

TUTORIAL

8.23

# Ata Bible resources 3

This tutorial is taught by Kaikou Maisu and Mike Griffis and outlines the process of discipleship for local believers as they took on the responsibility of developing Bible resources for the Ata church, Papua New Guinea.

## Introduction

In this last tutorial from Kaikou and Mike, they talk about the process of resource development, specifically the discipleship process for the Ata men as they began to take on the roles of Bible teaching, leading and developing teaching resources. They also discuss the importance of written resources in safeguarding the truth.

*The following is a transcript from the video for Tutorial 8.23.*

MIKE -

We have previously described the theoretical or the philosophical basis, or the rationale for the way in which resources are developed for the church, and we have described God's Word, obviously, as a foundation for that. Now we would like to move to more of a discussion of the shared responsibility and process for the resources that we see here before us and that are important tools for the work of the church.

So now we would like to change topics a little bit and talk about the way in which the church, and the church planters who are in that situation, have shared ownership of the process of developing resources; the shared responsibility that represents. And the way in which our desire is to see the church feel fully equipped for taking full ownership for the ongoing development of the resources that the church requires as they move ahead in their growth to maturity. So, we hope to insert some 'snapshots' along the process of all of these resources having been developed, such that we can see the way in which that balance of shared responsibility changes over the course of time.

In order to be able to do that, as we see and assume lots and lots of written texts before us, we have to return to the very foundational idea of not only God's Word being made available as the primary resource,

but also people being able to read and write that. Read and write in their own languages, read and write material that will help them as they move forward in the tools being developed.

And so Kaikou is going to begin to share that process of learning to read and write and then going on into the development of the resources themselves as the church moved forward in maturity.

#### KAIKOU -

Like Mike said, we are going to talk about something foundational to the life of the church. The local language literacy school has a very important role, because people need to learn how to read and write. If people gain the skill of reading, then it helps them because they are able to read God's Word for themselves. It's true that they are able to hear it from those who stand up and teach it, but it is much more helpful to them if they can read it for themselves as well. Then if they are in their homes, or wherever they are, they can read. Whatever issues they are facing in life, they can go and read. So the work of teaching literacy is very important, because it allows people to learn to read and write in their own language.

As I already said, being able to read and write in their own language is a huge help to the believers. We have some resources here to help those who teach literacy, to guide them in the best way to help their students, as they teach them to read fluently and to write well. These literacy resources help them to do their work well. And there are other resources like this that are specifically for students that give them exercises and practice in both reading and writing.

I'd like to give an example to explain the relationship between the work of developing Bible teaching resources, and the work of teaching people to read and write. The fact is that literacy teaching, and the teaching of the Word of God, must go together, they can't be separated. Because if you just have Bible teaching without literacy, it's helpful of course, but people need to be able to read God's Word so He can speak directly to them. Because without that, then the foundations just won't be very strong. But if a person is able to read, they know that God is speaking directly to them.

So what can I say about the work of teaching people to read... imagine, for example, a bird trying to fly with only one wing. It wouldn't be able to fly to another place. It couldn't even fly into a tree. But having two wings allows that bird to fly. It's the same with this tool that helps the believers in the church if they are able to read and write well. They are able to gain and learn so much more from God's Word, and have a much

greater ability to take it to other communities that don't yet have any access to God's Word.

Once people are able to read and write in their own language, then that gives them the ability and the confidence to become teachers of God's Word. In the beginning, those that first began God's work here carried the full responsibility for it. They prepared the teaching material, and they stood up and taught God's Word. Then local men began to take part and to share in that work. They were able to do that because they had confidence in their ability. They were confident firstly because of their literacy skills, and also because of all the Bible teaching they had heard. Those two things really helped them to begin to share the work. They knew that they had a level of literacy to be able to teach.

So in the beginning it really was only the work of those who started the work, they did it and were responsible for it, because they were the only ones able to do it then. But then quite quickly local people learned to read, and they understood the Word because they had heard it taught clearly. Then they felt equipped to be able to teach others as well.

