

Broadcast 02 – The Formula

SAMMY:

Hello! This is Sammy, and I am so excited! I wish you could see what I am holding in my hands. It is a copy of the Gospel of Mark. Many of you might be wondering, what is wrong with me? The Gospel of Mark is not new; our pastors read from it regularly. But listen carefully to me. This Gospel of Mark is not the one you hear read each week in church. The one we listen to is in our national language but the one I am holding in my hands is in my mother-tongue language! I just returned from a translation workshop where five other Christians and I completed a translation of the entire Gospel of Mark. I want to tell you how we did it since none of us have been theologically trained, but first let me tell you when I read from it at church last week, our pastor was so excited he changed his sermon to preach from the passage I read!

MARA:

Hello everyone! This is Mara. I remember our church leaders were skeptical about our translation efforts and attending this workshop. Now they can hear the scripture in our mother-tongue and preach from it.

SAMMY:

That is true, Mara, but they were not the only ones who were skeptical. Siara, my wife, told me about Jesus three years ago and I began to read the Scriptures in our national language, which we both know, but something was always missing. I think, pray, dream, and feel in our mother-tongue language and have wanted to hear God speak to me through the Scriptures in that language. I was told by many that we would not have the Scriptures in our language in my lifetime because it takes too much time for a missionary to come, live in our village long enough to learn our language, and translate the Scriptures for us.

MARA:

Remember last spring when church members from a nearby community showed us the New Testament they had translated from their national language into their mother-tongue language? It only took one year! They worked with some friends from Wycliffe Associates who believe the local church can accomplish in months what would take someone that doesn't speak our language, years to do. They said since the Scriptures already exist in our national language, and we have people in our congregation who know both our national language and our mother-tongue language, we could do the same. It was just about that time you taught me about Jesus, and I became a believer. I was so excited at the thought that someday I might be able to read the Scriptures in my own language.

SAMMY:

Yes, they told us about MAST, which means **Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation**, a new method used to translate developed by the people at Wycliffe Associates. They said they attended a workshop and they were taught the MAST method of translation. They were given a tablet with many resources to help with the

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translation and shown how to start their first book, 1 Thessalonians. Then, taking what they learned and the equipment they were loaned for the project, they went home. With some support from their church and Wycliffe Associates, they finished the entire New Testament in a year.

That was amazing, but our people have known about Jesus for many years. Much of that time our pastor and church leaders have prayed for the miracle of having the Scriptures in our language, with little hope that it would ever happen. Even when we saw the New Testament the neighboring community translated; many could not believe it could happen here. I was one of the people that doubted this. But I do not doubt anymore because I have our first gospel in our mother-tongue language!

MARA:

I am glad we were told about the workshop they were having nearby so we could send a team to start a translation for our language.

SAMMY:

I am glad you believed in me. I wanted you and Siara to come with me, but home and family are important too.

MARA:

And I will be a part of our translation team very soon. You promised to train me in the MAST translation method.

SAMMY:

And I will! The next two broadcast I am going to teach you and our listeners the **Eight Steps of MAST**. But for now, let us get back to the story of how I came to have this wonderful book in my hands. It was not easy to assemble our team. We needed people who knew both languages, though I have since learned of teams who had members who did not know the national language, and even some who could not read or write in any language, but God could use them. We also needed members who could leave home for a few weeks, the length of our workshop.

MARA:

That was especially tough. It is one of the reasons I could not go. My husband is not a Christian and I could not ask him to add the care of my father, our house, and two children to his workload so I could pursue a dream he does not share.

SAMMY:

So, it was with Siara. She would have been a great addition to our team except for her business and our son. As I said, home and family are important. I want her to join our team here at home even though she is still not sure of her mastery of our trade language, but she helps me so much to have time for translation work.

Even without you and Siara, we were able to gather a team. I was glad that our pastor was able to come and see what MAST is because now he is excited and that helps us keep the work going on here at home. That is so important. At the workshop it was easy to keep translating. Everything was fresh and new. We were doing something we could see was happening. Most of all we had no distractions. Now everyone on the team is busy with life. We have our jobs and our families. Even church activities can occupy us, so it is harder to get together and translate. Of course, having the encouragement of the pastor, we plan time to get together as a team.

MARA:

A team I am soon going to be a part of!

SAMMY:

Yes, you will. Let me tell you some of what happened to us at the workshop. As I said, we gathered the team and went to the workshop. We were not sure what to expect, especially when we got there and realized the teams from other villages spoke and were translating into different mother-tongue languages. We shared the same trade language so we, at least, could communicate with each other. But we also shared a love of the Savior and sweet fellowship over meals and worship times. And we shared hard work. It did not matter which mother-tongue language each team was working in, they wanted to see the Scriptures as badly as we did. And the celebrations as a team would announce the completion of a chapter or other portion of their work. I am still thrilled at the memory!

