

STEWARDED THE BUS STOP

How the Translation Principle Became Flesh in My Marriage and Fatherhood

Translation Review · MAGH · Approximately 25 minutes

PART ONE

WHEN TRANSLATION CAME HOME

Good morning, everyone.

Firstly, I want to thank Pastor Lakers for the opportunity to share this morning.

When I received the invitation, one phrase stayed with me. Pastor said that one of the forms of translation he believed my life represented was marriage and fatherhood.

If I am honest, that humbled me.

Marriage and fatherhood are not areas in which I feel I have arrived. They are the places where I am still learning, being corrected and discovering how much of the man I am becoming must first become visible at home.

It is one thing to understand a principle.

It is another thing for it to become flesh in the way you speak to your wife, listen when you would rather explain, respond when you are tired, keep your word to your children, and remain present when your mind is occupied with the next assignment.

That is where the Translation Principle became real for me.

Before we began this journey, I shared a message called The Testimony of Process. It was about the way God prepares a man before He promotes him.

At the time, I did not realise that I was entering a personal process of my own.

I had sold my law firm. A major chapter had closed. I knew I wanted to go to the Bar, and I knew there were books, businesses, ministry responsibilities and other assignments ahead.

But I found myself standing between the season that had ended and the one I believed was coming.

One evening, while I was trying to explain that unsettled feeling, Chabala said, "It is like you have stepped off one bus and you are standing at the bus stop waiting for the next one."

That picture captured the season perfectly.

Initially, I thought the main question at the bus stop was what I would do next.

But as the months passed, I realised God was asking something much closer to home.

"Who are you becoming as a husband?"

"Who are you becoming as a father?"

And, "Will the people closest to you experience the benefit of the work I am doing in you?"

That confronted me.

I have always been comfortable with visible responsibility. I know how to work, carry pressure, solve problems and make decisions.

But marriage and fatherhood require a different kind of strength.

They require emotional presence.

Patience.

Consistency when nobody is applauding.

The ability to notice what is happening inside the people you love, not merely what needs to be done around them.

The bus stop gave me something I had not fully appreciated before.

Time.

Time for conversations with my wife that might otherwise have been postponed.

Time for school drop-offs, pick-ups, excursions, netball games and ordinary moments with my daughters.

And somewhere in those moments, I realised that God was not only preparing me for another professional assignment.

He was translating truth into my home.

The principles we were learning about identity, stewardship, emotional governance and assignment became questions I had to answer in real time.

Can I listen without immediately fixing?

Can I be present without looking at the clock?

Can I protect covenant when I feel misunderstood?

Can my daughters depend on my word?

Can my family experience me as more than a man with good intentions and a busy schedule?

The greatest shift has been recognising that my value is not established by what I produce, and neither is my value to my family limited to what I provide.

Providing matters. Working hard matters. Building matters.

But my wife does not only need what I can provide.

She needs me.

My daughters do not only need the opportunities I can create.

They need their father.

The Translation Principle began moving me from seeing marriage and fatherhood as responsibilities alongside my assignment, to recognising them as central assignments entrusted to me by God.

That has been the beginning of my translation.

Not a man who has mastered marriage and fatherhood, but a man beginning to understand that whatever God does through me publicly must first make me more faithful privately.

PART TWO

THE HUSBAND GOD IS TEACHING ME TO BECOME

One of the clearest places I have seen this translation is in my marriage.

For many years, my instinct whenever a problem appeared was to solve it.

That is partly the lawyer in me. Present me with a difficulty and my mind immediately begins analysing the issue and producing a solution.

That approach can be useful in the courtroom.

It is not always what your wife needs.

I have had to learn that when Chabala shares something with me, she is not necessarily giving me a problem to solve. Sometimes she is inviting me into her experience.

If I treat every expression of emotion as a problem, I can hear the words but miss the person.

I can produce a technically sound answer and still leave her feeling unheard.

The Translation Principle has helped me become more conscious of emotional governance. Not simply controlling anger, but recognising what is happening within me before I respond.

Why am I becoming defensive?

Why do I need to explain myself immediately?

Why am I trying to close the conversation while she is still trying to feel understood?

Those questions have not always been comfortable, but they have been necessary.

I am learning that leadership in marriage is not proved by always having the final answer.

