

Broadcast 09 – Accountability

SAMMY:

Greetings! This is Sammy. Thank you for joining us today as we share more about our experience translating Scripture into our mother-tongue language. In our previous broadcasts we described the method we are using. It is called **MAST** – that stands for Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation. This method allows people like me – people without special theological training – to be part of a team that works to do the translation. Understanding the **MAST** method is important. But we also must be accountable to use the method well. Otherwise that would be like having tools to plant a vegetable garden but not using them. You would have no vegetables that way! I have invited Jade to join me on the broadcast today. Her experience in the business world gives her good insight into the importance of accountability and how to achieve it.

JADE:

Thank you, Sammy. I am glad to be able to join you today and share what I have learned in the business world. I want to point out that accountability is important in all areas of life, not only in the business world. Children are accountable to complete their schoolwork and to complete the chores their parents ask them to do. Adults are accountable to other family members to do their share of the work for the household – whether that is tasks inside the home or with outside employment. Without accountability, it is very difficult for anything to be accomplished. Projects and work stop. Accountability is important in Bible translation so that the work keeps being done and being done well.

SAMMY:

Thank you for pointing that out, Jade. It sounds like accountability is like responsibility.

JADE:

Yes. In the dictionary, those words are considered to mean almost the same thing. It means that if you have agreed to do something, you will do it. People depend on you.

SAMMY:

How should we think about accountability when it comes to Bible translation?

JADE:

There are several ways we need to be accountable when we engage in Scripture translation. In a practical way, we need to be accountable to do the work that needs to be done. If we commit to be part of the team, we should contribute to the work of the team. When there is no accountability, the work of the team can slow down or stop altogether. If one person is not doing their part, others have difficulty continuing their work.

SAMMY:

Could you give us an example of that?

JADE:

Of course. This is an example from a team that is working remotely. One of the team members translated his chapter and did the **SELF-EDIT**. Because they were working remotely, he sent an email with his translated portion to another team member for the **PEER-EDIT**. The waited and waited. A couple of weeks went by and still he had not heard back. When he checked, the other team member apologized and said that he had been busy. So, the translator waited longer but still did not hear back. Finally, he decided he needed to ask another team member to do the **PEER-EDIT**. His translation work had been delayed for nearly three weeks because the other team member was not accountable and did not communicate that he could not get the work done.

SAMMY:

Oh, that is unfortunate! There are several steps in the **MAST** process where it is necessary to work with another team member. If the other team member is not accountable, it can stop progress.

JADE:

Let me share another example. I heard recently about a team that was working on their New Testament translation for more than a year. During that time some members of the team moved away, and others found that they were not able to continue their work. Deadlines were missed. No one communicated about the problems or missed deadlines. As work was completed by some translators, new assignments were not given out. Slowly, the whole project came to a stop. No one was responsible to keep track of the translated chapters, so some of the work that was done was lost and had to be done again. There was no accountability to complete the project.

SAMMY:

That sounds like a very serious situation. It could mean that there would not be a New Testament in the mother-tongue language of those people.

JADE:

Yes, you are right. Fortunately, one of the men who was involved in the project was saddened by what happened. He felt accountable for completion of the New Testament for his people. He brought together a new team and led them by example. First, they met together in a workshop where he taught the **MAST** method. He gave each person short chapters of Scripture to work on. He assigned portions to himself and worked alongside the others. Assigning short portions helped the translators get through the eight steps of **MAST** and become comfortable with the process. He made a large chart that showed the team's progress. As each person finished their chapters, they colored in a box on the chart. This gave the team a sense of accomplishment as they worked together to color in more chapters on the chart. Having that success encouraged them and, by the end of the short workshop, they did not want to stop working to take breaks. They felt accountable to finish the task set in front of them. After the

workshop, they continued their work with the chapters the leader assigned them. They are in the final stages of completing the New Testament in their mother-tongue language. It will be available soon for distribution.

SAMMY:

That is very inspiring, Jade. What can we learn from this example? How can we remain accountable and keep our Scripture translation moving forward?

JADE:

There are some things that we can do to help each member of the team remain accountable. One is to be very clear when we give assignments. Team members should know what they are expected to do. Try not to overburden any one member of the team but make assignments achievable. The size of the chapter or the number of chapters given to each member may differ based on the time that translator has available. Team members also need to have a deadline for their assignment. I find what works best for me is to break down the task into smaller steps and set deadlines through the process. For example, you could have an assignment to translate Chapters 1 through 4 of the book of John. I would suggest that you have a deadline for when you want to have the **BLIND DRAFT** of Chapter 1 completed, when you want to finish the **SELF-EDIT**, when you want to be finished with the **PEER-EDIT** of that chapter, and do this for each chapter. Smaller deadlines help me remember how much time each step in the process takes and stay on course. It also means that I can be fair to the team members who are helping with the checking steps that require I need one or more partners to check. I can allow enough time for them to read my work, respond, and for us to discuss it and then make corrections.

SAMMY:

That sounds like a very helpful way to stay on track.

JADE:

Another thing that helps is to be able to check in with other members of the team regularly. It is important to encourage each other in your tasks and keeping your commitments. Some teams have meetings every week or every 2 weeks after their church service. Others have phone calls, messaging apps or keep in touch with email. These are important opportunities to share and praise accomplishments.

SAMMY:

I understand, Jade. But no matter how hard I try, there are times when I feel that I am getting behind in my translation work. I am sure that happens to others as well. That would make me want to skip the meetings rather than tell the others that I am behind.

