



The Literacy Barrier

Lit•er•a•cy

/ˈlɪdəreɪsē, ˈlɪtrəsē/

noun the ability to read and write

synonyms: ability to read and write, reading/writing ability, reading/writing proficiency; learning, book learning, education, scholarship, schooling; letters

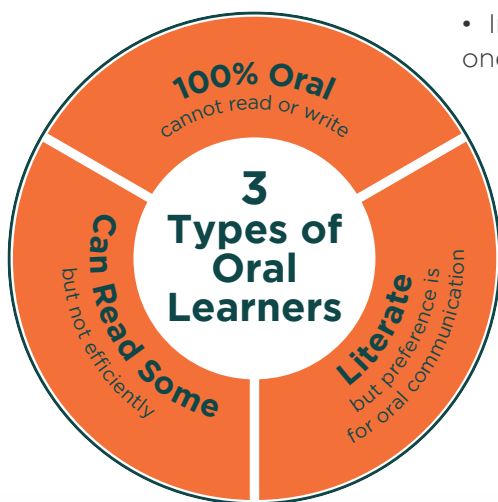
At Spoken, we Deliver Truth...Where Written Words Can't Go. Why? Because written words only affect change for those who can read them; otherwise they are simply ink soaked into paper.

But don't most people learn new information by reading? **Surprisingly, no.** Roughly 2/3rds of the world's population does not read as their preferred learning style. That's over 5 billion people who learn better when material is not written. **5 billion.**

Let that number sink in while we break down what literacy means, why it's often over-estimated, and how we, as disciples of Christ, can overcome this barrier.

One of the challenges is that individual countries set their own standards for literacy.

Literacy is relative across the globe and recognized differently:



All prefer to hear in order to learn, memorize & share

All are relationship focused

- In some countries, the test consists of reading and writing one's own name.
- In another, it is the ability to recognize and name specific street signs.
- In yet another, it means a comprehensive written test.

Many countries lower their literacy requirements in order to boost their literacy rate.

Having a country, region, village or community considered "literate" does not mean they have what is needed to understand Christ's teachings or utilize information regarding health, sanitation, or other community development topics. Additionally, many of the unreached areas of the world are not even remotely considered literate, have no written language, and have no access to Scripture or community education information in their spoken language.

Global Literacy Rate listed as 86.25%*

although the CIA acknowledges that "there are no universal definitions and standards of literacy."

*data.worldbank.org

"Various government testing, in both developed and undeveloped nations, has shown that even those that might consider themselves literate, can in fact only comprehend simple, brief texts and documents. There is a lack of understanding of the content. The Bible is certainly not simple, brief material. If they are unable to integrate information from a text like the Bible, how can they gain spiritual Truth?"

Overcoming the Literacy Barrier

As Christians, we are called to reach the ends of the earth with God's Word, regardless of real or perceived obstacles. If the majority of those lacking access to the Gospel are oral learners, it makes sense that the best and fastest way to reach them is using tools without the prerequisite of learning how to read.

Spoken's exclusive mission is to reach oral learners with Truth, both spiritual and physical. We use innovative techniques to break through barriers that hinder people from transforming their lives and communities. If, as Christians we only provide written information, we are requiring people to learn how to read before they can know Christ.

When this happens, literacy becomes a barrier.

A barrier that is easy to overcome with appropriate communication strategies.



"As people begin to realize the importance of acquiring knowledge, that is when people begin to find means of gaining the knowledge. So, yes, lack of literacy can be a challenge at times, but Christ-like humility, and teaching people in the way they best learn makes a difference in the lives of people."

- Sunil Masih
Spoken Program Manager, India

Spoken's Method

Deliver Truth...Where Written Words Can't Go

Understanding how oral communities prefer to learn and share new information is the foundation of the Spoken method. Using traditional forms of communication delivered through trusted leaders, Spoken's goal is to train local leaders in storytelling methods so they effectively make and multiply disciples.

Once stories and messages are crafted, they are recorded on audio devices so they can be shared in a group setting. The MP3 devices ensure that the messages stay consistent and shareable.

Benefits:

- Reproducible with accuracy ensured
- Fast/efficient way to share Truth
- Accepted in the community when presented in a well-received format rather than a western-style presentation
- Highly engaging, relationship focused
- Disciples share with others creating a disciple-making movement.

