



Episode 015: Orality, Bible Translation and its Impact Show Notes

Roy Eyre is the President of Wycliffe Canada. He started out as a graphic designer for Wycliffe before transitioning into an administrative role leading a team of mobilizers. He became president in 2011 and lives in Calgary with his wife and three kids.

Tell us a little bit about yourself and how you came to be passionate about missions.

- I grew up with a lot of missions influence around me. My parents were big supporters of missions, volunteering for an organization. As a kid, I grew up attending many missions events.
- My parents always thought that one of their three children would end up being a missionary and it turned out to be me!
- At Urbana in 1996 God opened the door to Wycliffe. I learned about how I could use my skills as a graphic designer for Wycliffe. The idea of the Gospel in every language was powerful to me.

We hear a lot about Bible translation and the importance of communicating with people in their heart language. What do you mean by heart language and why is it important?

- Can also be referred to as the mother tongue – it is the language that we think and dream in. Our identity is inextricably linked to our mother tongue.
- UNESCO has found that the mother tongue is really important when it comes to learning – you’ll be more successful if you learn in your mother tongue first. A child that first learns to read in their mother tongue will be more successful than those who don’t.
- God wants to speak to us in our heart language. When you go to a New Testament dedication you hear people saying, “Now God speaks in my language.”
- You can have a much more intimate relationship with God when He ‘speaks’ your language.

Wycliffe’s purpose is to work towards a world in which the scriptures are available in all languages. What impacts does Bible translation have?

- We don’t just want to create a book that sits on a shelf.



- In January 2014 Christianity Today discussed the work of Robert Woodberry. He discovered that Bible translation was tied to the spread of democracy.
- Everyone needed access to God's word so everyone needed to read and books needed to be affordable and in local vernacular. This has impacted schools and newspapers around the world
- Areas where protestant missionaries had a significant presence, these areas could be marked by higher economic development, better health, lower infant mortality, less corruption, greater literacy, higher educational attainment – especially for women, higher levels of printing, more protection of private property.
- Jesus wants us to change the world – it doesn't happen through economic development; it happens through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to be an oral learner?

- There are people who do not read and who will never read. It isn't part of their culture.
- As we look at orality, and we ask, what is the end goal? It isn't always a book.
- Translation and literacy go together, hand in hand. However, if you aren't going to value the book we have to come with a different strategy. They need the word of God in forms that they will value and use.
- We've started using audio tools such as the Jesus Film, the Megavoice MP3 player, and radio broadcasts.

How is Wycliffe needing to adapt because of orality?

- We have a lot of partnerships with organizations that have the skills and tools in orality
- Oral Bible Story telling is a great tool. We work with organizations that already are using this to create accurate Bible stories that can be passed on orally from person to person, family to family.
- Faith Comes by Hearing has committed to recording every language that Wycliffe has translated – so far they have done 915 languages.
- Every Tribe, Every Nation is working to get every language into digital format.
- The Jesus film comes in 1370 languages. We often start with the Gospel of Luke which is the script to the Jesus film. Once we've translated it, they can make the next version of the Jesus film.

As we think about North America, we are becoming increasingly diverse. We are seeing an influx in immigrants. Our cultures are becoming increasingly multicultural. What advice do you have for churches and Christians engaging with immigrants in their neighbourhoods?

- Most organizations are set up to do missions overseas. However, as people come to us, we are beginning to ask, how do we equip our Christians here to reach these groups?
- I believe that a lot of the skills we have – anthropology, language – has relevance for the church in North America. It helps us understand other cultures.



- We know that refugees will be coming in the next months. The church should be the first to welcome them to North America.
- Church leaders can learn a lot by partnering with mission organizations and learning what we've learned from our cross cultural ministries overseas.

Translation is one way to be involved in missions. For someone listening to this podcast, what advice would you have for them if they are wondering how to get involved?

- We aren't necessarily looking for skills – we can teach skills. Attitude is far more important.
- We need servants – people who are willing to do whatever is needed from them
- If you come with the right attitude, we'll find a place for you.
- We need more Canadians on the field, because we are a multicultural society that has good cross cultural skills.
- The biggest attitude is serving the people overseas. Despite our level of education here in North America, it is the people overseas that know their language. And so we must go with the attitude that we are serving them.

What are some of the roles that people might play within Wycliffe?

- If you love languages, that's easy. If you are interested in it, you might consider taking an intro to linguistics course. Check out CANIL.ca.
- If you aren't a linguist, that's ok. 63% of Wycliffe Canada staff aren't working in linguistics or Bible translation.
- We need people in finance, accounting, management and all kinds of support roles.

How long does it take to translate the New Testament?

- 5-10 years ago, it took about 20 years on average to translate the New Testament.
- Today it takes more like 8 years on average. However, there are translations that only took 3 or 4 years.
- As technology improves, it speeds up the process of translation.
- We can now translate in clusters, which speeds up the translation.

What is the cost of translating the New Testament?

- That's a tricky question to answer.

If any of our listeners want to learn more, or follow up with you, how can they contact you?

- Visit Wycliffe.ca
- Email info@wycliffe.ca



You are a leader and a writer. How can people follow you?

- I have a blog – the President’s blog that you’ll find at Wycliffe.ca
- I have a personal blog called thebackrowleader.com as well

