

The Nehemiah 8:12 Project

Serving with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Australia's Top End

Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them. [Neh 8:12]

PEV snapshot

I'm currently drafting a Plain English translation of **Genesis 25**. The young man Jacob cooks up a tasty stew, catching the eye of his famished and impulsive older brother Esau. He will serve him up a portion on one (outlandish) condition: *"First sell me your birthright."*

The word 'birthright' is unlikely to be known among our target audience, and its precise meaning may vary between different contexts. It usually implies a position of headship and privilege in the family, and sometimes (but not always) a financial inheritance.

My challenge is to reword the text into simple, transparent terms, in which I neither add to, nor subtract from, the message conveyed in the original Scripture.

Here is my working draft:

Jacob said to Esau, "First, I want you to do something for me. You are the oldest son in our family, and I am the youngest. That means you will be the next leader for our family. All right, now I want to be like the oldest son, instead of you. I want to be the next leader for our family."



Introducing the PEV

Did you know that thousands of Australians speak an Aboriginal language at home and in their community, but only one of these languages (Kriol) has the full Bible translated? The task is immense and the workers are few, and while we continue to pray and trust God's provision for this ministry, the sad reality is that large numbers of today's Indigenous Australians will not live to see the whole Bible published in their mother tongue. Even our simplest English Bibles contain too much abstract vocabulary, unfamiliar metaphor, and complex grammar to be usable by this audience.

The Plain English Version (PEV) is a new 'in progress' translation of the Bible that conforms to the unique principles and patterns of English as spoken by Indigenous Australians. The PEV project team has a vision to give Indigenous Christians, churches and communities access to God's word in a form they can understand, teach to others, and use as a basis for their own translation work into the future. I'm delighted that God has moved me to Darwin to help with this project for a season as I await developments in Ethiopia (*see next page*). **Please pray for our work!**



AuSIL turns 60

Most Wycliffe staff who are based in the Northern Territory work under the banner of the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages, or AuSIL [OZ-ill].

Founded in 1961, AuSIL is committed to partnering with Indigenous communities to help document, preserve and resource their heart languages, including through Bible translation.

We will be marking AuSIL's 60th anniversary with events in three locations later in the year:

Sydney on Sat 11 Sept
Melbourne on Sat 9 Oct
Darwin on Sat 13 Nov

All who are able are warmly invited to join us. Please save the date(s); further details will follow!

Ethiopia update

Please keep praying for Ethiopia. The country is now facing its second wave of coronavirus infections, with medical services stretched to breaking point. In addition, political tensions are starting to simmer as the June federal elections approach. As a precaution, SIL Ethiopia has currently put a hold on expat staff returning until July at the earliest.

The Christmas Project

From **May 17th–21st**, Indigenous translators from around the Top End will gather in Darwin for a special workshop.

In (early) anticipation of Christmas, we are hoping to compile a book that tells the story of Jesus' birth in many different Aboriginal languages. Participants will work from either the PEV or Kriol Bible texts to translate Luke 2:6–12 into their mother tongue. For some of the languages represented at the workshop, this will be the first ever portion of Scripture put into print. A joyous milestone indeed!

We are praying that the workshop will encourage our Indigenous brothers and sisters to see how valuable their heart languages are to God (so valuable that he is using them to proclaim the good news of Christ's incarnation!) and to continue Bible translation work in their home communities.

The Christmas Project will 'fast-track' all the usual steps of the translation process—drafting, community check, back-translation, consultant check—into the space of a few days.

Please pray for smooth logistics, stamina for participants and facilitators, and a fruitful week's work: to the glory of God who sent his Son!

