

Broadcast 05 – Interview: Workshop Testimonies

Mara:

Hello. This is Mara. We have something a little different for you in our broadcast today. So far, Sammy has been sharing his experiences at the translation event that started the work to have Scripture in his mother-tongue language. Today, we are going to be talking with Oliver, who also was one of the members of the translation team. Welcome Oliver! Thank you for joining us today. We are interested to hear about your experiences as part of the translation team for our language.

Oliver:

Thank you, Mara. I am happy to be with you today.

Mara:

We would like to hear about your experience as part of the translation team. Sharing about this will help those who are translators to compare their own feelings and experiences. Maybe it will even encourage someone who is listening to become part of a translation team themselves!

Oliver:

Those are good goals. It would be great to be able to encourage others to join in translating the Scriptures into their mother-tongue language. We need all the helpers we can get! What would you like to know?

Mara:

I thought we would start at the beginning. How did you feel hearing Scripture only in the national language?

Oliver:

It was difficult for me. I was not always sure that I understood the message well enough to join in discussions or to ask questions. It discouraged me from reading Scripture on my own because it is difficult for me to read in the national language. Probably the most important was that it made me feel that the Scripture was not meant for me. In the book of Acts, Chapter 2, it talks about everyone hearing the message in their own language. I wondered why that was not the case for us. Why are we hearing God's message in the national language instead of our mother-tongue language, the language that speaks to our hearts? I even wondered if God would not hear me or understand me if I spoke to him in our mother-tongue language.

Mara:

Those are difficult thoughts keeping you from a close relationship with God. How did you first find out about MAST – which stands for Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation?

Oliver:

I first heard about MAST at church when they were trying to recruit translators. They explained it as a way that ordinary people like me can help translate Scripture. They said that a team could complete translation of the New Testament in one year if we worked consistently through the year. That is much faster than I had heard it was possible for a translation to be completed.

Mara:

What did you think about MAST at that point – when you first heard about it?

Broadcast 05 – Interview: Workshop Testimonies

Oliver:

I was very excited about it. It was as though God had heard my difficulties with reading in the national language and was providing an answer. At the same time, though, I was doubtful. I was always told that translation had to be done by scholars who can read Greek and Hebrew and are trained in theology, not by ordinary people. I was not sure that I would be able to do it.

Mara:

How did you proceed? What were the first things you did?

Oliver:

Well, first I prayed about it. I asked God if this was something that He wanted me to do. I talked with my pastor about it. He shared with me that he had been unsure when he first learned about MAST as well. He talked with some of his friends who are pastors in other communities. A couple of them have started Bible translation in their mother-tongue language. They have found that it is a wonderful encouragement to their people. They said that the MAST process works well. He assured me that ordinary people like me are involved in this and encouraged me to go. That helped a lot.

Mara:

I understand how that would provide reassurance. What else did you do?

Oliver:

The next thing I needed to do was talk with my family. I shared my excitement about the possibility of having Scripture in our mother-tongue language. I asked how they would feel if I went to the translation event. It meant that I would be away from our home for a couple of weeks. I would not be there to help at home, and I would have to take time away from my job. I had never been away from home for that long. Would they be willing to manage without me for that time?

Mara:

What happened? What did they say?

Oliver:

My wife was so excited. She wanted to attend the event as well. We decided that we could not both be gone, though, so she stayed home and supported the translation event with her prayers. My brother and father are not believers, but they knew how important this was to me. They said they would help my wife while I was away. I thank God that they were so supportive. I pray that hearing Scripture in our mother-tongue language will bring them closer to God and that they will become believers.

Mara:

So, then you said yes and agreed to go to the translation event?

Oliver:

Yes, I told my pastor that I was ready to join the team going. I told him that I still was very nervous and not sure that I would be able to do it. I was not sure what the translation event would be like and

Broadcast 05 – Interview: Workshop Testimonies

that made me nervous. The Pastor reassured me with a verse from scripture. He chose Second Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 8 – “And God is able to make all grace overflow for you, so that, always, in all things, you may have all you need. This will be so that you may multiply every good deed.”

Mara:

That is a good verse for all of us to keep in mind. What was the translation event like for you? Let us start with the first day you were there. What was that like?

Oliver:

There was a small team from our church. Then there were quite a lot of other people from other communities. It was more people than I expected and the whole situation was very new to me. So, while I was excited, this made me nervous again and concerned that about whether I would be able to do the translating work. I reminded myself of the Bible verse Pastor had given me – that God is able and will give me all I need. Then I was able to calm down and remember God would be with me.

Mara:

What happened throughout your time at the translation event? How did things move forward?

Oliver:

The first thing they did was teach us the eight steps of MAST. I know you have been talking about those. First you **CONSUME** – that means to read the section of Scripture that you are assigned. Then you **VERBALIZE**. That is when you tell another translator the message of your Scripture section. I like the way they call the next part “**CHUNK**.” You divide your scripture portion into smaller segments of several verses. Next comes a challenging part – the blind draft. Without looking at the chunk, you write what you remember in your mother-tongue language. Then there are the checking steps. **SELF-EDIT** is when you compare your blind draft with the source text, to see if you have missed any important ideas or words and make sure it sounds natural. You can make corrections and edits. With the **PEER-EDIT**, you work with another translator to get their perspective on whether you have captured the meaning of the section of Scripture you are working on. Working with a different translator, you do the **KEYWORD CHECK**, to be sure that all key words like names, numbers and important terms have been included and are represented in the translation accurately. Finally, there is the **VERSE by VERSE CHECK**. This can be done a few different ways, but we did it by translating it back into the language of the source text and then compare to make sure all of the content of the Scripture is there and translated naturally. At first, these steps were a lot to learn. It seemed like we talked about translating for a long time. The trainers told us that the steps each are very important, though. We needed to know those steps before we could start translating.

