



Go and make
disciples.

A GLOBAL
STRATEGY
for
THE BIBLE 'B'

**A GLOBAL
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for
THE BIBLE 'B'

**The Finishing The
task Movement**

A Global Strategy for the Bible 'B'

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The Objectives of Finishing the Task:

Mobilize all of Christ's Church, to do ALL Christ Commands, With All People, All Places, Using All of God's Gift's, All for God's Glory

Finishing the Task (FTT)

The Finishing the Task Movement began as a follow-up to the Amsterdam 2000 Conference which focused on reaching all the remaining unreached people groups in the world. In 2005, after much research and discussion, FTT participants produced a list of 639 unreached, unengaged people groups (UUPG) with populations of around 100,000. Passionate Great Commission leaders from different parts of the world committed themselves to the task of reaching every one of the groups. Over time, the list expanded to include many more groups with smaller populations as a search continued for any missing groups. By 2019, the majority of these UUPGs were adopted and engaged to some extent, although we do not know how deeply they are engaged.

Much has been accomplished since 2000. Tens of thousands of people have come to the Lord and many thousands of churches have been planted in previously unreached, unengaged people groups through the FTT movement. Today there are hardly any unreached, unengaged people in the world. Even so, the search for any missing unreached and unengaged people groups is ongoing.

In 2019, when Pastor Rick Warren took over the responsibility of moving FTT forward, the movement adopted a more comprehensive approach to finishing the Great Commission, summarized under the 4B Approach.

The 4 Bs Approach

This paper primarily addresses the Bible 'B' goal of Finishing the Task.¹ First, any plan for completing the Bible B goal should take an integrated approach to include the other 3 Bs. Second, the plan should address at least two key questions

1. How can every person who does not have access to the gospel and the Bible gain that access in the next ten years so that every person on earth has access to the gospel and the Bible?
2. How can every believer in every part of the earth engage with Scripture in new and expanded ways? What will this new and expanded engagement look like?

BIBLES

We want every believer on Earth to have access to the Gospel translated into their heart language

BELIEVERS

We want to equip every believer—all 1.8 billion of them—to share their faith personally

BODIES OF CHRIST

We want every existing church to sponsor and plant a daughter church where there is no church

BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER

We want to have every person on planet Earth who doesn't know Jesus yet prayed for by someone who does know Jesus

¹ <https://finishingthetask.org>.

The Unfinished Task of Bible Translation

To understand the magnitude of the unfinished global Bible translation task, we need to know the number of languages and dialects there are in the world

Languages and Sub-Dialects

Based 2023 Wycliffe Global Alliance statistics, there are 7,396 languages in the world.² The statistics published by Ethnologue Languages of the World lists there are 7,168 living languages.³ Progress.Bible claims there are 7,376 languages in the whole world.⁴

However, many more languages are not included in these three sources. Serve-A-Language India Handbook 2023 lists 762 languages in India alone, which is 301 languages more than what the Ethnologue has listed for India. As we progress towards the goal of eradicating Bible poverty, we must be open to identifying and adding unlisted languages that may exist for any target groups.

Presently, we do not have a definite answer to this question. Many languages have at least two or three distinct sub-dialects.⁵ So, the total number of these dialect variants could be at least twice as many more languages. There could easily be an additional 8,000 dialects not accounted for in language surveys.

² <https://www.wycliffe.net/resources/statistics/>

³ <https://ethnologue.com>

⁴ <https://progress.bible/data/>

⁵ Sub-dialects are usually a regional variety of a main language and can be spoken by more people than the main language. Arabic has at least 25 different dialects. Each one is a distinctive regional language spoken by large populations, yet the Bible is only in Modern Standard Arabic. New dialect translations are now underway.

