

# The Talking Bible Report



Winter of 2006

## THE ADVENT OF THE TALKING BIBLE

by Dr. Harvey T. Hoekstra, Missionary, Pastor, Bible Translator, Author, Founder of Audio Scriptures International, Chairman of the Board for Talking Bibles International. Harvey holds a Doctor of Missiology degree from Fuller's School of Intercultural Studies.

The advent of the Talking Bible revolutionizes how we can make the translated Scriptures available in audio for non-readers. The Talking Bible dramatically increases the value of every Bible translation. It creates new possibilities we could not have dreamed of just a few short years ago.

After spending nearly fifteen years of intense, joyful, and fruitful years in the

Soon hundreds and even thousands of non-readers became believers, were baptized, and began to share their audio Scriptures with others.

But it has been only recently that advances in technology have created previously undreamed-of possibilities for making the Bible available in audio for the two billion adults in our world who still are functionally illiterate.

Five years ago we (Talking Bibles International) developed and patented a new listening device which we called a Talking Bible. The Talking Bible looks just like a reader's Bible but contains an entire New Testament sealed inside. Instead of opening this Bible to read it, a person simply pushes a button to HEAR it.



The Talking Bible has not only been a blessing to individuals but has also proved to be very useful in group settings. At normal playing levels, the message can be easily and clearly heard by fifteen or twenty listeners—or even more—without additional amplification. People who have a Talking Bible therefore frequently invite neighbors, family members and friends to join them for daily listening sessions. The word spreads quickly. Many believe and are baptized. Many new churches are formed.

Believers who cannot read are excited to learn that *their* Bible contains exactly the same message that readers have in theirs. For the first time, the Word of God is as available to them as it is to people who can read. They can listen to it at any time of day or night, wherever they are, and whatever they are doing.

The analog Talking Bible has already



proven to be extremely useful. However, as useful as it is and inexpensive to produce, it has some of the same limitations that all analog devices have. Recently, therefore, having extensively tested

the proto-type, in an upcoming project in Africa, we will be using a solid state digital Talking Bible which contains an entire New Testament on one small memory chip. This digital version makes it possible to move quickly from book to book and from one chapter to another and provides a crystal clear message with high fidelity sound. And, since the digital Talking Bible has no moveable parts, power usage is very low and durability is very high. Though we will continue to use the analog version in various areas, the digital Talking Bible will provide a significant new way to reach the non-reading half of the world with a Bible in their own language and in a form they can understand.



The primary intent in designing the Talking Bible was to give non-reading



Sudan translating the New Testament into the Anuak language, followed by a similar period in Ethiopia in the 1950's on into the 1970's, I began to realize that most of the people for whom I had translated the New Testament would never read it. It wasn't that they were not interested. They simply could not read! Unless they would HEAR the translated Word in some way, the Bible would remain as foreign to them as if it had never been translated at all.

I was delighted and encouraged, therefore, to find that these non-reading people responded very positively when they HEARD the newly translated Word on phonograph records and, later, on cassettes and compact disks.



Christians access to the translated Scriptures in audio in their own language. Listening to the Bible would enable them to grow stronger in their faith and become more effective disciples of Christ. What we had not fully anticipated was the impact the Talking Bible would have



on non-readers who were not yet Christians.

In a report that came to us from India where many non-readers have been introduced to the Talking Bible:

*“A Hindu village priest insisted that he, being spiritual leader in that village, should be the one to be responsible for their Talking Bible. He promised to call the people together to listen every day. The amazing thing that happened was that the priest himself began listening and became a believer along with almost the entire village. Three months later, when the local evangelist called to check up on them, the converted village priest pointed to the small village temple. There was a chain and a padlock on the door. The temple was closed. Instead, because of the power of God’s spoken Word, many people in that village were baptized and were worshipping together, praising God and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Oral cultures learn **everything** through hearing. They know how to listen! And they remember what they hear. Many of these people have phenomenal memories which far exceed those of most readers. They are able to memorize large sections of the Scriptures simply by listening to them on their Talking Bible. And then, after they have memorized them, they often spontaneously share them with others. That’s just how they live! They listen, they learn, and they tell others what they have learned.

As a former Bible translator, I continue to be extremely grateful for the faithful and sacrificial efforts of Bible translators around the world who make God’s Word available in new languages. It’s



almost impossible to imagine what “Christian missions” would be without them. At the same time, I am deeply concerned by the realization that hundreds of millions of people still have no direct access to these translations simply because they cannot read now—and never will.

Literacy training is therefore very important and of great value. However, it has been estimated by responsible scholars that the number of non-readers in 2025 will be as great as it is today—in spite of the many literacy programs that are being developed. Besides, the distribution of the Talking Bible to non-readers is not in competition with literacy training. In some ways it may even enhance literacy efforts. For example, some who read poorly become better readers by listening to the spoken word while following the printed text in their hands. Or, as one person put it, “The Talking Bible may help good readers to become better readers, poor readers to become good readers, and motivate non-readers to become readers.”

