



DiscipleLand

Missions Education

Level 2, Quarter B—Why We Got the Bible

Integrate these World-missions concepts into your **DiscipleLand** lesson. Introduce your children to one missions truth each lesson.

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2B—Missions Education

The “Heart” Message

Teacher Intro—This quarter you will be guiding children on exploratory adventures, discovering how God’s Word speaks every language. They know how God speaks in English, but what about the other languages? Surely, He has no favorites. His Word is for all people. It is His love letter, and He does not want anyone to miss it.

John Piper has said, “If the Spirit of God is the divine author of the Bible, then the most loving thing you can give to any people group in the world is the Scripture, because in the Scripture God speaks and when God speaks, life happens. Therefore, all missions is fundamentally Bible translation—whether you’re translating it across a culture with your life or whether you are writing it down with a written translation.”

The ministry of Bible translation is challenging and complicated, but as God works in the hearts and minds of His servants, He enables them to translate His Word into the “heart-language” that can be understood and applied.

Pray that this series will be the beginning of a lifelong passion in children to make Bible translation a priority.

Lesson 1—The Bible: the Living Book in Which God Speaks

Bring treats for all in the class. Keep one separate and place the rest in a package. Welcome children to the class and tell them they are about to start an adventure in which they will discover something so wonderful they will never forget it.

Ask them to hold their Bibles and turn to some of the pages. **Perhaps your Bible looks like an ordinary book—with lots of words and maybe some pictures. But that is not all the Bible is. Like no other book that has ever been written, the Bible is God’s living Word. He didn’t just give the words long ago, as any human writer would do. He is alive and speaks to our hearts as we read today.**

Isn’t that wonderful? Your Bible is the most precious treasure you can ever have. But there’s more. To help us understand, I have a little treat for someone here. Hand the treat to one child. **That’s all for you, and it is a reminder that God’s Word is all for you.**

When you have something that valuable, what do you want to do? When you understand how much God loves you and how wonderfully He speaks to your heart, you surely want to share it. Open the package and give a treat to everyone in our class. **That’s a reminder that when we love God we want to help get Bibles to everyone else because God loves everyone else too. It won’t be easy to get Bibles in the “heart-language” of all people. There will be lots of challenges, but together, we will discover how we can help do this. Are you ready to begin our discovery?**

Lesson 2—Exploring Language

Prepare three messages in separate notes:

1. Mas rehtal xic'uhtaj i Jesus chi guiguach take xitahkanic re, ma' chincel ta tz ta'ih'mbimaj chipam I huj guili. (*Words in the Pocomchi language, spoken in Guatemala.*)
2. Henceforth and heretofore all communications are null and void. Your compliance to this directive is imperative and compulsory. (*Words in formal English.*)
3. Come to my home for a party. (*Words in children's "heart-language."*)

If your group is small, you may prepare a set of notes for each child. This will make the exploratory experience more personal. To make this an extraordinary experience, make the invitation in note three real—invite the children to your home for a casual hour, enjoying each other with games and a few refreshments.

Show the first note. After children have a moment to look at it and react, tell them it is John 20:30 in the Pocomchi language, spoken in Guatemala. Ask them to identify any words they recognize, but say that the note is really beyond understanding for anyone who does not speak that language. This is what happens if a Bible in English is given to people who do not speak and understand it.

Now show note two. The children will recognize that it is in English, but beyond their comfortable reading level. Ask how they would feel if everything they were given to read were in that kind of language.

Now show note three. The children will be able to read it easily. **It is in the language you use at home. We call that your "heart-language."**

If you went to a country that does not have the Bible in its heart-language, how would you want to give it to them: In a language they cannot read (note 1)? In a language that is too hard to understand (note 2)? Or, in the language they can read and understand (note 3)?

We are going to discover how we can help get Bibles to people in the language they can read and understand so that it speaks to their hearts! Let's pray, asking God to show us what He wants us to do to help people have the Bible in their "heart-language."

Lesson 3—How We Can Help

Bring a suitcase packed with a Bible, paper, pencils, a cassette recorder, and a laptop computer.

Try to imagine one thousand people, a million people, and then 380 million people. So many—it is hard to imagine so many! How do you feel when you hear there are 380 million people in our world who do not have a Bible in their language? It makes us want to do whatever we can to get the Bible to them.

First, we need someone to go to a people group to learn their heart-language and begin to put together a team to translate the Bible into words they can read and understand. That's a big job! Translation is taking the words and meanings of one language and putting them into another language. Let's choose someone in our class to be that missionary. Here is the suitcase our missionary will need. Have the child chosen to be the missionary open the suitcase and discover tools a translator would need.

Our missionary will need our help. What can we do? Allow responses. We can send letters, e-mails, and packages to encourage our missionary. We can give money so our missionary can pay for expenses—food, supplies for work, shelter, and travel. And very, very important—we need to pray for our missionary. What should we ask God to do to help our missionary learn the language, make friends, and look for people to help with translation?

Pray now, asking God to send many translators to the people who do not have a Bible in their language.

