

Broadcast 23 – Celebrate!

OLIVER:

Hello dear brothers and sisters in Christ. This is Oliver. This is the day the Lord has made in our beautiful part of His creation. As you are aware, many months ago, a team of believers met to help translate the New Testament from our national language to our mother-tongue language. We hope this leads to more Scripture translations for the remaining languages in our country.

JADE:

Hello, this is Jade! Our listeners may wonder why this has not happened earlier in our people's history. The method developed to speed up the Bible translation process was developed only six years ago. This new method makes it possible to complete a reliable translation more quickly.

OLIVER:

We are grateful to those missionaries of the past who gave their lives to Scripture translation around the world. Their work is blessed. One big difference from their work and this new process, is that translation is done by speakers of the language, not an outsider who has to spend years learning it. Our own people speak the language from birth, learning it from their mothers and fathers. Even if they are unable to write it down, someone else on the team can.

JADE:

Many people who love God are part of this new approach. If you know somebody who took part, please tell them you appreciate the gift they have given to people who didn't have God's Word in their own language. I am also confident that God may be moving many other people who are listening, to join a translation team in the future.

OLIVER:

Today we are happy to announce the completion of our New Testament. I am excited we have the privilege of telling our listeners this good news. To our dearly loved local pastors – you and your congregation will soon be able to read the New Testament in our own language – the language God would use in a private conversation with you.

JADE:

I really like the way you put that: the language God would use if He were talking to you. Of course, that is the language that we pray to Him and were taught about Him. But now we can read His Word! I cannot wait to share it with others.

OLIVER:

We are grateful for the time translators spend away from their families to focus on translation work. The availability of God's Word is an occasion to celebrate, and you are the ones making this happen. The angels in Heaven surely celebrate every time another people group can read God's Holy Words. You have the very first copies in your hands, and others will want their own copy.

JADE:

So, this is not any regular day, but an important milestone. Our translation team has talked of some suggestions for celebrating this accomplishment. At the beginning we were overwhelmed with all the details for this party, but then we decided to ask others to help. We have several people in our church with the gift of hospitality and we asked them to join us in making this a truly memorable celebration.

OLIVER:

They should tell the pastors about plans for a celebration. They will decide on the meeting place where you can hold an event, perhaps a meal. Everybody enjoys celebrating with good food. Besides good food there are other things that can be added to a celebration. Jade, why don't you start? Keep in mind that we don't have to use all these ideas but can choose what is best for our community to celebrate.

JADE:

Before or after the meal we could have a ceremony. We could present a copy of the New Testament to every pastor and community leader who is there. Perhaps you might consider also including your older church members – those who waited the longest for this day. This also honors those mature believers, who are probably the leaders in the church. Some may even be moved to tears since they waited their whole lives for this.

OLIVER:

Look for artistic people in the church and community, or those who have beautiful handwriting. For each person who is attending, it would be meaningful to write a verse on a card. It can be given to them as they arrive or passed out during the celebration. If you are setting a table for the meal, they could be placed at each place setting.

JADE:

Can you give an example of a verse they might choose?

OLIVER:

We could have a difference verse for every card, or we can have the same verse on every card. One suggestion is Philippians 4:4. It says, *"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice."* Of course, there are so many wonderful verses to choose from in the New Testament. They may want to use one about the power of God's Word like, *"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."* Romans 10:17.

JADE:

I like this idea because everyone leaves with a simple gift to take home. I can picture someone carefully placing this card where they will see it every day.

OLIVER:

Continuing the idea of having the written Word at the celebration, if you have access to a roll of paper, make large signs for the walls of your banquet room featuring verses in your mother-tongue. The point of this event is to celebrate God's Word. Since not all members have the New Testament yet, surround them with this precious text.

JADE:

If paper is not readily available, choose confident readers with good loud voices to read sections to the whole assembled group. Ideally, have readers of all ages and include young people so they feel part of the celebration. The older people will be thrilled to see children and teenagers reading God's Word in their mother-tongue.

OLIVER:

That would be very meaningful. Make sure someone plans this ahead of time. Some people won't feel comfortable standing in public to read. I like the idea that anyone, not only the pastor, will read it aloud. Someday this New Testament could end up in the hands of people who don't even know a pastor, but

we know the Holy Spirit will touch the hearts of those readers and fill them with the desire to know even more.