Languages or Sub-Dialects that Need a Full Bible Translation

We believe every person has the right to have the full Word of God in his or her heart language, even if there is only one single person who could not understand God's word without it. God cares about everyone and does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9). With this understanding, let us begin with known languages. Based on Wycliffe Global Alliance figures, in order for all 7,293 of the world's languages to have a full Bible and Bible resources, 6,658 languages need more Bible translation. Currently, 1,658 languages only have the New Testament, and 1,264 only have Bible portions.

Languages with Scripture⁶



LANGUAGES

Full Bible	736
New Testament	1,658
Portions	1,264
At least some Scripture	3,658 languages

PEOPLE

6 billion
824 million
449 million

According to the Wycliffe Global Alliance 2023 Scripture Access Report,⁷ there are 736 languages in the world with a full Bible. This constitutes nearly 10% of the world's languages and 74% of the world's population. That means, 6,658 languages with a total population of 2.1 billion people still need a full Bible. These figures differ a little from the Progress.Bible. As mentioned earlier, translation needs are probably greater when accounting for sub-dialects.

⁶ Wycliffe Global Alliance

⁷ <https://www.wycliffe.net/resources/statistics/>

Languages with a New Testament

Based on the WGA September 2023 report, 1,658 languages have the New Testaments, which means only 22.4% of the world's languages can access the New Testament. That means, 5.1 billion people are still waiting to be able to access the full Bible in their heart language. Progress.Bible data indicates there are 1,663 languages with New Testaments.

Languages with Some Portions of the Bible

The WGA report states there are 1,264 languages which have some Bible portions. It could be just some verses, a Bible story, a portion of a book, or a whole book, but it's less than a full Old Testament or New Testament. So 3,658 languages have at least some scripture, be it a full Bible, a New Testament, Old Testament, or portions. That means, 7.23 billion people have some access.

Many Languages Do Not Have Even a Single Verse of the Bible

WGA statistics show there are still 3,506 languages in the world with no part of the Bible. With world population at 8.2 billion, that means there could be nearly 1 billion people who don't have any Scripture access in their heart language. The good news is that there are active translation projects in 1,752 languages, according to Progress.Bible.⁸ However, we need to remember that languages with portions of the Bible may also have sub-dialects that need their own translation, so the number of languages without a single verse is likely greater than official figures show. In any case, the unfinished Bible translation task is so big that it requires serious attention by the whole body of Christ.`

⁸ <https://progress.bible>

Unidentified Languages

There are probably many languages that nobody has identified as needing Bible translation. There may be languages that outsiders are not even aware of.⁹ However, local believers and churches are in the best position to identify these undocumented languages. This data shortcoming can be overcome if global church leaders identify language translation needs in their own locations. This would provide a more accurate figure of global translation needs.

Languages Going Extinct

Several languages have been reported as extinct. Some are on the verge of extinction and others are threatened with extinction. For languages on the verge of extinction or threatened languages, who decides if they should have a Bible in that language or not, a linguistic expert or a church? We believe the church bears the ultimate responsibility for deciding which languages need a Bible translation. Their criteria is broader than just linguistic data.

Defining the Goal for 2033: Begin with the End in Mind

The first step is to have a clear understanding of the end goal for finishing the task in every language

How do we understand the Great Commission in terms of how God views the world when it is completed? Stephen Covey, author of

⁹ A Nepal YWAM scripture distribution team discovered a language dialect that Bible agencies were not aware of. The people could not read the neighboring dialect Bible the distributors were offering to them. The Bible distributors assumed they spoke the same language.

Seven Habits of Highly effective People, says Habit 2 should be, "Begin with the end in mind."

"People are working harder than ever, but because they lack clarity and vision, they aren't getting very far. They, in essence, are pushing a rope with all their might."¹⁰

The End Vision

- God desires that people of all languages worship him (Daniel 7:14)
- God desires that people of all languages stand before the throne and worship him. (Rev 7:9)
- God desires that people of all languages are washed by the blood of Lamb (Rev 5:10).