But whether they become readers or not, all who hear God’s spoken Word become better informed and better equipped to share the message of Jesus with others. Something wonderful happens that would not happen if they did not have the Talking Bible in their own language. We sincerely believe, therefore, that the most significant way for non-readers to come to faith in Christ and to grow in their Christian life is by *listening* to the Word of God faithfully and systematically in their own languages.

It’s also important to remember that many readers, especially in oral cultures, learn much better from hearing the Scriptures than by reading them. For them, the spoken word still carries with it an authority and power which the written word does not have.

Millions of people who need a Talking Bible will not receive one unless thousands of individuals, churches, Bible societies and mission-sending agencies become more aware of the unique needs of the non-reading world—and prayerfully seek to help meet those needs. Our earnest desire and passion, therefore, is to help readers catch the vision of the tremendous spiritual harvest that could result if we put



as much emphasis on reaching non-readers with audio materials as we do on providing written materials for those who can read.

For decades the Christian community has faithfully demonstrated its loving concern for the lost by investing millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of hours in translating the Bible into new languages. But most Christians probably do not realize that we can now *multiply* the effectiveness and fruitfulness of all our past translation



efforts by *adding* the relatively small amount of time and money required to “translate” *written* Bibles into *talking* Bibles! **By adding only a few cents more to every dollar already spent to translate a New Testament into a new language, we can make that translation available to twice as many people!** If the Christian community fully understood that, it would seem unthinkable that we would choose not to do it.

This year we hope to share with you what churches and individuals *can* do by way of producing and distributing Talking Bibles and report to you what some of them have already done. One person, for example, recently wrote:

*“I cannot even put into words how special and touching it was for me to be able to actually physically put these Talking Bibles in people’s hands. I have tears in my eyes even now just remembering some of the expressions on their faces and looks of such gratitude. It was a blessing in my life like none other!”*



-by Dr. Harvey T. Hoekstra, Chairman of the Board for Talking Bibles International, 1-03-06

This article is an excerpt from a longer article written for World Pulse Magazine - Billy Graham Association



## Working Together ---

~ ABSE, Audio Bibles of Southeast Asia and Talking Bibles International are working together to see that all of the translations that need to be recorded in the Philippines are getting recorded and placed into Talking Bibles.

~ Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bible Society and Talking Bibles International are working together to produce the common language translation of Bengali.

~ New Tribes Missionaries, Venezuela and Talking Bibles International are working together to see that three indigenous Indian language translations are recorded and placed in Talking Bibles.

~ Talking Bibles India and Talking Bibles International are working together to place 100,000 Talking Bibles into non-reading homes in India.

~ World Mission and Talking Bibles International will partner together to produce the first solid state digital Talking Bible for worldwide distribution.

~ Mega Voice - Talking Bibles Interna-

tional will continue to work with Mega Voice as they use a number of language recordings we have produced.

~ United Bible Society and Talking Bibles International will continue to work together to place audio Bibles into the homes of non-reading Christians in Africa. This year we hope to place 1,000 digital audio Bibles into homes in Malawi.

~ Mexico, Jim Loker, Talking Bibles International and others are working together to see that all completed translations in Mexico are placed into Talking Bibles.

~ Radio - Talking Bibles International provides Scripture recordings for broadcast into the Middle East and China.

~ American Christians and Talking Bibles International are partnering together to place Talking Bibles into the homes of 100,000 new believers in India.

~ Bible Society of India and Talking Bibles International are placing Talking Bibles with 1,000 blind people in India.

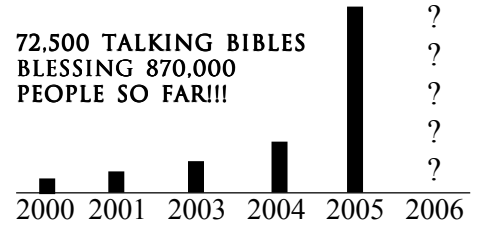
~ Nepal - Calvary Chapel, Bible Society of Nepal and Talking Bibles International are working together to record and produce Talking Bibles in the Lhomi language.

## The Talking Bible ---

In 2005 Talking Bibles became available in the following languages.

*Chichewa - Malawi*  
*Lingala - Congo*  
*Hausa - Nigeria*  
*Farsi - Iran*  
*Kosovo - Macedonia*  
*Kui - India*  
*Machi - India*  
*Baduga - India*  
*Amharic - Ethiopia*  
*Chinteco de Palantla - Mexico*  
*French - North Africa*  
*Lao - Laos*  
*Khmer - Cambodia* ?  
*Turkish - Turkey* ?  
*Zapoteco - Amatian* ?

**72,500 TALKING BIBLES  
 BLESSING 870,000  
 PEOPLE SO FAR!!!**



## News Briefs ---

~ Malawi - The two hundred Chichewa Talking Bibles that were hand carried into Malawi by 22 American Christians were used by eighteen local pastors for discipleship.

