

Broadcast 21 – Translation Transforming Communities

OLIVER:

Hello! This is Oliver. My family and I enjoy sharing our Bible translation experience with you. I thought it would be good for us to hear about the difference it makes when people have Scripture in their mother-tongue language. We have a special guest who can share with us actual examples of the difference translated Scripture has made. We invited Paul from Wycliffe Associates to join us. Paul has a special interest in making the Bible available to more people in their language. Welcome Paul!

PAUL:

Thank you, Oliver. I am so happy to be here with you. I am excited to talk about the impact of Bible translation in other communities.

OLIVER:

We are excited about the amazing things happening in our language community, now that we have much of the New Testament available in our mother-tongue. Paul, we know groups all over the world are using MAST just like we are using it. How did you find out what is happening in different places? Surely you have not been to all those places.

PAUL:

Wycliffe Associates conducts a survey after MAST translation workshops. They ask questions in six different areas.

OLIVER:

That is great! It will be encouraging for us to hear about what is happening in other communities. What did you learn?

PAUL:

The first area is about how the church is using the translated Scripture.

OLIVER:

That is a good place to start. How are the churches using translated Scripture?

PAUL:

One thing that happens almost right away is translated Scripture is used more by pastors in their sermons. Here is an example. In one church, the translation of the feeding of the 5000 was read as part of the service. When the pastor heard this section of Scripture in his language for the first time, it affected him greatly. He changed his entire sermon for that day to preach about this miracle Jesus performed.

OLIVER:

That sounds like what happened at our church the first week we shared a portion of Mark we translated during a MAST workshop. It certainly is a very dramatic example of inspiration from Scripture. Do people besides the pastors also use Scripture more now?

PAUL:

Yes, they do. Children's classes use Scripture more in their lessons. The readings are more meaningful to them because they are hearing them in their own language. Students understand what they are hearing. They say it seems like the message has been written for them.

OLIVER:

That is wonderful!

PAUL:

Wait. There is even more! Families are using Scripture more in their own homes.

OLIVER:

I experienced that myself. Siara, my wife, and I are reading Scripture more at home and sharing it with our son and with my father, Omar. I am happy to know other families are reading Scripture more as well.

PAUL:

That is so good to hear about your household, Oliver. Greater use of Scripture is happening in every one of the communities I read about. This is possible because of the dedication and work of volunteer translators like you and your listeners.

OLIVER:

Thank you. I will be sure to tell Siara about that. Tell us more. What has been the result of people becoming more engaged with Scripture?

PAUL:

The assessment asks several questions like, has faith, hope and discernment increased. And has there been increased understanding of good versus evil?

OLIVER:

Those are difficult questions. What are people saying?

PAUL:

I read over the responses to the surveys. Some amazing things have happened. Leaders tell us there were people who professed faith for over ten years but had never actively participated in the church. Now these people are coming to hear, worship and participate in spiritual growth. It is because for the first time they are hearing Scripture read in their own language. Some of these people even became group leaders and teachers.

OLIVER:

What has all of this meant for the church?

PAUL:

They ask if the church has grown and if there has been a sense of revival in individuals and the community. They ask if there has been increased witness of Jesus.

OLIVER:

Has there been growth of that kind?

PAUL:

Yes. In every community I read about, the church has grown since having Scripture in their language. The churches report new believers. They have faith even more people will become believers. Many are increasing their church facilities to be ready to serve those new believers.

OLIVER:

That is fine in areas where it is accepted or tolerated to be a Christian. There are many areas where Christians are persecuted for their faith. What about those places?

PAUL:

There were some surveys from areas where there is persecution. I was surprised and happy to learn that even in those areas people say having Scripture in their language increases their faith and encourages them to worship more openly. Those areas see steady growth since translated Scripture has been available. It is a miracle, brought about through the dedicated work of volunteer translators like you and your listeners.

