries is necessary so I find ways to do what is needed. It’s good to check the price tag carefully before I make a purchase, though.

It’s also good to understand the cost of starting a Disciple Making Movement (DMM). Starting a DMM is an exciting venture, but it isn’t cheap. It’s definitely not a “freebie.” The investment we must make in tears, prayer, loss and personal pruning is great.

### What Does a DMM Cost?

We could consider an amount in dollars, thinking through the cost of training and evangelism materials. In many ways, however, that is relatively insignificant. What is more important to consider is what it costs the movement leader or trainer on a personal level. How do we determine what is the price that will be paid in tears? In emotional stress due to betrayal and persecution? Or the cost that comes with constant spiritual warfare?

I wish I could tell you that DMMs are free. Salvation is free. But there is a price we must pay to see that free salvation come to thousands of unreached peoples. DMMs have a large price tag on them. Is it worth it?

### Compel Them To Come In

In Luke 14, Jesus tells a story of a feast. It wasn’t well attended. Can you hear the passionate heart of God expressed for the lost to be saved? Jesus says, “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.’” (vs. 23)-NIV.

The Master longs for His house to be full. “Compel them!” He says. The emptiness of His table grieves God’s heart deeply.

After this stirring parable, Jesus immediately talks about the cost of discipleship. He refers to a man who began to build a tower but wasn’t able to finish. He tells of a king going to war who first carefully weighs the cost. We too must understand the payment needed when starting a Disciple Making Movement.

### The Price Is Real

Every time the ministry started to move forward I got sick. Seriously sick. God would bring a divine appointment with a potential national apostle. We would start to connect with them, begin mentoring and “Boom!” Something would happen. My back went out and suddenly I had two herniated discs. Another time I had a life-threatening hepatitis relapse.

Once, we were making serious inroads to a new community and my right-hand colleague was suddenly killed. While riding in an auto rickshaw she was hit by an army truck. She died shortly after being taken to the hospital. Grief hit me much like that army truck had hit her. How was I to continue?

Then there was the time when we were trying to produce a gospel film in the local language. We were using indigenous actors and presenting the message of Jesus in a contextual way. The film demonstrated simple church and told a story of someone coming to faith. It would be a major tool to help us with abundant gospel sowing.

We expected some resistance from anti-Christians in the area especially when we would start to distribute it. What we didn’t expect was the persecution we faced from the Christian community. We were attacked, slandered, threatened and called names by those we thought were on the same side as us!



## Primary Costs You Will Face

It would not be fair to anyone wanting to pursue a DMM to tell them it will be easy. Though it is simple, it is not easy.

Starting a DMM requires a high level of commitment and tenacity. You must have a willingness to go through suffering to see the release of God's Kingdom in that place. The rewards are also great! Rather than seeing just a handful of people believe, you can see thousands of multiplying disciples.

What are the primary costs you must be ready to pay if you are pursuing a DMM?

1.

**Be willing to be misunderstood.**

As you apply DMM principles, you will go against the flow of many traditional church views and practices. At times people will question your methods. When you allow non-ordained people to baptize, for example, it might raise eyebrows. When you decide against a church building or empower local believers to do ministry, some will think you are not "doing it right."

When you put into practice the things done in the book of Acts, it goes against the status quo. You may feel like you are "swimming upstream" in your organization. Don't be surprised by this. It is normal for people pursuing DMMs. It's part of the price we pay for the release of thousands into the kingdom. Be ready to be misunderstood and not take it personally.

2.  
**Be willing to face spiritual warfare.**

Sickness, unusual marital stress, and unexpected conflicts in team relationships are quite common. The enemy does not want a movement to take off. You can be sure of that. He looks for your weak points and will try to stop you. I'm not saying everything bad that happens in life is spiritual warfare. But the reality of the enemy we face is clearly described by Paul in Ephesians 6:12.

It helps to know that whenever there is an attack, it is also an opportunity for God to do a miracle! God always wants to use spiritual warfare against us and turn it around for our good. The miracle may be a healing. It might be a reconciliation, or a breakthrough in our own character growth. Be ready to struggle, but also be ready to experience the power of God demonstrated in those times!