At the dedication service, the people danced with joy when the sun came out from behind a cloud and the solar panel began to play the Talking Bible.

~ Mexico - 15 New Testament translations have been recorded. Huichol, Mixe of Guichcovi, Zapoteco of Lachixio, Zapoteco of Texmelucan and Zapoteco of Yalalag are being recorded now.

~ Nepal - The Lhomi New Testament recording is underway.

~ Bangladesh - Common language Bengali recording is underway.

~ India - 5,000 Talking Bibles produced this year for non-reading families in India.

## The Talking Bible Project

**Talking Bibles International**, publisher;  
 Mark S. Hoekstra, editor

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Customer Service number 1-800-318-7262.  
 Contact Talking Bibles International directly or visit the website [www.TalkingBibles.org](http://www.TalkingBibles.org).  
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**Yes! I would like to reach the non-reading people of India with the Gospel message.**

**Talking Bibles**  
*God's Word in Action*

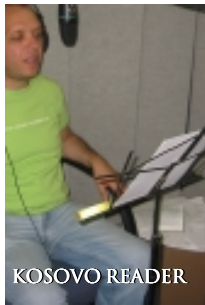
\_\_\_ \$18.00 to provide Talking Bibles and reach at least 4 people with the Good News.  
 \_\_\_ \$36.00 to provide Talking Bibles and reach at least 8 people with the Good News.  
 \_\_\_ \$72.00 to provide Talking Bibles and reach at least 10 people with the Good News.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ to provide \_\_\_ Talking Bibles, each Talking Bible is placed for \$72.00 and reaches at least 12 people with the Good News.

**To make your gift by credit card fill in the blanks below.**

CARD HOLDER NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNITURE (required) \_\_\_\_\_  
 CARD NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ EXP. DATE \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT \_\_\_\_\_

## Kosovo ---



KOSOVO READER

800,000 Kosovo speakers live in Macedonia - not one known believer among them and most of them do not read.

Talking Bibles International flew a reader in from Macedonia to record

the New Testament in Kosovo. Beceam spent two intense weeks of recording.

Our efforts provided the entire New

Testament in audio for the missionaries, evangelists and church planters working in Macedonia.



READER & TRANSLATOR

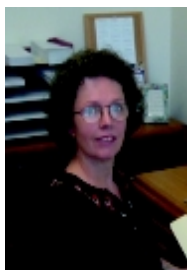


PROOF LISTENER

The Kosovo New Testament is available as a Talking Bible.

## We say Farewell ---

We want to thank Mrs. Peggy Brooks for the many years she served as Office Administrator.



Just before ASI and AAV merged to create Talking Bibles International, Peggy underwent surgery and was unable to help us with the merger of the ministry.

After some considerable time on medical leave, Peggy decided she would not return to work at Talking Bibles International.



***“Pray without ceasing.”***

1 THESS. 5:17

## Mozambique ---

Five hundred Talking Bibles and solar panels are speaking God's Word to the people.



LUKE WITH BACKPACK STUDIO

A couple of years ago, three young adults from Youth With a Mission came for training and went off to Mozambique to do the recording of Xsitswa New Testament. Luke was one of them. He stayed in Mozambique to carry on the distribution and follow-up of the Talking Bibles.

is blessing the people with the Talking Bible.

American Christians from several churches hand carried 500 Talking Bibles in the suitcases. These were given to Luke was here after spending two years in Mozambique with his story of how God



LUKE FIXING A TALKING BIBLE

As the Talking Bibles work their way into the homes in remote areas, people began to respond to the gospel message.



NATIVE PASTORS

One day the people walk for over a day to come for baptism. In a river near one of the villages, they filed into the water

and one by one and were baptized.

After that they built a bonfire and burned the fetishes and items used for witchcraft they had brought with them. These were all items given to them by the witch doctor and they were re-nouncing their power and burning.



NATIVE PASTORS RECEIVING TALKING BIBLES

## Venezuela ---

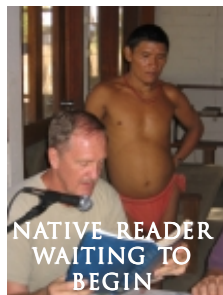
Project on Hold! New Tribes missionaries in Venezuela have been given until the 16<sup>th</sup> of February to leave the country.



RICK PACKING TALKING BIBLES

“You’ve come to put God’s leaves in the thing that turns and talks”.

The old native fellow had the right idea.



NATIVE READER WAITING TO BEGIN

Rick and Eunice, his wife, came to Talking Bibles for a week of training then took two backpack studios, 200 Talking Bibles, solar panels and re-chargeable batteries to Venezuela.



NEW TRIBES MISSIONARIES LEARNING RECORDING PROCESS.

Once in Venezuela Rick trained three missionary translators how to do the recordings. Each translator had their own language translation “God’s leaves” to be record and placed in the Talking Bible.

God’s Spoken Word comes with power to change lives, but only if the missionaries can finish their work.



NATIVE EVANGELIST