Lesson 4—What Translators Do

Make ten footprints on colored construction paper. On each one, write one of the Bible translation steps shown below. Place them in random order on the floor.

Choose a student to be the missionary translator. **Our job is to help our missionary translator take the steps needed for the work of Bible translation.** Have the child chosen for this role bring the suitcase and be ready to take the next steps, helped by the group.

Draw attention to the ten footprints which you have placed on the floor. Read the steps to be sure the children understand what each involves. Explain new words. Then challenge the group to try putting the steps in correct order. Number them after they are in correct order and mount them on the wall for the rest of the quarter.

10 Bible Translation Steps

1. Decide where to go.
2. Assemble the team.
3. Create an alphabet.
4. Write a draft.
5. Teach people to read.
6. Test the draft.
7. Revise the draft.
8. Make final changes.
9. Print new Bibles.
10. Celebrate the Word.

For this activity, it is more important for the children to understand what each step involves than to put them in correct order. You can do that as you wrap up this activity.

Lesson 5—1. Decide Where to Go

Before class, make copies of the *Unreached People A—Z* list found at the end of this document.

Display a world map. Have the child chosen to be the missionary translator sit with the suitcase near the world map.

Our missionary is ready to get started in the translation work. Where will (s)he decide to go? First, we need to look at places where translators are needed. We know that of the 3,000 language groups that still need God's Word, most of them are in three parts of the world:

- Africa—940 languages
- Asia—700 languages
- Indo-Pacific—1,000 languages

How will our missionary know where to go? We can talk about it together, but it is more important to talk to Someone else about it. Who can that be? Yes, we would want to join our missionary in praying to God and asking for His direction. God will guide our missionary to the right place. We can begin praying right now for people who need Bibles.

Refer to the *Unreached People A—Z* list. Introduce the term “unreached people,” which refers to a people group among whom there is no indigenous community of believing Christians. Explain how most of these unreached people groups do not have a Bible in their heart-language. Assign an unreached people group to each child. Help with pronouncing the name of the people groups and finding the country on the world map. Then encourage the children to pray that God will send someone to go and work on a Bible translation for that people group.

A good resource for this activity is the colorful alphabet book, *From Akebu to Zapotec*, by June Hathersmith, from Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Lesson 6—2. Assemble the Team, 3. Create an Alphabet

Have this week's missionary translator sit with the suitcase nearby. **God has guided our missionary to the people group where he will begin his work. He arrives at a village and meets the people. He wants to make friends with them, but how can he when he does not know the language?**

First, he will need to have a team to work with him. Hopefully, another missionary will join him. Then, as he makes friends with people in the village he will find one or two who seem to understand why he has come and what he wants to do. They will be helpers on his team called “informants.” They will tell him what he needs to know about their language.

Gradually the team makes an alphabet. Then they begin to put words together. They listen to the informant talk. They point to things and ask him to name them. Then they say the sound back to him. Slowly, the list of words grows. As they hear the sounds, they write shapes that will remind them of the sounds. It isn't like our alphabet, but it is becoming theirs—the first alphabet this people group has ever had!

Let's thank the Lord for helping translators do this challenging work and pray that He will send more and more to help with Bible translation.

Lesson 7—4. Write a Draft

If possible, borrow a copy of *The King Who Rained* by Fred Gwynne from the public library.

Now that we have most of the sounds in an alphabet, and we know quite a few words in the new language, it is time to ask the informant to help us start translating simple stories into their language. This is so exciting and we pray with all our hearts that God will use this work to help our people group know His love and the wonderful eternal life He has promised to give them when they believe on Jesus.

We begin with some simple Bible stories, going slowly from sound to words. Then we discover a problem. In English, some words sound one way but mean something else. Suppose I say, “Come at 3:15 sharp.” Would you come with sharp knives? “Sharp” means both a sharp knife and coming exactly at the right time.

Show *The King Who Rained* and read several pages so that the children get a good idea of the kinds of word problems translators have. If you do not have access to this book, ask students if they can think of other English words that would give a foreign learner problems.

The missionary translators and the informants work word-by-word, line-by-line, asking God to help them make the Bible stories correct and understandable. They desire that the people will hear and understand God’s Word so that they can know God’s love for them.

Lesson 8—5. Teach People to Read

Borrow a book in a foreign language from your public library. If possible, choose a book that has a different-looking alphabet and illustrations.

Show the library book. Point out that some people have gone to a lot of work to produce this book. But what worth is it to us if nobody here can read it?

The translation team we have been talking about each week has developed an alphabet. They have gone on to put down words. Now it is time to write some short stories. Since they will be teaching adults to read, they write the stories about things the village adults do.

Now it is time to invite grown-ups to come to reading lessons. They are curious and even excited about the strange classes that are starting. First, they will learn the alphabet, so that when they see the letter they will be able to make the sound that goes with it. Next, they begin to read words and match the words with little pictures. When they finish, they will be ready to read the short stories that the translation team prepared.

It seems that it will be a long time before the people will be able to read the Bible in their own language. But the missionaries keep working faithfully. While they keep busy working with language they also keep praying that by their actions and the words they say they will help the people know Jesus’ love for them.

