

Why Everyone Needs a Bible in Their Own Heart Language

There is something powerful about language, both the spoken and the written word. It is our primary tool for communicating and expressing our thoughts, needs and ideas.

More importantly, it bonds us together as human beings and allows us to connect with God.

Language, in essence, is the foundation of understanding and knowledge. And because the Bible is key to understanding God's power and eternal truth found in Jesus Christ, it is vitally necessary that every person be able to receive and read it in their native (or heart) language.

The vision statement of Eastern European Mission (EEM) is "The Bible. We Want Everyone to Get It." There is a double meaning in this phrase in the English language. We want people to get a Bible in their hands, but our goal is Scripture engagement.

Once someone physically gets a Bible in their hands, we want them to read it and get it in their mind, and through the Spirit, into their heart. At the earliest days of EEM, our team realized that the Bible must be in the heart language of an individual so they can understand God's message to them.

The Bible is our greatest resource to share and proclaim God's saving grace and everlasting love to those around us. For this reason, there are many Bible translation ministries around the world working to provide the Scriptures in the 7,378 known languages. While much has been accomplished (the full Bible now exists in 717 languages, with the New Testament available in more than 1,500), there is still much to do.

Through the Every Tribe, Every Nation (ETEN) collective impact alliance, multiple Bible translation and resource partners are

working together to see all people gain access to God's Word in a language they can clearly understand by 2033. Together, the partnering organizations have created a shared repository for digital and audio texts, adopted a common framework for the task of Bible translation, and are developing a comprehensive ecosystem of tools and information. EEM and other Bible printers depend upon these translations to take God's Word to people throughout the world to end Bible poverty.

Our work wouldn't be possible without the efforts of these valiant translators. We at Eastern European Mission are grateful every day that we are able to deliver God's Word to more than 30 nations throughout the region of Central and Eastern Europe and beyond in more than 25 different languages. In addition to Slavic translations such as Russian, Ukrainian, Polish etc., we also share Bibles in Farsi, Turkish, Arabic and some of the Romani dialects. Having these specific languages available makes it possible for people in these nations and ethnic groups to truly "get it," as our tagline says.

Translations have opened the door for people in this geographic region to intimately know God and His heart. When the beauty of the gospel is translated into one's own language, it can be transformative and life altering. Those who experience the Scriptures in their native tongue are given the opportunity to study and absorb biblical truths on a level that penetrates the heart.

This is partly what made the day of Pentecost so powerful and effective: "Each one heard them speaking in his own language" (Acts 2:6, RSV). They heard the gospel of Jesus in their "own language." There is comfort and security deeply embedded within that statement. If you've ever traveled abroad and been in settings where English is not being spoken, there is nothing more comforting than finding someone who speaks English.

Have you ever seen someone who is deaf encounter someone who can speak sign language? Their eyes light up and a smile immediately engulfs their countenance.

We want this for the multitude of nations who still need to hear the gospel in their own language, so we are more committed than ever to finishing the task. It is essential that we continue our efforts in bringing the Scriptures to different cultures and tongues so that men, women and children across the world can truly understand the marvelous mystery of the Bible and begin storing God's Word in their own hearts.

In Matthew 28, Jesus called us to make disciples. We believe that providing someone with God's Word is the first step in making disciples. Isaiah 55:11 tells us, "My word ... will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it " (NIV). But that word must be able to be understood in order to accomplish that disciple-making purpose, so our work continues until everyone has had a chance to hear the good news and respond. {eoa}

Bob Burckle is the president of Eastern European Mission, which has been delivering God's Word to the people of Eastern Europe since 1961, now reaching 32 countries in 25 languages. They provided 1.5 million Bibles and Bible-based materials free of charge in the region in 2021, including in public schools in Croatia, Romania and Ukraine. Through their annual children's Bible campaign they seek to raise funds to provide 800,000 requested children's Bibles in 19 languages. Learn more at .

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