

Chapter 3: Church Owned Bible Translation (COBT)—Four Beliefs

For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:27-28).

YOUR NOTES:

We have four beliefs about Bible translation that drive our process of Church-Owned Bible Translation.

Traditional Bible translation: done by a foreigner in a new country.

How do you think “Church-Owned” Bible Translation changes that?

- **Which is easier for you: translating into your heart language, or from your heart language to another language?**
-
-

4 Beliefs:

1. Ability

Romans 12:4 -6a 2 Timothy 2:7

- **Linguistic Ability** - You understand your language and culture better than an outsider.
- **Bilingual Translation Ability** - Bilingual speakers have shared meaning through oral translation most of their lives. You won't need to spend years learning a new language.
- **God-Given Gifts** - Each of you have God-given gifts to work as a team.

2. Authority

Matthew 28:18 -20 Acts 1:8

God's Spirit lives in every believer. He provides wisdom and gives each of us authority to share, teach, or translate God's Word.

3. Responsibility

1 Peter 3:15 Colossians 3:16 2 Timothy 2:2

The local Church has the responsibility for:

- _____
- _____
- _____

- **What areas of leadership are needed if the Church is responsible for the translation?**

4. Accountability

Romans 14:12 1 Corinthians 2:12-13

Mother-tongue translators are accountable to

- **God**
- their **Community**

for the accuracy, clarity, and accessibility of Scripture in their heart language.

- **How can Church Ownership of Scripture benefit evangelism, discipleship, and church planting?**

Exercise: **COBT 4 Beliefs Scenario Match**

Ability: The local believers of a language community understand their language and culture better than an outsider. Typically, at least some are multilingual and have a certain skill in transferring messages from one language to another. The knowledge of more than one language without having to spend years learning it also sets them up to begin translating right away.

Authority: God's Spirit provides wisdom and entrusts each believer with authority for stewarding God's Word in his or her community.

Responsibility: Local believers have a responsibility to their community that others outside the community don't have. This responsibility is for evangelism and discipleship. Scripture translation into the heart language of the people is an essential part of that responsibility.

Accountability: The local believers are accountable to one another and to God for the accuracy, clarity, and accessibility of Scripture in their heart language.

YOUR NOTES:

Consider the following scenarios and discuss which of the “4 Beliefs” drives the behavior.

**Ability
Authority
Responsibility
Accountability**

Example:

The Ontenu People of Papua New Guinea were clashing violently with neighboring clans. Despite the conflict, their church leaders decided to attend a MAST translation workshop with other language groups.

During the workshop, their village was raided, and half the homes were burned. The translators chose to keep working, rather than to join the fight.

At the end of the workshop, the Ontenu leaders had translated more Scripture than the other language groups.

Which Belief best matches the experience of the Ontenu People?

1. When a young woman on the translation team arrived at the training event, she felt unqualified for translation. But as she learned the process and worked with her team, she realized God had uniquely prepared her. She understood the source language well enough to help others on the team. She was also comfortable with English and had learned to type while at college.

2. The leaders of a translation project asked the school teacher in their community to help them with their checking efforts because he was respected for his knowledge of their mother tongue. He loved words and researching meaning. The leaders trusted him to help them find the best words when they were confused.

3. A group of leaders from several language communities came together to be trained in specific checking tools. These leaders translated the resources into their trade language, so they could take it back to the community and use it in further checking.

4. A pastor provided his church as a place for translators to meet. People from the church volunteered to cook meals for the translators on the days they gathered to work on the translation.
-

**Ability
Authority
Responsibility
Accountability**

5. The translation team split up the remaining portions of the New Testament to work on at home. They set a schedule to gather for checking every couple of weeks.
-

6. A Christian leader from the community mentors eight pastors to translate Scripture into their mother tongue.
-

7. A church is home to 3 minority dialects with no Scripture. The pastor wants to help them get Scripture. At first, he thinks he can only find help from the outside. But what he really wants is help to equip himself and the 3 communities to manage the task themselves. He decides to host a training event and invites a group from each language to learn specific skills in Bible translation. This pastor plans and manages the event and helps guide the translators for each language.
-

8. A Muslim man allowed his wife, who is a believer, to attend a translation training event for their language as long as she took him with her. He was not interested in the gospel, but he was interested in preserving their heart language. The leaders of the event allowed this non-believer to join the training with his wife. During the training, this young man read the Scriptures, heard the gospel, and was saved.
-

Review of Core Concepts:

- The local Church of heart language speakers is the body that is best qualified to lead Bible translation for their language.
- They have the ability, the authority, the responsibility, and the accountability to God and their community to translate and assure the accuracy of their translation.