



News and Current Events :: Wycliffe translators still on the front lines

Wycliffe translators still on the front lines - posted by docs (), on: 2009/11/26 12:52

This story caught my eye and is certainly something to be thankful for on this day. It's refreshing and far from the madding crowd and so much of the political rancor that seems to permeate so much these days.

By Stan Jeter
CBN News Senior Poducer
Monday, November 23, 2009

BIBLE TRANSLATORS BRING GOD'S WORD IN NATIVE TONGUES

There are still more than 2,200 people groups without a Bible in their own language, according to Wycliffe Bible translators.

Now, the organization is working with partners around the world to make sure everyone has the Word of God in the language they grew up with. Many translations are under way, and Wycliffe hopes to be working on the last of the remaining languages by the year 2025.

In the country of Panama, one native language is nearing completion.

Almost 40 years ago, a British missionary canoed into a remote area of Panama with a proposal for the local chief. Could he and his family live among the tribe to learn their language and tell them about someone called Jesus?

The answer, however, was no.

"I just sat in our canoe that was tied up at the river bank and I just wept before the Lord," recalled Wycliffe translator Keith Forster. "I mean, I bawled my heart out. Imagine that here I'd given up my home, my country, my career, everything."

After years of training, and obstacles, Forster's mission had abruptly ended -- or had it? As a parting gift, Forster offered a picture of his family and told the chief they were on a mission with a purpose.

"We were sent by God to take his letter and translate it for you so you, too, could understand.," Forester said. "So in the future, when your children ask us 'What is God like?' You will have to say to them, 'I don't know.'"

The chief changed his mind, and Forster and his wife settled among the Kunas, learned the language, and more than twenty years later, gave the tribe their own New Testament.

As the Word of God was translated into their own language, many Kunas decided to follow Jesus. And although, as Panamanians, most speak Spanish, it's the Kuna Bible that speaks to their hearts.

"Like Mandela said, talk to the people in the language you can understand, it's going to head. But talk the language, his own language, the word is going to the heart," said Kuna translator Lino Smith.

Smith was part of the team that translated the Bible. Another Kuna leader with weak eyesight, appreciates his large-print edition of the translated Bible.

"When I feel weak it gives me strength," said Kuna missionary John Kennedy Morales. "I feel loved and I can carry on."

Morales works as a missionary in a village called Tabardi.

"I use the Kuna Bible, because that's the way they understand better," Morales said.

Today, the translation team is revising the translation of the Old Testament, completing one more project in the task of giving every tribe and nation, God's word in their own language.

One of the dangdest stories I ever heard was from a Wycliffe member - posted by docs (), on: 2009/11/28 10:23

He spoke at a church I was part of several years ago and had no reason whatsoever to embellish the story. But he shared a story that took place somewhat recently back then and told how a group of Wycliffe translators had gone to a remote region and engaged indigenous natives and began to live with them for the purpose of sharing the gospel with them and if possible coming up with a translation of the Bible in their language. For 7 long years things didn't go very well. After that long period communication was still strained and sparse and no breakthrough at all had been achieved to help the natives understand what their visitors were really after. Even common communication was hard and strained and done with a lot of gestures and sounds. The native language was difficult. The translators had tried to translate some of the native language into the Old Testament and parts of the New and were wondering if they had really made any progress. They would listen intently to the native language and try to figure it out and get it down properly. One day two of the translators were speaking with each other and one of them reads half of a verse from Hebrews they had strained to try and get down in the native language and they were wondering if it was right. Right then one of the natives walks up and is gesturing and they still have a hard time but they figure out he is wondering and inquiring about what they had just read. They reread it again and they realize the primitive native has seemed to catch a grasp of what the half verse from Hebrews says in his own language. It leads to a dramatic breakthrough and from that point on the translation process and daily communication concerning ordinary matters makes a dramatic jump. The half verse from Hebrews, after 7 years of effort, proved to be the catalyst for it all. Many end up being saved and the translation is well on its way to being done and the chief translator suddenly becomes very ill near unto death and is laying in one of the huts and hears voices outside. His comrades tell him the people from the village have surrounded the hut in a circle and are on their knees praying, "Please God don't let him die because the book is not finished.. Please God don't let him die because the book is not finished." Well, he didn't die and the book was eventually finished. And after becoming somewhat established in the infancy of their faith the villagers began to send out missionaries to the surrounding areas and villages with the message of Jesus Christ. After 7 years the half of a verse from Hebrews bearing witness in the man's heart had been the key.