3.

**Be willing to face persecution.**

As you pursue a DMM, you will face opposition from within and without. The first persecution will likely come from the existing church (even if it is a small and ineffective church). Later, when the disciple-making groups start to multiply rapidly and thousands are coming to faith, it is difficult not to be noticed. That is when external persecution is likely. You may be targeted by authorities, called in for questioning, or deported. If you have done a good job of training local leaders in a simple way, they will continue the work without you. It will grow even more!

## 4. Be willing to suffer loss.

A DMM practitioner may experience loss of status in their church or organization. Even more serious, they may face losses like the death of a child or spouse. Many who have seen movements released have walked through deeply painful times of grief. As you walk through these on your DMM journey, be assured of God's comfort. He will draw near. He will be there to walk with you through the questions and doubts that losses provoke. The tears you cry will water the movement's growth. Those you disciple and mentor will learn from you. They will watch you as you walk through the pain. They will see your love and commitment to God, and also to them. This is part of the deep foundational stones of a kingdom movement being laid.

## 5. Be willing to change & grow—

in challenging new ways as a person.

An openness to change and grow is crucial for those wanting to start movements. This too is a costly thing.

It is easier to stay the same than to change our beliefs and paradigms.

Great men and women of God are constantly growing. They are always learning. They allow each challenge to train them in godliness. They make adjustments when things aren't producing fruit. Allowing the Holy Spirit to convict them, they respond in repentance.


Change is costly, but so very rewarding too. The process of learning we go through in starting movements has great value! It shapes us into His image.

## Is It Worth It?

When we see the release of a massive movement of Jesus followers, we will rejoice with Jesus and the angels. Seeing thousands swept into God's kingdom and an unreached area transformed...nothing can compare! Lives, families, and communities radically changed by His love? It's unquestionably worth the hefty price tag.

## Are You Ready to Commit?

Counting the cost can be a bit shocking, much like my first trip to the grocery store when returning to the States. I hope this article hasn't talked you out of pursuing a DMM! My goal is to help you count the cost now, so when you hit the hard stuff, you won't give up. You've already decided it is worth it.

Take a moment right now to pray. Ask God to give you the courage to embrace the challenges ahead. Let Him know you are willing to pay any price to see His house full, to see the unreached come to taste of His goodness. Jesus paid the ultimate price already. Let's follow Him in demonstrating that same kind of love. 



# Kingdom Kernels: The Oikos Hammer— You & Your Household

by Steve Smith

Two very important Biblical factors propel the expansion of Church-Planting Movements (CPMs). The first enables a breakthrough into new arenas. The second enables expansion within that arena. Every movement is a continual balance of these two.

Both principles were taught by Jesus to His disciples (Matt. 10, Luke 10) about how to reach a new place. That first principle involves finding Persons of Peace or, as some have referred to them, Fourth-Soil People, that bear fruit 30, 60 or 100 times. Person of Peace searches have become the default strategy from most CPM strategists. Persons of Peace are the God-prepared doorways into new communities. Their hearts have been prepared for 1) the missionary, 2) the message, and 3) the mission to reach their household or circle of influence (Gk. *oikos*.)

Unfortunately, we can emphasize *part* of the Person of Peace model to the detriment of the second highly-integrated principle of Matthew 10 and Luke 10. If Persons of Peace (POPs) are the gateways, then the second principle is that movements expand as those POPs and the evangelists who reach them take the gospel to their households. Biblically, these households can include people from their biological, geographical, vocational and volitional worlds. The term the New Testament uses for this is *oikos*.

This article is not an attempt to argue for the validity of oikos evangelism. Rather it is to advocate for the

importance of believers having faith in the vision that God wants their entire household saved.

