



focus

ON THE BIBLE TODAY

No Bible verse is an island

A little bit of effort can help you avoid common Bible-quoting pitfalls

Russell Doerksen
Special to ChristianWeek

Whether it be in church or on your Facebook feed, it seems there is a short and pithy Bible verse to solve every problem.

Do you feel overwhelmed? The kids especially irritable or the boss nagging a little too much? Just quote that one little section of 1 Corinthians 10:13 (God... will not let you be tested beyond your strength), and you will be fine.

While it may be comforting to use Scripture in this spell-like way, it can actually lead to a lessened understanding of what the Bible really says.

Below are three of the most misused verses in the Bible, and some simple things you can do to put a dent in the problem.

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains” (1 Timothy 6:10, NRSV).

I have a soft spot in my heart for this verse. I fondly remember an old friend quoting it at me while I was in business school.

If the wording of the first line sounds odd, you likely learned it with the translation that many consider to be “the holy one.” **“For the love of money is the root of all evil...” (KJV).**

Notice the large difference between these translations. In the KJV, love of money is the only root of evil, while in the NRSV it is not. Oddly, both readings are correct.

Because all languages work differently, translating word-for-word will rarely end in something intelligent. As such translators need to

work to smooth out the language, hence the difference.

As such, when you read check out some other translations. Seeing the verse and its surrounding context in another translation may help you better understand the passage.

It is easy to take what we read out of context, and when it comes to a book as important as the Bible, that can be a big problem.

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6, NIV).

Many use this verse to shame parents of loud children, but to do so they are misquoting it. That’s because to understand the verse, one must understand the genre of Proverbs.

Genre is what guides how we understand what we read. When we read a textbook, we expect to read explanations. When we read a romance novel, we expect a sappy love story.

Proverbs are tidbits of wisdom. Wisdom literature generally applies to only a particular circumstance or describes a specific likelihood. Under no circumstances should Proverbs be read as promises.

It is most likely that if parents raise their child right, their child

will behave. However, it is also possible for a child to become terrible on his or her own, even with great parents. Proverbs aren’t promises.

It is important to be mindful of genre when you read. How Proverbs should be read is different than how we are to read the gospels. If you read the entire Bible as a single genre, you’re going to get some of it wrong.

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13, NRSV).

Every year without fail there is one celebrity who recites this passage, usually at an awards show. This is unfortunate, because there is no better example of a verse being misused due to context.

In the passage where this verse is found, the Apostle Paul says it is best to be content in all things. As most understand it, being content

in all things is different than thanking God for winning you an Oscar.

No verse is in a vacuum, and it is important to always read a passage as part of the larger story. Take the time to learn about the historical context as well; the Bible was written over a span of thousands of years, in many different settings featuring many different people and people groups.

It is easy to take what we read out of context, and when it comes to a book as important as the Bible, that can be a big problem. Taking the time to understand what you read pays off, and if you do so the Bible will become alive in some wonderful new ways.

Russell Doerksen is the Managerial Editor of Providence Theological Seminary’s academic journal, *Didaskalia*. He enjoys writing about theology, the Bible and Christmas in particular.

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Bible translation gaining speed

What used to take a missionary 20-30 years is now taking less than a decade

Steven Sukkau
ChristianWeek Staff

New technology and indigenous translators are allowing organizations like OneBook to get Scriptures into the hands of language groups at unprecedented speeds. OneBook president Wayne Johnson says what used to take a missionary 20-30 years is now taking less than a decade, by empowering the indigenous speakers for the work.

Johnson says it's all part of an incredible change happening in the world of missions. Last year 90 per cent of new Christians came from the Global South and East where the church is experiencing rapid growth according to the U.S Centre for World Missions. In Cameroon the average age of members is 26.

"What you have is a young, growing church that has doubled in 10 years," Johnson says. Places like Cameroon have more Bible colleges and universities than all of Canada, and students can't graduate without first learning the art of Bible translation.

"Here's the reason, there are 286 languages in one country," Johnson explains of Cameroon. "The problem is the church [leaders] do all of their preaching in English and French. But in the communities, the difficulty is communicating in their mother tongue."

When a sermon comes through a translator, many fine points become lost. Johnson explains the NIV English Bible contains 11,000 words, but some local dialects can

contain only 2,000.

