

HOWe THINGS ARE... January 2016

Happy 2016! I'm going to Arizona this month. It's for my home church's International Weekend. One activity while I'm there is speaking to a Sunday school class. I was reviewing what I think I'll say and wanted to tell you too...

"... In not my job, I lead Bible study at the county jail.

Women in jail have access to a Bible. They can make a request and a Bible will arrive for them. But not very many have much idea what the Bible says or who Bible characters are and how the story fits together. There's a term used to describe this problem: Bible poverty. That describes a lot of the women who show up for Bible study at jail: they're suffering from Bible poverty.

Sometimes, I practice telling a Bible story enough so that I can tell the story, not necessarily word for word, but accurately. I was telling Luke chapter 7 where the sinful woman washes Jesus feet with her tears. I realize most of the women are coming to Bible study because they're bored. There's not much to do, this is something to do... they're not coming for any spiritual reason, some do, but most, just bored... so I'm telling the story to women who have showed up to Bible study because they're bored and I realize, mid story, that I have every lady's full attention. They are laser focused on me. They're not talking or moving around. You could hear a pin drop. "This stuff is powerful." I know God's word is powerful, but I'm saying this story has the power to hold people's attention who came to Bible study because they were bored. They are hanging on every word out of my mouth. This story has the power to capture their imagination. They are wrapped up in the drama. This story has the power to change people's lives as they encounter God through his word.

After I tell the story, then I'll have someone read the story and then I'll ask them reading comprehension questions. Basically walking through the story... so why did the man invite Jesus to his house? And who showed up? And what did she do? And what did Jesus say? And what kind of woman was she? And then I have some questions and observations. Once, we were doing the parable of the prodigal son and my question was "did the Father know what the son was going to do? Was it a surprise or did he already know?" And the general consensus was "yeah he knew" so the spokesperson for that group speaks up and she says, "Oh he knew. Parents know their children. Sometimes parents know their children better than their children know themselves. He knew exactly what would happen and he did it anyway".... And then another woman in the front spoke up and she said, "well, maybe, but you know parents never give up hope in their children. You know no matter how rotten the kid is, the parent hopes... so maybe... I mean he knew but he was hoping for better for the kid". Pretty profound observations, what God revealed about Himself to these women through his word.

There are 1,860 languages: 180 million people without any scripture at all in their language. It's a different kind of Bible poverty than those ladies in jail suffer from. Those ladies, like a lot of Americans, even American Christians suffer from Bible poverty that God has provided for us a feast in his Word and there are people right there starving because they won't eat. It's tragic. We, Grace Community, we, the global church, we want to end that kind of Bible poverty. We don't want anyone suffering from it, including ourselves right? We have this feast and we want to be stuffing ourselves, tasting everything on the table. But for those without any scripture in their language, the table hasn't even been set yet. There's nothing on the table.

That Bible poverty needs to end too. We, those of us with the whole counsel of God, the complete Word of God in our language, we want everyone to have what we have. This feast. We aren't satisfied when we see language groups with nothing, to say, well let's give that guy a couple crumbs. He should be okay with that. Revelation says every tribe, every nation, and every language. That's what we want. God's Word to be available and to permeate people and nations and cultures as God speaks through His word and makes more worshippers.

Grace Community's part in that through my ministry is to provide needed IT support to people involved in translating God's Word for those still waiting. The task is huge. The Bible translation task is huge. The job of providing needed technology is also huge. We don't take on the whole task, we join with God and his church and take on a little piece. ... which is you know... Biblical... one body, many parts... Thanks for your part". *Thank you for your part!*

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