The task of completing translations in all languages is not the end goal. Having communities of faithful disciples worshipping the Lord in every language is the goal of completing the Great Commission task in every language. That includes the following items and perhaps more. The order or priority may vary from place to place and language to language depending on the spiritual maturity of the churches.

Gospel Access

The goal is for every person in every language group to have a chance to hear the gospel clearly in a language they can understand and respond to best until there is no person left.

¹⁰ Stephen R. Covey. 1989. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic*. New York, Simon and Schuster.

**Discipleship
Groups or
Churches**

Every place the language is being spoken should have a gathering of believers or communities of faithful disciples, worshipping the living God in their heart language. Every language speaker in a people group must also be intentionally reached with in-depth engagement.

**Mature
Disciples and
Mature
Leaders**

Every lingual (local spoken language) church should have adequately trained disciple makers and leaders to ensure the churches are strong and healthy.

**Tools and
Training
Resources**

Every language should have Bible stories and other resources needed for evangelism and discipleship tools for new believers. Every language group should have training materials and tools to develop quality leaders who can engage the community with the Word of God.

**Bible and
Bible Portions**

Every language and dialect should have a full Bible in a form that best meets their needs, such as oral, digital, print, audio, or all of those.

Every Language with a Bible by 2033

Passionate Great Commission leaders committed to fulfilling the Great Commission are pondering how they can disciple every language group and people group in this generation

The unfinished task is huge. Translating Scripture in all the remaining Bibleless languages is an immense undertaking. It requires new innovative approaches, such as churches and church networks collaborating to address the needs of languages that still don't have a full Bible. Previous methods won't get the job done. A new paradigm for the Bible translation process is needed. The paradigm must be based on the centrality of the church as the principal partner in the task. And that is only possible if churches take full responsibility for Bible translation needs in their regions.

The Centrality of the Church and Church-Centric Bible Translation

10 years ago, this notion of the church as the center of ministry gave birth to the Church-Centric Bible Translation movement (CCBT). The view calls for innovative approaches that fosters churches and church network collaboration with Bible translation agencies and resource providers as the church takes responsibility for addressing the Scripture needs of the languages in their nations. See CCBT Asia,¹¹ and Church-Based Bible translation.¹²

God's church plays a central role in accomplishing His mission in the world. This is Bible translation by the church, with the church, and for the church.

¹¹ <https://www.ccbt.asia/>

¹² <https://churchbased.bible/>

“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to the eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord....” Ephesians 3:10-11.

Growth of the CCBT Movement

Thanks to the efforts of partners all over the world, CCBT has become a well-established paradigm for accelerated Bible translation. Doing it faster, cheaper, and with better quality is achieved by training and equipping church leaders to do the translation work with the help of their own language communities, in addition to having adequate tools and resources so they can finish the task well. The church community is the ultimate end user of their own translated Scripture, so this gives them a great sense of involvement and ownership of the results.

The churches choose the languages for translation based on their felt needs. They select translation team members, and they decide which books of the Bible or portions should be translated first and in what order. They also determine when the translation has achieved good quality, while utilizing all the available translation resources and resource people. Their ability to determine good quality is based on broad community input and ongoing iterative improvement.

Even though the churches own their translations, they make them widely available to the rest of the body of Christ for use without copyright. Instead, they apply a Creative Common Share Alike license so the translation can produce greater impact.

About Beyond Translation¹³

Recently, a new movement emerged called Beyond Translation. The organization is a global network of churches committed to alleviating Bible poverty through the Church-Centric Bible translation movement. However, note their focus on the word 'Beyond.' This isn't just about producing Bible translations. It is about what happens beyond the completion of translations. That is, the establishment of communities of faithful disciples in every language group, thus helping to complete the Great Commission in every language and people group.

BTC's Commitment:

- Envision** how local church networks can do accelerated Scripture translation.
- Equip** local church networks to accomplish the goal by training and capacity building.
- Encourage** collaboration of church networks with resource providers and agencies.
- Establish** communities of faithful disciples in every language group.