If our goal is for the message to be received with open hearts, the delivery method is critical. This process has been proven through Spoken's 14 year history to be the most effective way to share Truth with Oral Learners around the world.

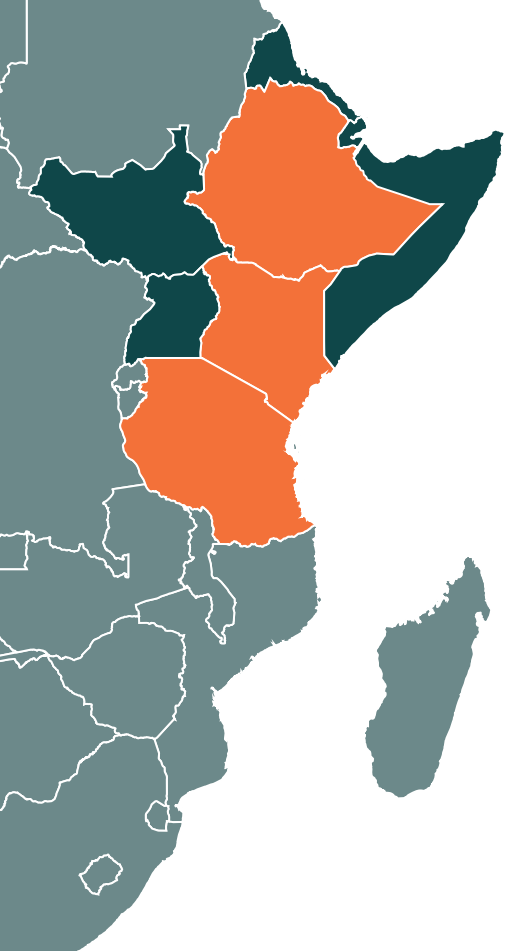


Using stories, songs, and dramas is our biggest tool in these situations. We adopt the local communities' style of learning and deliver the Word of God in the same style.

Experience It

By virtue of the fact you are reading this newsletter, you are literate. Does that mean stories don't influence you and your beliefs? Do you remember a story that your parents or grandparents used to tell you? Maybe your favorite teacher or mentor growing up? A favorite author? Stories have played an important role in all of our lives, regardless of whether or not we went on to learn and read and write. **Stories have power.**

Visit <https://bit.ly/2G3GCgL> to hear a story told by Dr. Ray Neu, Spoken's Director of Orality Coaching.



| Region Update: East Africa

Spoken has been working in East Africa for the past 11 years in various countries. Our work may look a little different each year based on need, but our mission to reach oral learners remains the same. Roughly 288 million people live throughout South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, and over 62 million of these are still considered unreached. East Africa has a great need for outreach.

Yohannes Faye, our North and East Africa Regional Director, recently returned from visiting two ministry partners in Ethiopia. While there, Yohannes was encouraged by the frequent requests from pastors and various denominational leaders to join in the ongoing work as they are witnessing the impact it's making in their community.

In East Africa, Spoken is active in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania at this time:

42.5 MILLION Unreached people in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania

65 Dedicated Program Volunteers

10 Languages engaged through Pastor Development Training

725 Disciple-Makers in Pastor Development Training

600+ Passages of Scripture being shared

2 Languages engaged through Oral Bible Translation Programs

| The Story of Elema Guffu

In order to fulfill the Great Commission, we must equip and train all believers to be involved in significant ministry. **Literacy has never been, and will never be, a prerequisite in order to do the work of God.**

The story of Elema Guffu illustrates how our engagement overcomes these challenges.

Elema is a woman from the Borana tribe with a powerful testimony. She came to know the Lord through the ministry of our partner church in Yabelo, and had the opportunity to be discipled through a small discussion group led by a Spoken leader in training.

She continues to be discipled and now discipled others through the same storytelling method.

Her church has now recruited her to be a supported missionary.

Recently, church elders from over ten denominations gathered to discuss what has been happening the past three years in our ministry across Southern Ethiopia. Elema came to give her testimony of reaching oral learners with the Gospel. She continues to get requests from different churches who would like her help in expanding the Kingdom in their communities.

Elema is an oral learner who has never had any formal school education, she cannot read or write, yet she is learning God's Word and teaching others how to go and make disciples.

The power of Elema's story is in the fact that no barriers were allowed to prevent her from sharing Truth.

