2025: A STEP TOO FAR?

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Category: Observations

Tim Chester has continued his series on planning in Christian mission (see my earlier post on this here). In his latest article Tim says:

> *But we donâ€™t have to have a master plan. We donâ€™t need a five year plan. Or a one year plan. Itâ€™ll almost certainly be wrong. Circumstances change. Opportunities change. People change. (read more).*

Tim says that we shouldn't have a five year plan, but Wycliffe is working to something called Vision 2025: a desire to see a translation programme started in every language that needs one by 2025. So we don't have a five year plan, we have a sixteen year one! At first glance this seems to be in direct contradiction of what Tim is saying.

Let's explore Vision 2025 a little further: the statement of the vision reads like this.

> *By 2025, together with partners worldwide, we aim to see a Bible translation programme begun in all the languages that need one.*

You can see that there are two main elements; partners worldwide and starting translation programmes by 2025.

The vision was adopted by Wycliffe at our International Conference in 1999 (at which point it was a twenty six year goal!). During that conference there were two major themes in our discussions. Firstly, there was the fact that at the rate at which Bible translation was progressing; at that point we would not start all of the programmes needed for around 150 years. Secondly, we had to deal with the fact that while the Church is growing exponentially around the world, Bible translation was controlled and managed almost exclusively by Westerners. We realised that Wycliffe had to change the way it works and be much more open to partners from around the world who wanted to be involved in Bible translation.Â The date itself was never really in focus; it's main purpose was to encourage us to think about making the sorts of changes that our organisation needed to make in the face of the growing world church.

In the clumsy sort of way that has to happen with a large organisation working in over seventy countries, we were doing what Tim suggests church planters should be doing.

> *Iâ€™ll want to work faithfully with the opportunities God has given me. Iâ€™ll think about the need. Iâ€™ll look for partnerships with people with whom I can co-operate. I can be proactive.*

In some places these discussions have coalesced into visible partnerships on 'the field' such as PABTEN in Nigeria. There are also partnerships between communities in the South who want to see

the Scriptures translated into their own languages and Churches in the West who can pray for them and support them such as the Wycliffe UK In Focus Programme.

In God's grace, as his people have come together to partner in Bible translation, the rate at which translations have started has increased. Although we are not on course to start a programme in every language by 2025, we are getting close to it. But the date is not the issue; it is our job to continue to seek the opportunities and partnerships which God provides each day and leave the long term results to God.

> *But we can leave the big picture to God. We can let God make the connections. We can let God be our great Mission Director.*

That being said, as westerners we can easily become fixated on dates and activities and it is a constant struggle for us not to try and take charge and do our all in order to reach the deadline for the sake of reaching the deadline. We have to resist this temptation. The genius of Vision 2025 was its call to realign ourselves with what God was doing in and through his people worldwide. We need to be constantly working to renew our alignment with God's mission on an individual and corporate level. As we do that, God will sort out the dates - we can safely leave that to Him.