

# Placing the Word in Their Hands

Imagine living in a silent world and growing up with a dynamic, visual language. You've never heard a word of spoken language ...

You sit in school trying to learn this sound-based, spoken language, but have no auditory reference point. It would be challenging to learn how to read and write. When you graduate from high school, your average reading level would be fourth grade.

Now imagine sign language is your heart language — the language in which you dream, think, interact and share your deepest feelings. What if the only Bible you had access to was

in the spoken language — a language you don't know very well, if at all? This may be hard to wrap your mind around, but it is the reality for millions of Deaf around the world.

Deaf communities form one of the largest minority language groups, and it is estimated that a mere 2 percent of Deaf people worldwide have embraced the gospel. Of more than 200 unique sign languages spoken worldwide, only one of them

— American Sign Language (ASL) — has the New Testament (which was released in 2005 by Deaf Missions). Not one of these Deaf communities has access to the entire Bible in their heart language.

This past year, the Lord has been stirring my soul to restlessness and patiently re-directing my steps. He has driven me to a place of earnestly seeking His heart and purposes for my life beyond a successful interpreting career. He has ignited a passion in my heart to get His Word into the hands of the Deaf around the world who've, literally, never heard His voice. He has guided me to the work and vision of Wycliffe Bible Translators. He is calling me to join a growing team of specialized linguists within Wycliffe, whose vision is to reach the unreached Deaf language communities around the world who have no access to the Word of God in any form they can truly understand.

Stepping out into this new adventure, I am continually reminded that His purposes are incomparably greater and more beautiful than my own.

✪ *To follow my journey, go to [www.BethelCollege.edu/Alumni](http://www.BethelCollege.edu/Alumni).*

— BETHANY HEYNEN ('05)



BETHANY HEYNEN  
SIGNS "JESUS."