## The Problem: Incomplete Oikos Harvesting

« If this pattern of failing to harvest an oikos continues long enough, gateway people stop being gateways, and we only reap one or two converts in various places. No churches are formed around these Persons of Peace and the expansion of the movement remains anemic. »

Recently, I have noticed some CPM strategists under-emphasize the second principle: harvesting the oikos. The most amazing thing that can happen is when a whole household believes at once. But if it doesn't, unbelief can easily set in: "God will not save my oikos, so I need to

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evangelize elsewhere.” When the household does not come to faith immediately, discouragement or disillusionment can set in and an unhealthy pattern emerges: the evangelist takes the POP with him to begin looking for new POPs. A new person gets saved but perhaps the new oikos remains unharvested as well. If this pattern of failing to harvest an oikos continues long enough, gateway people (POPs) stop being gateways, and we only reap one or two converts in various places. No churches are formed around these Persons of Peace and the expansion of the movement remains anemic.

Whether in communal or individualistic societies, God’s intentions from the beginning was that the whole household would be reached with the gospel—whether at once or over time. Without vision and faith for the household to be saved, POPs will not become gateways through which movements expand. The Oikos Hammer below is a tool that can restore this vision and faith with every believer.

## The Pattern and Promise: the Oikos Hammer

From Creation to Consummation, God’s promise and pattern is this: you will be saved, you and all your household. God’s promise to His faithful servants is that He will bring in most or all of those who belong to them. The Oikos Hammer just follows that pattern throughout the pages of Scripture. It is called a hammer because it keeps pounding on your thinking as you read the multiplicity of texts describing and promising this.

◀◀ **From Creation to Consummation, God’s promise and pattern is this: you will be saved, you and all your household.**

**The Oikos Hammer is a tool that can restore this vision and faith with every believer.** ▶▶

I encourage you to work through the Oikos Hammer yourself, and then learn to share this vision with the believers that you disciple. What follows is by necessity simple and easy to share. It can be shared in 10 to 15

minutes. The power is in the repetition of God doing similar things over and over in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

### 1. NOAH

(Gen. 6:8-10, 18; 7:1)

Because of Noah’s righteousness and faithfulness, God promised to save not only him, but also his household. The salvation of the household was dependent upon the righteousness of the man which God found. When God enables us to find prepared people, we should expect Him to save not only them, but those who belong to them.

*Oikos sphere: biological (family)*

### 2. ABRAHAM

(Gen. 18:17-19)

We are familiar with the Abrahamic covenant that through him the Messiah would come and all of the nations would be blessed. It is very clear in Gen. 18:17-19 that the pathway and pattern through which God would bring blessing upon the nations was as Abraham worked through the salvation in the upbringing of his household. The blessing came as God brought about the salvation of Abraham’s household. Abraham gave attention to the right things (his oikos), and God brought about the more extended promises because of his faithfulness. *Oikos sphere: biological and vocational (his hired men)*

### 3. LOT

(Gen. 19:12-15)

Though Lot lived in a wicked city, God’s intention was to save everyone who belonged to him: literally “everyone you have in the city.” Lot tried to save his sons-in-law who thought he was simply jesting. Even so, God, in his goodness, still saved Lot and his daughters. This passage indicates that oikos is much more than simply blood relationships; it seems to imply everyone who belongs to us. *Oikos sphere: biological, volitional and geographical relationships.*

### 4. JOSEPH

(Gen. 45:5-11; 50:20)

The salvation of Joseph’s household took many years. God does not always promise the salvation of our household immediately, but the promise is still there. It’s a promise that calls us to persist in our witness to those who belong to us. Early in Joseph’s life, God gave him dreams which envisioned the salvation of his household. *Joseph never gave up hope, and neither should we.* Through many travails God provided for the salvation of many. *Oikos sphere: biological (extended family)*

**5. RAHAB**

(Josh. 2:18)

Through Rahab's righteous act to hide the spies of Israel, God promised to save her and all who belonged to her. The salvation of the household came through the daughter, but God promised salvation to the parents, the brothers and everyone who belonged to her father's household. We never know the avenue through which oikos will be saved, whether the head of a family or a child. *Oikos sphere: biological*

**6. SHUNAMMITE WOMAN**

(2 Kgs. 8:1)