Mara:

Once you understood the eight steps of the process, what happened next?

Oliver:

It felt a little bit scary but good once we started translating. We were working on the book of Mark. As we worked together, I started to get to know and trust the other volunteers. We could start seeing that we were making progress, and that was exciting. It took a little bit of time but after some practice

Broadcast 05 – Interview: Workshop Testimonies

I gained confidence that we would be able to have the book of Mark in finished by the time the event was over, so we could go home with that gospel completed.

Mara:

By the end of the translation event, what was it like? How were you feeling?

Oliver:

One thing that happened was the close bond that build among the team. We really bonded with each other. I was excited to have Scripture in our mother-tongue language to bring back to our church. I am so thankful that I was able to go to the event and be part of the work. I felt success and proud of what we had accomplished – although I know it was not really us, but God working through us, who made this important work possible.

Mara:

What parts of the translation work did you like best?

Oliver:

There were many parts of being in the event that I liked. This was different than anything that I had done before and I liked that. I liked being closely involved with Scripture passages and the challenges of making the translation as good as possible. I liked that God was using me in such a powerful way. I had never felt that way before.

Mara:

How about the other people who were there? What did you like about working with them?

Oliver:

There were so many different kinds of people – men and women, different ages and different occupations. God had brought us all together with the same purpose. Everyone was very dedicated. We recognized that each person had different strengths to contribute, just like it talks about in the Bible. People helped each other and were not critical of each other.

Mara:

That all sounds wonderful. I imagine, though, that there were some difficulties over the course of the event. What difficulties did you or the team face with the work at the translation event?

Oliver:

Yes, you are right. There were challenges. Sometimes the translation seemed to be going very slowly. There were ideas that were difficult to translate and took a lot of discussion. Sometimes we were not sure that we were translating the meaning of the passage correctly. We overcame these difficulties by working together and with the support of the leaders from Wycliffe Associates.

Mara:

Tell us about how you felt after the translation event.

Broadcast 05 – Interview: Workshop Testimonies

Oliver:

After working so hard together on such an important project, it was difficult to say good-bye. It was a very special time. One of the translators compared it to the kind of special experience that Peter, James and John had when they saw Jesus, Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter felt it was so special that he wanted to stay there. Jesus explained they needed to go back into the world, and we needed to go back into the world, too. It would not be the end of our translation work, but we needed to share what we had learned and the Scripture we already had translated.

Mara:

What have been the high points since you have come back from the translation event?

Oliver:

One high point for me was hearing the Scripture that we had translated from Mark read aloud in the church. It made the passage so much more meaningful. It seemed like it was written just for us. Seeing my father and brother read Mark was a dream of mine fulfilled. They are asking more questions and I continue to pray that they will accept Jesus as their Saviour.

Mara:

I know that the translation team has continued to work so that there is a complete New Testament and even a complete Bible in your mother-tongue language. I understand that you are working on translating the book of Romans now. Do you find it difficult to keep working at translation now that you are back home? What have you been able to accomplish since coming back?

Oliver:

You are right. When we were at the translation event, we had nothing but translating to think about. Our meals were provided. The place for us to sleep was provided. Now that we are back home, it is more difficult. We have obligations with work and family and just the challenges of everyday life.

Mara:

What have you found to help overcome those challenges? Maybe those ideas will help our listeners who are working on translation.

Oliver:

It helps me stay motivated when I hear or see how important the translated Scripture is to others. That encourages me to go on. I have found that trying to set a certain amount of time aside each day to work on translation is important. For me, it is getting up earlier in the morning. I tried using time in the evening, but too often other things came up or I was too tired. And it does not mean that I can always spend time in the morning, but I do my best. The translators from our church all talked about it and we have regular meetings at our church so we can pray and work together. Our team has also gotten bigger since coming home. We have added church members to the translation team, like you, Mara.

Mara:

To sum up, I would like to ask you to look back over your whole experience with translating Scripture so far and tell us how you would describe it.

Broadcast 05 – Interview: Workshop Testimonies

Oliver:

Summarizing the experience is difficult. It has meant so much to me and continues to have great meaning. I think the best way to describe it so far is the amazement that God has used ordinary people like me so that we can have Scripture in our mother-tongue language. It has been such a blessing to me, my family, my church and my community. It has brought me closer to Scripture and increased my faith.

Mara:

Oliver, it has been so good to hear about your experiences with translating Scripture. I am sure it has been helpful to others who are working on translation to hear about your experiences. Could you please close our time in prayer?

Oliver:

Thank you. I would be honored to. Dear Lord, thank you for showing us the MAST method of translating Scripture. Thank you for all who have worked on the translation so far. Thank you for our families and friends who support our work. Bless our efforts as we continue with our goal to translated Romans and then to continue to translate the rest of the New Testament. Please inspire others to join in the work of translating Scripture. Help us to combat the obstacles Satan puts in our way to distract us and keep us from our work on the translation. We also pray for all who will hear the translated Scripture, that they will grow in their faith. We pray especially for those who do not yet know you who will hear the Scripture in their mother-tongue language and accept You as their Savior. Amen.

Mara:

Amen! Thank you, Oliver, for your prayer and for all that you have shared with us today. We pray that all of you listening have a good week. If you are working on a translation, we pray that it is a productive week. We look forward to sharing with you again next time. God bless you!