"What happens when you go to church and get a muddled message?" he asks. For example, he points out, passages like "The Word became flesh," in John 1:14 can be translated to "The Word became grilled meat."

"God is now their God. He is no longer a foreign god to them."

However, that's where OneBook has seen an incredible movement among the Global South. Indigenous communities are passionate about doing Bible translation for themselves, rather than wait decades for a missionary to complete it.

With the help of computers and enthusiastic translators who know their language intimately, OneBook is able to shorten the process from training translators to seeing a Bible in print to six to eight years.

"But it's still not fast enough," Johnson says.

Currently OneBook has translations for 70 languages in the works. Groups come to them and request a Bible in their mother tongue, and OneBook requests their best 20 translators to be sent for training. The result is an improved quality of the translation as well as speed.

Zebedee Chia, a language

program facilitator for OneBook Cameroon, says the work of translating Scripture is a job one must approach with fear and trembling. He says translators are very aware of their high calling and the incredible responsibility they carry in bringing the Bible to groups in their own languages.

The challenge is creating a translation that is natural, accurate, relevant to culture and clear.

"What do you do in a culture where the seat of honour is on the left hand, but Jesus is seated on the right hand of God?" he asks.

Yet despite the challenges, Chia says seeing the fruit of their labour keeps them going.

For people groups who have been given a written language, "it makes them feel like they matter," Chia says. "God speaks our language," many say after receiving a Bible in their mother tongue.

"God is now their God," Chia

says. "He is no longer a foreign god to them."

Along with the work of translating, funding is another area where local communities are taking ownership. Johnson says OneBook no longer funds 100 per cent of any project; instead locals raise support to get the project off the ground. And the results are startling.

"Greater community transformation comes when the community takes ownership," Johnson says. "They do it, we facilitate, and the impact changes significantly."

Through it all he says the hand of God is evident.

"God is doing a major work; mission methodology is changing," he says. OneBook has seen 15 New Testament translations and one Old Testament translation finished in the last 10 years. They expect to see 35 more completed in the next five.



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Century-old Bibles find a new home

Antique Bibles reveal lifetime of God's faithfulness

Steven Sukkau
ChristianWeek Staff

WINNIPEG, MB—A treasure-trove of Bibles from the late 1800s has found a home with Give the Word ministries. The rapidly-growing organization founded last year by Ryan Rempel provides free Bibles to anyone who needs them.

However, it was Rempel himself who recently received Bibles containing a wealth of history.

"A guy calls us out of the blue and says, 'I saw your article in *ChristianWeek* and had a nudge to give you a call, can I come down and see you?'" Rempel explains.

The donor arrived with two boxes full of Bibles that date back 100 years or more. The oldest was printed in 1895, others ranging up until 1943. Many are bound in cracked leather; some have pages badly yellowed, but for the most part they are in great condition after decades of careful use.

"These are Bibles people had been using to grow their faith over the years," Rempel says.

The 87-year-old man had been collecting Bibles for some time, Rempel says. After reading about Give the Word, he felt he should donate his collection.

"I was in a bit of shock," Rempel says.

He began opening up the Bibles and reading the notes people had written in the margins over 118 years ago. Writing about their faith journeys, their thoughts, prayers, celebrations, marriages, births, Rempel says he was deeply moved.

"It's evident that these Bibles were changing lives in the 1800s just like they are today," he says, adding he was especially struck by the verses the former owners highlighted, like Romans 12:21,

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

It is proof that, "the Bible is timeless and alive," Rempel says.

Instead of giving the older Bibles away, Rempel hopes to set up a display, showing how Bibles have changed through the decades up until the present, including the outreach Bibles Give the Word distributes today.

