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TRANSLATION *Matters*



IDENTITY PARADE

A pivotal moment in Jesus' ministry was when He wanted to confront the disciples about His true identity. They had lived with Him for some time. At first they were fascinated by Him as a unique rabbi, but after witnessing His supernatural abilities and character, the veil was lifting to reveal His true nature.

After asking who others thought Him to be, we read in Matthew 16: He said, "But who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Jesus had left the Jewish region of Galilee heading north to Caesarea Philippi. In the shadow of Mount Hermon, at a city dedicated to the worship of gods (Pan) and men (Caesar), He poses the question about who people thought He might be. The disciples reported the popular gossip: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah. But when asked directly about their beliefs, they answered by revelation of the Father.

In the midst of a pagan world, Jesus wants His identity to be known so that people can be released from false beliefs to receive salvation and freedom. The Church is given the assurance that nothing will hinder it from its mission, not even the gates of hell. Our identity is intertwined with the identity of Christ; we are His Body. As believers, filled with the indwelling presence of the Spirit, we are empowered to represent the King and His kingdom on earth.

The amazing reality is that translating the Bible into mother-tongue languages, not only brings the question of Jesus' true identity to every nation, but invites the participation of people into the "divine nature" (1 Peter 1:4). Those who are far off are brought near, the orphans are adopted, the sinners are made righteous. Moreover, the isolated are connected globally, those working in dead-end jobs are given meaningful work, and the mundane existence is transformed into a glorious future.

How critical, then, is making the Bible available in the languages of our lost and confused world. We are seeing that whole tribal groups find a new sense of identity because they have a Bible. You will read here how the identity of the Deaf, the Baphuthi, and the Kaaps communities have been impacted by Bible Translation, as well as the story of what it looks like to be a lifelong Bible translator on the edge of retirement.

May you be fruitful in the knowledge of Jesus, and step into your identity as one who makes Jesus known, even in the midst of our crooked and perverse generation. Thank you all for your partnership in the Gospel.

Alan Webster

IDENTITY THROUGH PSALMS THAT SING

By Helen van der Walt



We often think of identity when thinking of ourselves and how we fit into the world. As Christians, our identity in Christ is a key element of our faith and daily lives. It involves all areas of life and has a huge impact on our relationship with ourselves, others, and with God. Who am I? Who are you?

Imagine being told, subliminally, implicitly, and explicitly, that you don't belong. Not just you, but your family, friends, community, and the history of your people, to have the way you speak, act, and think defined as "not normal", "slang", or "not proper". This is the case for the Kaaps communities across South Africa.

Kaaps is a vibrant language, and the people are no different. It is spoken mainly by the Coloured community in the Cape Flats, who are descendants of the multiple ethnicities that lived in the Cape region under European colonisation, including Malays, Khoi, and other African peoples. They have been continually looked down on and ignored. Even today, their way of speaking is described as "prison language" or as a lower-class way of speaking Afrikaans; it is not.

Through Psalms that Sing, a team of artist-translators were put together to explore, translate and perform the biblical psalms in Kaaps. It resulted in a performance called "Alive in Kaaps". Initially, those invited to take part were sceptical, but they left beaming, excited by what they were a part of, Since then, it is having a profound effect on those who are encountering Kaaps as a validated language worthy of God's Word. The most common phrases heard are, "That's how we speak!" or "This is our music!"

Many are still hesitant, and many disagree with different aspects of this work, including members of the Kaaps community. There are many reasons for this, and we must listen to all experiences with humility and love. However, it is undoubtable that through this work God is liberating the Kaaps identity and validating it as not only acceptable, but as wonderful. People are becoming free to talk to God as they talk to their neighbours, and to express themselves in worship authentically with their whole soul. We pray with anticipation as the ripple effects travel further out and more people are freed to proudly call themselves Kaaps Christians.



GOD LOVES THE BAPHUTHI

By Gary Baxter and Pieter & Melanie Pienaar

God said to go into the world and preach the gospel. So, God called us, NewLife Church, to go to Daliwe in Lesotho where the Baphuti people know about Jesus but don't all have a real relationship with the Lord. Without the Word in their language, it is hard to grow. We all need the Word of God.

This is why Wycliffe SA has been working with the Baphuthi people to translate the Bible into their heart language. Sections of Scripture have been recorded and loaded onto audio Bible devices, ready for distribution. With this in place, a team from Wycliffe and NewLife was able to bring the Good News to the Baphuti in their mother tongue, Siphuthi.

Many Baphuthi are in the south of Lesotho and from what we could see they are a forgotten people, their roads are treacherous, tucked into the mountains and their livelihoods are made up of simple but effective farming. Traveling by car is not simple due to the roads and most of the locals travel by horse. They are proud of their heritage and friendly to all who visit. But the Baphuti are still on a quest to have their language recognized as an official language in Lesotho. For some, this has been their life mission. We praise the Lord that the Word of God being translated into Siphuthi the way has also been opened for these people to finally have their language recognised as an official language in Lesotho.

"The Lord gave me a word for the trip and it was, "I, the Lord, see the Baphuti". We know that God has them on His mind and He cares about them."
– Pieter Pienaar

For the members of NewLife Church the mission trip was both rewarding and inspiring. We were encouraged by the hospitality of the Baphuthi people and sensed their hunger to know more about the Word of God. It was especially encouraging to see how enthusiastic the children were to receive the Word. They are the generation to take the Gospel forward and be the change agents of the future for the Kingdom of God.