BTC Values

Having been birthed by the CCBT movement, The BTC movement shares similar values, including:

¹³ <https://beyondtranslation.org>.

- A firm belief in the centrality of the church in God's plan for accomplishing His mission in this world.
- Understanding that the goal of Bible translation is not a product. Rather, it is the establishment of spiritually strong communities of disciples in every language and people group.
- Creation of a resource pool in every community that will be able to translate, not only the Scriptures, but also other needed resources for the local church.
- Churches and church networks are the driving force behind the translation initiatives in the BTC movement.
- Driven by the completion of the Great Commission.

What it Will Take to Achieve the 2033 Goal

A Global Resource Centre

While we draw information from all available resources on the number of languages and dialects needing translation, we also need to organize the data and make it available to church networks for creating awareness and decision making. The data can be organized according to country or wider region. To do that, the FTT Bible B group needs to have data on languages in every county indicating which languages have a Bible, a New Testament, or scripture portions.

Know the Need Gap for Each Country: Languages and Related People Groups

It is important to identify the heart language(s) spoken by a people group so the church can determine if they already have a Bible, as well as evangelism and discipleship tools available in that language. It is also important to make sure there are adequate resources for engaging every people group speaking a given language.

Any engagement strategy for an unreached / unengaged people group is incomplete without a Bible and biblical resources. Unfortunately, many engagement strategies have underestimated the importance of these resources. This produces spiritually-shallow training.

How to Identify the Need Gap

List all the languages and dialects in each country from all available Sources. Church networks should identify the languages and dialects that need Bible translation in their region. This may include data from the sources below, as well as additional languages and dialects identified by the local churches.

- Ethnologue (Ethnologue.com)
- Progress.Bible (Progress.Bible)
- Mesa
- Joshua Project (Joshuaproject.net)
- National Census database
- Other national sources
- Other sources

Scripture Engagement

Identify the level of scripture engagement in each language and promote evangelism and church planting

Using language data from the sources above, identify Bible-based resources available in each language in the region or country. What portions do the languages have? What is lacking? This research should be done to determine how much scripture engagement is possible. Use the R0-R1 Table to Identify the potential depth of engagement. The L0-L7 Table can be used to measure the level of church engagement a language group has.

R0	No resources available
R1	Bible Stories, Jesus Film, but no scriptures
R2	Some scripture portions, but no NT or OT
R3	One or more books of the Bible, but no NT of OT
R4	New Testament
R5	Old Testament
R6	Some discipleship and training materials including NT & OT
R7	Sufficient resources in addition to the full Bible

L0	Not adopted
L1	Adopted
L2	Gospel shared
L3	A few believers
L4	A few local churches
L5	Churches reproducing
L6	Churches multiplying
L7	Movement of movements

Develop Language Profiles and Maps

A summary of the process below provides a roadmap for finishing the Bible engagement task.

- Identify all language groups and dialects in all geographical areas and determine the exact locations where a language is spoken, such as state, district, or sub-district, and village.
- Make a profile of every language in the selected region if possible.
- Equip local churches with all the necessary tools and resources needed for translation work.
- Equip the lingual church, so they are capable of producing quality-assured Bible translation with the assistance of quality checkers and translation advisors, following the CCBT approach.
- Produce audio, video, and print Bibles, along with discipleship training materials, as required in every language and dialect until every person is able to hear and understand God's Word clearly.
- The goal of Bible translation is to go beyond the translation process by using the Bible to establish strong communities of faithful disciples who make other disciples in every language group.¹⁴

Language Adoption Drive for Prayer and Bible Translation

Once language data is provided to the church networks in different parts of the world, we can encourage every church to adopt one

¹⁴ <https://www.beyondtranslation.org>

or more languages or dialects for prayer, followed by intentional efforts to alleviate scripture poverty and establish communities of faithful disciples in each of these language groups.