A righteous woman who provided an upper room for the prophet Elisha reaped the oikos promise. God provided for the miraculous conception of a son and then the miraculous resuscitation when he died. Elisha informed her alone of all the Israelites that famine was coming to the land. God brought salvation to her and her household—in this case through the wife. *Oikos sphere: biological*

**7. GERASENE DEMONIAK**

(Mk. 5:1-20; 7:31, Mt. 15:29-31)

The demoniac is a marvelous example of God promising salvation not simply to one person, but a large group of people. Instead of allowing the demoniac to accompany Him, Jesus gave him a clear mission—his extensive oikos of friends in ten cities. His reputation was so large that he went throughout the area of the ten cities (Decapolis) and had a great impact. *Oikos sphere: volitional, geographical*

**8. SAMARITAN WOMAN**

(Jn. 4:7-42)

God prepared a woman who had a very tragic past to receive salvation and through her to bring salvation to an *entire town*. It is not only that God wanted to bring salvation to the man she was living with, but He wanted to bring salvation to an entire community of Sychar. *Oikos sphere: biological, geographical*

**9. CANA OFFICIAL**

(Jn 4:46-54)

In the town of Cana, an official's son was very sick and about to die. Jesus sent word to this man that He would heal the son. When this happened, the father and the entire household believed in Jesus. *Oikos sphere: biological*

**10. DORCAS**

(Acts 9:36-42)

In Joppa, the disciple Dorcas was full of merciful acts and her world was filled with many widows who loved her deeply. When God raised Dorcas from the dead these widows were amazed and many throughout the region believed in the Lord. *Oikos sphere: volitional (widows), geographical*

**11. CORNELIUS**

(Acts 10:1-48; 11:14)

When the angel spoke to Cornelius before he believed in Jesus, he gave Cornelius a clear vision: that not only would he be saved, but the promise was for his whole household (Acts 11:14). In this case the large group that Cornelius gathered together as his household were both family and friends (Acts 10:24). *Oikos sphere: biological, volitional, perhaps vocational (other soldiers)*

**12. LYDIA**

(Acts 16:13-15, 40)

Lydia, a woman who has been pursuing God, received salvation and immediately God saved her household. Her home apparently then became a meeting place for the church in Philippi. *Oikos sphere: biological, volitional (other women)*

**13. THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER**

(Acts 16:23-34)

A man who had been opposed to Paul and Silas just hours before became open after an earthquake. Immediately God saved him. He was so eager for his family to believe that he woke them up from sleep and the whole family was baptized before dawn. *Oikos sphere: biological*

**14. CRISPUS AND STEPHANAS**

(Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 16:15)

We don't know much about these men except that their salvation was critical in the establishment of the Corinthian church. First, the household of Stephanas became the first converts in the whole province of Achaia. Second, Crispus, the leader of the synagogue that was opposing Paul, came to salvation and his entire household believed. What a blow that must have been to the persecutors! Households are the mechanisms God uses to unlock new areas for the kingdom. *Oikos sphere: biological*

## 15. JESUS

(Acts 1:14)

Of the many thousands of people that Jesus ministered to in Israel during His three years of ministry, He never neglected to reach His own household. Even though He was ridiculed by his brothers who did not believe in Him (Jn. 7:5), Jesus did not give up on them. When the early disciples gathered in the upper room to pray, who should be there but Mary, Jesus' mother, and *his brothers*? God worked complete salvation in that household. One of the brothers (James) would go on to lead the Jerusalem church and write the book of James. Another brother wrote the short book of Jude. *Oikos sphere: biological.*

### Impart this vision and faith to others

◀ Peter declared the same promise on the Day of Pentecost when 3,000 were saved:


*"For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."* (Acts 2:39, ESV) ▶

These fifteen passages illustrate God's intention throughout history to save a person and through him or her an entire household: family, friends, neighbors and work/classmates. This should not surprise us because Peter declared the same promise on the Day of Pentecost when 3,000 were saved. He not only called them to salvation (Acts 2:38) but imparted to them the vision of their households (three generations):

*"For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself."*  
(Acts 2:39, ESV)

