

What if I hadn't gone back?

In early 2015, my wife, Rosa, and I attended the first MAST workshop in Myanmar. The workshop was attended by 40 people from 33 different church, speaking 10 different languages. At the end of two weeks all but one of the ten groups (that group had only two speakers, didn't have a written language, and chose to begin an oral translation) 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.

On our Friday flight to Myanmar we connected through Bangkok, Thailand. We had 45 minutes to make the connection, which I had initially thought would be sufficient – until I realized that we needed to transfer from the domestic terminal to the international terminal. I had prayed about it so I decided I needed to leave it in God's hands, trusting that He would work things out even if we missed our connection. When we arrived in Bangkok, 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 minutes. The bus drove a LONG way around the airport (consuming many more minutes) before finally stopping at a terminal door to let us off. I had checked 'Flight Aware' and it said our flight was departing from gate D2, so I gave a sigh of relief when I realized it was not far from where we got off the bus. As we were approaching gate D2 I finally found a monitor and discovered, to my dismay, that the departure gate had been moved to C2. As we hurried toward C2 I realized 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 has a sense of humor. 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 of. ☺

The ten groups continued to translate more of the Scripture and began requesting a consultant to check what they had translated to verify that it was accurate. My supervisor, Dan Kramer, helped put together a program to teach the church leaders a process of Quality checking that they could incorporate to confidently and accurately check Scripture that is being translated. He asked me to lead this pilot project with the MAST outreach in Myanmar, October 18 – 30, 2018. The goal of this Quality Checking workshop 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 thru this workshop . . . because the enemy fought very hard against it. There were several setbacks, complications and hurdles; however, as I gave the ministry back to God to lead and direct, He was once again faithful in working things out. The MAST Quality Checking workshop was an overwhelming success . . . despite the fact that I felt more spiritual warfare than on any previous trip.

I met two of the team members in Chicago on Tues, Oct 13 to travel the rest of the way to Myanmar together. Although the trip was VERY long (over 24 hours of traveling), we arrived in Myanmar safely a little before midnight on Wed. 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 the email we had 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 and we were put back on the plane and were sent back – to Beijing, China. In Beijing we spent 7 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 the cell. Eventually we were required to purchase tickets back to the US. Our return flights were scheduled through Washington DC, so that is where we flew. There is a Myanmar embassy in DC, so that was a good choice. I also have friends who live near the airport in DC and they were kind enough to pick us up when we arrived Thursday evening and allow us to stay at their

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house. Karyn, wife of the couple, had checked with the embassy and was told that it took 4-6 days to obtain a visa, but that *occasionally* they could expedite the process.

On Friday morning we filled out the applications which Karyn had printed out for us; went to get passport pictures taken and to get certified checks from a bank; then headed downtown to the Myanmar embassy. There was an accident on the highway, which held us up significantly, so when we finally arrived at the embassy it was 12:05 – and the office was closed from 12 – 1. I had thought that if we could get there mid-morning we might have a chance to get our visas that day, but 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 sacrifice and said "Ok God, show them who you are!" Our God is AWESOME! In the midst of the nightmare we were experiencing, we walked into the Myanmar embassy at 1:00 pm and walked out at 1:36 **with visas in our passports** - a definite relief, encouragement and point of praise.

My previous experience, that if Satan is fighting so hard against something, God MUST have something important planned, 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 Scripture they had translated.
2. The church leaders from the six language groups acknowledged that translation **IS** their responsibly 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, & Cumtu) believed that they could assemble 30-40 church leaders each and asked us to bring teams to lead 2-week workshops coaching them thru the process of completing translation of the New Testament into each their languages during those 2-week workshop.
4. The Khawngtu Tu group believed that they could assemble 100 Christian leaders and asked us to bring a team, the last two weeks of March, to help them complete translation of the New & Old Testaments into their language.

Sooooo, 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.

In the midst of all the hassles we strongly considered whether or not to return to Myanmar; but I often wonder, what if I had chosen not to go back for that Quality Checking workshop?

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

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