



Lutheran Bible
Translators

Proclaim to Every Nation

The Plugers in Ethiopia

Fall 2025

Community Ownership

One of the greatest joys for a teacher is seeing a lesson “click” with your students. This month I’m sharing two student stories to highlight the impact they have on their communities.

One of the courses I taught this summer was “Practicum of Bible Translation,” which is the capstone course for fourth-year undergraduate BT students. Part of this course is a close look at what we call the “Indicators” of a translation project’s future success.

The Goal of Bible Translation is not only a completed Bible in the language. True success is when God’s Word is read, listened to, and treasured by a community so that hearts and lives are changed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel.

Based on research, the #1 way to help make sure that the Goal is reached is *Local Community Ownership* of the translation project. This doesn’t mean that the community has to go it alone without any help. But it does mean that the local community — the speakers of the language — should be the ones making key decisions at key points. Outside agencies (like Lutheran Bible Translators) can lend expertise and



Which book shall we translate next?

help the community ask the right *questions*. But the *answers* should come from the people themselves.

After teaching this lesson, a student approached me with a ton of follow-up questions. He is a translator, and his local community is wrestling with some of these issues. We talked for a while, and then met again for coffee later in the week.

We worked on a list of questions that the community needed to answer — things that had been assumed or taken for granted at the beginning, but now was the time for them to take ownership of *their* project.

Lelissa was very excited and organized a meeting with the language committee and local community representatives. Over the weekend he traveled back to his home, led discussions and a workshop on these topics, and still made it back for class on Monday!

He says there is still work to do, but by God’s grace his language community is on the right road to reach the Goal of Bible Translation — transformed hearts and lives through the Gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit.



Lelissa addresses community leaders and representatives

Celebrating Scripture

In Ethiopia, June 21 is celebrated as Onesimus Nesib day.

Onesimus Nesib was a freed slave from the Oromo tribe who in 1899 completed the first modern-day translation of the Bible into an Ethiopian language.

This year, Christians from the Borana language community in Southern Ethiopia gathered to celebrate with prayer, songs, and mother-tongue Bible reading.

Thomas Abdisa, the Scripture Engagement worker for the Borana language and a graduate of Mekane Yesus Seminary's Bible Translation program (and one of my former students), organized the event.

More than a hundred years later, Onesimus' great work is still bearing fruit, as his spiritual grandchildren work to translate Scripture into other Ethiopian languages, and millions of people gather to hear God's Word in the language they understand best.



Thomas is wearing the blue and white striped shirt and holding a Bible.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- For Lelissa, Thomas, and all Bible Translation students from our program
- For our family and time together
- For a successful exegetical check of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians with the Opo language in July

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*Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to **proclaim** to those who live on the earth—to **every nation, tribe, language and people.***

—Revelation 14:6