We want to be faithful in praying for translators wherever they are working in the world. What shall we ask God to do for them as we pray today?

Lesson 9—6. Test the Draft

Make a little folder for each child:

Front cover: God Speaks

Inside: God loves all people
so much
that He sent His
only Son to us.

Now we come to an exciting time for the translation team. While the people are learning to read, the translation team has been busy putting parts of the Bible into their language. They are ready to give these parts to the people to read. They use their computer and printer to make copies.

It is exciting for the people who have learned to read. Now they can hold in their hands a small part of the Bible and actually read words from God! It is also exciting for the translation team who has worked and prayed for many years.

Imagine that you live in their village. You have never seen a book in your language. The missionaries have told you that God’s Book is very special and tells of His love. And today, for the very first time, you are holding some of God’s words in your hands. Imagine how you feel as the translators give you a little folder and you read the words. Hand children your premade folders. Encourage them to enter into the experience and share how they feel reading God’s Word for the very first time.

Let’s thank God for giving us the Bible in our own language and tell Him we will choose to read His Word each day.

Lesson 10—7. Revise the Draft, 8. Make Final Changes

The translators are very happy to see the people's gladness to read God's words for themselves. They talk with the people and find that some of them have questions—they did not understand some words. So the team members go over the draft and make changes. Then they go on and translate more of God's Word, give it to the people to read, and make more changes. They want to be very sure that they have found the right words to give God's message in the people's "heart-language."

This takes a lot of time because people in every culture use special words to describe ideas that are important to them. For example, Alaskan languages have many terms for different types of snow. But some languages don't have a single word for "snow." Let's name some tropical or desert regions where the people would never see snow. Let children share responses. Have them try to figure out ways to translate Psalm 51:7 in a region where it never gets cold.

Finally, an expert translator joins the team. He goes over every word. The team works and prays that God will help them make all the corrections needed. When the Bible words make perfect sense to many people who have spoken the language all their lives, translators make final changes.

Around the world, Christians continue praying every day for the translation team, and they faithfully send money and resources to make Bible translation possible.

Now let's pray, thanking Jesus for the way He is helping Bible translators in many parts of the world.

Lesson 11—9. Print New Bibles

At last, it is time to send the Bible translation to the printer! The work of translating is done, but still there is more to do. The team needs to make decisions:

- What color cover should the Bible have?
- What maps of Bible-time lands should be on the back pages?
- Will there be art?
- What design should the pages have?

The team asks the informants for help, because each people group has a different culture, so the designs, color, and art in each Bible will be unique.

When these decisions are made, the printer will get the pages ready for the press. The team will check them one last time. Are all the pages in the correct order? Are there any mistakes?

Then the presses roll. Page after page comes off the press. When the printing is done, the pages need to be folded and cut so they are exactly the same size. With strong glue, the printer fits the pages inside the cover. Then he packs the Bibles neatly in boxes to be delivered to the translation team.

Lesson 12—10. Celebrate the Word

There's excitement in the air at the village. Something very wonderful is going to be celebrated—even more wonderful than a birthday party. Someone has arrived with sealed boxes. The translation team carries them into the place where they have worked so many months. They open the boxes and there are oohs and aahs as they look at the Bibles. Yes, it is time to celebrate! They place the Bibles in neat stacks on a table. The team remembers how God has helped them in the ten Bible translation steps, and they are thankful.

First, they sing songs of praise to God. What songs would you suggest they sing? Allow song suggestions.

Then they pray, dedicating the Bibles to God. That means they ask God to bless every person who receives a Bible, that they will be hungry to read it, and that the Holy Spirit will talk to their hearts as they read.

Let's pray now and ask God to bless everyone who is reading God's Word in their heart-language. Let's place our Bibles on the table here in our classroom. We can dedicate them to God, ask Him to make us hungry to read them, and ask His Holy Spirit to talk to our hearts as we read. Encourage children to take turns praying.

Close in prayer asking God to form a translation team for each people group that still waits for their Bible.

UNREACHED PEOPLE A—Z

WHAT CAN YOU DISCOVER ABOUT THESE PEOPLE GROUPS?

AMDO —TIBET

NAHUKWA —BRAZIL

BALINESE —INDONESIA

ORMA —KENYA

CHAMAR —BANGLADESH

PERSIAN —IRAN

DALIT —INDIA

QIZILBASH —AFGHANISTAN

EN —VIETNAM

RAJPUT —INDIA

FULANI —NIGERIA

SINHALESE —SRI LANKA

GAMIT —PAKISTAN

TTATAR —RUSSIA

HUI —CHINA

UYGHUR —CHINA

IR —LAOS

VAI —LIBERIA

JAKUN —MALAYSIA

WAODANI —SOUTH AMERICA

KKURDS —IRAQ

XINH MUN —VIETNAM

LISHANAN —ISRAEL

YAEYAMA —JAPAN

MOUK —NEW GUINEA

ZAPOTECO —MEXICO