

News Story Summary

A new app is available for your smart phone that allows you to take a picture of a street sign, highlight the text, and translate the text to English. This is just one of the features of Google Translate. It is also able to translate text from 90 languages, nearly 50 percent more than the 63 languages it initially supported at launch a half decade ago. Speech-to-speech translation is also expanded. In January 2011, when the feature was first added to the Android app, only a single language pair was supported (English to Spanish). Now a whopping 40 languages are supported.

Google boasts that its Translate service now has 500 million mobile and internet users a month. That means more than 1 out of every 15 people living on the Earth today uses Google Translate each month. Google claims that every day it translates 100 billion words.

(For more on this story, search the using phrases such as “Translate.” Make sure to select “news” so your browser won’t accidentally think you are trying to translate a word or sentence.)

Focus Attention

Begin by asking your group to share stories of being in a foreign country, or in a situation in which they couldn’t understand the language being spoken. Alternatively, you could ask anyone who knows a word or phrase in another language to say something in that language. Discuss how people felt when there was a language barrier between themselves and someone with whom they were trying to communicate. Ask: *How did language differences keep you from accomplishing something?*

Share the news story about Google Translate. If you have the app on your own smartphone, you may wish to demonstrate it. Ask: *What might a tool like this allow you to do that you couldn’t do before? How much more confident would you be on an international trip if you were able to have an instant translation of every street sign?*

Draw attention to the point of today’s session (page 61 of the Personal Study Guide): *God’s purposes cannot be thwarted by humanity’s best efforts.* Comment that most of us would see the ability to understand one another as a positive thing. But there was a time in history when God deliberately confused language, and intentionally made it more difficult for people to work together. As you transition into the session, encourage group members to listen for why God would do this.

Challenge

Focus attention on the question on page 70 of the Personal Study Guide: *List ways you are tempted to build your own tower or monument to yourself. What steps can you take to stay focused on honoring Christ?* Emphasize that the point of the Scripture isn't that God doesn't want people to work together. It's that He wants us to work together to honor Christ and not ourselves. Remind group members of the story about Google Translate. Close by encouraging group members to think of ways advances in technology can be used to honor Christ and not ignore Him.