

Hi! Fell in love with this story... which I lifted from a letter from Bob Creson, the president of Wycliffe US... which filled up my whole newsletter. Could not be more grateful I get to be a part of work like this... because of people like you... who generously give and pray and support me in so many ways.  
Thanks!

## HOWe THINGS ARE...

April 2009

### Stuff you could pray about:

- Wisdom at work
- A work/rest of my life balance... on accident work has taken up more than its fair share of time, energy, etc.
- Discipline to memorize Matt 5-7. It's a requirement for my trip to Israel in October. Very excited about the possibility of Israel in October by the way...

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Enclose a note stating:  
For Sheryl Howe)

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Sebastian was 50 years old, an alcoholic with a second grade education, when he trusted Christ as his Savior. He was 55 – quite elderly for his small Mexican community -- when he began translating the Scriptures into his Tezoatlan Mixtec language. He had no training, no help, not even an alphabet beyond the Spanish one he'd learned in school, but he saw a need. While he could understand a fair amount of what he read in his Spanish Bible, his wife could not, nor could many others who attended the Bible study in their village. His heart burned to help them.

Finally one day he decided he had to try. He bought a notebook and set out to translate the resurrection story in Luke 24. It was hard to spell Mixtec words using only Spanish letters. It was even harder to understand the biblical concepts and express them in his own language. It made his usual work plowing rocky fields and hauling firewood down mountain trails seem easy. Nevertheless he kept at it.

He took his beloved notebook to every Bible study, but he didn't read from it out of fear that he might have mistranslated the precious Word of God. Then one night as he watched his neighbors sleeping, wiggling or whispering to each other through an unintelligible service, he knew he couldn't wait any longer. He slowly stood up, and moved to a position underneath the only light bulb in the room. With trembling hands, he opened his notebook, took a deep breath and began to read. Slowly, haltingly at first, he read those words from Scripture, gaining strength and confidence as he read on.

Several people gasped as they realized that he was reading in Mixtec, their heart language. Then the room grew quiet. No one moved or spoke or slept. Tears rolled down a few cheeks. The light of understanding shone in their eyes. Sebastian read on for a long time, and when he stopped, he knew that no one present would ever be the same again.

Time passed and Sebastian's notebook filled up. His farming suffered, as did his weaving of palm fronds into baskets and hats for extra income. Money grew tighter, but God always provided for his needs. He kept translating, and he kept on sharing those newly translated verses with his wife and neighbors. He read at four or five services each week, and the walls began to come down. God was no longer a "foreigner." God spoke Mixtec, and the words went straight to Mixtec hearts.

Four years after Sebastian began translating, Wycliffe member John Williams came to Sebastian's village, looking for someone willing to move six hours away and teach John his language so they could make books and translate the Scriptures. John could only stay in the village one night, but God led him straight to Sebastian, who asked just one question: "Do you want to leave tonight or in the morning?"

As Sebastian and John worked together, Sebastian eagerly appropriated the new alphabet symbols that made his language easier to write. He just as eagerly contributed to every aspect of their translation and literacy work. Thirteen years later, with joy and thankfulness, Sebastian held in his hands a draft of the whole New Testament in Tezoatlan Mixtec.

Not long after that, God took Sebastian home, his task completed. The New Testament was joyfully dedicated in 2008 and is now being used by Sebastian's people in both written and oral forms.

If you or I had been choosing a mother tongue translator for the Mixtecs, we might have overlooked Sebastian. He was too old, we might have said, and his health was compromised by his former addiction to alcohol. He didn't have a good enough education or knowledge of Spanish. He didn't know how to develop an alphabet for a language that had never been written, and certainly he couldn't translate without one!

But God knew better. He changed Sebastian's life first, and then He gave him the vision, endurance and ability he needed to translate many chapters of His Word for his neighbors, providing for his physical needs along the way. Then He graciously sent John and Judy Williams to help him complete the task.

In the same way, God knows how He plans to reach the rest of the last language communities around the world. I can't wait to see how He does it!