IT AIN'T WHAT YOU DO, IT'S THE WAY THAT YOU DO IT

Posted on July 12, 2012 by Eddie

Category: Methodology

This is an edited version of my monthly letter to Wycliffe Bible Translators' Staff (with added links and a Bananarama video!)

As some of you will know, Iâ€™m rather allergic to some of the narrative about speed and progress that sometimes makes its way into discussions about Bible translation. Itâ€™s not that Iâ€™m allergic to speed *per se*; just ask anyone who has been a passenger in a car that I was driving. Iâ€™m simply not convinced that doing things faster is always a good thing in Christian ministry.

Of course, all things being equal, producing a New Testament translation in five years rather than fifteen is undoubtedly a good thing. The problem is, that all things are not equal. In Christian work, the things we accomplish are only part of the story; the way in which we accomplish them is also incredibly important. Research on translation work has shown that one of the key factors in the long term use of translated Scriptures is the godly witness and example of the team doing the translation. Building relationships and demonstrating the love of Christ is as much a part of Bible translation as exegeting a tricky passage from Romans.

Of course, this is true in all aspects of our work, not just translation. We have jobs to do, things to accomplish, goals to be met. But the way in which we do these things is as least as important as actually getting them done. We are responsible for building others up, encouraging them, challenging them and helping them to walk with Christ, just as we are responsible for meeting our work targets.

When Sue and I lived in a Kouya village we were acutely aware that most of the people around us were not believers and that we had a responsibility to show Jesus to the Kouya people in our life and words. I fear that in some Christian contexts, we live in isolated bubbles and donâ€™t feel the same compulsion to demonstrate Christ to our colleagues as we would to non-believers. This is a big mistake!

The way in which we live as followers of Christ is, perhaps, especially acute at times of stress and change, when the temptation can be to grumble or â€˜go off the deep endâ€™. the church and mission agencies are all going through big changes at the moment and many of us, in different parts of the world, are feeling under pressure. Letâ€™s pray for Godâ€™s strength to go through this time in a way that pleases him and helps us all to walk more closely with Christ.