The Oikos Hammer should reveal to us God's age-old pattern for kingdom expansion:

- **Household salvation:** We must no longer focus on just individuals coming to faith. Whether groups believe all at one time, or over a period of time, God's promise and intention is that Persons of Peace reach their whole households. Our focus from first to last must be on *households* with Persons of Peace as the gateways into them.
- **Expanded oikos definition:** Oikos seems to include all who belong to you: biological (family), geographical (neighbors), vocational (workmates/classmates) and volitional (those you share interests with).
- **Impart faith for household salvation:** We must balance reaching new Persons of Peace with helping them reach their oikos. It is never an either/or, but we must help Persons of Peace grow in faith and ability to win their whole household.
- **Intentional oikos harvests:** To help them reach their households, we may want to do an oikos harvest (or a "push") with them—that is, create some events or opportunities to get the oikos together to hear the gospel from others (like Peter going to Cornelius), to study the Bible together, etc. If the oikos is slow in coming to salvation, plan events to harvest them with the Person of Peace.
- **When it slows down, find new Persons of Peace:** When an oikos is saturated or no progress is being made, we may need to spend more time looking for new Persons of Peace and helping the original Person of Peace learn to do the same with us.

Let this hammer serve you in imparting vision and faith to all believers that they will be channels of salvation to many. Our vision must not be simply Persons of Peace, but whole households of faith. 



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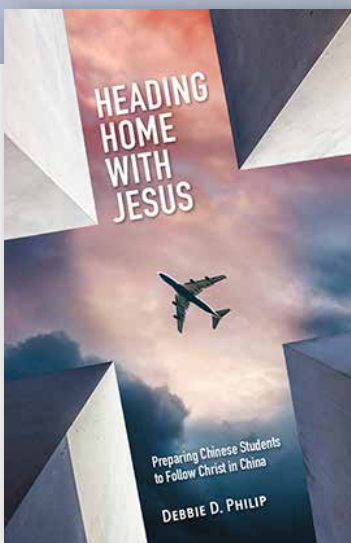
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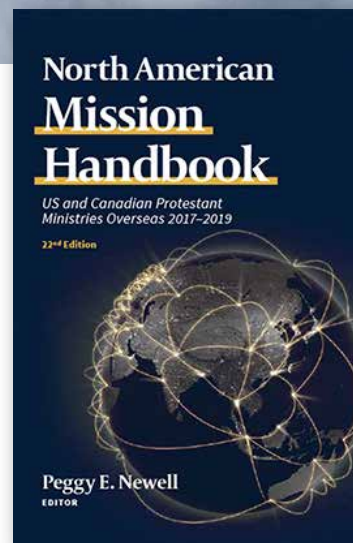
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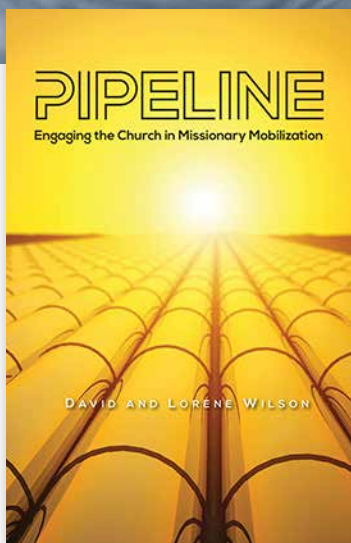
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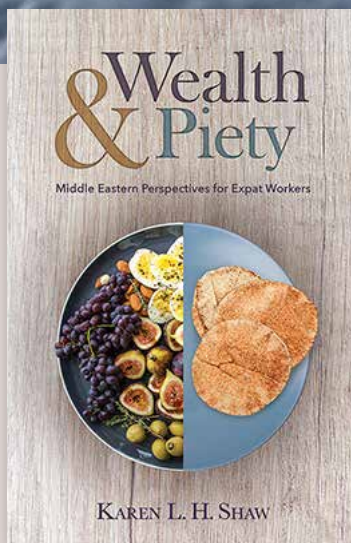
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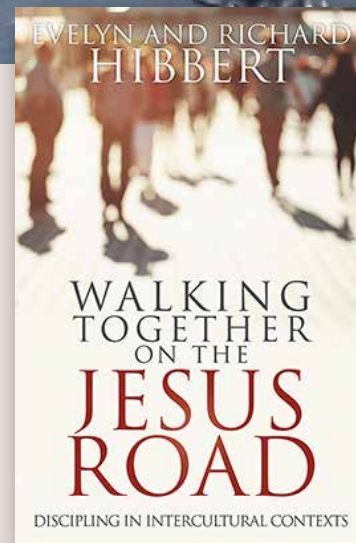
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This book contains hundreds of verbatim observations about local and foreign wealth by thirty-five Middle Easterners from nine countries, representing all major religious groups. These comments are a mirror in which workers can see their own status and moral reputation as people of the region see them.