They were disciplined and equipped gradually. At first just sharing a short portion from the early Bible teaching material. Because at the time that material from 'Highway' was first being taught, the people listening always knew they had the opportunity to stand up and share their praise and joy with others about what they were hearing. And that time provided a great opportunity for people to stand up and begin to share with others who were hearing God's Word. Then as time passed, their understanding deepened, as they were hearing more and more of God's Word. And as they studied too God helped them grow in their understanding. And so they felt more and more equipped to take on the responsibility for teaching and sharing God's Word as part of the work.

They were hearing the Bible teaching in the village meeting, then as they were back in their own homes, they saw it as an opportunity, to discuss and share with one another the truth that they "owned" as their own. So in their homes they discussed together this new truth they were hearing, because they were so amazed by God's Word. Also there were resources to help believers who wanted to teach, like recordings that were made of the teaching, which helped new teachers as they talked about what had been taught. And they could discuss with each other what was being taught. Then eventually the local teachers were able to teach longer portions, or ask questions about what had been taught.

So the responsibility for the work began to change hands from the beginning. Because people were being equipped with literacy skills, and they were being equipped by God through His Word as they heard

it. Because they felt equipped they were confident to teach even though it was something entirely new for them. And it was a wonderful thing for them and for those listening.

MIKE -

So Kaikou has described up until now, the earliest stage, or snapshot of the way in which the resource of God's Word has been used and the tools that accompany that in teaching. We wanted to mention also, in conjunction with that, that we are seeing, and trying literally and very definitely, to find opportunities for those who are participants in hearing the Word of God taught, to be included as much as possible in the process of they, themselves, being responsible to share God's Word with others around them.

So we are hearing the way in which, very early on in the progression of being taught - even for the first time - that the attempt is made to give over responsibility in certain areas of teaching to those who are hearing and them being included as participants in the work. Because the recognition is that they need to begin to take responsibility for as much as they can. And yet, at the same time, we are wanting to give care to the way in which that responsibility is handed over. Not only because we want to see God creating a clear identity for them in their engiftment through the Holy Spirit enlivening their hearts and giving gifts to them - perhaps as teachers, for example. So those we identify who might have the gift to teach, we want that gift to begin to be used, or implemented in the way that they are working together with church planters in those settings.

Not only that, but also very significantly they are exhibiting a desire to apply the truth that they have heard, that they have received. Even in the early stages, of demonstrating a faithful desire, a faithful hunger, for the Word of God to truly apply to their lives so that a growing sense of humility in their place in God's plan is accompanying that engiftment that we see exhibited. So just the caution of taking care in the early stages to cultivate a process of discipleship that accounts for both engiftment, and accounts for a genuine desire to apply God's Word to our lives as we move forward, growing as His disciples and look forward to the leadership roles that God might have for each one in the church.

So as God's Word is being taught for the first time, there is a group of hearers who have taken in God's Word, have applied it to their lives, who have become believers, some who have begun to take on certain areas of responsibility in the re-communication of God's Word. As that body of truth grows and is understood, as the momentum in the desire for God's Word being shared with others around them and in other communities - as that momentum and that hunger grows, and the

recognition that the church that has been formed is sharing responsibility for sharing God's Word out to others - comes into existence, then we see the resources that have been applied by that group of growing believers in a new setting. Those resources can then be shared outward again to others. And at this time we see opportunities for these ones who have been growing in their understanding of how to teach those resources through various means that Kaikou is describing, they begin to reach out to others and to actually carry the primary responsibility for being the teachers in those new settings where they are going to share God's Word.

#### KAIKOU -

As he said, the resources are a help to those people who are beginning to teach God's Word, and who are beginning to take it to people who haven't yet heard. All of these resources are a support and help to new teachers, who feel it is their responsibility to share God's Word with others. These resources give them the ability to take God's Word out and to share the Word with those who haven't heard.

Often that means they will suffer and face many challenges as they do that. But they are dedicated to that work because they want people to believe. And they know that whatever suffering they go through, it will only deepen their resolve to continue to do their work. They are convinced that their work of taking God's Word to new communities, is their God-given responsibility, and they represent their local fellowships also. And when are out living and working in other communities, they know they find support and encouragement from their local churches, and also further teaching from God's Word. All of these resources that have been provided to help them, are a great encouragement to them as they go out to teach those who haven't heard as well as those within the church.

