

What if I hadn't gone back?

In early 2015, my wife and I attended the very first MAST workshop in Myanmar. The workshop was attended by 40 people from 33 different churches, speaking 10 different languages. At the end of two weeks all but one of the ten groups had translated the book of Mark into their heart language and committed to continue using the MAST methodology to complete the New Testament at home. The only group that did not finish had only two speakers, didn't have a written language, and chose to begin an oral translation.

We had some excitement on our travels to get to Myanmar. We connected through Bangkok, Thailand, with 45 minutes to make our next flight. When we arrived, instead of pulling up to a walkway, the plane parked on the tarmac and they brought a bus to pick us up. This meant waiting for everyone to deplane and board the bus – using up several extra minutes. The bus drove a very long way around the airport before finally stopping at a terminal door to let us off. Our flight was supposed to be departing from gate D2, not far from where we got off the bus. As we were approaching the gate, I checked a monitor and discovered that the departure gate had been moved to C2. As we hurried toward C2 I realized our departure time was seconds away and we were not going to make the flight. When we did finally get to the gate; however, others in our group were just beginning to board and they told us the flight had been delayed 30 minutes. Not only did God take care of us, He had a sense of humor about it. They put us on a bus and took us to a plane waiting on the tarmac. As we boarded the plane, we recognized the crew and realized they had taken us back to the same plane we had just gotten off.



The ten groups we worked with continued to translate more of the Scriptures and began requesting a consultant to check what they had translated to verify that it was accurate. We had a newly developed program to teach the church leaders a process of quality checking that they could incorporate to confidently and accurately check the translated Scripture.

This was a pilot project in Myanmar. The goal was to equip them to continue to independently complete translation of the Bible into each of their native languages.

I am excited about what God did through this workshop, particularly because the enemy fought very hard against it. There were several setbacks, complications and hurdles. However, God was once again faithful in working things out. Though I felt more spiritual warfare during the trip than on any previous trip, the MAST Quality Checking workshop was an overwhelming success.

I had met two of the team members in Chicago to travel the rest of the way to Myanmar together. We arrived in Myanmar safely about 24 hours later. We had applied online for e-visas and had received a confirmation email that they had been approved. As we received our boarding passes for the three flights, each agent checked what we had received and allowed us to continue. When we arrived in Myanmar, however, we were told that this email was not sufficient, and that we should have received an official letter with a bar code on it. Without that official letter they would not allow us to enter Myanmar. We were put on a plane and sent away – to Beijing, China. There we spent seven hours with the Chinese airport police (who spoke no English), sitting in a room next to a rather ominous jail cell. Fortunately, we never ended up *in* that cell. Eventually we were required to purchase tickets back to the US. Our return flights were scheduled through Washington DC. There is a Myanmar embassy in DC, and I have friends who live there. They were kind enough to pick us up when we arrived and allowed us to stay at their home. They also had checked with the embassy and were told that it took four to six days to obtain a visa, but that *occasionally* they could expedite the process.

The next morning, we filled out the applications; got passport pictures taken and picked up certified checks from a bank; then headed downtown to the Myanmar embassy. When we finally arrived at the embassy it was 12:05. The office was closed from noon until 1:00pm. I had hoped if we could get there mid-morning, we might have a chance to get our visas the same day. When we couldn't get into the office until 1:00 pm, my hopes dwindled. I felt a bit like Elijah on Mt. Carmel in his confrontation with the leaders of the false Gods. He poured water on the

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sacrifice and said, "Ok God, show them who you are!" Well, our God is awesome! We walked into the Myanmar embassy at 1:00 pm and walked out at 1:36 with visas in our passports!

It has been my previous experience that if Satan is fighting hard against something, God must have something important planned. This mindset certainly helped me keep going and helped me maintain a positive attitude (James 1:2). The rest of the trip was a continuation of ups and downs; but in the end, my experience was reconfirmed – God had some fantastic results planned:

1. The six language groups at the workshop all learned the process of authentic assessment for checking the quality of the Scriptures they had translated.
2. The church leaders from the six language groups acknowledged that translation is their responsibility and that with God's guidance they are very capable of verifying the quality of Scripture their members have translated into their language.
3. Four of the groups (DaaYinDu, Cho/Rah, Inntha, and Cumtu) believed that they could assemble 30-40 church leaders each and asked us to bring teams to lead two-week workshops, coaching them through the process of completing translation of the New Testament into each their languages.
4. The Khawngtu Tu group believed that they could assemble 100 Christian leaders and asked us to bring a team to help them complete translation of the New and Old Testaments into their language.

Once again, our God is awesome! Each of these workshops was completed and now four languages have the New Testament and one has the whole Bible in their language.

1 John 4:4 *"Greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world."*