JADE:

Here's another idea. Do not just read the words, but also sing them. In every church there is at least one person who loves music and would be good at putting Scripture to music. Ask that person to compose a simple melody or choose one that everybody already knows. Then select one verse or several short verses for the lyrics. For example, Philippians 2 verse 13: *"For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure."* Or Philippians 4 verse 19: *"My God will meet all your needs according to his riches in glory...."* Teach the song that night and encourage congregations to use it in the future.

OLIVER:

That's a great suggestion, because one of the best ways to learn Scripture is by singing it. Not just for children, but adults too. You might be thinking that you know nothing about music. That's ok, talk to the people who are good at this. You know who they are because they sing joyfully in your church services. For this celebration, it could be the verses on the cards set to music, and before the night is over, everyone will know how to sing it, and keep these meaningful words in everyone's memory.

Often when we celebrate in our village, we do traditional dances. It is a way for us to show our worship and gratefulness to God as a community. We all grew up learning these dances and it is an important part of our culture.

JADE:

Is there an individual who is confident and outgoing enough to become an actor for that one night to represent Paul? After dinner, "Paul" can make an appearance and address the group in your mother tongue language. He could even use the final verses of Philippians 4:21-23, *"Greet all God's holy people in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All God's holy people who are here greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."*

Use this as a benediction before everyone leaves: a blessing in your language as the final worship of the evening.

OLIVER:

Or hang banners with the verses and have the guests read along with him. Celebrate this occasion! It's a wonderful reason for believers to share this joy. Sometimes, in God's perfect planning, unbelievers are part of the translation team. Be sure they are invited and feel included. At that time, their only exposure to Christianity is the Word of God, and this celebration. They would be in the presence of believers of all ages and maturity levels. It could be the first time they really would get to experience Christian fellowship. The evening could lead into a time of sharing testimonies. Both believers and unbelievers need to hear these uplifting stories.

JADE:

An added benefit to the translation team is to reignite your own excitement for the process you began. The New Testament is one step along the way and the Lord may be asking your community to continue and start work on the Old Testament.

You may even want to end the event with an invitation to join the team in beginning work on the Old Testament.

OLIVER:

Wow! Thank you for that suggestion, Jade. I want to take a minute to the idea to start a new project – the Old Testament!

There is a presence of evil in our world, Satan himself, who loves to lead us astray. He is thrilled at the end of each day when you have no plans to begin your next project. That means you need to take the first step to begin the plan you made at the end of your translation work. To get started, ask the team when they can all get together again. Find a date that is convenient for everyone and do not let anything interfere with your meeting. Don't put this off any longer. Then get started. At this first meeting, review the plan you made when you were working on the New Testament, revise it if necessary, and set up a reasonable schedule for future meetings. If you have done as Jade suggested and made an invitation at the event, follow up with anyone who volunteered to join and make sure they are included in your very first meeting.

JADE:

Yes. The Old Testament is a bigger portion of Scripture than the New Testament. So, the task could use extra help. Our Lord certainly knows you have other work and family commitments, but He is also giving you strength to get this job done, so take it in manageable amounts. This is a wonderful time to promote the experience and gain new members. Perhaps this will produce a whole new second team. Let it be known that you are recruiting. Having a completed New Testament can be an inspiration to others.

It occurred to me that every person who is part of translating the Bible for their people will someday reach the end of their life. As they look back, translating God's Word may be their most important accomplishment.

OLIVER:

I am excited for the people who will now have God's Word in their mother-tongue language. I also want to commend all those who gave their time to work on this gift of God's Word to generations of people in the future. What a legacy! And I hope that some of you listening will consider being a part of a team in the future. God has ways of letting us know when the time is right.

JADE:

As always, we enjoyed this time with you! And we look forward to next time, when we will continue sharing how God loves you and cares very much about Scripture becoming available in your mother-tongue.

OLIVER:

As we finish this program, it seems appropriate to end with Scripture. Philippians 4:6 says, *"Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in everything by prayer and earnest appeal with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God."*

If you have questions about your current project or want to start a project in your own mother-tongue language, please call or text (local country partner info) or send an email to reachingalldialects@gmail.com or radio@wycliffeassociates.org.