We have been talking about the work of taking God's Word to new communities, and an important part of that is how they will continue to grow. They won't be able to grow unless they are hearing more teaching from God's Word, and they also need resources for teaching and discipleship. Those who are going to teach them have access to good resources, and can get further teaching and lesson material, to help them in their work. So when they are working in a new community, they can work with the people in that community, and teach God's Word in a clear and systematic way, so that it provides a good model for the people there.

They should carefully build the foundations of truth so the people can grow in their spiritual understanding. And if they are going to help existing churches, where the truth of God's Word has been planted

before, then they shouldn't just teach whatever they feel like teaching. They should think about the overall progression of God's work there, and teach the specific material that is needed for healthy growth. So one church might need teaching at a specific point, and another church might be at a different point. So different teachers might be using different resources, depending on which community they are teaching. The important consideration is to carefully build the foundation of truth, which is what God desires for each particular group of His children. To be fed so that they grow in a healthy way, from the part of God's Word that will help them most in that growth.

MIKE -

So as Kaikou is describing the way in which we make use of God's Word and specifically make use of these written resources that are tools for outreach to other communities, and we all together as believers in these situations stand on the common basis of our understanding of what has been carefully recorded, both in God's Word, and what has been provided in resources that help us to understand a common process for sharing God's Word with others.

We want to highlight that that creates a safeguard, even in situations where people groups would be described by some perhaps as 'oral cultures' or that 'orality' would be the primary basis for the ways in which they relate to one another. And yet we are introducing a written system, or a way to provide parameters or boundaries, such that as God's Word is communicated, from one set of communicators - leaders perhaps - to the next, that we all understand the mutual boundaries and basis for that. Then as you can imagine, as God's Word gets extended farther and farther beyond that point of origin, that we all together have a comfort level and are understanding the way in which God's Word is going to be understood and the way in which God's Word is going to be applied to each individual life as those hearers take that in, and then form communities of believers, form churches for themselves.

So that shared identity in God's written Word and in the resources that are written down and passed down from one group to another, are really significant in that process.

To this point we have described the introductory ways in which that balance of shared responsibility - between those who are being taught for the first time God's Word, and those who are the initial teachers of God's Word - how that responsibility is balanced and shared. Our ultimate goal and desire is for those new believers who are growing in maturity to eventually take full ownership of this set of curricula that is being developed for the benefit of the church. So we have described these first steps of their going out with this resource that has been

developed to new areas, new teaching opportunities, and they themselves taking responsibility for teaching that new material.

As we progress then through what we would describe as the foundational framework of the Epistles, that we have talked about, we continue to find ways to engage the growing disciples and growing teachers in the process of the development of this curriculum. Perhaps in opportunities of application, of God's Word to their lives, as we develop these lessons. Or in areas of the ways in which their own cultural background understanding comes to bear on what is being taught from God's Word, or supporting resources and texts that they have heard already from other parts of the Scripture prior to this point, that they bring those in to the way in which we write lessons.

As we move forward, we are moving towards a time when those who are demonstrating responsible application of God's Word to their own lives and demonstrating the kind of aptitude that we see in those we want to see as leaders in the church. As we are teaching forward we come to the time when we are teaching in Timothy and Titus and we are clearly explicating the qualifications for those leaders, the qualifications that we want those leaders to have, and we see those who are applying that standard to their lives. There comes a time when we indeed appoint leaders in the church who take on the eldership role and responsibility for those bodies of believers.

So as we come to that point then, we sense the opportunity again for another kind of a shift in responsibility and ownership of this curriculum development process that's ongoing for the church. And Kaikou is going to talk a little bit about some of the steps that occur as this growing group of leaders who have demonstrated competency in applying God's standard for their lives, that as they move forward in development of curriculum, some of the kinds of steps that they might be involved in.

#### KAIKOU -

We are going to talk about the church developing teaching resources, so that they can continue to grow. The task of developing teaching material is the responsibility of the elders of the church. But when did they take on that responsibility?

When we first heard the teaching from Revelation, there were no fully developed Bible lessons given to us for that. The lessons were taught clearly and fully to us, but the actual written lessons were not put in the hands of the church. That was going to be the work of the teachers and elders to develop those written lessons themselves. They began by writing the points that they would later use to teach from. These points were written when they heard the lessons being taught. This marked

quite a change in the work of lesson development, as it became the work of the believers, or the leaders. The new lesson material was still taught to us, but the writing of lessons was done by the church leaders. They would hear the lesson taught, they would write down points, then they would develop lessons and teach them to the churches.

