

FROM AXES TO BIBLES

By Richard Gretsky

In early 2013, Matt* went to Immi—a village in Papua New Guinea—to get a jump-start on a Bible translation project for the Enga language. While there, he met Joseph,* one of the local men who helped him learn the Enga language and culture. Matt was quickly won over by Joseph's humble, gentle spirit, which is why he was shocked to learn of his new friend's past.

Joseph had been one of Immi's most feared warriors—fighting countless battles with neighboring people groups. He was so powerful that he was even hired out as a mercenary who fought for other villages. In the end, when the fighting was done, Joseph was one of the few Immi men left standing.

In 2010 a pastor felt called to start a church in Immi to reach out to those who had experienced heavy fighting. He taught messages on forgiveness, saying, "When Christ died on the cross, He died for all of our sins, even the most heinous."

When he heard these words, Joseph humbled himself and eventually decided to trust Jesus.

Matt could clearly see how the trajectory of Joseph's life had changed dramatically. He had become one of his people's leaders, a man who leverages his life for the well-being of others. When Matt's time in the village finally came to a close, he took the opportunity to thank Joseph

and the other two men who had helped him learn the language and take care of his family. In a ceremony at a local church, Matt presented each man with an axe or machete, and then gave each man a Bible—one in English, one in the trade language of Tok Pisin, and one in a language spoken nearby.

"Before, your lives were based on weapons like these, and you used them to destroy," Matt announced. "Now your lives are based on the Word of God. And these axes and machetes that you used to use to destroy will now be used to build new houses and build a new life based on the Word of God."

Joseph locked his arms around the Bible, while tears poured down his cheeks. He tried to speak, but just stood in front of the crowd, eyes focused on that book—his first Bible. He could read the words, but only very slowly, since it wasn't in his own language and most Engans cannot read well. Even so, Joseph cherished those words.

Today, the translation team is focused on producing an audio Bible—and a physical Bible—for the 300,000 people in the Enga Province. And Engans like Joseph are prepared to fight again, but this time it's to do whatever it takes to get a Bible in their own language.

**Names have been changed to protect identities.*



DEAR FRIENDS,

I recently wrote to the Wycliffe staff worldwide, rejoicing that the number of Bible translation projects that still need to be started has dropped below two thousand.

Dave Lux, a Wycliffe translator and advisor to the mother-tongue translators for the Misaje cluster of languages, opened my e-mail on a remote mountaintop in the Northwest Region of Cameroon.

That same day, Dave witnessed the first sharing of new Scripture in the six Misaje languages. He wrote, “The Misaje translators yesterday afternoon divided up their newly printed books of the parables of Luke for distribution. It struck me as a historic moment. It was quite unknown by the world, and equally uncared for by the world, but from God’s perspective it was precious to see these men taking steps for the first time for the six language groups to have the printed Scriptures.”

This event on a remote and largely unknown mountaintop in Cameroon, witnessed by men and women unknown to the world, who speak languages that are unknown and insignificant in human terms, is part of a larger event that’s infinitely important to God. Six more communities are hearing the Good News in their mother tongue; six fewer communities are without any of the Word.

Warmly in Christ,

Bob Creson
President/CEO
Wycliffe Bible Translators USA

WORLD *focus*

PROMOTING LITERACY—BURKINA FASO

Malindi’s family suffered through hunger and increasing poverty after a recent famine in the Sahel region of Africa. But after finishing a literacy class offered by the Dagara Bible translation project, Malindi discovered new ways to care for her family by making organic fertilizer, soap, and dye. She’s now able to provide for her family, continue learning, and read God’s Word in her own language.

COVENANT—PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Earlier this year, several church and community leaders along with different mission organizations working in Papua New Guinea (PNG) met and drafted The Bilum Covenant, a commitment to partner in language development and Bible translation. Their ultimate goal is to see a Bible in every *bilum*—a woven string bag. A bilum is a fitting symbol because nearly everyone in PNG uses them to carry food, firewood, valuables, and even babies. And in order to get a Bible translation program started in the remaining three hundred PNG languages, this partnership will be key.

“SON OF GOD” DISCUSSION

Wycliffe is committed to maintaining the integrity of God’s Word. Learn more about the ongoing discussion in regards to the translation of divine familial terms.

www.wycliffe.org/sonofgod.aspx



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www.wycliffefirstwords.org



JOIN IN PRAYING

for people groups around the world that are waiting for a Bible in their mother tongue.



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