

TUTORIAL 8.21

Ata Bible resources 1

This tutorial is taught by Kaikou Maisu and Mike Griffis and outlines the Bible resources available to the Ata church, Papua New Guinea.

Introduction

In the next three tutorials we will be hearing about Bible Resources from a local church elder, Kaikou Maisu, who is from the Ata people group in Papua New Guinea. The Gospel was first shared there by missionaries in 1992. If you'd like to see more about God's work there, you can watch the video on the AccessTruth website - *The Ata: God's Narrative Continues*.

Kaikou has been a believer since 1992. He has been involved in many outreaches in the Ata area, moving with his family to teach the Gospel in unreached villages. He was also co-translator for the Ata New Testament translation, which was published in the year 2000. He has been a faithful teacher and overseer in the Ata church as well as visiting and serving other local fellowships in various locations in Papua New Guinea.

Joining Kaikou to share about Bible Resources, is Mike Griffis. He and his family were invited in 2005 to move to an Ata village, where they learned the language and culture. Mike became part of an Ata village church leadership team for the five years they lived there, and was involved in teaching and discipleship as well as helping the Ata to adapt to cultural and technological changes. Mike served the Ata by helping them to be better equipped to partner with other churches and with the wider Body of Christ.

In this first tutorial, Kaikou and Mike will begin by sharing about some of the Resources that are available to the church.

The following is a transcript from the video for Tutorial 8.21.

KAIKOU -

Today we are going to explain the kinds of materials we have to help to support the life of the church and to help in the growth of the church, and also to give the believers assurance that they are truly God's children. These 'tools' that we are about to describe and show here, all

have one substantial foundation. All of these materials are based on what is in God's Word itself. Because we know that God's Word - that has been translated into the language of the people here and is now in their own language - is actually God Himself speaking to us, and God Himself who has revealed His will, and who has clearly communicated His plan for human beings. And so through His Word, we can understand His will, His plan, and His thinking. So having His Word in our language is not an insignificant thing, or an inconsequential thing. It is extremely important. Because it is through His Word that He is revealed or communicated to us. It is God Himself, in His Word.

So the first 'tool' that people need to help them understand God, is this book we call 'Highway'. But before we get into the material in 'Highway', there something helpful we share with people first that is in the form of an analogy to help them evaluate their existing beliefs. I'll share the analogy with you now.

The analogy talks about an old string bag and a new string bag. The old string bag represents the existing beliefs of the people, and all the things they were trusting in, like rituals, spirits, ancestor worship. And the new string bag represents the Word of God. Because God's Word is something new that they are about to hear. This analogy helps people to begin to understand, that the Word of God they are about to hear is something entirely new.

Then we begin to use the material in 'Highway' which clearly lays out God's desire and His overall plan from His Word. When people hear all of that, they understand the reason people exist, and what their real standing before God is. They hear God's Word clearly in a way that helps them to really understand it. Their eyes are opened and they understand how God really sees them. This first course of teaching from Genesis to Christ, reveals for them what their real need actually is. The teaching in 'Highway' gradually builds a foundation of truth in the lives of those who are hearing it, so they come to clearly see what their real need is. Which of course is that their trust should be in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So then after they become God's children, then what should we teach them? Should we go straight to the Epistles? No. Instead we build slowly on the foundation they have, and we use another resource we call 'Branch Road'. Because once people have heard God's Word taught clearly from the beginning, and they have become His children, then the material in this 'tool' helps them to understand their true position, 'inside' the Grace of God, and the love of God, and that the basis of their new life is only Christ Himself. This material here helps them to understand their position, and that they can truly find "rest" in their new life of faith.

As we have already said, we share the material in 'Branch road' with people, so that they will understand their position, and know that they are safe in Christ. It's true they still live in this world of sin, but they know they are 'in Him', and that God loves them and is pleased with them, because His Son is perfect and without sin. And because of that they know that there is nothing that can ever take them out of the position of acceptance they have with God because of Christ.

MIKE -

So as we are describing the way in which resources are developed for the church, we are mentioning here in the first series of resources that are developed, how those resources focus on the way in which the people who are listening, are first understanding the foundations of God's Word being taught. So therefore they are hearing the story of God's character as it is established, for example, in the book of Genesis; God clearly at work amongst the people who existed at that time; God showing forth His character in the way in which He handled His relationship with human beings from the beginning. They are seeing the way in which the book of Genesis moves forward and God develops a chronology of that narrative as He continues, in different stages and in different ways, to work with human beings to help them to clearly understand the moving forward to Christ, and the way in which their sin has created a barrier between them and God in that process.

So that first narrative that is being taught is the establishment of God's character and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as well, in the way in which God moves from His character, up in to Christ. So then when we reach the life of Christ, not only have we established the clear flow of the narrative and not only have we established the need of people for salvation, but we have also begun to build significant foundations through the series of lessons, such that it points forward towards a firm place where this new church that is going to exist, can develop to maturity - looking forward into the future.