JADE:

I understand, Sammy. Everyone will probably have a week or two when other responsibilities need attention. It is important to communicate with the team about these things and not hide them. We should also encourage people, not discourage them. If someone has had a tough week, it is important to be understanding. If someone is having trouble and falling behind consistently, it is important to figure out the reasons and look for ways to help them. Maybe they need someone who will watch the children or do some household tasks that will free up time for them to work on their translation assignment. It is important to remember that everyone is doing their best and work together as a team to help each other.

SAMMY:

I understand what you are saying. We need to work as a team. We need to be accountable to each other and to the work. You mentioned that with Scripture translation there also are other ways we need to be accountable.

JADE:

Yes, Sammy. We need to be accountable for the accuracy of the translation work we are doing. It is not enough just to do the work. We want to do it well. We want the mother-tongue translation for our people to be high quality and accurate.

SAMMY:

I agree, Jade. But it makes me nervous when you say it that way. As you know, I am not formally trained in theology. I am concerned that I may not be able to do a good enough job.

JADE:

I do not mean for it to discourage you or others, Sammy. As you know, the **MAST** steps assure a thorough check, so the translation is of high quality. We have mentioned some of them in our conversation. Let me go through them now as a reminder of the importance of each of the steps keeping us accountable for the accuracy of the translation.

SAMMY:

Yes, please. It would be good to have a review.

JADE:

SELF-EDIT is when you compare your blind draft with the source text to see if you have missed or added any important ideas or words and make sure it sounds natural and then make corrections and edits. With the **PEER-EDIT**, you work with another translator to check to be sure you have captured the meaning of the chapter of Scripture you work on. 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 compared to make sure all the content of the Scripture is there and translated naturally. The people at Wycliffe Associates told me that it is very important to complete each of these steps, even though they might seem repetitive. This process helps to ensure the quality of the translation over and over again.

SAMMY:

Yes, we learned about those steps at the workshop and have been following them as we continue to work on our translation.

JADE:

That is good. Did you know that after those steps, there are more checking step we could do to assure quality? Because our team is accountable to the church leadership and church community, they are asked to review the translation. The translation is checked with the church leadership of multiple denominations, if they have more than one. It also should be read by the community to make sure it sounds smooth in our language. Even after the translated Scripture is printed, if there are places identified where the translation could be improved, changes are made.

SAMMY:

There are many steps in place to ensure that we are accountable for the accuracy of our translation work.

JADE:

Yes, the **MAST** process ensures that many people from our language group are involved in checking the translation. But here is the most important thing of all. The process does not depend upon people alone. In the book of John, chapter 14, verse 26, we read that Jesus told His disciples that God will send the Holy Spirit to teach them everything and remind them of everything that they have been told. The leaders at our workshop told us that the impact of the Holy Spirit is seen consistently providing discernment and guidance during translation projects.

SAMMY:

What is an example of seeing the Holy Spirit in action?

JADE:

One way they often see the Holy Spirit at work is during the **VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK**. This is the final checking step for the translation team and it is taken very seriously. A translator has worked very hard on their chapter. Yet in the **VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK**, new problems and misunderstandings can arise. It can be discouraging for the translator. They have gone through so much checking and there still are issues to resolve. Sometimes it can be difficult for the translator to listen to the comments of the

people who are doing the checking. Sometimes it is difficult for the people who are checking to understand why the translator does not see the problem and is not willing to accept their solution. They can get stuck in one place for some time, but the Holy Spirit comes to provide grace and wisdom and patience. The translator and checkers are able to come to a solution that all feel is high quality.

SAMMY:

Thank you, Jade. It helps to know that we have this help to be accountable for the quality of our translation. It helps to remember that we have the help of the Holy Spirit.

JADE:

We also should remember that with Scripture translation we are accountable to God. He has called us to this task. We should be faithful and complete the work we have before us. He will give us support and resources that we need to complete it successfully for Him. We know from the book of Joshua, chapter 1, verse 9, that God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous. We should not be afraid or discouraged, because God promises to be with us. That promise is not only for Joshua long ago, but the promise is for us today. God has given us this task and He will equip us to complete it.

SAMMY:

That is a good reminder. Accountability is important not just for our Bible translation work but for our Christian walk. We are accountable for our thoughts, words and actions every day.

JADE:

Also, as part of the Body of Christ, we are part of a family and accountable to each other. Having accountability with other Christians means we have others who can pray with us and for us, teach us, rejoice with us, weep with us, encourage us and help us keep on the Christian path and safe from Satan's attacks.

SAMMY:

Jade, you have given me some new thoughts about accountability as a part of Scripture translation and in my life as a Christian. We need to think about accountability to the task, to the team, to translation accuracy and to God. I would like to close in prayer. Please join me.

Dear Lord, thank You for bringing us together today. Thank You for the learning that has been presented. Help us to remember these thoughts and use them in our Bible translation work and in our lives. Teach us to be accountable to each other as we complete our assigned tasks. Help us to be accountable for the accuracy of our translation work. And help us to always remember that we are accountable to You and to walk as a follower of Christ in this world. In Your Holy Name. Amen.

Thank you again, Jade. And thanks to all of you for joining us today. Please join us again for our next broadcast. We will be talking about challenges that can arise as people work together on the **PEER CHECK** and the **VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK**. We also will talk about how to address difficult situations when they occur.

Please remember 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:

Have a blessed week!