This story is an excerpt from “At the Foot of the Snows,” a book written by Wycliffe missionary David E. Watters about his family’s experience working with the Kham Magars of Nepal. Here he shares a story of three men who wanted to be baptized as a sign that they believed in God.

The men who had come to my door … wanted to be able to point back to an event, to a time when everything had changed, the day they had believed and committed themselves to the gospel. So why not follow the biblical pattern of declaration?

Their next question was, “How is one baptized?”

In many languages the word “baptism” is just transliterated. … But in our translation of the New Testament, I had wanted something that would connect meaningfully to the Kham culture. We chose a word that hearkens back to some of their own rituals, a word that means “to become purified.” When Khams go “outside the village” to bury the dead, for example, they do not return before entering the river and washing the impurities of death from their bodies.

I showed them the word in the gospel and reminded them of its meaning in their own culture. Then I went on to explain its meaning in the Christian context. “In some traditions,” I explained, “they pour water over the head to signify the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.”

“But in many traditions,” I went on to say, “they submerge the person completely in the water to signify that he has died to the old self and is risen into a new life.”

“Well, I don’t see why we can’t do all three,” they said in one voice.

I thought for just a few moments. “There’s no reason not to,” I said. “They all have meaning. We’ll do all three.” The Kham ritual would be the cultural bridge for the other two.

That evening, after dark, when the villagers were staying close to their fires, we went down to the stream that is viewed as a boundary between this world and the world to come.

Hasta Ram went first. Stepping into the cold water and acting out the Kham ritual, he scrubbed his legs and declared, “As this water cleanses the impurities from my body, so Christ has cleansed me from my sin.”

Then, I stepped in with him. I submerged him in the cold, dark water and declared, “I now bury you with Christ to signify the death of your old self, and I raise you to newness of life.”

Finally, asking him to kneel, I filled a bopka with water and poured it over his head, saying, “Now receive the Holy Spirit.”

Hasta Ram broke into spontaneous prayer. Then, standing on the shore, he wrapped himself in a blanket while I performed the same ceremony with the other three men. … All of us burst out into prayers of thanksgiving. The Kham church was born that day.
DEAR FRIENDS,

I love hearing stories like the story of the baptism of the Kham men. When the truth of the gospel connects with people’s hearts, they can’t help but respond. And for these men, that response meant taking a step of faith and obeying Christ’s command that his disciples be baptized.

These Kham men aren’t alone in declaring their faith. All over the world, people are responding to the power of the gospel and taking their own steps to identify themselves as followers of Christ. But in order for people to take these steps of faith, they first need to be able to understand the Good News in the language that speaks directly to their heart. And that’s accomplished when the Bible is accessible in a form they understand best.

Thank you for your part in making God’s Word accessible to those who still need it. As you advocate for those who don’t yet have the Bible, you too are taking a step of faith and participating in God’s mission to draw people from every nation and language into his kingdom.

Warmly in Christ,

Bob Creson
President, CEO
Wycliffe Bible Translators USA

FIRSTFRUITS — SOUTHEAST ASIA

Apan has been working on a video of the Gospel of Matthew in his language for a long time. Recently he was able to watch the movie in his own language, and he broke into tears. He is finally witnessing the firstfruits of the work he and his colleagues have invested in so their language community will have access to the Scriptures in the language they understand best.

BIBLE APP — SOUTHEAST ASIA

Praise God! The development of a Bible app has made Scripture available to over five million people in two countries! Pray that believers in the area will gain access to the app and use it as a resource to read God’s Word in their own language and to share the Good News with others, too.

NEPAL

Learn about what God is doing in Nepal through stories, a video and more!

wycliffe.org/nepal