A TRANSFORMING EXPERIENCE
How Partnering in Bible Translation Can Deepen the Faith of Your Church
Introduction

Cultivating a healthy church is not easy.

A recent Pew Research Center survey indicated that in the last seven years, the U.S. population claiming to be Christian dropped roughly 8 percent, and many congregations saw a slight decrease in attendance, particularly among young adults.¹ Even among churches that reported an increase in attendance, many struggle to maintain spiritual growth among their congregants, with pastors feeling immense pressure to keep people engaged.

Do these struggles sound familiar? Would you like to see your church grow in the following areas?

- Understanding of spiritual purpose
- Passion for individual prayer and Bible study
- Urgency to share the gospel
- Desire to serve
- Motivation to give sacrificially
- Awareness of God at work in daily circumstances

It may come as a surprise, but we too want to help your church nurture these areas of growth. And we believe God’s Word holds the key.

The Case for the Bible

God’s Word changes lives, and church members need more of it.

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. —Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)

BIBLICAL teaching and regular Bible study, both corporate and private, are perhaps the most important ingredients for a healthy, thriving church. It is through God’s Word that he speaks into our lives, drawing us closer to himself and teaching us his character.

A 2012 study by the Center for Bible Engagement2 indicated that subjects who engaged with the Bible four or more times a week were significantly more likely to do the following:

- Memorize Scripture
- Share their faith with others
- Practice generous giving

The study also indicated that those who engaged with the Bible were far less likely to do the following:

- Give in to temptations
- Engage in negative or sinful thoughts
- Feel spiritually stagnant
- Believe they couldn’t please God

In spite of these incredible benefits and the fact that God’s Word is the very foundation of our faith, a 2014 study by the Barna Group found that just 15 percent of American adults read the Bible daily.3 Compare that to a Pew Research study on the percentage of Americans who say they attend church,4 and you’ll find that less than half of all churchgoers say they read the Bible every day. This despite access to literally dozens of translations in English and more study resources at our fingertips than ever before in history!

So why don’t more people read the Bible? Common justifications include not having enough time, believing Sunday morning sermons provide enough Scripture for the week, and not understanding its relevance to daily life.

But we believe all of these symptoms point to the same root issue: most people don’t believe the Bible has the power to change their lives. In his book The Prayer of the Lord, respected Bible teacher and theologian R.C. Sproul wrote, “I think the greatest weakness in the church today is that almost no one believes that God invests His power in the Bible.”5

Bible translation can help your church become passionate about God’s Word.

This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God’s wonderful grace. —Colossians 1:6 (NLT)

When you see people get God’s Word in their language for the first time, it changes you forever.

In 1998, while attending a celebration in Guatemala for a recently completed Bible translation, Mart Green, founder and CEO of Mardel Christian and Education Supply stores, saw a man weep as he received a Bible in his language for the first time.6 Although Mart owned a chain of Christian bookstores stocked with more Bibles than he could ever read, at the time he wasn’t engaging with God’s Word on a consistent basis.

Mart was so moved by this Guatemalan man’s passion for his new Bible—and convicted of his own lack of engagement—that he made a vow that very night to read the Bible regularly for the rest of his life. And as a result of his newfound faith in the importance of God’s Word, Mart has since become one of the biggest champions of the Bible in America.

How is Mart’s story relevant to your church? It shows that while even a Bible salesman can take the Bible for granted, seeing the results of translation can help your church gain a new excitement for God’s Word. And we’d love to help provide that experience through our free resources and exciting opportunities to partner with a Bibleless people group.

A global missions perspective is critical for church health

My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard, rather than where a church has already been started by someone else.
—Romans 15:20 (NLT)

From its very beginning, God has used the Church to spread his Word to the ends of the earth. Not only is missions a biblical mandate, but it also benefits churches by giving them a chance to see God at work in exciting ways all around the world—as well as in their own backyards.

As an experienced church consultant, Dr. Chuck Lawless wrote an article in The Christian Post titled “Eight Diagnostic Questions for a Church’s Health.” In it he asserted that along with other key elements such as biblical teaching and a commitment to prayer, pursuing the Great Commission is absolutely essential for church health.

Referencing Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:45-47, John 20:21, and Acts 1:8, Dr. Lawless contended, “Apparently, preaching the gospel and making disciples mattered to Jesus—and so these tasks must concern churches today.”

So what’s the most effective way for a church to get involved in global missions?

Bible translation is a proven, lasting way to reach the world for Christ

It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it.
—Isaiah 55:11 (NLT)

With roughly 75 years of experience in the field of Bible translation, Wycliffe can attest to the fact that helping people get the Bible in their own language is one of the most lasting, life-altering ways to reach a community with the gospel. As our founder, William Cameron Townsend, liked to say, “The greatest missionary is the Bible in the mother tongue. It never needs a furlough, and is never considered a foreigner.” Generations after missionaries leave a community, God’s Word in the local language continues to make new disciples.

Helping people get the Bible in their own language is also one of the best ways to help them gain independence and opportunity. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, “If you want to keep people subjugated, the last thing you place in their hands is a Bible. There’s nothing more radical, nothing more revolutionary, nothing more subversive against injustice and oppression than the Bible.”

Wycliffe has roughly 75 years of Bible translation experience

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It’s for these reasons that Bible translation truly is one of the best investments your church can make toward missions. And with roughly 1,800 languages around the world still waiting for a Bible translation to start, Wycliffe can help your church connect directly with a Bibleless people group in just about any part of the world. Many of these communities include Christian believers who have waited decades for a church just like yours to come alongside them in support of their goal. Through a customized partnership facilitated by Wycliffe, you can help one of these people groups accomplish their dream of receiving God’s Word in their own language for the first time in history.

And it’s not just the Bibleless people group that will benefit from this partnership. Your church can experience transformation through this partnership tool: “It is a work of God to see families, single parents and children give sacrificially so that others might have God’s Word for the first time,” said Pastor Travis Mitchell of FBC Brewster in Brewster, New York. “The act of giving sacrificially allows God to expand your heart with a breathtaking generosity. The act of praying and fasting for a Bibleless people group allows God to grow His vision of spreading the good news of Jesus to every people group. All this helps us to be the people and the church God intends us to be by the power and grace of God. This is what I have personally experienced and seen as a pastor.”

More than 1,800 languages around the world are still waiting for Bible translation.

**Conclusion**

Our prayer is that God would give your church a vision for your role in this worldwide movement to reach every last person on earth with his Word in his or her own language. Because as more congregations like yours engage with the Bibleless, God’s Word will continue to spread and the global Church will be strengthened.

**So what’s next?**

Will you start by praying that God will give your church a vision for what he wants to do in and through you?

Meanwhile, visit [wycliffe.org/church-resources](http://wycliffe.org/church-resources) to take advantage of our free resources specifically designed to inspire churches just like yours.

Ready to take the next step? We have a team that can help your church develop a partnership with a people group to help them get the Scriptures in their own language.

To learn more, visit [wycliffe.org/churches](http://wycliffe.org/churches).