

Bits from Bill

Using Information Technology to Help Bring the Word of God
to the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil

September, 2016



Second Module of MTT Course

The second module of the Mother Tongue Translator course was held in July, at the AMMI Bible School in the state of Mato Grosso. This time, I ended up driving over instead of flying, and took with me the 18 new computers for the students. All but one of the students returned; the one who did not come stayed home to care for his wife, who was diagnosed with malaria the day before he was scheduled to leave.

While there were some issues that affected one of the groups, in general the module went very well. Do pray for these students, however. While their attitudes are good and they are intelligent people, the level of understanding of Portuguese among this group is lower than previous times.

After the course finished, the students returned to their homes to do a back-translation of the material that they worked on after the first module. They will bring this to the third module in January, to be checked prior to finalizing the portion of Scripture that they translated for the course. Please be praying that they will be able to accomplish this necessary step in the work.

ALEM Projects

When I returned from the MTT course, there were still work projects waiting for me. The first one was the network cable restructuring. Since then, I have been able to accomplish most of this task. As I write this, we still have three pairs of cable to install. A couple of issues that have slowed this down include other jobs that pop up, and having to divide my time between this project and others. Fortunately, enough cable has been installed to be able to have a phone extension in every office, which was one of the reasons for doing this in the first place.

Another project, which is still in the planning stage, is replacing the phone wiring throughout the base. The biggest barrier here is financial resources. I have laid out plans for what needs to be done. Now we need the equipment. Please pray that God would provide the necessary resources.

The new network server is ready. However, we have been having difficulties with a company that we contracted to provide special software. Again, please be praying.

In addition, there are the usual individual requests for help. Pray that I would be able to divide my time wisely.

A View from the Other Side

In my years in Brazil, I have always viewed Bible translation from the side of the translator. Recently, I had the opportunity to see it from the “other side”, the side of those *receiving* the translation. As part of their training, two of the ALEM linguistics students translated a passage of Scripture into English—and asked me to be their “language helper” to check their work.

This turned out to be interesting from several perspectives. First, the perspective of *correction*. We tend to think that a native speaker of a language should be able to instinctively correct the mistakes of non-native speakers. But I found that there were places where I struggled to figure out how to express something better—in English!—even though I knew that it was not completely correct. Translators struggle with this—and now I know why.

Another perspective was that of *freshness*. To play the role, I had to imagine that I was completely unfamiliar with the message of the Bible. From my experience with writing, I was able to do this—and was amazed at the tremendous attraction that I felt toward the concept of a God who loved me enough to come to Earth as one of us—just from hearing a first-draft translation of the first two chapters of Mark. There is indeed power in the word of God.

And so while the two students benefited from my help in completing a course assignment, I in turn benefited in being able to get a completely new perspective on why we do what we do.

Playing the Role of Translation Consultant



Prayer

- That the MTT students would be able to complete their “homework”, and that all would return in January.
- That God would give this group of students an understanding of Portuguese sufficient for the task that He called them to.
- For resources to do the phone rewiring project, as well as for many other needs at the ALEM base.
- That I would be able to prioritize my time and not get distracted by the unimportant.

Praise

- For all of the students that returned to the MTT course in July.
- For a safe trip driving to and returning from the MTT course.
- For progress in the network restructuring project.
- For the opportunity to see Bible translation from the “other side”.

May the LORD give you the strength to run the race and to finish the course,

Bill

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Colossians 3:12

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