

Update: Bible Translation Milestone

¡Hola! James and Carol along with their children; Sarah, Jacobo, and Mark are serving with [Avant Ministries](https://avantministries.org) (<https://avantministries.org>) guiding souls into abundant life in Malaga, Spain.



Recently we celebrated Sarah's birthday. She decided to have a girls only, princess-themed birthday party.



Not even her dad or brothers allowed.

In January, at a no cameras event, the Moroccan Derija Arabic Bible translation launch party took place. The first edition of this new testament translation was started in the 1920's and for the last almost 30 years this full translation project has been led by a team of nationals.

TL;DR

Calendar

- Ramadan started in Morocco on *February 19th*. Join me in lifting up our muslim neighbours during this season which lasts till *March 19th*. Learn more at [Prayer.Tools](https://prayer.tools) (<https://prayer.tools/ramadan-2026/>)
- *March 14th*: Mom arrives to join us in Celebrating Marks 2nd birthday. *March 22nd*: my brother and his family arrive to do the same. *March 27th*: Everyone leaves.
- *June 28th till July 4th*: We plan to attend the Avant Europe Missionary Conference in Switzerland.

Praise

- We started January 2025 with a significant deficit in our support account, but I did the math and for 2025 we *finished out the year 101% supported. Praise God!*
- We have received the components for the server storage upgrade. This refurbished equipment is vastly superior to what we had. *Praise God for his provision!*

Intercede

- As a family, we knocked on all the other doors on our street and shared about Jesus with those who would open the door

and listen. Nobody wanted to take the conversation further, and as not everyone was home, we are still trying to find time to connect with our ‘Christmas’ present. *Pray that we could find the harvest amongst our neighbours.*

- The migration to the new equipment is going slow, the computers take hours to inform me that things didn’t work, please try again... *Pray that I would have wisdom to make this migration happen.*
- I am teaching 12-18 year old Sunday School now till summer. *Pray that I could guide these kids in the faith that they might enter adulthood as vibrant disciples.*

Bible Translation

I have no doubt that this translation milestone marks an inflection point for the harvest amongst Moroccans.

Morocco is a largely unworked land: According to [Joshua Project](https://joshuaproject.net/countries/MO) (<https://joshuaproject.net/countries/MO>) 89% of Moroccans are in ‘[frontier](https://joshuaproject.net/frontier)’ (<https://joshuaproject.net/frontier>)’ people groups, that is unreached or least-reached people groups, and as many as 40% of Moroccans struggle with literacy. Moroccan Arabic and ‘Standard’ Arabic are as similar as High German and Low German. The importance of the audio component of this translation cannot be overstated and it joins just 11% of translations that includes both written and audio versions.

In our church community here there are two individuals who have lead Bible translation projects: One to a people group with no written language until his team started their work. Now, 30 years later that group not only has a new testament in their language, but I’ve also seen road signage.

The other man works with a nomadic tribe in Asia. In December, with tears in his eyes, he shared that while english speakers enjoy the benefit of more than 900 Bible translations and spanish speakers can engage in more than 90 different translations, this particular people, after nearly 30 years of effort, finally have a single but complete written translation of God’s Word.

Having a court-side level seat from which to cheer on this work I am blown away at the lifetime(s) Bible translation takes; even today, even in the best of circumstances. The Wycliffe report on [global scripture access](https://wycliffe.net/global-scripture-access/) (<https://wycliffe.net/global-scripture-access/>) states that as of August 2025 that there are yet 544 living languages waiting for translation to start. That number was more than 5000 in 1999. It’s not yet time to rest on our laurels.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith” —*Ephesians 2:8*

“Faith comes by hearing and hearing the words of Christ.” —*Romans 10:17*

Comments on Matthew

Quoting Sam Metcalf's booklet [Engaging the Supernatural](https://info.novo.org/ets-download)

(<https://info.novo.org/ets-download>):

John Wimber, the primary catalyst behind the Vineyard movement, had been immersed in the secular music industry when he became a committed follower of Jesus. He read through the New Testament and fell in love with Jesus. He was awed at what Jesus did. He was amazed and drawn to the stories of the miraculous and of supernatural reality. When he became a follower of Jesus, he thought that's what he was going to be doing. He thought the "stuff" he read about in the New Testament would be normal but was stunned when he visited some existing churches. He said:

I remember the frustration of attending church the first few times, and I thought, "This is great. I'm going to join up. I want to do this stuff". You know what I thought they did at church—this is how stupid I was—I thought people gathered at the church, had a good time together, sort of divided up the land, then everybody went out, healed a few people, cast out a few demons, and won a few people to Christ before lunch.