OLIVER:

That is very encouraging news. It makes me want to do more work on our translation right now!

PAUL:

They also ask if there has been an increase in emotional healing, spiritual healing, or physical healing. The communities report there has been emotional healing – healing of the soul. Before, you asked about areas where there is persecution of believers. When those believers hear Bible verses in their language, they can remember them more easily. They really understand the meaning. They use those verses to help them when they are afraid. One verse they find helpful is from the Gospel of Mark 5:36 – *“Do not be afraid. Just believe.”*

OLIVER:

Emotional healing and freedom from fear are important for us all. What about actual physical healing?

PAUL:

In the communities I read about, there has been actual physical healing as well. One person was on dialysis treatments for kidney problems. He received peace through hearing the translated Scripture and experienced healing. He dedicated his life to Christ. Physical healing may be less frequent, but it can happen, and it will glorify Him.

OLIVER:

Many positive things are happening. Does this have any kind of effect on the community? Once a community has translated Scripture, are changes seen?

PAUL:

Some interesting changes were reported. Some communities report men changing their views on the treatment of women. Let me give you an example. This happened at a translation workshop. A lot of the translators were young Christian female college students. They worked hard on their oral translation. Then an older man came in the room. He was a professor and a Christian. He thought he could do a better job and he wanted to be the one to read the translation work aloud for the recording. The girls wanted to respect him, so they gave him the microphone so he could record the work. He started and he read for a while. Then an amazing thing happened. He gave the work he was reading back to one of the young girls. He said she should be the one to read it, because she could read it better. What a change in his heart, to honor the ability of the young female student!

OLIVER:

My wife and sister will be very excited about that! I cannot wait to tell them. Those people were all Christians already. What about people in the community who are not church members?

PAUL:

I was surprised to learn these communities see changes even among those who are not now members of the church. We have stories of some people stopping lying. Other people stop using bad words. Others tell us gambling is reduced or alcohol abuse has decreased. Some communities even launched educational instruction programs to support people who are trying to stop these bad habits.

OLIVER:

It is wonderful to know translated Scripture can affect the entire community.

PAUL:

Yes, it surely is. I saved what I think is the most important area for last. Wycliffe Associates asks, “Have there been salvation decisions as a result of Scripture translation?”

OLIVER:

I agree. That is the most important question.

PAUL:

Yes. Leaders tell us now they can reach people who had resisted the teachings of the Bible. Those people felt the Bible was not written for them because it was not in their language.

OLIVER:

I can understand that. I heard people in my community say that, too.

PAUL:

Here is an example. It is about one of the translators. His father was a Communist and an atheist. He hated that his son was a Christian. After the translation workshop, the son went home. He could share Scripture with his father in their language for the first time. This touched the heart of the father. Now he believes and has been baptized. He supports the Christian testimony of his son.

OLIVER:

That is a great example. How wonderful it must have been for the son who worked on the translation to see his father come to Christ! Are more people coming to Christ?

PAUL:

Yes. I can tell you great news about that. In every community, people have been saved and can directly trace that decision to people hearing the translated Scripture. In each community, it may be only a few people to start with, but it grows. In some communities it is six people. In others, it is twenty or thirty.

OLIVER:

Hallelujah! That is the very best news of all. Thank you for sharing this learning from the surveys.

PAUL:

You are welcome. It is a joy to share such wonderful news. You may realize you saw some examples in your family, church, and community already – like you told us about using Scripture more in your home, Oliver. Maybe you did not see examples yet. Do not be discouraged if you do not see results right away. Changing hearts takes time. You may never know all the ways God has used your translation work. But trust He is using it in a powerful way for His glory.

OLIVER:

Thank you very much for your visit and for your prayer. Listeners, until next time, please think about the areas Paul shared. Think about the ways Scripture can bring changes in you, your family, your church, and your community. Watch and pray for these changes. And, of course, keep working on your Scripture translation! Your work has eternal value!

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.