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*Discipling in Intercultural Contexts*

Evelyn and Richard Hibbert (Authors)

Christians who serve Jesus among people from a different culture than their own often struggle to find a good way to disciple people. *Walking Together on the Jesus Road* addresses this need by guiding readers through three essential practices for making disciples across cultures: listening to disciples to get to know them and their context, focussing on relationships with Christ, fellow disciples, and others, and enabling disciples to live out their faith in culturally relevant ways. These practices are the foundation for the long-term, intentional process of helping disciples from other cultures become more like Jesus. The book also engages with the practical challenges of enabling disciples to find and belong to a nurturing community of faith, and of contextualizing the way we teach the Bible.

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# Further Reflections: A Gap in the Creeds

BY **GREG PARSONS**  
DIRECTOR OF  
GLOBAL CONNECTIONS  
FRONTIER VENTURES

We live in a world driven by material possessions and comfort, fueled by marketing and laser guided by data. They know what we like—literally! This has radically changed how we perceive the world. What people want (not just need) is fueled by media. A major force creating this shift began just after silent films—though now it is so pervasive that the movie industry is only one, still influential force in this direction. One historic example is how many people decided to try smoking because they saw it in films and it looked cool.

The Church is also greatly impacted by its history and leaders—for an even longer period. This has been good and bad. We all know stories, which opponents to the gospel flaunt in our faces, where the Church and/or its leaders were not being true to the gospel—to say the least. But since the end of the NT times, the Church has been guided by its history, reflected (in part) in the creeds. We sometimes wonder what would have happened if some of those key decisions had been decided another way.

Rarely, however, do we wonder what might have been left out or ignored. How would you “edit” the creeds to include something they missed that is crucial?

For example, what might have happened if any (or all) of the main Christian creeds had included Jesus’ last command—to make disciples

of all ethn<sup>e</sup>? How different might it have been if everyone who wanted to pass on solid biblical truth included this? Suppose those mentoring young Christians or training pastors and leaders had seen the sentence below, inserted right after—“On the third day he rose again from the dead...”

- *He commissioned his Church, beginning with the Apostles to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations.*<sup>1</sup>

This is the reflection of Don Richardson—who is both a former missionary to the Sawi people, and mission statesman who has studied a wide range of issues like this very deeply. Don has probably taught in our Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course more than anyone else (other than Steve Hawthorne, author of the *Perspectives Study Guide*).

In chapter sixteen of his book titled *Incomplete Creeds as Symptomatic Warnings*, Don outlines why the command of Jesus should be included in the creeds, namely that God’s plan for the world can be traced throughout the Scriptures. And, he ties that together with Jesus teaching at the end of Luke and Matthew—just before the ascension.

Just last week, I was asked by a friend


who works with a mission-sending organization if I had something he could use to answer the question: “Is the Great Commission (from Matthew 28:19-20) for us or just for the apostles?”

I would have suggested this chapter in Don’s book, but I hadn’t read it yet.

But if you think just a little about it, it would be foolish to think it could reasonably be meant *just* for the apostles. If it were, they sure did a lousy job. Even Paul only got so far himself.