Then we moved on to Philippians. There was another development as we prepared Philippians lessons. There were no lessons, because it was the responsibility of the leaders to read it and to discuss how it should be taught to the believers. We read through the whole book and talked about it, using our understanding and the foundation of truth that we had, to decide how it should be presented to the believers. We began by writing down all of the important headings, then we worked together to flesh out the lessons fully using those headings. The Holy Spirit helped us in our work and we finished all the lessons.

Then we took those lessons and taught them to some of the believers. We wanted to check their comprehension. And those believers helped us to make changes to the flow of the lessons, or to make some of the examples communicate more clearly, and generally to give input on how the lessons communicated. Once that comprehension check was done, we taught those lessons to the whole group of Bible teachers. These are the steps we went through in learning to develop lessons. We taught the lessons to all the Bible teachers, so then they could go out and teach them in the churches where they work.

MIKE -

So as Kaikou has described some of the progressions that we see in opportunities for those who are leaders and who are growing in maturity in the church, to engage with this process of curriculum development - the development of resources for the church. What we are trying to illustrate is not so much the specific prescription of opportunity, as much as the *kinds* of opportunities that we want to encourage. We are trying to foster a genuine growth in confidence based on a common understanding of the Scriptures in the various places where we are teaching.

As we have established that underlying framework - in the beginning that we remember, that started with Genesis and moved its way through Acts and into the Epistles, establishing the life of the church, their understanding of their growing life in the Lord Jesus Christ in His grace, moving into the future era of God's culmination of all events in the end times that we see in Revelation - we have established that underlying framework, both as a narrative progression but also as a Biblical theological progression. So on the basis of that underlying narrative framework, then we feel confident as we encourage the process and



progress of these steps of involvement, that there is a substantial safeguard basis for these teachers to continue to develop lessons that would be of benefit to the church, based on God's Word that they have previously received.

I think about two different aspects of what we would describe as a further along place of ownership and responsibility for teachers in lesson development. One is this continuing growth in the opportunities for learning in technological helps that may or may not be available to them. For example, in their early days, of literally doing notes in notebooks and using a blackboard to write the lessons out, and it was quite a tedious and lengthy process. Then having opportunity later to introduce computer technology and to allow those who have the aptitude to learn to type to be the ones to help to input those lessons so they can be sent away to be printed - either printed locally, or printed in another place where printing is available. But nonetheless, the idea that many times there is an accompanying technological development that really facilitates the growth in the ability of the teachers practically to produce the lessons or the curriculum that they are working on.

In addition then, to see the team coming to a point where their ownership of the process is as extensive as them being able to read together books of the Scriptures, books of the New Testament or perhaps some books of the Old Testament, and together to read that book sufficiently well - to use the translation that has been developed and to use the outline that is available in the translation itself - to outline the logical flow of the teaching material. And together to actually create a teaching outline for the flow of that book of the Bible, and then together to be able to flesh out, not only the narrative or the expositional content of the book, but also to feel very confident in that expositional flow to insert culturally relevant applications. To insert supporting texts that would now include a large part of the New Testament and some of the Old Testament as well and then to be able to apply those lessons that they are developing to people's lives in the community around them in the way that they feel very confident that the parameters that have been established over the course of quite a long period of time, of learning to apply God's Word to their lives in a very personal way and of growing in confidence in the exposition of God's Word, and teaching God's Word. A solid foundation has been established, giving them confidence that they can really take on the whole process from start to finish of reading God's Word for themselves, having resources that have been developed, being able to gather as a team to develop new teaching material, to put it into a form where they call all collectively access it and then to teach it to the church and to feel confident that at the end of the process they have taught God's Word

faithfully and clearly in a culturally relevant way to the communities in which they are living.



## **DISCUSSION POINTS**

*Ata Bible resources 3*

1. Summarize in point form what Kaikou and Mike say about the role of literacy.
2. Think about the process of discipleship described here - as it relates to the development of resources - and summarize in point form the process of the shift in responsibility from the church planters to the local leaders and believers.