

Using people's 'heart language' always makes a difference, writes
Ruth Eardley



MESSAGE RECEIVED AND UNDERSTOOD

It was an ordinary working day but my friend was wearing a gorgeous sari in red and gold. 'I don't get many thank you cards' she confided, 'but I do get a lot of hugs'. She is a GP in an area of Leicester where there is a large Asian community and she speaks four ('or five – if you count Urdu') Asian languages – besides flawless English.

The hugs are from old ladies who speak only their mother tongue. They hail from the Punjab and the Gujarat, from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Some have lived most of their lives in Leicester but have never mastered Received Pronunciation let alone a 'propah Lestah' accent and a glottal stop. They usually bring a daughter-in-law or grandchild to the surgery to translate. How wonderful to get an appointment with my friend – they can attend in privacy and alone; they can express themselves and understand the questions; there is true communication and not so much compliance as concordance.

'What do the old men do?' I asked. 'Oh, they still see me,' she smiled. 'They shake my hand for a long time and their eyes fill with tears. But no hugs!'

By a happy coincidence, Leicester is associated with William Carey who loved the people of India and learned their dialects. He 'translated the Scriptures in part into thirty-four languages, with six whole Bibles and twenty-three New Testaments'.¹

We know that there is perfect, loving and joyful communication

within the Trinity and that God communicated with the world through his son Jesus – the Word.² Like those grateful patients, we should thank God for communicating with us in a way we can comprehend.

Down the road from Leicester is Lutterworth where John Wycliffe was rector in the fourteenth century. With others, he translated the Bible from Latin into English – a dangerous enterprise in those days. How avidly the scripturally-impooverished populace welcomed the word of God in their own tongue! Wycliffe Bible Translators bear his name. WBT declares that 'history documents the Bible's profound impact on individuals and societies. Its impact is greatest when written in the "heart language" of a people.'³

Thank God for John Wycliffe and for William Carey. Thank God for William Tyndale (who later translated the Bible into English from the original languages) and Bible translators today.

Do you have the Bible in your heart language? Read it and be thankful.

Ruth Eardley is a GP based in Leicester.

references

1. Legg J. *The Footsteps of God*. Evangelical Press, 1986:267
2. John 1:1
3. www.wycliffe.org.uk/wycliffe/about/bibletranslation.html