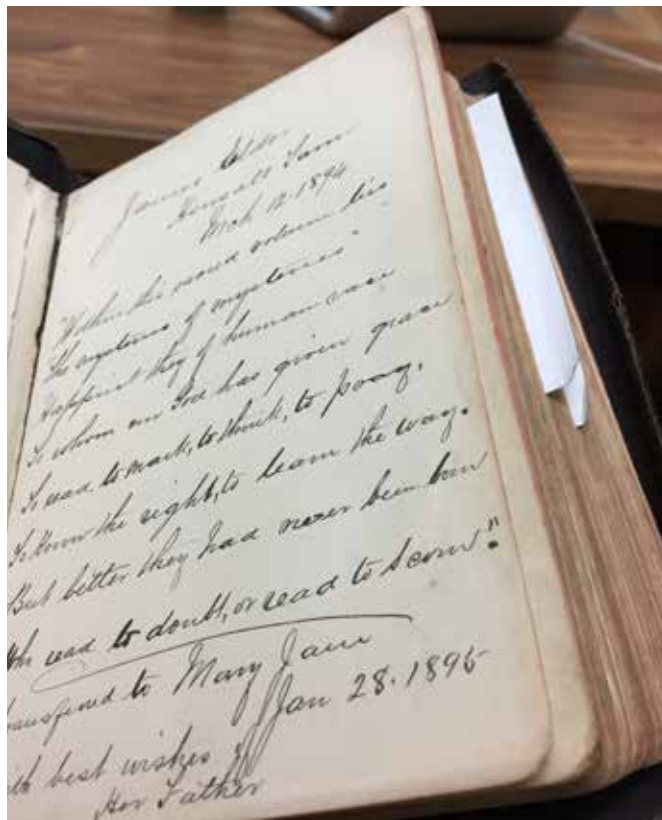
The gift is an encouragement, Rempel says, and spurs him and his small staff to continue to provide free Bibles for ministry and for those with a vision for outreach. He says they continue to receive calls from across the country, from ministers who can't afford to buy Bibles, but need them.

"Lots of organizations say they do lots of outreach and struggle to buy Bibles," Rempel says. "They can only afford 20, but could easily use 50. They say, 'Now we have a place to get them.'"

The sheer amount of testimonies Rempel is hearing is proof the Bibles are being put to good use. He has visited more than 50 churches in the last year, challenging those in attendance to grab a free Bible on their way out and have it on hand to give away when they see someone who could use it. "They give the Bible away and have this amazing experience, and then they want to do it again," Rempel says. "It's really cool to see the tangible fruit coming from this ministry."

The ministry has grown alongside Rempel's vision, though he says now it's a matter of finding the funding to match it. They hope to order 20,000 Bibles and are in the process of raising \$63,000.

While a daunting figure, Rempel looks to God to provide.



One of the oldest Bibles recently donated to Give the Word, dating back to 1895.

Photo by Steven Sukkau

In the end, Rempel says, it's not really about him. Instead he can only do his job and let God worry about the big stuff.

"This is God's ministry, why am I worrying?" he says.

To learn more visit givetheword.ca.

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New Bible reaching Canada's First Nations

Edition features testimonies from aboriginal leaders

Steven Sukkau
ChristianWeek Staff

WINNIPEG, MB—Staff at Canadian LifeLight Ministries are hopeful that a new Bible for First Nations will strike a chord with aboriginal communities.

"We saw a need and we're trying to fill it," says LifeLight project facilitator Ken McGhie.

After four years of planning, LifeLight has printed 30,000 of the First Nations LifeLight New Testaments to be distributed to more than 600 aboriginal communities in Canada.

"What can we do but share the good news of salvation? As Christian people it should compel us to plant a seed."

The New Testament features testimonies individuals such as well-known Christian hip-hop artist Fresh I.E, who shares of his story of overcoming a life of crime and substance abuse through God's love, as well as respected former Cree chief Kenny Blacksmith who shares how finding God helped him overcome a life of sin.

"It's important to see people finding hope in God," says McGhie.

The release of the new edition is

timely, says McGhie, as Winnipeg was recently named the most racist city in Canada by *Maclean's* magazine and is in need of healing and hope.

