

Broadcast 10 – Cultural Concerns & Bible Checking

SAMMY:

Hello everyone! I am glad you could join us to hear more of the amazing story of how we are getting God's Word in our language. We love telling others about this miracle that God has done for us. And we know He can do the same for you and your language group.

MARA:

That is right, Sammy. I still cannot believe we have portions of the Bible in our mother-tongue language! And we have a part in translating God's Word! I was so nervous when you first told me you were going to teach me how I can help. I have only been a Christian for a short time, and I do not have a lot of education. I did not think I could do much to help. But you were patient while you taught me and now, I am excited to see how God is giving me wisdom to do His work.

SAMMY:

I know what you mean. I felt the same way when I was learning to translate. I thought I could never learn to do this work. Now I have learned so much and see how we are equipped to translate Scripture. I do not mean to say it has been easy or without challenges. We have had challenges, but it is worth it.

MARA:

That is so true. We talk very enthusiastically about this work, because God is doing a miracle for us in our language. We want everyone to experience the same miracle. However, we don't want to say that everything is easy.

SAMMY:

In fact, we want to talk with you all today about some of the specific challenges we have faced, and we will share some of the ways God has given us wisdom and insight to keep going. Jesus told His disciples not to be surprised when they faced trials. We had to remind ourselves as we faced obstacles while translating God's Word. It has encouraged us to keep working and be strong, knowing that Jesus has overcome all obstacles for us. In Him we have the victory. This is His work and He will give us the wisdom to do it well.

MARA:

Yes, we must remember that. Today, we are going to focus on some cultural and teamwork challenges. I want to share with you a situation we experienced last weekend when we got together for a checking session. A few of us, including Pastor Fin, Siara and me, had been trained in the MAST process by those who had gone to the workshop. We were not able to go to the workshop and are newer to the translation team. It has been exciting and scary.

When we came together as a group, we all had our portions drafted and were ready for step six, **PEER EDIT**. The person teaching us had everyone trade papers with someone

on the team and check each other's work. There are three women on our team, Siara, Jade, and me. We also have five men. Two of the women, Siara and Jade, traded with each other. I looked around to see who I could trade with. Sammy had already traded with the pastor, and the other men were elders in our community, older men whom I respect. I did not mind that they would check my work, but I did not think I could check their work. In our culture, elders are held in high respect by everyone in the community. We are not allowed to question or correct them. It is unthinkable to do such a thing because it would indicate that we know more than they do. I am young. I am a woman. And my husband is not even part of the Christian community. I could not be the one to check their work! I could tell they were uncomfortable too, because they were whispering together and not looking in my direction.

SAMMY:

I saw Mara hesitate and stand alone. I could see that she did not know what to do. I quickly asked the pastor if perhaps he should trade with one of the elders and I could trade with Mara. Instead, the pastor stood up and said something to the whole group. He called everyone's attention. He told us that we are doing God's work together as a team. He told us that this is the group God has called together to do this translation—men and women, young and old. God tells us in His Word that He does not choose us for a work because we are wise or fit for that work by our own standards. God chooses by His standards. And God is right, even above our culture. In our culture, we respect our elders. This is good. It is how we should behave. But we cannot let that respect stop us from doing the work God has given us. Instead we must believe that God's way is better than our culture. His way is perfect. Pastor told us that we will check each other's work and we will share our translation suggestions and concerns with one another. Everyone must be humble and respect each person on the translation team. Then he asked Mara to check his work, even though he is her pastor. He told her he knew she would show respect in her suggestions. Pastor told us that together we will accomplish what God wants from us.

MARA:

I almost started to cry when he said that. The elders seemed confused by what he said, but also relieved that they were free from the awkward situation. The pastor came right over to me with his draft and I gave him mine. I was nervous and scared to check his work. He is my pastor! But he insisted I should check it just as I had been taught. I made some small suggestions on his draft, and he received those ideas and we talked about ways to make the passage better. Then he showed me corrections on mine and I thought how blessed I am to have such a humble pastor who knows God's Word and wants to follow God's way.

SAMMY:

Later in the same day, we had another obstacle during step seven, **KEYWORD CHECK**. I was working with one of the elders on his section of Scripture. I noticed that he had

used the word “to splash” for baptize. I asked him why he had chosen that word. He shared that even though he is a part of our church now, he came to know Christ when he lived in a different village. In the church there, the pastor taught that baptism is not being covered in water, but merely sprinkled with it. He did not know which way was correct but thought he should use what he had first been taught at the other church.

I am a newer believer than this man. I did not know that some churches practiced baptism differently. I felt like we should make it the way our church teaches, since most of the people on the translation team are from our church. But this elder argued that we want other people from other churches to also use the translated Scripture and not feel like it is only for our one church. I knew when we were at the workshop we had translated about Jesus’ baptism in Mark. We had used a word that means “to wash” or “to cleanse by with water.” I did not think we should use different words in different places. This man had not been with us at the workshop, so I reminded him what we had done in Mark. He looked at it and told me that if he had been there, he would have shown us that we had used a questionable, or even a wrong word. I was so confused but also thought I could not argue with this man who is an elder and a Christian longer than me. What could I do? I went home that night feeling defeated. Maybe he was right, and I was not qualified to do this work.

