Regent University graduate, Bruce Smith ’06 (Divinity), knows what it’s like to run a marathon; after all, he’s run nine thus far. His ministry calling—the race God has set before him—is even more exhilarating, rewarding and reaches lives all over the world. As CEO of Wycliffe Associates, Smith has a hand in ensuring those who want the Bible translated into their own language have a chance of receiving it.

Can you imagine opening a life-changing letter that you couldn’t read because it wasn’t written in a language you understood? What if you knew it contained information that was vital to navigating life’s challenges and circumstances, yet no one was around to decipher this wisdom for you?

Living in a place where Bibles are readily available, it’s hard to imagine not being able to read and understand God’s letter to us. We don’t have just one version; we have many translations, interpretations and topical styles. Twenty English-language versions are available on biblegateway.com alone. We can purchase Bibles such as the Experiencing God Study Bible, Life Application, Extreme Teen, Spirit-Filled Life, red letter editions or giant print, all in multiple translations. Our choices are seemingly endless.

For many in this world, however, there’s not even one Bible from which to choose, as none have been written in their native tongue. They have no idea what Scripture has said to them regarding how to live, love, serve or how to run their own race. And they haven’t heard the most important message in the Gospel of John: how much God loves them and has offered salvation through His Son, Jesus. For them, reading John 3:16, one of the most revered verses in Christianity, might feel something like reading this:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (KJV)

Thankfully, someone hand-wrote that foreign translation in Folopa, a language used in Papua New Guinea.

Every Verse, Every Tongue, Every Task: that’s the mission of Wycliffe Associates, an organization dedicated to playing a significant role in translations.
role in making sure the Bible will be available in every person’s language.

Smith completed his Doctorate of Ministry from Regent’s School of Divinity in 2006. In 2009, Regent named him Alumnus of the Year, recognizing his important contribution to the Great Commission. He has dedicated the past ten years of his life to the company whose mission recognizes God’s Word as central to everything they do. Smith is so passionate about his work because of the impact of the Bible in people’s lives. He calls biblical characters like Joseph, David, Elijah and Caleb his personal mentors. When facing tough issues in life, the Bible is where Smith finds his answers. “I’ve experienced that power personally and seen its power transform the lives of people around the world.”

Around the time he began his studies at Regent, Smith was experiencing a personal trial, wanting answers from God. Digging into the Book of Job greatly impacted his journey. He understands why the Bible is needed to transform people’s lives and hearts. “My heart breaks for people who live beyond the reach of God’s Word. Some are isolated by geography, politics or illiteracy. I’ve seen the Bible transform the lives of men and women living in the most desperate circumstances of the world—in poverty, war, sickness and ignorance. I see Christians in other nations experience their own reformation when, for the first time in their lives, they hear God’s voice in their own language. They move beyond dependence on someone else for spiritual interpretation to being able to receive and understand God’s Word personally and directly. I see people who have lived their entire lives in hopelessness and antagonism to Christ find hope and love for the first time.”

Even though Smith was already serving at Wycliffe when he began studying at Regent, he feels his coursework has impacted the work he does: “I learned new things, heard new perspectives from writers and professors, and applied these new things directly to Wycliffe Associates’ ministry challenges. Regent was, and is, a community of faith that strengthens each of us as we serve God.”

In 1999, 3,000 languages still needed to be translated into Bibles. Wycliffe Associates has a worldwide dream with partner ministries: it’s called Vision 2025. Smith describes this as “a desire to see God’s Word reach every language still needing Scripture by the year 2025. At the historic rate of 20 new translations beginning each year, this would have taken until 2150 just to begin these translations. Partners in Bible translation worldwide agreed to make every effort to accelerate Bible translation to see God’s Word impact the world in our generation.”

They aren’t quite on target with this timeline yet. Wycliffe is doing its part to mobilize translators by supplying volunteers all over the world to help them. Volunteers may have no idea how to translate Scripture, but they can donate other talents and services to free up translators to work on Scriptures. Smith says, “Wycliffe Associates volunteers are teaching in mission schools, doing accounting, maintaining computer networks, managing projects, building facilities and doing countless other administrative and technical support tasks to enable Bible translators to stay focused on their work. Last year, 4,100 volunteers served in 49 countries in support of Bible translation.” Wycliffe is also working on a video project to translate the Bible into 300 sign languages.

The Bible contains nearly 800,000 words divided into over 31,000 verses. Translation into just one language takes a great deal of time and effort. But Smith is up to mobilizing fellow missionaries for this task. He humbly admits, ”If there is any eternal impact from my work in supporting Bible translation, it is only because of the power of His Word.”

Smith has a wonderful family surrounding him in support. He married his high school sweetheart, Jan, who serves alongside him in ministry. They have two grown daughters, Abby and Lindsey, and recently became grandparents for the first time.

As Smith fulfills his important call of God, he brings new meaning to the verse “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Heb.12:1b KJV) Or as written in Haitian Creole, “Ann kouri avek pasians non chemin Bondie mete devan nou an.”