There were some valuable lessons learnt on this trip with regards to submitting to God's agenda and working with that which God has placed in our hands. We give glory to God, for His protection over the team, for His guidance and for knowing that His Word never returns void.

We praise the Lord and are so grateful to be part of this specific work. We met so many special people that we are praying for and trusting that the Lord God would use them for His great plans and purpose in this little town of Daliwe.

Jeremiah 29:11 is my (Pieter's) prayer for the people of Daliwe:

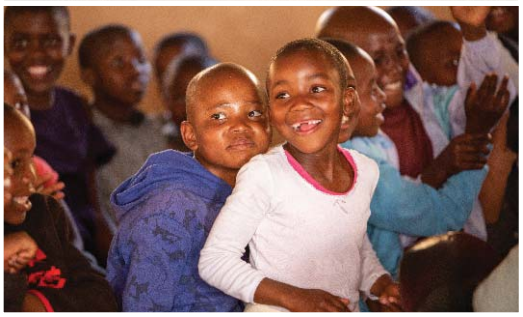
For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

As they find their identity in Christ, we believe that they will become an influential people group within Lesotho and we are expecting great testimonies from the community.

To view a video telling the story of our time in Lesotho go to:
https://youtu.be/73U0Sm0S5T0













IDENTITY IN THE DEAF COMMUNITY



"The first time when we started translating, something I identified to myself was when God spoke to Moses and he said, "who makes people deaf and who makes them hear?" Before it was like I didn't know that I was made by him. You know God made everyone perfect and then I would think "but I'm Deaf". I realised that no - God made Deaf people as well, and it made me feel I can accept my Deaf identity."
– Agnes Kunene

Wycliffe SA has partnered with Hands With Words (HWW) who have been busy creating a visual Bible Translation for the Deaf. Recently, the decision was made by the government to include South African Sign Language as an official language. Ansie van der Merwe reached out to HWW to find out how the Deaf community view their identity and how this has been impacted by these developments.

Shirley O'Hare and Agnes Kunene shared their reflections on what it means to be Deaf, and what they wished hearing people knew. "I wish that people would stop saying "deaf and mute". They need to understand it's a language. We have a language. It's not "deaf and dumb" or "deaf and mute", because that says there's no language", Shirley shared. Agnes explained that when written down the term "Deaf" must have a capital "D" because the capital "D" includes Deaf identity and culture. She added that "often when you say "I'm Deaf", people say "oh I'm sorry!" But you don't have to be sorry because it's nothing to be shy about. It's to understand and to accept that Deaf people are like anyone else, they just use Sign Language to communicate."

They told us about the challenges Deaf people face from childhood – when their hearing families can't communicate with them, they become isolated and lonely. Often, it is through joining a Deaf school and meeting others in the Deaf community that they are finally able to establish relationships and gain a sense of identity and belonging. This continues into adulthood, with Deaf people preferring to share their lives with other Deaf people as lack of understanding and negative stereotypes often hamper communication with their hearing family.

The two ladies expressed how delighted they are that their language is finally being recognised as an official language of SA. Agnes said, "people would look at us signing and think that it's just gesturing, but now because it's an official language it shows that it is a true language." Shirley shared her hope that this recognition will result in better access for Deaf people in schools, hospitals, businesses and politics.

When asked about how the visual Bible for the Deaf has been received, the ladies told of the excitement, interest and growth they've seen as a result. Agnes shared that "they'll always say, "wow I never thought of it this way!" You get goosebumps when you see it in your own language. Many Deaf people's hearts have been touched because they now suddenly have so many questions that they never had before. So it aids true understanding of the Bible."

We are grateful for our partnership with HWW and look forward to sharing more information and stories as we continue to work together.







OUR IDENTITY AS BIBLE TRANSLATORS

By Nick Swanepoel



"We have come to understand that in some ways our lives will always be impacted by the roles we played, but ultimately our identity is found in Christ Jesus and that never changes."

Lynne and I both applied to become Bible translators. However, while we were training, we heard of translations completed, but never used. Clearly, literacy and Scripture use went hand in hand, so during our second year of SIL training Lynne decided to specialise in literacy, while I continued with the translation track.

The Rendille community in Kenya was very remote and very needy in 1981. "Come quickly, a warrior has been bitten by a lion!" "Help, a camel has fallen down the well!" "Our only donkey was mauled by lions!" "I have not eaten for three days, give me..." The luxury of just sitting in an office to hasten the translation was never going to be an option for us.

The prolonged drought brought great suffering. We arranged food relief and were personally involved with distributing it for two years, until the camels came into milk. We could then end the food aid. But a pastoralist with no livestock is still totally dependent. Then we started a restocking program for three hundred destitute families.

When the rains came in December 1984, we were able to start translation. Lynne developed an adult education program suited to the needs of the community. The publication of the Gospel of Mark coincided with a sudden growth in the number of believers. The literacy contributed significantly. Many students became believers. We could only stand in awe at the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, hungry to read, and quick to respond.

We retired from working in Korr, as we both faced significant medical problems. Eventually we could continue with the Old Testament from the UK. The work was similar, but the role was different. I was no longer leading but worked as an advisor to the team in Korr.

Supporters kept prompting Lynne to write our story. Despite the changes, we continue to rejoice at the ongoing work of God. We have come to understand that in some ways our lives will always be impacted by the roles we played, but ultimately our identity is found in Christ Jesus and that never changes.

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