Sometimes leadership looks like creating safety.

Sometimes it means allowing your wife to finish speaking without preparing your response.

Sometimes it means saying, "I understand why that affected you," before explaining what you intended.

Sometimes it means apologising for the impact, even when the impact was not your intention.

I have also had to confront the desire to be right.

As men who are used to carrying responsibility, we can convince ourselves that if our reasoning is correct, our response must also be correct.

But you can be factually right and relationally wrong.

You can win the point and weaken the connection.

Marriage is teaching me that covenant is more valuable than the satisfaction of winning an argument.

That does not mean avoiding truth. It means remembering what I am protecting while we work through it.

I am not arguing against an opponent.

I am speaking with the woman I chose, the woman who has carried life with me, and whose flourishing should matter more than proving that my recollection of a conversation was correct.

The bus stop season has also helped me become more expressive.

There have been times when I carried things internally because I did not want to burden anyone, or because I felt I should already know how to deal with them.

But when I was struggling to describe the uncertainty of this season, it was Chabala who gave me the language of the bus stop.

That reminded me that vulnerability is not a failure of leadership.

Allowing my wife to understand what is happening within me gives her the opportunity to walk with me, rather than watching me carry something she cannot name.

I am still learning this.

I still retreat into my thoughts sometimes. I still move too quickly towards solutions.

But I am becoming more aware that marriage requires more than loyalty in principle.

It requires presence in practice.

Friendship.

Laughter.

Checking in, rather than assuming that because we live in the same house, we remain deeply connected.

Supporting Chabala as she steps into her counselling practice has challenged me in another way.

I naturally see systems, processes and possibilities. But supporting her calling does not mean taking ownership of it.

My role is to strengthen her, create room for her to flourish, offer what I can, and still honour her voice, her pace and what God is doing through her.

That is another form of translation for me.

From fixing to listening.

From directing to supporting.

From protecting my position to protecting our connection.

I do not say this as a man who has perfected marriage.

I say it as a man whose marriage has become one of the main places where God is exposing, refining and translating him.

The clearest evidence that I am growing is not that I can speak about marriage well.

It is that my wife increasingly experiences me as safer, more present, more open and more intentional than I was before.

PART THREE

THE FATHER MY DAUGHTERS NEED

The second major area of translation has been fatherhood.

This season has given me more time with my daughters than I might have had if life had continued at its previous pace.

I have been able to do school drop-offs and pick-ups, attend excursions, watch netball games, help with schoolwork and listen to stories from their day.

I used to think of those things as ordinary.

I do not anymore.

Childhood is built from ordinary moments.

My daughters may not remember every lesson I try to teach them. But I hope they remember that Dad was there.

That when I said I would come, I came.

That when I gave my word, they could trust it.

That I was interested in what mattered to them.

That they did not have to compete with my work, my phone, my projects or my ambitions in order to experience my attention.

That has required intentionality, because physical proximity is not the same as presence.

I can be in the room and still be elsewhere in my mind.

I can nod while one of my daughters is speaking and still be thinking about an email, a legal issue or the next task.

The Translation Principle has made me ask whether the people closest to me are receiving the best of me, or merely what is left after everything else has taken its share.

Fatherhood has also made me more aware of formation.

The world is actively forming our children.

School, friends, social media and culture will all tell them what beauty, success, value and belonging should look like.

If I am passive, I am not leaving them unformed.

I am allowing other voices to do the forming.

I do not only want to raise successful daughters.

I want to raise women who know God.

Women who know who they are.

Women whose value is settled before comparison, achievement, popularity or disappointment begins to speak.

But that formation does not happen because I occasionally give a good speech.

It happens through repeated conversations.

Through the way I speak to them.

Through the way they see me speak to their mother.

Through whether I apologise when I am wrong.

Through whether the atmosphere at home confirms what I say I believe.

My daughters are not only listening to what I teach.

They are watching what I translate.

They are learning what a husband looks like by watching how I treat their mother.

They are learning what love feels like by how I respond when they make mistakes.

They are learning whether men can be trusted by whether my word is dependable.

They are learning whether strength includes gentleness by the way I carry authority at home.

I have also had to learn that my daughters do not need me to shape them into smaller versions of me.

They are different from one another. They have different personalities, strengths and ways of processing the world.