When they didn't do it, I was disappointed. So, I asked one of the leaders, "When are we going out to go do it?" He told me, "Oh you don't have to do it. You just have to believe it was done once".

That's pathetic.

I found out over the next year or two that we cried about it, we sang about it, we preached about it, we prayed over it, we gave to it, but we never did it.

I grew up in the church and I never understood why so many pages of the Bible existed if they weren't for me and for today. Carrying these texts through the millennia has been done at no small cost (demonstrated above).

I've heard bountiful commentary on why, for example, [Matthew 10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew%2010&version=NIV) (the sending out of the 12) doesn't apply today. The claim is that context is king and Jesus said '*Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel*' (v.6) so unless you plan to go to Israel and '*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons*' you know, the stuff (v.8), you're doing it wrong. But Matthew 10 happens in the context of the book of Matthew and the last red-letter words Matthew's gospel are some of the most memorised amongst Christians.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

—Matthew 28:18-20

The merit of a disciple is not to *know* what Jesus commanded; we are to *obey*. What do you think Matthew believes Jesus

commanded? I'm pretty sure it's every instruction Matthew received from Jesus in the book of Matthew.

We've traded *obedience* to God for *knowledge*. Knowledge is the benchmark for spiritual maturity. Adam and Eve traded obedience for knowledge in the Garden of Eden. Rabbis in Jesus day memorised the first five *books* of the Bible and were completely disconnected from the work of God. And today, well, I'm as guilty as anyone in this indulgence. I confess; I've got more than a 1000 pages of extra-biblical reading stacked on my night stand calling.

But Jesus didn't with all authority in heaven and on earth call me to *know* anything. He called me to *do* what he commanded. I'm trying to gear my life around that; and it's not complicated—it's hard.

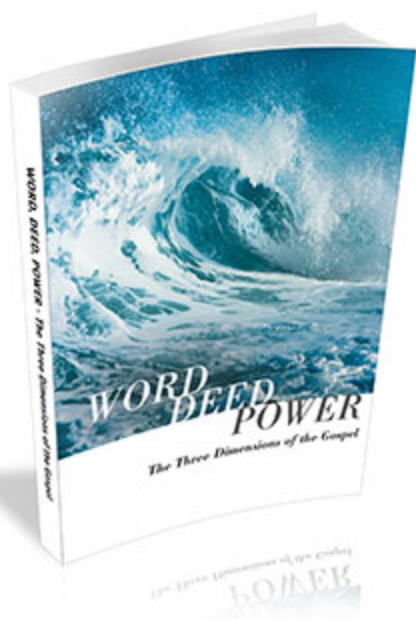
Hebrews 11:6 says "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." When I act in faith, faith that obedience is doing Matthew 10 sort of stuff, Matthew 10 sort of stuff starts to happen. If you want to hear testimonies, feel free to ask.

Read the gospel of Matthew, read it as quickly as you can digest it. Make a list 'what did Jesus command?' Ask God what you need to focus on. Do that stuff, if not in faith, at least in obedience.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" —*John 1:1*

"Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forevermore!" —*Hebrews 13:8*

A Short Reading Recommendation



[Word, Deed, Power](https://info.novo.org/wdp-download) (<https://info.novo.org/wdp-download>)

by **[Sam Metcalf](https://spmetcalf.novostaff.org/)** (<https://spmetcalf.novostaff.org/>) 30 pages

I appreciated the perspective that, while we need enough word, too much focus on the word quenches the Holy Spirit, leads to legalism and collapses the equally important manifestations of deed and power.

—James (with Carol, Sarah, Jacobo, & Mark)

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