

BROADCAST #1

History and Introduction to MAST

LIAM:

Greetings, my name is Liam and I am here with my wife, Sofia, and we would like to share with you an amazing story about how God enabled our people to have His Word in our mother-tongue language.

SOFIA:

The national language of our country is English, which is the language we are using today. It is the language taught in schools and the language of the government, but it is not the language that we speak at home and it is not the language that our mother speaks. It is not our mother-tongue language.

LIAM:

For us, the Bible is available in our national language and other larger languages, but we do not have the Bible in our mother-tongue language. In fact, we do not even have a single verse of Scripture in our mother-tongue language. Most books, the newspapers and even the sermons at church on Sunday are all in our national language. Last week I asked mother what she thought about the pastor's message. She said, "Well, it was clear that he was very excited about whatever he was talking about, but I understood very little."

SOFIA:

We are very concerned for our mother and many of the other people in our language that cannot understand God's word or the preaching. How can they respond to God's love and invitations? Liam, let us tell everyone about that passage in the book of Mark you read last week.

LIAM:

Yes, I agree, last week I was reading the beginning of the book of Mark. It talks about God sending a messenger to prepare the way for Jesus. I saw a note in my Bible that this passage is a quote from Isaiah 40. I looked up that passage and read it. What a picture of God's heart and desire. He calls for barriers to be removed so that all people see His glory and know Him. Tell us more about the passage, Sofia.

SOFIA:

The passage in Isaiah 40 says, "A voice cries out, 'In the wilderness prepare the way of Yahweh; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' ⁴ Every valley will be lifted up, and every mountain and hill will be leveled; and the rugged land will be made level, and the rough places a plain; ⁵ and the glory of Yahweh will be revealed, and all people will see it together; for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken it."

LIAM:

Suddenly it became clear to me that one of the biggest hills or valleys or barriers that stand in the way of our people seeing and understanding God, is language. If we only have scripture in our national language, which is a foreign language to us, it will be very difficult for our people to know God. Isaiah makes it plain that God wants those barriers removed. ALL People are to see His Glory.

SOFIA:

Has anyone answered the call besides John? Any ideas, Liam?

LIAM:

I think history shows us many people who have answered this call. You know, the original languages for the Bible were Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. People translated the scriptures into other languages since the scriptures were first written. The modern era of Bible Translation began with people like John Wycliffe and Martin Luther. They translated the Bible from the ancient languages into the common English and German of their people. Having the Bible in their own language led to revival in Europe.

SOFIA:

In the last 100 years, organizations have started working and there has been a push to see that all languages have Scripture.

LIAM:

At first, missionaries would live in a village to learn the language and culture well enough to translate the scriptures. This took a lifetime. It also meant that a western translator did most of the work and was in control of making all the decisions on quality and publishing.

SOFIA:

Many language communities in the world have people that speak the national language as well as their mother-tongue language. Some of those people even have a Bible education. Teaching people that are fluent in both languages how to translate scripture into their own language would make the translation more clear, natural, accurate, and much faster. Some organizations publish a translation in 10-15 years. That means the translation done by mother tongue speakers, BUT experts from the west still decide what the quality is and are responsible for publishing.

LIAM:

Sofia, that is amazing but even with the faster method of using people who are fluent in both languages, it still takes a very long time to complete a New Testament. We are very concerned that if a project is started in our language, it will be many years before our people receive a published Bible. Sofia, will my mother and others see or hear God's word in their mother-tongue language before they die?

SOFIA:

That is a good question. Before we try to answer that question, let us tell everyone a little about ourselves. Liam and I were both blessed to complete our schooling. We are fluent in the national language and can also read and speak in our mother-tongue language. We both love to read, including books and newspapers. Many in our village know of this ability and often ask us to share the news we have read.

LIAM:

That's right Sofia. We are asked to translate the news almost every day. When asked, we read a story thoroughly in the national language and then share the story in our mother-tongue language. We try very hard to be accurate and clear. We can often tell by watching our friends' faces if we are being clear or need to repeat something.

