

The “Key Terms” Workshop

From time to time we have friends who “drop in”. It could be travelers from Asaro, or Ukarumpa village. Or in this case it could be our friends from Saep, on the Rai Coast – friends from a time long ago, where we lived on the Rai Coast (southeast of Madang) learning the culture and common trade language of PNG.

So Numbri, (NOOM-bree), Waele (WHY-lee), and Eli (EL-lee) plus two others came for a visit the other day. Their reason to be at Ukarumpa was all business: they were to attend the two week “Key Terms” workshop offered by SIL here at Ukarumpa in the Highlands.

As you probably know there are many special words from the Greek and Hebrew that are the origins of what we read in the English versions of the Bible. How about a few concepts that might be familiar:

Greek	“numa”	translated...	Spirit (which also means “wind” and “breath”)
Greek	“agape”	translated...	Love (reserved for the God-like love different than man’s)
Hebrew	“aheb”	translated...	Love (to have affection for, endear, laying down one’s life for)
Greek	“kardia”	translated...	Heart (for the inner self, seat of emotion or will of a person)

And how about a host of other familiar words like “mind”, or “spirit”, or “soul”, or “heart”, or “personality”? What about those fancy words we use in English? How about “reconciliation” or “atonement”? The problem of course, is that we struggle with the original meaning of the ancient texts as well, in our popular English translations. For instance in 2 Timothy 3:16 we say:

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

But the word “inspired” is really that Greek word “numa” again. It means “God Breathed”, and we translate that with the word “inspired” in English. Obviously, to really, really regain the original meanings of the text, we need to get down to the source languages as much as possible. So the “Key Terms” workshop spends time in detailed discussion explaining the old words, and with a particular emphasis on the ancient Biblical culture of Palestine. In this way, the goal is to get to the best Saep words possible, for the Hebrew and Greek equivalents of “love” and “mind” and other words. English will not really suffice. It is also possible that there are not one-word equivalents to get to the same idea.

Once the Workshop is completed then the representatives from those language groups will be ready to begin Bible Translation. Without the proper concepts and the right semantic frames, then it would not be an accurate “meaning based” translation whereby God truly speaks the Saep and other languages here in Papua New Guinea.

Meanwhile, while Numbri, Eli and the others visit us, we get to encourage them in the task. At our house they are full of “church” questions related to back home. It turned out that a splinter group has moved away from the main Lutheran denomination, and their core belief is the “irrelevancy” of the Scriptures in written form. Helen and I gave counsel on how to deal with these members of their society, but in the end, the question is: do they see the Word as “God-Breathed” or not? We think that this group would probably come around if they were reading the New Testament in their mother tongue. Only time will tell....

As always..... it is a joy for Helen and I to have our very small part in making this possible.

Joyfully in His Service,





Eli enjoys one of Helen's homemade cookies (left hand) and fellowship.



Numbri and wife Waele. Two very strong Christian leaders to the Saep people



PNG teachers convey Biblical cultural values and world view. Useful in determining ancient word meanings



The "Saep" table with Brad Voltmer from SIL, wrestle with Saep words and their meanings

October, 2005

Email Address: b.chapaitis@sil.org.pg; h.chapaitis@sil.org.pg

SIL Box 188, Ukarumpa, E.H.P. 444, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Tel: 011 675-737-4352

Wycliffe Bible Translators, P.O. Box 628200 Orlando, Florida 32862-8200, USA

Tel: 1 407-852-3600