
A Typical Local Language Seminar for Pastors¹

A report of a seminar for Ejagham pastors from Cameroon and Nigeria

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The first Ejagham area pastors conference went well. Twenty people gathered from most of the denominations in the Ejagham area: Baptist, Catholic, Deeper Life Bible Church, Full Gospel Mission, Presbyterian, and Apostolic. All were as one for the two days while discussing the use of the Ejagham New Testament and the use of Ejagham as a language of ministry in their churches. The time together ended with singing and prayer that each other would see the Lord's strength and courage in their various corners of ministry.

Seminar Snippets

Many of the pastors and leaders had never had the opportunity to learn the nuances of reading Ejagham in order to improve their public reading. In just a few hours of instruction and practice, they learned to read and demonstrated their skills to one another! A few among them said, "I never knew it would be so easy. Everyone always said reading Ejagham is too difficult."

During an exercise dealing with the problems of translating the key biblical terms found in the New Testament (*grace, salvation, justification, hope*, etc.), the participants became very engaged in looking at how these terms were rendered in the Ejagham language. Some heated debates took place, but overall I could see the light bulbs of understanding turn on in many of their eyes. Following the exercise, one pastor reported, "I never understood *grace* like that before. I think I can learn a great deal using the Ejagham New Testament in my Bible study. And my people need to hear this so that they will understand better as well."

The first Ejagham song book we produced for these conferences (93 Ejagham worship songs and choruses) was a *huge* hit. They all wanted more, including a seminar where the church song leaders can learn how to sing and lead the songs in the book. Plus, they were great tools for improving reading skills as the participants were actively reading while doing something they enjoy—singing! A song leader taught a number of choruses during the conference. We usually had to cut this part off as it always went too long! You get the feeling that they would have sung through the entire conference.

¹ This article is a revision of: Jackson, Chris. 2003. "A Typical Single Local Language Seminar for Pastors." *Scripture in Use Today* 7:16-18.

Stories of success about using the Ejagham Bible and preaching or teaching in Ejagham were offered.

Preaching first in English in an interior village produced no interest, but one sermon given in Ejagham produced a great response with people crying and asking to know more. An older woman came the next morning to pray for salvation.

For a number of pastors, using the Ejagham New Testament, alongside their English Bible, for sermon preparation Bible study resulted in deeper understanding than ever before. That practice has now become standard for them, and others who have not yet done so recognized the value of such a practice.

Teaching Scripture-based songs in Ejagham has resulted in seeing and hearing people of all ages (including young adults who often project a preference to hearing English even though they don't understand it very well) singing these songs on the footpaths or while at farm work.

When pastors preach in English, people often fall asleep. But when they preach in Ejagham, people nod their heads in the manner that indicates they are hearing you.

For a high school religion class, which is a study of the Gospel of Luke, using the *JESUS* film in Ejagham resulted in final exam scores increasing from 50% to 90%!

The result of hearing all these success stories seemed to bolster the others' courage to integrate the Ejagham New Testament and the Ejagham language more fully into their ministry. The pastors expressed deep appreciation for what they had learned and had come to appreciate using the local language in their ministries.