Equipping National/Lingual Church Leaders for Quality Assured Bible Translation

Once church networks adopt languages for prayer and Bible translation, they are encouraged to identify and train mother tongue speakers and quality checkers for those languages. Training should cover principles and practices of Bible translations, The Great Commission, and the use of technology and translation tools. CCBT Academy provides a training platform for church network leaders in different parts of the world to produce quality assured translations.

Training In-Country Master trainers

CCBT Academy is also currently training in-country master trainers. These trainers are now training several mother tongue translators and quality checkers in their own country. Some of the trainees may serve as master trainers beyond their own countries.

Resource Mobilization

Once the church networks have the vision for doing Bible translation and beyond, the FTT movement needs to help raise financial resources to help them start and finish well. Program cost is currently estimated to be \$35 per verse. This includes the translation work, initial printing, audio recording, and distribution.

Envisioning a National Church Network

While we appreciate all that Bible translation agencies are doing, finishing the scripture translation task is only possible with the active involvement of local and national churches.

Envisioning How it Can Be done

We propose the following steps for helping churches gain the vision and mobilize their people for Bible translation. Begin by creating awareness by doing the following:

- Produce a country level list of all languages and dialects, as well as language resources.
- Convene a meeting of church networks leaders and share the vision for completing the Great Commission task.
- Share the CCBT model for doing Bible translation.
- Encourage the church networks to adopt languages that don't have any scriptures, have a strong focus on prayer, and move forward with Bible Translation and beyond.

The Role of Technology

Artificial intelligence for accelerated scripture translation is a game changer that can make 2033 happen

Such a large translation task could be accomplished sooner with the use of advanced technology, such as today's powerful artificial intelligence natural language processing (AI NLP).

Avodah, Inc.¹⁵ has developed AI natural language machine translation processing designed for low to no resource languages. The program can accelerate the pace of translation and achieve

¹⁵ <https://www.avodah.com>

good quality in a short amount of time. With this system, people can produce a full Bible in just 3-4 years, and at a far lower cost. Beyond Translation is partnering with Avodah, Inc. to incorporate the use of AI NLP in translation projects.

The Role of Resources

Having the Bible in one's language is a big start. Having enough biblical tools for Bible study and discipleship training is essential

Bible Translation Resources

Advancing Bible translation led by church networks to finish the translation task requires providing access to all necessary resources. This includes:

- All translation resources available in languages of wider communication.
- Training materials and tools to develop quality leaders who can engage the community with Word of God.
- The CCBT manual, which describes the principles and practices of Bible Translation, including steps to accomplish the goal.
- Technology tools, such as Paratext, Autographa and others.

Biblical Resources

- a) Bible stories and other resources for disciplining new believers, in any form that is needed, such as oral, digital, print, and audio.

- b) Audio, video, or print Bibles, and any other discipleship training materials required in every language and dialect until every person can hear and understand God's Word clearly.

Tracking Progress

There should be a way for FTT to monitor and track progress, not only Bible Translations, but also church planting beyond translation. Then language groups that are lagging behind can be identified so they can be strengthened and encouraged to achieve their goals.

Networking with Other Bible Translation Agencies and Church Networks

It's important to work collaboratively with all Bible agencies and church networks to build and maintain unity in the body of Christ as we seek to finish the Great Commission. Even so, we believe the church should be the leader and final decision maker in finishing translations and reaching the last groups on earth with the Gospel.

Conclusion

The ideas shared in this paper are not exhaustive. Certainly, others can add additional ideas from their experience. Neither are the ideas prescriptive. It is important to apply the principles and practices in culturally relevant and sensitive ways. Even so, from our experience, the ideas proposed in the paper can go a long way in working collaboratively to finish the Bible B by the year 2033.

BeyondTranslation.org is part of the Finishing the Task Movement, tasked to help carry the Bible B initiative forward.
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