

Reed Reflections *...from the desk of Judy Reed*

Developing affordable practical training for third world missionaries

July 2020

Handwashing Across Languages and Cultures

“Wash your hands!” We have heard that a lot in recent months. Some of our former colleagues have been involved in an effort to translate this sentence into as many languages as possible (you can see some of the results here: <https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/health>). Looks pretty straightforward, right? Just three words; how hard can that be?

Perhaps one-third of all languages don’t distinguish ‘hand’ from ‘arm’; they use the same word for both. For these languages some clarification might be needed.

In some languages, it would be unnatural to include the possessive pronoun ‘your’; after all, we don’t wash other people’s hands very often, do we? In a number of languages, it sounds rude to use a command type of sentence (except perhaps with close friends or relatives) unless you are addressing a servant or employee. In such cases it might be more acceptable to render our message as an exhortation, e.g. “Let’s wash (our) hands.”

These issues are just a sample of the normal **linguistic differences** between one language and another which may force us to make some adjustments in order to achieve an acceptable translation. What about **cultural differences**? In cultures where people eat with their fingers, handwashing is often an important preliminary to sharing a meal together, but the customary way of washing may not be ideal in terms of dealing with the spread of COVID-19. In some places, a common bowl of water is set out, and everyone dips their hands into the same bowl. Perhaps more commonly, people will pour water over the hands from a pitcher or teapot. This is clearly better, but often, the wash water is caught in a basin or bucket and sometimes re-used. So, it may not be enough just to tell people to wash their hands; we may also need to re-educate them about how to do it safely under current conditions, much like we are being re-educated in America about how to do it. The creative use of pictures can help.



A rendering for “wash your hands” in one language came out: “Hands you should lick and head.” (No one seems to know why the head was mentioned in this version; sometimes things go wrong in mysterious ways, just to keep us on our toes.) In this particular culture, people typically eat with their fingers, and lick the fingers to clean them after the meal. But clearly this will not help people avoid being infected by the corona virus.

All of these issues have direct parallels in Bible translation, and must also be considered in creating training courses for cross-cultural ministry. These days people are frequently looking for ways to speed up the translation process. Our Bible translation colleagues often hear questions like these: “There are so many languages waiting for the Bible: can’t we get this job done faster? Do we really need to analyze these languages before we translate? Do we really need all this training and checking? That is so expensive and time-consuming.”

If one is content to tell people to lick their fingers as a way of protecting them from the COVID-19 virus, then speedy translation with minimal training and checking will work just fine. But if one is dealing with more important matters, such as a person's eternal destiny, one wants to be very careful to get it right. **These are just a few examples of why so much thought goes into the content of the training courses that Robert is creating for third world missionaries who will be working across languages and cultures.***

*Handwashing article borrowed with permission from former colleague Paul Kroeger and adapted

Forty Years!

In May Robert and I celebrated 40 years of marriage by getting away to a hotel for a couple of nights, courtesy of my sister Jeanne and husband Theo's hotel points which they graciously gave us. And Jeanne even came to take care of Mom in my absence. Daughter Christie had a gorgeous professionally packaged (by her) gift basket of goodies delivered to our room, and several people contributed to our being able to eat out at restaurants. We had a lovely time! Thank you everybody!



We Appreciate You, Team!

In August, we celebrate 46 (Robert) and 47 (Judy) years in missions—not counting our years growing up on the mission field. Quite a few of you have supported us financially, prayerfully, and/or through your friendship our entire journey. Whether you've been with us a long time or short, thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

A sparkling soda toast to 40 years of marriage, with gratitude for the wonderful life God has given us together. (Above, the gift basket, unpacked.)

Praise and Prayer

- We are so thankful for gifts that have come in for the Ashaninka video project! The project team is excited and so grateful! We lack only \$240 for it to be fully funded, if anyone is interested in getting in on this.
- Peru has been hard hit by covid. Many fear starvation from lack of work more than they fear the virus. Some indigenous people in cities are being allowed to return to their villages to avoid starvation, with strict covid testing before travel. The virus is in the area surrounding Churingaveni, but no cases in the village yet. Please pray.
- Thank God for the wonderful years He has given us together in marriage and in ministry, and for the marvelous team with which He has surrounded us. Pray we would reflect Him well to the world around us.
- Pray much for our country and the leaders God has put in place; pray for the Church to humble itself (2 Chron. 7:14), to awaken and be powerful for the Kingdom during this difficult season, not just in America but in the entire world. Praise God, things are not falling apart, they are falling into place. God has a plan and it's unstoppable. Jesus is coming soon!

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