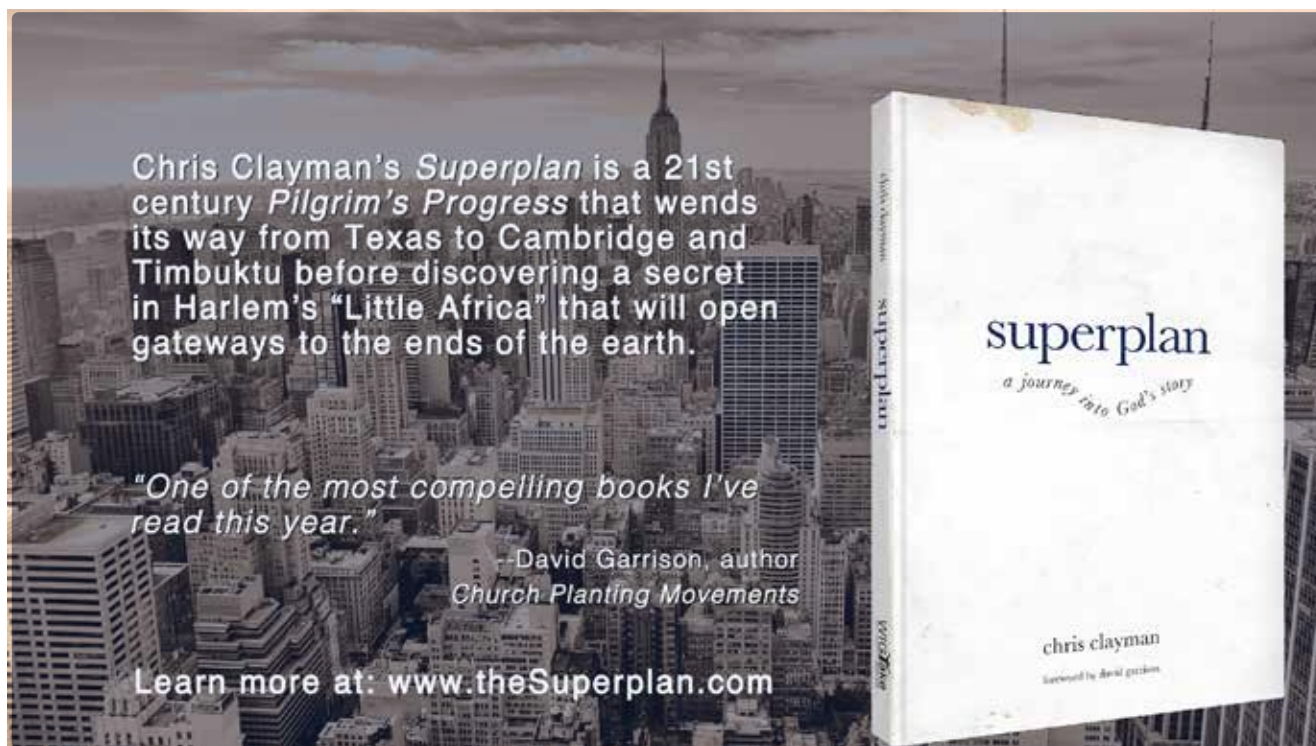
Historically then, instead of seeing this Commission as a foundational part of the Church and her calling, it is relegated to a fringe group in the church, or in a department in a few seminaries. Usually, smaller schools do not even have a class in “world missions” or “intercultural studies.” Instead of talking about reaching people with little or no witness when we disciple people, we wait till that younger believer “gets a sense of calling”—and then we pass them off to one of those “fringe” missions people in our churches. Many pastors are too focused and busy to strongly push the church to go beyond their walls/neighborhood to reach out where the gospel has yet to go.

How are you applying the clear teaching of Jesus and the entire Bible on this issue? How central is it to you and your church?

Please share your thoughts on [www.missionfrontiers.org](http://www.missionfrontiers.org). 

<sup>1</sup> 2013, Don Richardson, *Heaven Wins: Heaven, Hell and the Hope of Every Person*, p. 188. You can get this book and others or download articles from Don here: [www.donrichardson-booksales.com](http://www.donrichardson-booksales.com).





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