
Brazil Forum for Use of the Scriptures in Indigenous Languages

August 29th – September 3rd 2010

By Edna Headland

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August 29th to September 3rd 2010, 200 people gathered in Annapolis, Brazil, at the SETECEB Seminary for the first *Brazil Forum for the Use of the Scriptures in Indigenous Languages*. 128 people represented 59 different ethnic groups with at least two from each of these groups. There were also 80 Brazilian and foreign missionaries from 32 organizations present full time and 20 to 30 more attending various meeting. The planning committee itself had representation from SIL, AMTB, ALEM, MNTB, ASAS de Socorro, and CONPLEI.



Committee pray and plan



There were plenary sessions in the morning with group discussions following. In the afternoon there were workshops on topics such as Scripture Memorization, Use of Indigenous Scriptures in the family and 8 other diverse topics. The evenings were for enjoying different ethnic music, hearing testimonies, and in general, having good fellowship.

Isabel Murphy, Brazil SIL Associate Director, reported: "An elder from one group remarked that he had never been to an event like this, which concentrated entirely on the relevance of the Scriptures to their everyday lives. One man, who came from Peru, said that he would never forget this event in his whole life, it was so wonderful to him." In a prayer letter a missionary mentioned she had been at a Suruí church where one of the participants in the Fórum had spoken in the service about the importance of the Word of God in the mother tongue and how God wants to communicate with us in our own language.



Workshop: Scripture Use in the Family



Discussion Group



Fellowship and exchange of ideas



Isabel Murphy: Contextualization

Highlights

Contextualization

The highlights of the plenary sessions were the presentations on Tuesday and Wednesday. Isabel Murphy asked the question “How many mothers and fathers do you have?” (In many cultures aunts and uncles are also called mother and father). Then she helped the audience think about how the command “honor your Father and Mother” applied in their cultures. How do they show respect? It demonstrated ways they can begin to think about making the Scriptures fit their contexts.

Ethnomusicology

Carlos Veiga a well known Christian musician told three stories to introduce his topic. One was his personal story of rejecting Brazilian style music when he became a Christian. He grew up in a home that loved music but it was considered sinful in the church where he came to know the Lord. He continued with stories of an Indian in Ecuador and an African and the Lord working in his own heart to realize that Brazilian music could be redeemed. Brazilians are a happy people and the music should reflect it. He used Psalms 96. We are who we are because God made us like we are. In the Lausanne Conference of 1994 it was stated: “Conversion should not be acculturation to another culture.”



Book

A heart warming moment for me was also in the Ethnomusicology plenary by the second presenter who used the “Colocando a Bíblia em Ação” Harriet Hill and Margaret Hill’s Scripture use book that several of us had been working on for more than a year to adapt to Brazil and get published. Copies were distributed to all the participants in a special presentation on Sunday evening. In addition

more than two hundred copies were sold. Some of those went to Training Institutes. Pray that they might be used in future courses.



Elias from ALEM presents book



Copies were passed out to each participant.

Communion

It was a foretaste of heaven as people from fifty nine different Indigenous groups, Portuguese speaking Brazilians and foreign missionaries all took communion together served by Indigenous people in their festive paint and feathers. We went forward to receive the manioc bread and juice. The chairs were removed so there was room to dance a simple back and forth step with people together in lines. We sang in an indigenous language and alternately held the bread and the cup in the air.



Indigenous leaders served communion



Ex pat missionaries, Brazilian miss and Indigenous people praise the Lord in Dance

Discussion Groups

There were ten discussions groups with leaders in each group representing the three waves of missionaries, Ex-pat, Portuguese MT Brazilians and Indigenous. People chose the group they wanted to be in and then they were adjusted by size. These groups discussed questions related to the plenary sessions. They reported back to large group with written comments as well as creative presentations. One presentation was a drama of a missionary coming in and putting a coat and tie on an Indigenous leader who was preaching with just his paint for dress up. Obviously showing how not to do contextualization.



Creative reporting from discussion; Missionary provides suit and tie. How not to do contextualization.

Praise and Prayer

Praise God for this event where so many people from what Brazil calls the three waves of missions worked together. As one person reported, he heard expatriates, Portuguese MT Brazilians and indigenous people calling the event “their forum”. Pray that the people would follow through in their home communities and sing and praise God in their own language with their own style of music. Pray that they might also encourage the use of the Mother Tongue Scriptures in all their forms.

This document is available for download at: <http://www.scripture-engagement.org>

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