

Wordwatch

Evangel Bible Translators

Why Translate the Holy Bible?

By Michael Johnson

Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."—Matthew 28:18-20 KJV

Bible translation is necessary to truly fulfill the Great Commission and make disciples in all nations.

Imagine for a moment that you had never heard about the love of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made for you at the cross. Now if someone came to you proclaiming the Gospel in perfect Koine Greek (or any language you don't understand), would it do you any good? The phrase "It's all Greek to me!" comes to mind. Of course, if there were no translation of the Holy Bible in your language, someone who knew both a language that had the Holy Bible and your language would have to translate it for you, so that you could understand the Good News. I suppose a foreigner could try to persuade you to learn his language first before telling you about Jesus, but how likely would you be to do that? Somehow I can't imagine a great evangelist like Billy Graham preaching without an interpreter to a stadium full of people who don't speak English.

It doesn't always take a lot of translation for someone to put their faith in Jesus Christ and be saved, because God has used just a few verses or a Gospel tract, together with the conviction of the Holy Spirit, to get people saved. But the Great Commission doesn't end there. Jesus told

us to "make disciples" and to teach them to observe all that He commanded us. That is tough to do without a Bible or at least a New Testament.

You are truly blessed to speak English, because not only do you have a whole Bible translation in your language, you actually have many choices of high quality Bible translations to choose from. For speakers of "minority languages" the situation is not as good.

There are approximately 6,809 living languages spoken in the world today. Of those, 405 have a translation of the whole Bible. 1034 have a translation of the New Testament. 883 have some Scripture portions translated. All of the Bible translation agencies combined have work currently in progress on over 1,500 translations. There are still over 3,000 languages, representing over 380 million people, with no Bible translation and no work in progress, yet. (Sources: <http://www.ethnologue.org/> and <http://www.wycliffe.org/wbt-usa/TranGoal.htm>.)

Even in cases where many of the people have learned a second language (such as an official national language), it is still an advantage to have the Scriptures in their "heart language"—the language they think in and express themselves best in. I have often heard reports of how much more impact the Word of God has in a person's heart language. The Good News of Jesus Christ has more impact and is more clear when it is in your heart language.

God's Word is Truth. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.—Romans 10:17

Where would you be without the Holy Bible in your own language?