



Behold the Power of Seamless Translation

Last ITEM chairman Will Hesterberg taught a class via Zoom recently and in doing so made important discoveries about how best to do that. He spoke with newsletter editor Matt Crossman about it.

Crossman: You taught a class recently by Zoom. Tell me what happened.

Hesterberg: I taught a Biblical leadership course. It was through Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary in Riga, Latvia. From there, it was beamed out to a lot of different students—five or six in Russia, and also some in Kazakhstan, Belarus, Romania, Ukraine and even one man from Thailand. We had a total of 23. All the men were involved in one form of ministry leadership or another.

Crossman: Was there a particular focus of the leadership lessons?

Hesterberg: Just for professional and then spiritual development as leaders.

Crossman: What Scripture did you focus on, if any?

Hesterberg: Oh goodness, so many. One in particular, was Proverbs 4:23. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. We talked about the challenges and dangers of being leaders in the church and then how to equip

them for that. We spent some time on how to develop lessons and sermons and the qualifications of elders and pastors.

We focused quite a bit on Psalm 23, and the idea of pastoring our people the way Christ pastors us or shepherds us.

Crossman: How did the translation work?

Hesterberg: That was what was so amazing to me. We had a Swedish Lutheran man living in St. Petersburg translating for me, and it was simultaneous translation. He was translating within a second after I said something. So there was really no time delay.

Crossman: Was there anything unique or distinctive about doing it on Zoom in that manner?

Hesterberg: I had never had simultaneous translation like that before. I've zoomed classes in the past, for example, down to Bolivia. That was not simultaneous. I would say a sentence or two, and then the translator would translate it. And we'd go back and forth like that. That's kind of typical of the experience that I've had in classrooms.

Crossman: Was this better?

Hesterberg: It's so much better this way. There was really no sense of the translator intervening in any way. I was just able to teach what I wanted to teach, within the timeframe that I wanted to teach it. I didn't have 2 hours of material take 2.5 hours to deliver.

Crossman: Did the students not even hear you and he just heard you and translated? How did it work?

Hesterberg: I think that's the way it was. When they had questions, I could hear them in the background. But what superseded it was his translating it back into English to me.

Crossman: And this was verbal, not typed out.

Hesterberg: Right.

Crossman: Obviously, it helps you. Does it help the students as well?

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Hesterberg: Sure it did. They could get immediate answers without time delay or anything.

Crossman: And is that a function of the Zoom technology or is it a function of this Swedish Lutheran man that he is just really good at translating?

Hesterberg: I think it's definitely that this man is really, really good.

Crossman: What's the takeaway from that and how do we apply that going forward?

Hesterberg: I think to be a little less fearful about Zooming. It's still not quite as good as in person. But if I were to give a percentage of communication ability, facility, that kind of thing, and say 100 percent if it were face to face, this would come very close to —90, 95 percent.

Crossman: What were your concerns going in on Zoom?

Hesterberg: That time delay. Whether I had to stop and explain something to the person so he then could translate it. That never happened at all.

Also, our field representative in Latvia, Artis Celmins, did a tremendous job in setting all of this up. As you can imagine, it's very difficult when you're trying to cross a lot of different countries and time zones. For example, between me and Latvia is, I believe, 8 hours, and then you add to that Eastern Europe, different locations in Russia, and finally one man in Thailand. I can't imagine how complicated that was. Artis did a tremendous job of getting it all set up. Every time I was ready to answer the invitation, everything was ready to go. This was just seamless.

Crossman: Let me ask you a devil's advocate question. This is an issue people are facing all over the place. We're finding virtual things are nearly as good as face-to-face. Even after COVID is gone, maybe the challenges required in getting face-to-face will be big, so we'll think, well, let's just stay on Zoom. What's your take on that?

Hesterberg: I would say, it's still important to meet face-to-face. And the reason being that a lot of communication takes place outside of the formal classroom setting.

I'll give you an example. During breaks, there's more of an opportunity for these students to

approach the instructor on a one-to-one basis. They have a little more hesitancy about asking some very personal individual questions if everybody is listening in.

For example, I might have a pastor come to me, rather furtively looking around and saying, I've got this situation in my church, not quite sure how to handle that. What do you do when this or that is the case? And you can address that individually. So I think some of those possibilities will not come up if it's on Zoom, because everybody is listening.

Prayer Requests

1. The Lord's guidance and wisdom are sought for the ITEM board of directors as they discuss current ministry, future fields and opportunities, future challenges and the 2022 budget.
2. Dr. Sacha Walicord will be teaching at BRTS in Riga, Latvia the last two weeks in November.
3. Alister Torrens as he leads ERSU and for his daughter, Saphira who is on a wait list to have surgery on her hand, hopefully in the new year.
4. The training of pastor trainers at three sites in India as they finish up the Christ and Salvation module.
5. Jobje Lammers, wife of board member, Dr. Warren Lammers, as she battles pancreatic cancer.
6. Rob Toornstra and Bill Wilton will travel to Liberia after Thanksgiving to teach Christ-centered preaching.

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