



# NO BIBLE SUNDAY?

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Bible Celebration resource

## The Bible at work!

**Description:**

Seven inspiring stories for use in sermons of God at work through the Bible

**Aim:**

Remind people that the Bible is changing people's lives in powerful ways

**What's needed:**

Nothing

**Time:**

Depends on use

### But what do you do if they *like* snake?

Many Bible verses appear easy to translate – *easy* because they mention things common to most people, like fishes or snakes. But a translator must check every verse with mother-tongue speakers to make sure there are no unintentional meanings buried in the seemingly straightforward text.

When Wen Jones and his Barasano co-translator finished the draft of Luke's Gospel, Wen took the translation to another friend, Marcos\*, to check it for clarity.

Marcos read Luke 11.11, "Which of you fathers, if your son asks you for a fish, will give him a snake instead?"

The verse didn't make sense to Marcos. He and his family *liked* to eat snake meat! It would be normal and acceptable for him to bring a snake in from the Colombian jungle and give it to his son to eat. Marcos' son would consider it a good gift.

The translator realised they needed the verse to mention an animal that would be considered a bad gift for Barasano children. After discussing the local possibilities, Marcos and Wen decided to simply describe the unloving present as an "inedible snake".

Now when the Barasano people read these verses in Luke, they understand that just as loving fathers know how to distinguish between good and bad gifts for their children, their Heavenly Father knows even more what good gifts they need.

\*Name changed for security reasons

### Bible translation brings unity

A translator from South Korea, Jee-Young An, rejoiced at a major milestone: after thirteen years the newly translated Gwahatike New Testament was finally completed. To help proofread the typeset pages, he gathered nine Gwahatike men – three co-translators and six church leaders – representing seven different denominations. The goal was for all the churches to take ownership of the New Testament. Before they began working, Jee-Young prayed for unity in the group and committed the project to God.

Jee-Young divided the men into three groups for proofreading, one co-translator and two church leaders per group. During a proofreading session in Galatians, one of the church leaders exclaimed, “Stop! Please, can we read this again?”

After the second reading, the pastor said, “This is very clear in Gwahatike. I understand this for the first time!” This pastor was from a church that used only the English and trade language Bibles. His congregation had not supported the translation work, stating that they would not use the Gwahatike New Testament.

God answered the translator’s prayer for unity. Later that week, after reading more translated Scripture, the pastor admitted to Jee-Young, “I was wrong. The Bible in our own language is much more understandable than the English Bible or the trade language. We *will* use it in our congregation!”

## **Genealogies – how exciting!**

While reading through a genealogy in Genesis, an older Olo man from Papua New Guinea became excited. “Now I *know* this Book is true”, he exclaimed. “No man would have written all this if he had made it up. But God wanted us to know that this is true and these were real people who did real things.”

He continued solemnly, “Hearing this in my language, I understand it, and it shoots me in the heart.”

Isn’t it amazing that names that could have been lost for all time were preserved so the Olo and other peoples would know the truth of God’s Word. As Paul wrote – “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful” – including genealogies!

## **Get up and walk!**

Following a hip surgery, Maria, a Tekritek woman in Guatemala, had refused to get out of bed. She complained constantly about the pain. “God doesn’t mean for me to walk again!” she said. The doctors asked that no one visit Maria until her stubbornness had subsided and they were able to help her walk.

Since Elenore (a translator who knew Maria) couldn’t visit her friend, she sent a care package with printouts of several chapters of the Gospel of John that had just been translated. While confined to her bed, Maria began to read the Gospel. Several days later the doctors called Elenore and said that Maria had begun walking. Elenore was now allowed to visit.

“You know the chapters of John that you gave to me?” Maria said. “It spoke about a man who hadn’t walked for thirty-eight years! Then Jesus asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’ When the man started complaining, Jesus simply said, ‘Get up and walk’. When I read this, I felt as though Jesus was also telling me to get up and walk.”

With joy lighting her face, Maria exclaimed, “So I got up ... and I can walk!”

Because God’s word has been translated into her heart language – and through the Spirit’s guidance in her life – Maria, a mother of eight children, can now walk again.

## **Jesus paid the ransom**

Translator Neil Anderson sat staring at the page. Here was another word he didn’t know how to translate. Across the table from him sat six eager Folopa men from Papua New Guinea. They were experiencing the exciting process of expressing the real meaning of God’s message.

They, too, were having a difficult time trying to translate the word “ransom” into the Folopa language. Neil exclaimed that “ransom” first implies that someone’s life is at stake. Second, it implies that the one holding another for ransom will accept a price for the captive’s release. As Neil explained the meaning to the men, he could see they understood.

“We need to ransom people all the time,” one man said. “When a man is felling a tree and it falls the wrong way and kills someone, the clansmen of the dead person demand payment. If the relatives of the offender’s clansmen don’t pay, the relatives of the dead person demand the life of the offender. To save his life, we make an exchange. Pigs, shell money and other things of value are given to the relatives in exchange for the life of the offender.”

Bursting with excitement, Neil plugged their phrase into Mark 10:45. After working on the verse for half an hour, he read it to his friends. The men feel silent. Their lowered heads moved from side to side. The finished verse translated back into English read: *Jesus came to affect an exchange whereby He took the punishment of the evil deeds of many people. He came so that many people could go free and He died.*

“We give a lot to make an exchange for a wrong. But we have never given a person for the exchange price,” a man said. “Jesus did a great work for us when He made His exchange. Because He did, now all of us do not have to take the punishment we deserve. We can go free.”

*Credit: all the above stories are from The Power of the Word, edited by Luci Tumas and Patrick Wilson, © 2000*

## Hail in the tropics?

Translation is not an easy task. While working on the Mindanao language of the Philippines, Scott and Becky Burton struggled to find just the right word for *hail* to describe the plague mentioned in Exodus 9. They exclaimed as best they could what hail was. But their language assistant had never seen hail and didn’t think there was a word in their language to describe it. They finally settled on using the term *batu na ayis* – “stones of ice”.

A couple of days later a storm whipped through the community. The Burtons listened as the noise of the pounding rain on their tin roof suddenly changed. Scott and Becky looked at one another. “That sounds like... No, it couldn’t be!” But it was! Rushing to the door they watched as pebble-sized “stones of ice” fell everywhere. They were smaller than the stones of ice that fell on Pharaoh’s court, but big enough to make history in a place where hail had never fallen before. Now, Scott and Becky had the words they needed to describe exactly the plague of hail.

## Jesus is the light

Before a translation team went to live among the Tboli people of the Philippines in the 1950s, the Tboli believed this life was connected to eternity by a bridge. On this bridge was an evil spirit whose purpose was to prevent anyone from making it across the bridge to safety. The only way to overcome the spirit was to have light.

The way to get light was to be burned. Bits of cotton dipped in kerosene were lighted and place on little boys’ arms to produce scars. The more scars, the brighter the light. This practice continued while the translators worked until finally the people were able to read in John’s Gospel where Jesus said, “I am the light of the world”. “*Ou se yóm layag kól lem benwu.*”

Later another Wycliffe worker visited the place where the translators had lived and worked. She saw little boys playing happily unscarred. When she asked a mother why she didn’t burn her little boy, the local mother said, “Jesus is our light. Jesus bears the scars. Jesus will get my little boy safely across the bridge”.

*Credit: the previous two stories are from By Faith, by Diane Stuhr and Jean Lieffers, © 2002*