MARA:

I knew you were upset, but you didn’t tell me what happened until later. I prayed that God would help you and give you wisdom for whatever the problem was.

SAMMY:

Thanks, Mara. I was praying too. I prayed God would show our team how to overcome obstacles like this. And I prayed that I would stop being angry with this elder. I prayed, but I could not see how God could solve our disagreement. My real problem was not enough faith, because God did answer.

MARA:

Tell us what happened. How did God answer our prayers?

SAMMY:

I woke up the next morning and decided I needed to go talk to our pastor. I wanted to ask him what he thought about our problem. I was nervous because I thought he might change his mind and decide the translation work is too hard for all of us to do. I started to think maybe that was right. Maybe we were trying to do something we just could not do.

On my way to our pastor’s house, I saw the elder coming toward me on the path. A big smile covered his face. He said that it was good to see me at that time. He had just been talking to our pastor and was on his way to meet with me.

I thought maybe the pastor has agreed with him and he is coming to correct me. Was he angry that I had disagreed with him? I was about to be very surprised.

The elder told me he had been awake late the night before, praying and asking God for help with our translation. He told me that God had showed him that he was wrong when he said we did not know what we were doing on the Gospel of Mark translation. He apologized that he did not trust God's Spirit in us to help with the translation. He had been talking to pastor about our dilemma with the right word for baptism since we know churches have different ways to baptize. Pastor said there is an explanation of the word from Scripture in the resources that are on the tablet we were given. We looked it up. The word is used to mean washing or cleansing. It does say different churches understand it differently. And the resource suggests using a broad term that would mean to cleanse. The point is to translate the Scripture, as it is, and not how we interpret each issue. If the Bible uses a broad term such as cleanse, then we should not use specific terms like splash or immerse or pour. The elder told me that our team did a good job! He told me that God had showed him that he is wise in his own eyes, and that keeps him from being truly wise sometimes.

I was so surprised I did not know what to say! Then the elder told me that I am a good translator because I care so much that God's Word is clear and accurate. He said that God is going to use me even when I feel small.

MARA:

God sure did answer our prayers. And he has given us a team with unique skills. If we can keep learning from these challenges, we will work together to do a good job. I am very glad the elder went to talk to the pastor. I am glad that he was praying too. Being humble, especially when we are checking with each other, is very important. It is amazing how God was listening to all of us.

SAMMY:

I know! After I finished talking to the elder, I went and talked to the pastor. I told him I was very grateful that both the elder and I felt like we could come to him with our problems. The pastor reminded me that he had been a little concerned about us doing the translation at first. He said now he is confident because he has prayed for God's wisdom and God keeps answering.

MARA:

We will have more struggles and challenges as we continue. I know our own ideas, our cultures, and our different backgrounds will make it hard sometimes for us to agree. But these challenges have given us the opportunity to see that we can trust God to show us the answer.

SAMMY:

Yes, and it helps all of us to know that we are not supposed to do whatever we want to do. We are meant to do what God leads us to do.

MARA:

And to do it together. I hope that sharing these challenges with you all will remind you that God can give you wisdom to overcome. Translating Scripture is a sacred responsibility. None of us want to do a poor job. We all have a desire to share with our people the good and beautiful message of Scripture, and that the Scripture would be accurate and clear in our language.

SAMMY:

Mara, do you think that before we go, we should share our challenge from last Friday evening as we were checking.

MARA:

Haha! Yes, that would be a great way to end our time together.

SAMMY:

I was working with Mara and our pastor doing **VERSE-BY-VERSE CHECK**. One of the elders was drafting his section. The other three team members were working on the **KEYWORD CHECK**. The elder finished his section and came over to us looking very concerned.

He said to the pastor he thought we were doing something wrong. The pastor asked him to explain. The elder told him he had just finished drafting Matthew 16:1-16. In verse twelve, Jesus tells the Pharisees that it is only acceptable to do good on the Sabbath. We had been working on this translation on other days of the week, days that are not sacred. The elder continued to say that Jesus says only to do good on the Sabbath! He was very concerned that we were attempting to do something sacred on a day that is not sacred!

MARA:

Right away the pastor asked to see the source text for Matthew 16 and to see the elder's draft. I was nervous because I could not understand what he meant, and I wondered how we could possibly get the translation completed if we only worked one day a week. Surely God would want us to have it faster than that.

SAMMY:

The pastor read Matthew 16:9-14 out loud to us from the source text. Then he asked the elder to read his draft of the portion. When he got to verse twelve, he paused and read it again. Then he stopped and said he might have drafted incorrectly. Jesus was saying that we should do good work on the Sabbath, but not only on the Sabbath.

Maybe he meant even on the Sabbath. He had seen his own mistake. The pastor smiled and said that he was right. Jesus did good things for people everywhere He went, every day. He did not stop doing good things on the Sabbath, even though the Pharisees thought He should.

MARA:

When the elder understood his own error, he laughed and so did we. We were relieved to have that challenge easily solved. And we are glad we can work on the translation every day, because we are excited to get it done.

SAMMY:

Yes, we are! Thanks for being with us for this session. We hope you feel encouraged and excited about starting a translation project in your mother-tongue language.

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: