

BROADCAST #6

Church Engagement

LIAM:

Greetings from Liam and Sofia. We are here again to share our story about God's Word coming to our people.

SOFIA:

Liam and I can speak and read in our mother tongue language and the national language but many in our families and communities cannot. Unfortunately, the Bible is not available in our mother tongue language, only in our national language. To our mother and most of the community, including our church, God's Word is in a language that they do not understand.

LIAM:

You recall that while we feared that our own mother may die before God spoke in her language, our cousin Samuel shared with us what could be an answer from God. A language group where he was living used a new translation method called **MAST** or **Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation** to have the New Testament translated in under a year. A mission organization called Wycliffe Associates developed this new method and has been sharing and supporting the use of the method around the world.

SOFIA:

We shared the eight-step method of translation and then some further steps you can take to ensure the translation is a quality one.

LIAM:

Today we would like to discuss how we engaged the church. This is an important step as the church can be a great source of aid and significant partner in getting the translation into the hearts of your people.

SOFIA:

Acts chapter 2 is a very familiar passage. It tells of the time when the disciples gathered in prayer. The Holy Spirit then came upon all believers. This is recognized as the beginning of the church.

LIAM:

When reading through this passage after being involved with translation, I suddenly saw this event from a different perspective. Let's recount the event.

SOFIA:

The disciples were gathered for prayer and suddenly there was the sound of wind and what appeared as flames of fire over each one. Each disciple present began talking about the wonderful works of God in the languages of all the people around them.

LIAM:

That's right, there was a major event in the Jewish calendar called Pentecost and Jews from many different countries were there in Jerusalem. That means there were people from other geographical locations and from different languages.

SOFIA:

Yes, it says that everyone heard the disciples talking about the wonderful works of God in THEIR own language! The response was wonderful!

LIAM:

Ok, how does this speak to the church? We often focus on the miraculous gift of speaking in other languages but may miss the significance for the church.

SOFIA:

Sometimes we decide importance or priority by the number of times something is said. If your friend talks all the time about a certain football team, that is obviously important to him. But also, sometimes what is first spoken can be of importance.

LIAM:

Yes, sometimes we will say, the first thing I am going to do when I get home is.... Or the first thing I am going to change is ...

SOFIA:

Well, here is the beginning of the church and what is the first thing that the Holy Spirit empowers and directs the believers to do? Is it healing? Is it preaching? Is it prophecy? No, the very first thing is a translation event.

LIAM:

The Holy Spirit empowers and directs the believers of the new church to speak out the wonderful works of God in the different languages represented. Do you think that making sure God's Word is in a form that people understand is a high priority?

SOFIA:

Yes! It is also important to note that all the languages present heard the message in their language. It was not just the major, larger languages, but every language. Do you think this means that God is concerned about all languages?

LIAM:

Bible translation, the work of seeing God's message in every language, is a high priority for the church. How do we get the church to understand this long-neglected ministry? We must work to get them involved. How do we do this?

SOFIA:

The first thing we did was to spend some time in prayer, asking God to lead us to the right people within the area churches and then to guide our conversations.

LIAM:

After that, we asked pastors in our area if they would give us the opportunity to share about this amazing ministry that we started to work on.

SOFIA:

We also made sure that we had some translated passages with us, taking care that they were formatted nicely. By now, you should have at least one passage all the way through the eight-steps Make it look nice. If you are working on paper, copy it on clean paper and make it look neat. This is something you may want to leave with the church leader to read. He may even use it in a message. Read the passage to the church leader or pastor and wait for his reaction.

LIAM:

Most of the leaders we read our translated passages to had very positive reactions. We then shared our excitement and the excitement we saw in those affected by reading or listening to the translations. During the translation process, many people, family, friends and even strangers, have been greatly affected by hearing or reading the translation. Some of these have been very emotional and some had new understanding of the passage. We shared all these testimonies to the great blessing of having God's Word in the language that speaks to peoples' hearts.

SOFIA:

We then shared with them the new perspective of Acts 2 that we shared a few minutes ago. We let the scripture challenge the leaders with this new perspective of a very familiar passage.

LIAM:

Finally, we gave several ways that they could partner with us.

SOFIA:

They could get involved with our team to get the translation done faster.

LIAM:

They could get involved with taking translated passages and helping to increase the quality by giving reviews either by taking part in group readings or going further with developing and applying quality assurance questions.

SOFIA:

There are always challenges we face when engaging the churches in our area. We are grateful when a church accepts the invitation and gets involved. This means that the work could go quicker with more people participating and with quality editing. However, it does bring a few challenges.

LIAM:

One challenge is that every church brings its own doctrine. That is the same for everyone on the translation team. We all have certain viewpoints or perspectives on how we interpret the scriptures. As a team we found it hard to lay those personal perspectives aside and try to simply translate the text. We all tend to explain a text in the way we have come to understand it.

SOFIA:

We talked about baptism in Mark 1. There are several beliefs about baptism and how it should be performed today. We found that even in our team, some wanted to define how they observed the act of baptism. Some would say that Jesus went down into the water and water was poured over him or that he was put under the water, but Scripture says that we went into the water and was baptized. That is how it should be translated.

LIAM:

Another challenge is culture. In our culture, age and position are held in high respect. There is nothing wrong with respect but sometimes it can bring an element of power and control. We mentioned that Caleb, an older church leader is part of our team. For a while, we let Caleb make all decisions on the translations. We were all quiet when he spoke, and no one ever questioned his statements, even if everyone else looked at the passage in a different way.

SOFIA:

One day, as we were translating a passage, the Spirit led Caleb to understand that with respect, there also comes humility. There is value in everyone's perspective and sometimes he might even be wrong. This was a hard lesson. It is a lesson that moved him greatly and he now speaks to other elder leaders of the need to give permission to the younger people to speak out. He also made sure people understood that women, regardless of age, should also be given this permission.

LIAM:

In our last conversation we left Sani standing in front of 2500 assembled Militants. He had finally accepted the phone invitation to come and talk about Jesus to a group that had experienced two different visions, one with Jesus Himself. Sani traveled several hours by motorbike to go into the heart of Extremist territory.

SOFIA:

As Sani awoke and left his hut, he found these soldiers seated on the ground, quietly waiting. Sani briefly wondered if he had been tricked into coming for his own execution, but he was stunned as the leader who called him invited him to a prepared platform to tell them all about this Jesus.

LIAM:

Sani, moved by the Holy Spirit, simply read from scripture. Sani was a preacher and teacher but this time he only spoke the words of scripture. He read the book of James from the New Testament. It was amazing that he had the book of James in his mother tongue language, the same mother tongue language of the soldiers who waited for him to speak. After reading James, he stopped and invited them to repent and receive Christ. Can you imagine making that invitation to this audience?

SOFIA:

In what can only be described as miraculous, they all responded in repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ!

LIAM:

After Sani recounted this story to us, I asked him two questions. One, what was the significance of having the scripture in their mother tongue language? And two, did he see evidence of a real conversion?

SOFIA:

This was the reason they were able to respond – they understood the message in their hearts. Sani's reading God's Word in their mother tongue language was the key to the event.

LIAM:

Were the conversions real? Sani stayed with them for several days, teaching them about Jesus. In that short time, he witnessed changes in how they treated each other and acted. For instance, they asked for help in getting seeds so that they could plant crops and not rely on attacking others. The conversions were real.

SOFIA:

That completes our story of how God enabled us to see His Word translated into our mother tongue language. Now it is time for you to start or continue your own story. If your language does not have the Bible, then pray about getting a team together and beginning a translation project using this new method called **MAST**.

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LIAM:

We are working closely with Wycliffe Associates to provide support and assistance to do the work. **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:**