SOFIA:

Recently, we were sharing our concerns with Liam's cousin, Samuel, who is now living in another part of the country. As we shared the need to see God's word in our language, Samuel mentioned that one of the languages in the area where he now lives has just finished drafting the New Testament. They used a method called MAST which stands for Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation. They completed the draft of the whole New Testament and have printed copies for the people to read in just one year! How is this possible we exclaimed! How can we make this happen for our people?

LIAM:

We had great joy and the expectation – this was an answer from God, a way where our mother may see and hear scripture in a language that speaks to her heart. We begged for Samuel to tell us more.

SOFIA:

Samuel shared what he knew about the new method and gave us contact information to connect with the people in our country helping with MAST. We will be sharing the details of the process in the future. It took a while to get a team together and started but we are excited to say that we have already seen the first few chapters of the book of Mark translated and checked! Some of these chapters have even been printed for people to read and comment on.

LIAM:

How did this happen? How did we get started and accomplish such an achievement? Can you share a little about our starting points, Sofia?

SOFIA:

Yes, of course. The first thing we did was gather a group of people to help with the translation work. An individual can do this work, but having more people involved makes the process go quicker and helps ensure quality. Liam and I spoke with Caleb, James and Ruth. Caleb is a leader and teacher at our church. He has some Bible training

and we wanted to have someone from the church involved from the beginning. James is a cousin that is very fluent in our national language and has a heart for the work. Ruth is an older widow that loves the Lord. Her family is grown and moved away. She has a love for the work of translation and has time to give.

LIAM:

After sharing the task with the team and some time in prayer, we discussed the MAST method which has Eight Steps and how best to do the work. We were excited that this new method also used mother tongue translators, people from the language group that is to receive the translation and puts ownership on the church and nationals. We greatly appreciate the work and assistance from the mission organizations but appreciate even more the trust and empowerment they are giving to us in the MAST process.

SOFIA:

We chose the book of Mark to begin with and plan to work on Acts, Ephesians and Revelation. On the advice of the MAST contacts, we divided Mark into five portions. Each person on the team took their own chapters. We work on our passages throughout the week using the first four steps of MAST which sees the Scripture drafted into our language.

LIAM:

The team then tries to meet once a week. We work together on using the next four steps – the steps for checking the translated material for accuracy, clarity and naturalness.

SOFIA:

We shared the translated materials with our pastor. Last week during his message from the book of Mark, for the first time he was able to use Scripture in our mother-tongue language. I asked mother about the message later in the day. She said with great joy and tear-filled eyes, “It was like God was speaking to my own heart.”

LIAM:

This new Bible Translation method called MAST is an Eight Step process that uses people who speak both the mother-tongue language and the national language and ideally, have some Bible background. In our future conversations, we will cover the Eight Steps and how we saw God’s word translated, printed and used by our church and people. Next time we will be discussing the first four steps of the process.

SOFIA:

Join us in this journey to see God’s Word translated into every language. ***If you have questions or are hearing this for the first time and want to get involved send an email to reachingalldialects@gmail.com or call/text....***

LIAM:

Sofia and I would like to leave you with a question and a challenge. Does your mother-tongue language have God's Word? Is there a translation project in progress?

SOFIA:

If the answer is no to the two questions that Liam just asked, would you want to be a part of changing that? Pray about your involvement and talk to others that have a similar burden. Meet as a group of interested believers to pray and discuss this amazing opportunity. See if that group turns into a team of people ready to commit to being part of the process to seeing God's word come to your language family.

LIAM:

Before we go, we would like to begin sharing a story of an amazing event where God's word in a mother-tongue language, transformed 2500 Militants.

SOFIA:

One day a friend of ours, from another country, named Sani, found himself in front of 2500 militants belonging to a well-known terrorist organization. They asked Sani to tell them about someone named Jesus. Sani was moved to read them the book of James which he happened to have in their mother-tongue language. After reading this letter, he invited them to receive Christ. What do you think happened? How did Sani end up in front of 2500 people that normally would kill him?

LIAM:

Listen next time as Sofia and I share more of Sani's story and how we began translating God's Word into our own language. Bring your own paper and pencil or computer and try the new translation method with us!