After we all met each other and shared a time of prayer and worship, our new friends from Wycliffe Associates began teaching us the steps of MAST. They gave each team a tablet full of resources that we were able to take home to help with continuing the work. We also used the tablets in our initial translation of the Gospel of Mark. Those tablets were and are still very helpful as we continue our translation.

MARA:

Those tablets were a generous gift.

SAMMY:

Yes; some of the teams had members who had a few computers and tablets onto which the resources could be downloaded. One team had a laptop and two tablets; that was a great help as they brought their work together. We did most of our work with paper and pencil. Not many of us were good at using machines. Then we got down to work. We decided to start with the Gospel of Mark though other teams chose a different book to start; it did not matter to the process.

According to Wycliffe Associates there are Eight Steps in MAST:

Step One is CONSUME. No, do not eat your Scriptures. This step is to read and re-read the passage you are going to translate (usually about one chapter) until you believe you really understand it. This usually takes about eight or nine minutes and is done in the national language.

Step Two is VERBALIZE. This may be your first chance to check your understanding. Close the book and say the passage out loud, preferably to another person but if necessary, out loud to yourself. You just read it in the national language and now you are re-telling the passage as accurately and concisely as possible in your mother-tongue language. You are not trying to memorize the Scripture; you are re-telling what you read and the main points of that chapter. This should only take two or three minutes per person. The listener will not interrupt or discuss what you are telling though they may ask about something that was unclear after you finish.

Now you are ready for Step Three.

Step Three is CHUNK. These are American words and they get strange sometimes. What they mean is to break the passage into smaller portions, like two to four sentences that you will translate. Try to make the chunked portion a complete thought or story you can easily remember and retell. You should read through the source text in your national language and mark each chunk with a pencil for clarity.

Step Four is BLIND DRAFT. Now you are ready for the most exciting and scary step of all. Read your chunk a few times thinking about how you would say it in your own language. Then turn the source text over, take a pencil and paper, and without looking back, write the chunk out in your language or type it, if you are using a computer or tablet. Right now, do not worry about absolute accuracy. Try to write or type the story as naturally as possible. You are going to check and recheck so if you make mistakes at this point you will have an opportunity to correct them. Do not look back at the source text! This will keep the translation from sounding natural.

Step Five is SELF-EDIT. You have drafted your first portion of Scripture! Now it is time to check your work. Look back at the source document in your national language and see how close you came, not in getting a word for word copy but a smooth and natural telling of the material in your language. Now make changes and corrections. Try not to recreate the translation as it is in the source text, but make sure nothing is left out and nothing extra is added.

Step Six is PEER-EDIT. Now you can share your work! Give your translation to another team member who will check it against the source document and make suggestions about changes they might see. One way to do this step is to read the passage aloud and see if the other person understands it and believes it is clear and natural. You and the listener can now discuss what you have written and what it means in your language, and then the translator can make changes that you both agree on.

Step Seven is KEYWORD CHECK. There are many words and terms in the Scriptures that are very important to translate correctly and consistently. Some of these important words or phrases may be discussed before you even start translating to be sure you are all translating them consistently. It is good to make a list of these words available to all the translators and add to the list as new words and phrases are identified. Some words that should always be checked on this step are proper nouns (like names of people and locations), numbers, and pronouns. This step can be done in a small group or one on one. You will discuss changes that you think should be made and then make them in the translation and move to the next step.

Step Eight is the VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK. Once again, this step can be done in a small group or one on one. Does the translation sound natural in your mother-tongue language or like it is in small pieces? Do you understand it well? Is everything in the source text in the national language represented in the translation? Is anything added that is not in the source text? This is the last step before you present your work to the wider audience of the church. You want to be sure the quality of the work is the best you can do. Sometimes in this step the checkers will translate it back to the national language to see if it resembles the source text.

MARA:

Wow! I know I asked to be part of the team, and I want the whole Scripture in our language but that sounds complicated. How can I learn all those steps just now, hearing in only one time?

SAMMY:

Mara, I have good news and bad news. The bad news is that there is even more that goes into a quality translation than just following the Eight Steps, though they are very important. Even after we returned, we needed to re-examine our work with the help of our pastor and others who understand the Scriptures. Other people can help us be sure we have expressed what God is saying in a way that is most meaningful to our people. The good news is that this is just an overview of the MAST Eight Steps. In our next broadcast we will look closer at the first four steps in detail and the broadcast after that, we will spend our time on the last four steps; edits and checks. With God's help you are going to be a master translator for our people!

This is an exciting time for us who know Jesus Christ as our Savior and want God's Word in our language. Listen to all of our broadcasts to learn more about it and how you can be involved too! May God bless each of you.

If you have any questions or want to start a project of your own, please send an email to reachingalldialects@gmail.com or radio@wycliffeassociates.org or call/text: