

This Aerospace Program Brings Good News in More Ways Than One

Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH), a ministry that distributes audio versions of the Bible in more than 900 languages, has launched an aerospace program that will expand its use of satellite technology to bring God's Word to the most remote areas of the globe.

"God has always used technology to spread the gospel, dating to Paul making his missionary travels on Roman roads in the first century," said Troy Carl, the FCBH vice president overseeing the program. "Our plan, still in the preliminary stages, would use existing satellite and mobile phone technology. In many of the villages where we work, kids don't have shoes, but they have cellphones in their pockets."

FCBH's aerospace program calls for a system of satellites that will be able to communicate with mobile devices even if they aren't connected to the Internet, making the Bible available to the more than 5 billion people who are "unconnected." According to the London-based media agency We Are Social, the number of mobile subscriptions worldwide is 98 percent of the population, with the percentage exceeding 100 in some highly developed areas.

"It's hard to imagine, but for the first time in human history, technology is making the fulfillment of the Great Commission possible," Carl said.

The Great Commission, Jesus' last instruction to His disciples before He ascended into heaven, calls for Christians to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," as recounted in Matthew 28:19.

Until recently, though, geographic barriers, religious persecution and technological shortcomings have made fulfilling the Great Commission an unreachable goal. But now, FCBH officials say, technological advances have put it within reach.

Carl had just a germ of an idea about an aerospace program last year when he met Gregg Leisman, a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force and an expert in microsatellites. About six weeks later, Leisman emailed him a 44-page PowerPoint presentation with a preliminary design for a global distribution system. A few months after that, in late 2014, he retired from the Air Force and joined the ministry full-time as program manager for its aerospace division.

Since then, the ministry has appointed a blue-ribbon advisory council, including a former space shuttle pilot, and hired an outside firm to determine the best way to provide access to audio versions of the Bible in some of the least-reached and most-persecuted regions of the world, such as the Middle East, North Africa, Southeast Asia and China.

“In the simplest of terms, we want to create Internet-like access to the Bible where public Internet is not available,” Leisman said. “There are three or four transformational technologies available right now—including small satellites and near radio frequencies—that can deliver Bible content to the unconnected.”

Ministry leaders have been encouraged by the initial round of seed funding. If plans go as expected, the system will be completed in two to four years, when everyone on the planet will be within 200 miles of one of the micro satellites, giving them access to God’s Word on their cellphone or other mobile device.

Faith Comes By Hearing provides Scripture recordings in 903 languages spoken or signed by more than 5.7 billion people.

Through the Digital Bible Platform, FCBH offers free access to this digital collection of Scripture via podcasts, Internet radio, satellite TV and the Bible. For more information or to contribute to the aerospace program, please visit .