

Broadcast 06 – Bible Study & Devotion

Sammy:

Greetings everyone! For a while now, I have been home from the MAST translation workshop where several people, like me were translating parts of the Bible from our national languages into our mother-tongue language. Today the pastor of my church is going to join us. Welcome, Pastor Fin.

Pastor Fin:

Hello Sammy! Thank you for inviting me to join you today! This has been an exciting time for the people in our church. People are starting to understand the Bible better and really understand that God can speak to them in their own language!

Sammy:

Yes, it was very exciting to bring it home and then hear you preach your first sermon from it. But I have been discouraged lately.

Pastor Fin:

Really? Why have you been discouraged?

Sammy:

I think that I have been distracted. There were so many things that I needed to do once I got back home, that I haven't had the time to focus on my translation work.

Pastor Fin:

I'm sure you have been busy; life is sometimes like that. How has your morning Bible study and devotion time been going?

Sammy:

I stopped for a little while. I felt so busy and overwhelmed, but I prayed about it just this morning and I have resolved to resume reading a bit of the Bible every morning, right before my morning prayer.

Pastor Fin:

I saw that you looked like you needed some encouragement, so I wanted to check on you. I am always happy to provide encouragement to people when they need it. With so many things going on it can be overwhelming. As you know, I was very hesitant when this translation workshop started, but I was very, very impressed with the first result of that project—the translation of the Gospel of Mark. This has made me see how important this work of Bible translation is. The team has had a great start, and we need to see that continue. I believe that one of the keys for that is for each team member to continue to make their own personal Bible study and prayer a priority in their life.

Sammy:

So, have we stumbled in our task?

Pastor Fin:

I would not say "stumble." You have just lost a bit of your enthusiasm... or you have been distracted with other tasks.

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Pastor Fin:

It was inevitable when you returned home that you would resume all kinds of tasks that were left behind when you went off to the MAST workshop. When you were at the workshop did you and the others pray for energy and insight?

Sammy:

We did.

Pastor Fin:

When you returned home, you mentioned that you would start studying in Romans since it can be a difficult book to translate. How is that going?

Sammy:

Well, I became so busy, that within a few days I stopped reading from it, but I resumed reading from it this morning.

Pastor Fin:

I am surprised you stopped your devotional readings. You are so dedicated in everything you do, especially in the work of our Lord.

Sammy:

It just did not seem to be what I needed, but it felt wrong to ask for encouragement when everyone on the translation team was studying it. The Bible study itself should have encouraged me.

Pastor Fin:

Usually when we study the Bible by ourselves, we are encouraged. But sometimes it is hard to focus, or we don't understand it. These are the times that we need to let others know what is going on. We are told, as Christians, to encourage each other in our tasks. The study of the Bible is often better when we are studying passages with other believers. They can have different perspectives on the passage that can be a help to us.

Sammy:

Sometimes we have no choice but to study alone.

Pastor Fin:

That is true, but in some ways the basic model of Bible study is group study or community-based study. After all, a central feature of Christian worship is a sermon centered on a Biblical text or a few, related Biblical texts. That is a form of Bible study, led by someone and is sometimes followed up by discussion among those attending the service.

Sammy:

As a family we always talk about the sermon after the service.

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Pastor Fin:

It may not always seem immediately relevant, but there are always things to be learned from the Bible, no matter where the reading is coming from. My sermons are not perfect, but if they encourage discussion and, more importantly, if they provide new insight into the Bible, then those sermons have served God's purposes.

Sammy:

Yes, if we believe that we do not live by bread alone but by every word from God, then we are going to be hungry for Bible study—that should include sermons and personal Bible study.

Pastor Fin:

Are you not hungry now?

Sammy:

I am still hungry, maybe just a bit tired or, maybe, distracted. I would prefer reading Bible devotions that were directly relevant to what I must now do to serve our Lord. I need to be energized.

Pastor Fin:

I see. I heard from your sister that when you were at the first workshop, where the Gospel of Mark was being translated, the devotion for the group was drawn from the Gospel of Mark that you and the others had just translated.

Sammy:

It was wonderful to hear the gospel in our own language and it was relevant to what we were doing.

Pastor Fin:

And that is great. Once we have the New Testament in our language, we could also develop our own studies and reading plans to help encourage people who will have the same struggles with consistent reading you are having right now. We could develop a Bible plan that shows how someone can read through the New Testament in a year or even twice a year. We could also write some simple studies to help people learn about topics like the salvation message of Jesus, marriage, children, God's forgiveness, our forgiveness, friendship, failure, or grace. These are studies that would speak to people where they are struggling.

Sammy:

I do want to stick to this translation task God has called me to, and I also want to be faithful to studying the Bible on my own. I know that other languages have these Bible study helps; it would be so wonderful if we had some of these things in our language too! Just imagine how useful these things would be for our people and how much they would help our people grow in their faith!

Pastor Fin:

I really agree with you Sammy.

Sammy:

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Pastor, I'm just a little afraid that I'm not qualified to help write Bible studies for our people. What if I get it wrong? You remember how scared I was to be involved in translating the Bible for our people. God helped me with that fear, but this is beyond anything that I ever imagined myself doing.

Pastor Fin:

Maybe not, but God envisioned it. And He is and will be with you and the other translators every step of the way!

Sammy:

I want every word that we translate to be accurate. I want it to say nothing more and nothing less than the original Bible texts. But I know that we are only human. As humans we can make mistakes. It takes turning to God to seek the help of the Holy Spirit to avoid or minimize error.

Pastor Fin:

And you are to be commended for your desire for the accuracy and integrity of the translations. And so, we turn to God in prayer for His help and guidance. Devotional time should combine Bible study and prayer. Ideally this is a daily habit.

Sammy:

An essential habit.

Sammy:

I so want our translation to be right for God's sake.

Pastor Fin:

And that is good. Maybe you are more discouraged than you are de-energized. Keep up with your prayerful study of the Bible. The church has learned—and God has taught—that wisdom comes from knowing and studying His inspired Word.

Sammy:

So, devotions amount to a commitment to daily Bible reading and praying.

Pastor Fin:

Exactly... and we need that Scriptural commitment no matter what our daily tasks.

Sammy:

And that is at the personal level.

Pastor Fin:

At the personal level, but also at the community level.

Sammy:

What does that look like?

Pastor Fin:

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If you do not find your daily devotions entirely satisfying, stick with them anyway in the humility that you will learn from your study. Get together and discuss what you are reading, the context of it and how you can apply it to your life, today.

Pastor Fin:

Perhaps you and I could sit down and talk periodically, just so you can share with me the ups and downs of your journey through translation.

Sammy:

Really?

Pastor Fin:

Really. I would like to be of help. Once I saw the results of the translation of the Gospel of Mark, I found my faith in our Lord renewed. He intends that our people hear His word in our language.

Sammy:

That is great! Mara and Siara have been encouraging me. But you have also encouraged me, and I am grateful for that.

Pastor Fin:

I want to encourage you and your translation team. That includes encouraging you in your daily devotion to Bible study.

Sammy:

Thank you! May God our people through the translating of Scripture. Goodbye!