

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

**Objective:** Participants will understand and accept the four beliefs about COBT.

**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.

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).

**Intro:**

**We've talked about how Bible translation was traditionally done by a foreigner in a new country.**

**Ask:**

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

**Discuss:**

- Have you ever overheard someone who shares your heart language translate something into your heart language?
  - How well was the message communicated?

**Time:** 60 minutes, plus 30 minutes for Exercise

**Workbook p. 8**

**Materials:**

- ✓ Slide Deck: T3.Slides\_03\_COBT.4.Beliefs\_TS01a
- ✓ White board
- ✓ Bible with place markers

**Teacher's Notes:**



Church Owned Bible Translation 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).

All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version®. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Invite a participant to come to the front to make a list of what they share on white board.



**Note:** Their suggested elements may be a good starting point for the later conversation about Quality Assessment.

Thank and have the volunteer at the whiteboard rejoin the group.

- Have you ever heard an outsider translate something into your heart language?
  - How well was the message communicated?
- Which is easier for you: translating into your heart language or from your heart language to another language?

**I want to share with you why Wycliffe Associates believes that the local church within every language group can and should own their own Bible translation.**

## 1. Ability

- Linguistic Ability – You understand your language and culture better than an outsider.
- Bilingual Translation Ability - Bilingual speakers, like you, have shared meaning through oral translation (or interpretation) most of your 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

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

### Discuss:

- How do you understand authority?
- What does authority include in your culture?

### Notes:

*As you introduce Wycliffe Associates' beliefs, note similarities with their suggestions and have them discuss the differences. This is primarily to get the ideas planted.*

**Romans 12:4-6a**  
For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, for we are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...

**2 Timothy 2:7**  
Consider what I say, and obey the Lord who gives understanding in all things.

Romans  
12:4–6a

2 Timothy 2:7

#### Ability



**Local believers:**

- Know the language and culture
- Have shared meaning through oral translation
- Have unique, God-given abilities

#### Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Matthew  
28:18–20  
Acts 1:8

#### Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses for Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

#### Ability



#### Authority

**God's Spirit gives the local church:**

- Wisdom
- Authority

*Ideas: the right to make decisions, the right to tell people what to do, the right to change things, the right to start new things, etc.*

## 3. Responsibility

The local Church has the responsibility for:

- Evangelism
- Discipleship
- Bible Translation

### Discuss:

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

## 4. Accountability

Mother-tongue translators are accountable to

- God
- their community

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

### Discuss:

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

### Exercise: COBT 4 Beliefs Scenario Match

(Participant Workbook pp. 9-11)

### 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.

### Notes:

**1 Peter 3:15**  
But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

**Colossians 3:16**  
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

**2 Timothy 2:2**  
And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

**Ability**  
**Authority**  
**Responsibility**  
The local church is responsible for:  
• Evangelism  
• Discipleship  
• Bible Translation

1 Peter 3:15

Colossians

3:16

2 Timothy 2:2

*Ideas: overseeing the process, ensuring progress, seeking outside help, making decisions on quality.*

**Romans 14:12**  
So then each of us shall give account of himself to God

**1 Corinthians 2:12-13**  
Now we have revealed, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.  
**13** These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

**Ability**  
**Authority**  
**Responsibility**  
**Accountability**  
Translators are accountable to:  
• God  
• Their community

Romans

14:12

1 Corinthians

2:12-13

Gauge the size of the gathering and assign groups to tables with a presenter at each if necessary. Do the example together.

The Exercise is also printed on pp. 120-121 in this Trainer Guide, if extra copies are needed.

Ask:

- Which Belief best matches the experience of the Ontenu People?

Notes:

This is a good example of **Responsibility** because the translators followed God's calling despite the challenges they faced. *(This can also fit other beliefs like **Ability** or **Authority**, but the trainees must be able to explain why it fits their choice.)*

Have participants complete the exercise within their groups.

Then, come back together and discuss their ideas.

**Exercise Answer Key:**

**(Questions on pp. 120-121)**

1. Ability
2. Authority
3. Accountability/Responsibility
4. Responsibility
5. Accountability/Responsibility
6. Authority
7. Responsibility
8. Authority

***These concepts can be challenging to understand.***

They are very different from translation done by colonial mission organizations, and many current Bible translation organizations. Colonial missions brought the Gospel and assumed authority and responsibility for Bible translation. Some Bible translation organizations today continue to retain leadership responsibility and authority over translation work, such as project management, choosing and managing translators, and checking the translation through language consultants.

Notes:

Other Bible translation organizations increasingly recognize that the local church should have the primary role in Bible translation leadership. In Church Owned Bible Translation, Wycliffe Associates affirms that the church has the ability, responsibility, authority, and accountability to lead translation work for the languages they serve.

**Be sure to dig in** and find any doubts, fears, or areas that need clarification.

**Address these issues with the leaders now**, so that they may address them later with their local translation teams.

Teach Back:

- Who is responsible to evangelize and disciple?
- How does the Church reach unsaved people within this language group?
- Who gives us authority to translate the Bible?
- Who is the best person to determine if a translation is easy to understand in the target language?
- How does the translation team stay accountable to God and their community?

**Confirm:**

Everyone understands the four beliefs about COBT and has considered how those beliefs apply to their local Church.