

Good News for Galim (Recent family pic near the top)

November, 2018

Dear praying partners,

Have you ever noticed how certain words or short phrases help you to know what kind of text you are listening to or reading? “Once upon a time...” fairy tales. “Preheat your oven...” recipe. “Save up to 50%...” commercial. “Dear praying partners...” prayer letter!

Every language has little words and phrases that provide cues to the audience about what kind of text they are digesting; whether a story, an argument, a letter, instructions, or whatever! English has them, the Greek of the New Testament has them, and Nizaa has them! A key for us to producing a good translation is knowing how to recognize these cues in the Greek and how to cue Nizaa hearers and readers with the appropriate corresponding word or phrases in their language.

Nizaa Debates (this subtitle can go after one of the next three paragraphs if it helps with the layout)

There are scads of books that teach us how to interpret and understand New Testament Greek, but for languages like Nizaa, you simply have to roll up your sleeves and analyze Nizaa texts to learn about what cues people to what kind of text they are digesting.

Happily, many helpful kinds of texts are easy to elicit, record, and analyze. Stories, instructions and descriptions fall into this category. You can ask just about anyone to tell you a story or teach you how to do something and they will do so. However, other kinds of speech are notoriously difficult to elicit. Counsel, exhortations, correction and compelling arguments fall into this category. It is difficult to get heartfelt and natural examples of these kinds of texts because you can’t simply ask someone to give you advice or convince you of something and then whip out your recording device!

The trouble is that huge chunks of the New Testament feature these kinds of texts; assertions, corrections, admonishments, arguments, and the like. So, we have had to get creative to collect them.

With this goal in mind, on Friday, October 19th, at our Nizaa Language Centre in Galim, we hosted our first ever Nizaa debate! The theme was “Should Nizaa people speak their language purely? Without mixing in any other languages?” Two teams of two debaters each were tasked with arguing either side of the theme. At the end of the day, we asked some Nizaa elders in attendance to speak to the Nizaa youth about what they think needs to be done. And we recorded everything!

I am sure that you can appreciate how important the event was for collecting good Nizaa arguments, counsel, assertions, and the like, but the event was great on several other levels as well. It raised awareness about the importance of working to preserve and develop the Nizaa language. My colleague, Rev. Ousmanou Dieudonné, is preparing a video report of the event so that Nizaa people who weren’t in attendance can appreciate what was said as well. Finally, everyone enjoyed spending the day speaking Nizaa (exclusively!) and everyone undoubtedly went away having learned a thing or two as well.

The event was such a smashing success, that we have already scheduled our *second* Nizaa debate; this time on the theme “Should Nizaa youth learn the traditional arts of their parents?” We will host this second debate in a Nizaa village on Wednesday, November 21st, and will follow it up with a Nizaa Arts Exhibition where Nizaa artisans will get to show off their skills and describe how they do what they do. *Please pray for these Nizaa debates; that God will use them to generate interest among Nizaa speakers in the work that we are doing and that we will be able to collect texts that will help us to better understand how to render NT Scriptures in Nizaa. (January)*

Translation Progress

While our team has spent some time on initiatives like debates, song-writing workshops, and linguistic analysis in recent months, we have also continued to put a priority on making steady progress

on the huge translation task before us. In the coming months, we hope to have Nizaa Christians who are not on our translation team read through or listen to sections of Luke and a few short epistles in anticipation of meeting with a consultant in February or March.

Please pray for our translation progress, especially the work of testing our drafts with other Nizaa speakers and meeting with a consultant; that God will use these steps to further refine the translation we are working to produce. (February) We have not met with a consultant since March of 2016 and we have not shared large sections of our work with the greater Nizaa community for even longer than that! We pray that their feedback will reveal that we have been doing good work while also showing us areas where we can still improve. Please pray with us!

Furlough 2019-2020

Another bit of big news for the months ahead is that we have officially scheduled our next furlough! We plan on travelling back to Canada at the end of April. Mike will participate in a Discourse Analysis workshop during the summer months. Then we will spend the fall, winter and spring of 2019-2020 visiting as many of you, our partners, as we can! If you are interested in having us come to your church for a visit, please contact the LBTC offices. We will start to set dates in the first few months of the New Year. *Please pray already for our furlough; that God will make it possible for us to reconnect with as many of you as possible, and that He will use our time together to strengthen the connection between the Canadian church and the Nizaa translation project. (March)*

The Perfect Translation

By the time you get this letter, many of you will have already begun thinking about Christmas. I have long felt that Christmas is a *great* time to think about the work of Bible translation... because the only ever perfect translation of the Bible is commemorated and celebrated at Christmas; the translation that God Himself effected when He sent His eternal Word into human flesh to dwell among us. The eternal message of truth, love, hope, and grace that resounds in the heart of our Father has been perfectly delivered and communicated to us in the person of Jesus; from His humble birth to his glorious ascension and everything in between. May God inspire your Christmas celebrations with reverent awe as you reflect once more on the miracle of His Word become flesh in the Christ child. *And please pray for us and all Bible translators; that God will use us to continue to translate His Word so that people of all languages will be able to encounter Jesus, the Word made flesh, through our humble efforts. (December)*

Rev. Mike, Kara, Tobias, Gideon and Gloria Kuhn