



Sign Language Gospel

Overview

The Ceylon Bible Society (CBS) is translating the Gospel Parables of Jesus into Sign Language for the Christian deaf community in Sri Lanka, partnering with Christian Churches and other organisations in the country.

The Need

There are more than 300,000 deaf and hearing-impaired people in Sri Lanka. Approximately 9% of Sri Lanka's population suffer from some form of hearing disorder (World Health Organization, 2019). Moreover, Sri Lanka's deaf community is marginalised socio-politically, and deaf people are unable to get required services efficiently from schools, hospitals, banks, courts and more, due to the lack of Sinhala to Sign Language interpretation support.

There are currently only five Christian schools for the deaf in Sri Lanka, and only five church denominations translate their church services into Sign Language. A visit to the School for the Deaf in Ratmalana convinced the Ceylon Bible Society of the importance of providing the children and young people with the Scriptures in their own language — sign language



300,000+

deaf or hearing-impaired people in Sri Lanka
(Sri Lanka Federation of the Deaf data)

<8%

of Sri Lankans are Christians

26

schools for the deaf in Sri Lanka, 5 of them are Christian schools

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy!"

Proverbs 31: 8-9, NIV

Goals

This project aims to make key biblical narratives accessible to the deaf community in Sri Lanka by creating gospel selections in Sri Lankan Sign Language in video format.

The team has successfully recorded the 'Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ' narratives in 2023 which included the integration of the recorded content into the Sri Lankan Sign Language Translation (SLTT) software, along with a glossary into Sinhala, Tamil and English. The team has hired artists to include illustrations to the narratives and received help from Bible scholars to ensure that members understand deep Biblical meanings.

Training and regular committee meetings to plan and coordinate the project's key components are also part of the process, to ensure an accurate representation and clear communication using Sri Lankan Sign Language. In 2024, this project will launch the 'Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ' video at Easter time, as well as commence work on the 'Baptism of Jesus' narrative in Matthew 2:13-15.

Impact

This project aims to impact at least 1,000 people, with a greater potential impact, as the estimated number of Christians who are deaf is around 20,000. The project will also strengthen churches to work more closely with the deaf community. The resources will improve the quality of churches for the deaf, and result in more deaf people being able to be involved in Bible ministry.

The Gospel Parables in Sign Language will be a resource for deaf people and may motivate them to study the Bible. Despite the challenges they face, they can experience more of the love and faithfulness of God. It is hoped that it will make them feel that they are a valuable in God's eyes.

Testimonies

"The life story of Jesus portrayed in Sri Lankan Sign Language has received positive feedback from the audience ... Many deaf individuals from the deaf community expressed their gratitude for having the opportunity to watch the life story of Jesus in Sri Lankan Sign Language. They appreciated the efforts put into creating sign language content that is specifically catering to their needs, allowing them to connect with the story on a deeper level.

"Individuals who watched the Sri Lankan Sign Language rendition of the life story of Jesus shared that it enhanced their spiritual experience. They mentioned feeling inspired, uplifted, and motivated to deepen their faith and relationship with God."

— Ceylon Bible Society Team

Prayer Needs

- Please pray for the people who are signing this resource, that they would be able to learn the correct signs, and that God grant them wisdom in translating Bible texts into signs.
- Pray for the editing and recording of the 'Life story of Jesus' series. Thank God for the wonderful work that is currently in progress and pray that it would be a blessing to the deaf community in Sri Lanka.
- Pray for good collaboration among the team and continued funding for the project into the future as the economic crisis in the country has affected everyone.