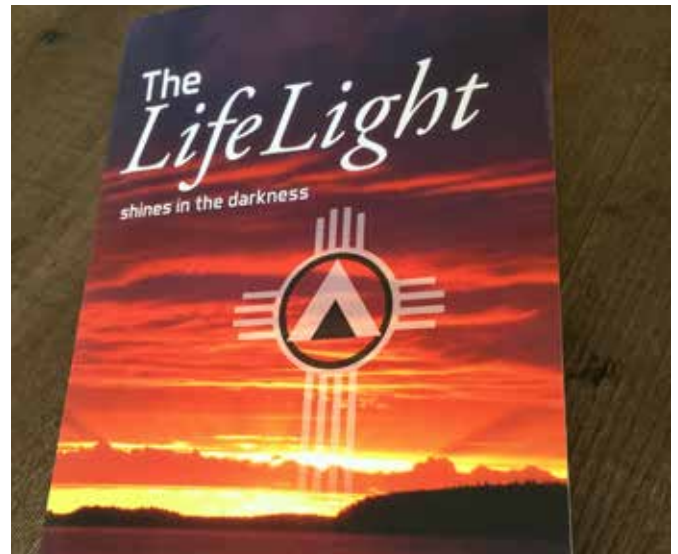
"What can we do but share the good news of salvation," McGhie says. "As Christian people it should compel us to plant a seed."

The Bibles are already having an impact.

McGhie tells the story of a native woman in Alberta who clutched him by the hand saying, "Please do what you can to get this Bible out to my people."

"It's the greatest gift to humanity, God's Word," McGhie says. He encourages people to prayerfully consider partnering with LifeLight to have more Bibles printed. A donation of \$200 provides a case of 50 Bibles.

Visit thelifelight.com for more information.



The First Nations LifeLight New Testament is being distributed to 600 aboriginal communities in Canada.

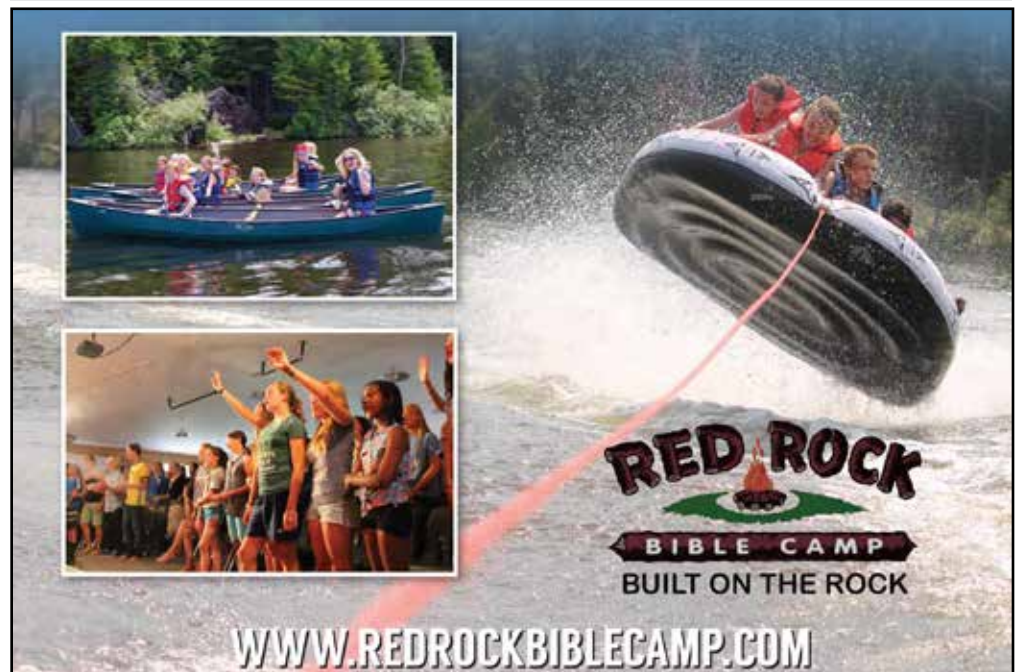
Photo by Steven Sukkau

High-quality experience draws students to camp

Red Rock Bible Camp

Great counsellors, challenging speakers and exciting activities are all part of attending a week at Red Rock Bible Camp in Manitoba's Whiteshell. Campers can choose from a number of activities like wakeboarding, mountain biking, archery, and drama.

"Thank you for the high-quality camping experience for my child," says one pleased parent. "I am always assured of safety at camp, quality meal provisions and accommodations. I am especially grateful for the focus on campers/staff developing a personal relationship with Jesus. I know that camp is a spiritual highlight for my children (as it was for me) and will never be forgotten. Be encouraged! Keep up the good work!"



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