KAIKOU -

The next thing we teach is the Acts of the Apostles. But why would we teach people the Acts of the Apostles next? Well, it's because people can see that today there are many different churches, but they can see the true foundation of that work in Acts and how God Himself planted that first church in Jerusalem. They can see that whoever believed in Christ, became His gathering, or His Body on the earth. And they understand the work of the Holy Spirit as they see His power demonstrated through the lives of the Apostles. And they also learn that in their new lives, as the Holy Spirit now lives in them, that His work is to guide and lead God's children today also. So, as we teach people

through the book of Acts, they begin to truly understand the foundation of new life that they now have.

But they also hear about the responsibility and the work that the Lord Jesus gave to the Apostles to take His Word out to other communities. God sent them out to do that. So people come to see that same responsibility is now theirs today. God has given that responsibility to His Church and they are the way for His Word to get to all the people who have not yet heard. So we teach from the Acts of the Apostles so that they understand they are part of His Body.

After teaching from Acts, we go to another resource that teaches from Romans. The reason we now begin to teach people from Romans is because we know that Romans lays out all of the foundational truths for their new lives. When new believers hear what God teaches in His Word in Romans, they hear how they should now walk, and how they should now live. And they hear where the strength comes from for them to continue in their new walk. They learn that it is faith in God and that it is His strength that they have to live in each day. Each day they get their strength to walk with God from the Holy Spirit. So the teaching from Romans is a wonderful resource. It really provides a solid foundation for the new walk of faith for God's children.

After we have taught from the book of Romans, we can continue to build on that foundation with the other Epistles. We move on to teaching from Ephesians, because by this point God's children have already heard what the foundations are for their walk of faith, and now they need to hear what the basis for their growth is. Ephesians describes all the good things God has given us for our spiritual growth. And it clearly teaches that the basis for all of those things is faith. Faith in the work of Christ is the basis for all the good things God does in our spiritual lives.

As well as that, the believers come to understand their part in the Body. There are many groups of believers and they live in different places and cultures, but the reality is that they are all one. Because of their shared faith, God sees them all as one, and He has given them all His Holy Spirit.

They also get foundational help in the area of marriage. God teaches them about marriage by using an analogy, so that husbands understand how to really look after their wives and children, and wives know their role in the family and in supporting their husbands in the best way. In order to explain that clearly, the analogy of the Church of Christ is used, specifically the relationship between the Church, and Christ as the Head of the Church. The believers get a huge amount of help from that.

MIKE -

So as you hear us articulating the foundations of the church, I assume you are getting a sense that we are describing a process and a view toward the maturity of the church that is a long and extensive process. That's why these resources are here before us.

As Kaikou mentioned, in the establishment of these new believers in Christ, they as individuals are hearing about their sin and about the salvific purposes of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are understanding that the Lord wants them to have a new identity in Him. So they as individuals are being established one by one in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His righteousness. And yet at the same time we want them to understand the way in which their new life in Christ as individuals connects back to the early foundations of the Church as well. And so for that reason, as Kaikou mentioned, we go into the book of Acts next, so that the historical setting of the Church is clear. So that we have a very clear understanding of the way in which, whatever churches emerge after the fact, have connected clearly back to the way in which the Apostles worked in the book of Acts. Not only that these Apostles existed in some sort of a theoretical way, but that it was in real life settings that they were ministering. They had heard the truth taught, and they were ministering themselves in their very real historical context.

So as we are teaching the book of Acts, [we need to be] establishing those historical contexts and establishing the people - the personalities of those authors - very clearly. And establishing the locations in maps, showing how they worked, where they travelled, what they endured, how the Gospel changed their individual identities. And not only on an individual basis, because we want then to show how these churches were emerging through the work of personalities like Paul and Peter. How these churches, these congregations of believers were gathering, and explaining that historical context in such a way that in the places where we are planting churches today - that individuals are making decisions to connect their identities to the person of Jesus Christ. That they are also understanding the way in which He is bringing them together as new groups of believers with a corporate identity that connects back to those early Apostles in the book of Acts. And that the way they suffer or endure hardship today is a reflection of the roots of the faith that are seen and represented by those personalities in the early days of the Church.

So as that corporate identity is growing in the book of Acts, we need to explain the person of the Holy Spirit. We know that early on in Acts it is described clearly how the Spirit came and gave gifts to the Church. It is an early foundation for leadership development in the church - the Holy Spirit being the source of strength and power that they will depend on

into the future as they together, as a body of believers, move forward in their growth to maturity.



DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. What would you say are two or three of the top considerations for Kaikou as he thinks about the particular Bible teaching the believers under his care should hear?
2. Summarize, in point form, any specific things mentioned by Kaikou and Mike that believers can come to understand through the book of Acts.