

# A Covenant to End Bible Poverty

Together we affirm that:

- “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NLT).
- “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12 NRSV).
- “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward” (Psalm 19:7-11 ESV).
- God’s “word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105 NIV).
- Jesus, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, declared that “Scripture says: Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4 NJB).

Together we recognize that:

- Many people are living with Bible poverty, for they do not have meaningful access to God’s Word. The Scriptures lament those seasons and situations whenever “the word of the LORD was rare” (1 Samuel 3:1 NIV). This describes the current reality of many millions

who can't engage with God's word because of linguistic, educational, economic, religious and/or socio-political barriers. Therefore, many exist "separate from Christ, excluded from the ... covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12 NIV).

- God's heart is that of a good shepherd who cares for the least, the last and the lost. He is willing to expend great effort to "go out to search for the one that is lost" (Matthew 18:12 NLT). We know that in this we are to "be imitators of God" (Ephesians 5:1 NASB) and "should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21 NRSV) "in complete obedience to God's will" (Colossians 4:12 GNB).
- We are called to go everywhere we are not until all persons in every situation are able to have meaningful access to God's Word, for God "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4 NRSV).
- We are to encourage all to engage with God's Word in a life-transforming way. We aspire that all become like the Bereans who "received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11 NASB). For this reason the Bible exhorts everyone to "give your time and effort to the public reading of the Scriptures" (1 Timothy 4:13 GNB), for "anyone who looks steadily at the perfect law of freedom and keeps to it – not listening and forgetting, but putting it into practice – will be blessed in every undertaking" (James 1:25 NJB).

Therefore we solemnly pledge ourselves to collaborate together to:

- Translate: Complete the initial process of Bible translation, so that everyone can have access to God's Word in their own heart language. We commit ourselves to the intentional acceleration of this translation process, for "He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly" (Psalm 147:15 NASB). There are some 7,000 spoken languages on earth today. We will do all that is possible to facilitate the start of Bible translation into the remaining

Bibleless languages by the early 2020s. We will press on so that by 2033, 95% of the world's population will have a complete Bible in their own mother tongue, another 4% of the world will have a New Testament available, and the remaining 1% will have a complete portion of the Scriptures (consisting of 25 or more chapters) in their own language.

- **Publish:** Produce the translated text of Scriptures in a way that is most readily accessible for each person in every language group. This can involve printed texts, digital texts made available on the internet or mobile devices, audio texts that can be listened to, and video texts that can be viewed on whatever platform is best for the viewing audience. Because we live in a time with many technological possibilities and because every individual has a different learning style we will embrace all methods and every approach necessary to reach both literate and oral learners. Our methodological flexibility is inspired by Paul who wrote, "While working with the Jews, I live like a Jew in order to win them.... In the same way, when working with Gentiles, I live like a Gentile ... in order to win Gentiles .... I become all things to all people, that I may save some of them by whatever means are possible" (1 Corinthians 9:20-22 GNB).
- **Distribute:** Distribute the Scriptures in an intentional and appropriate way so that every household on earth has the opportunity – if they so choose – to have the Word of God in their home. We press on toward that day when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14 ESV). We are convinced that we must not passively wait until people come to the house of God to hear God's Word, for we are called to "go" with the Good News (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15) and be his witnesses "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8 NRSV). This was modeled in the early church, for "every day in the Temple and in people's homes they continued to teach and preach the Good News about Jesus the Messiah" (Acts 5:42 GNB).

- Educate: Facilitate educational programs which equip people to read, hear, understand and apply the Word of God. The very Scriptures tell of “when you give it to those who can read [...and...] to those who cannot read” (Isaiah 29:11-12 NLT). Thus we must make provision for people of every educational background and help each grow in their capacity to comprehend the Bible. We are committed to eradicate every educational barrier which keeps anyone from their full potential in Christ.
- Motivate: Motivate all people everywhere to a new awakening of Bible engagement. Paul urges us, “Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives” (Colossians 3:16 NLT). Jesus inspires us saying, “So then, anyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock” (Matthew 7:24 GNB). Our desire would be to birth and nurture a movement wherein every individual would engage with God’s Word in a life-transforming, frequent, regular and ongoing manner.

By God’s grace we the undersigned make this covenant together.