

Bible Listening At Its Best!

FAITH COMES BY HEARING GOD'S WORD

By W. Paul Smith, a member of Wycliffe Bible Translators for nearly forty years

"Good health is like gasoline in a truck," explains an illiterate Indian of Bolivia. . "Sometimes good health runs out and we have to buy more from a shaman (witchdoctor). He gets it from heaven, but we have to pay whatever he demands and do everything he says." The shaman may require an ailing customer to hang the carcass of a puppy, the heart of a dog, or a dead lizard around the neck.

"Illiteracy is a millstone around the neck of progress," writes British statesman Sir Charles Jeffries.

Literacy pioneer Frank Laubach called illiterates "the most bruised people on this planet, the naked, the hungry, the fallen among thieves, the sick, the imprisoned in mind and soul, afraid of educated men in this life and of demons in the next."

We must put a very high priority on giving the Gospel to non-readers throughout the world. But how? The vast majority of illiterates are not motivated to learn to read, millions don't have radios or TVs, there are not enough evangelists and teachers, and not enough time!

This generation's key tool for reaching non-readers with the Gospel is the Word of God recorded on cassette tapes. Nothing is more effective for church planting and spiritual growth among illiterates than audio cassettes.

Certainly, radio, TV and videos are vital evangelistic tools, and God is using these in a wonderful way, but we must realize that a one-shot Gospel presentation does not assure the new converts' spiritual growth in the following days. Only daily access to God's word makes the growth process possible. With scriptures available on tape, illiterates do not have to learn new skills--all they have to do is listen!

In Nigeria, Nwibo and his drinking companions used to cut each other with knives, for sport. After Nwibo heard the Gospel on tape, he became a believer. Later, he sent a letter to me, written for him by a Christian brother: "I used to worship 'juju' charms, sacrificing valuable fowls to them daily. But when a cassette player was brought to my house, I believed. I abandoned my jujus and destroyed them. I thank God for sending his Word on cassettes to us Izi people."

One of the Izi Christian leaders reported, "Once a new Bible tape is made available, it takes the people only a few days to memorize every word on the tape. It is just wonderful!"