



Auslan Bible Translation

Overview

The Auslan Bible project is working on Bible translation for people in the Australian Deaf community, Opening The Bible to those who can't hear it.

The Need

The Australia Census report indicates that just over 16,000 people use Auslan in Australia. This number includes both first language and second language users.

Auslan is the language of the Australian Deaf community, characterised by the use of hands, bodies, and facial expressions to convey meaning. It is a distinct visual language with its own grammar and vocabulary, not merely a representation of English through signs. The term 'Auslan', a blend of the words 'Australian Sign Language', was coined by Trevor Johnston in the 1980s, though the language itself has older roots, evolving from British Sign Language (BSL).

Auslan is not only an important language for Deaf people to be able to communicate with one another, it is also important as it has the potential for bridging gaps in communication and social interaction between deaf and hearing individuals. When an entire community embraces and uses Auslan, it can foster an environment where both Deaf and hearing have an equal voice and a means of communication through which they can easily connect with others.

To date, portions of the Old and New Testaments have been translated into Auslan, however there is much of the Bible yet to be translated, and there is a notable lack of Scripture engagement resources in Auslan, particularly for children and young adults.



16,000+

people in Australia use Auslan at home (2021 Australian census)

+/- 4,000

reported Auslan users in each state of QLD, VIC, & NSW

< 2,000

reported Auslan users in SA & WA

100-400

reported Auslan users in NT, ACT & TAS

But as the Scriptures say, "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard about him will understand!"

Romans 15:21, ERV

Goals

The goal of this project is to facilitate the translation of the Bible into Auslan. Amy Cruickshanks, a linguist and translation consultant at Bible Society Australia, is collaborating with Rebecca Thurrowgood from Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Auslan Committee to develop resources for Deaf communities and churches throughout Australia.

The growth of technology has made it possible to develop more Bible engagement resources in Auslan than ever before. In 2024, work will continue on updating the Auslan Bible website, making it easier for people to use. Another goal in 2024 is to produce children's Bible Stories and other resources in Auslan, and to establish connections with Deaf communities nationwide to ensure effective engagement with the Auslan language community.

Impact

For two and a half decades, since Bible Society was approached by Christians in the Deaf community to help them translate the Bible into Auslan, a translation team has worked under translation consultant John Harris and project chair Mac Adam, and more recently with BSA's Amy Cruickshanks and Wycliffe's Rebecca Thurrowgood. The team have published John, Acts, selections of the Pentateuch, selections of Paul's epistles, as well as a full retelling of the story of Jesus (a combination of all four Gospels). At times, the Auslan translation team were leading the rest of the world with innovative translation processes for the Deaf. In 2023, work was done updating the Auslan Bible website, making it easier for people to use.

The impact of this project will be seen as over 16,000 daily users of Auslan have the opportunity to engage with the Bible more fully. Through the Auslan translation, Deaf people in Australia are provided the tools to understand the message of the Bible in greater depth — many to understand it for the first time.

Testimonies

"I didn't realise how isolated the Deaf community is, particularly Deaf Christians and how few resources there are available for them." — Louise Sherman, Bible Society Australia

Prayer Needs

- Please pray for ongoing translation work, especially with a new committee on board.
- Pray for wisdom as the team chart the way forward.
- Praise God for the spiritual growth and sharing made possible by the Auslan Scriptures.