My responsibility is to help them recognise what God has placed within them, to provide boundaries and wisdom, and to give them room to grow into the women He has called them to become.

That requires me to know them.

Not only their school year or timetable, but what makes them anxious, what makes them come alive, what they are believing about themselves, and what questions they have not yet found the words to ask.

Sometimes that means listening to a long explanation about something I would never have chosen as a topic.

Sometimes it means putting down what I am doing because a child's invitation cannot always be scheduled for later.

Sometimes it means recognising that what appears small to me may feel very large to them.

I want to provide well for my daughters. I want them to have opportunities.

But one day, the gifts and opportunities will become memories.

What I hope remains is the security of knowing they were loved, seen, prayed for and delighted in.

I want them to know they do not have to perform for affection.

That correction does not mean rejection.

That their father's love is not fragile.

If my identity as a son of God is settled before my performance, then I must help create a home where my daughters know their value is also settled before theirs.

That is the father I am committing to become.

PART FOUR

WHAT GOD IS STILL WORKING ON IN ME

As I share these changes, I do not want to suggest that I have arrived.

Marriage and fatherhood are also the places where I see most clearly how much work God is still doing in me.

One thing I continue to wrestle with is pace.

I naturally move quickly. My mind is often several steps ahead.

But family does not always move at the pace of a project plan.

People cannot be managed like tasks.

Emotions do not always resolve according to the timetable I would prefer.

Sometimes love requires me to slow down enough for another person to speak fully, change their mind, or simply be where they are.

I am still learning that.

There are moments when my body is at home but my mind is building the next thing.

There are conversations in which I realise I have been listening for the problem rather than listening for the person.

There are times when I say yes too quickly to another responsibility without first asking what that yes will cost my family.

The Translation Principle has taught me to ask:

“Is this actually mine to carry?”

I see opportunities everywhere. My instinct is to make room for all of them.

But every yes has a cost.

If I say yes to something God has not assigned to me, that cost may be paid by the people He has clearly entrusted to me.

That does not mean I stop building or serving.

It means I become more discerning.

Faithfulness is not measured by how many things I carry.

It is measured by how well I steward what God has placed in my hands.

I also continue to work on emotional presence.

I am learning to recognise when tiredness is making me impatient, when pressure is making me less gentle, and when disappointment elsewhere is affecting the atmosphere I create at home.

My family should not have to absorb emotions I have refused to process.

That does not mean pretending to be fine.

Sometimes healthy presence means honestly saying, “I have had a difficult day,” rather than withdrawing and expecting everyone to interpret my silence.

It means allowing my wife to know what I am carrying without making her responsible for fixing it.

It means making sure my daughters understand that a serious face or tired response is not evidence that they have done something wrong.

Another area God is working on is consistency.

It is easy to be intentional for a week after a strong revelation.

The greater challenge is to build a way of life.

To continue listening when the season becomes busy again.

To protect the dinner table, the conversations, the laughter and the routines that hold a family together.

I know another bus will arrive.

There will be another demanding professional season, with deadlines, court appearances, publishing projects and ministry responsibilities.

The real test of this translation will be whether the lessons of the bus stop travel with me when life begins moving again.

Will my wife still experience me as emotionally available?

Will my daughters still experience me as present?

Or will marriage and fatherhood slowly become the things I assume will understand while I attend to everything else?

I also know I must protect my health.

For a long time, the question was, "How much can I do?"

Now I am asking, "How long do I want to remain fruitful?"

My family does not only need the output I can produce today.

They need a husband and father who remains healthy, available and fruitful over many years.

So I am still learning boundaries, rest, and that stopping is not laziness.

Still learning that I do not have to prove my value through exhaustion.

The Translation Principle has not removed these struggles.

It has helped me recognise them sooner.

I am no longer only asking, "What am I achieving?"

I am asking, "Who is my family experiencing me to be while I achieve it?"

That question keeps me honest.

It reminds me that the most important translation is not what I can explain to other men.

It is what my wife and daughters can see, feel and trust in the life we share.

PART FIVE

THE MAN I AM COMMITTING TO BECOME

As I come to the end of this reflection, I have been asking what I will do with everything God has shown me.

If the Translation Principle becomes only another completed programme or another language I can use in conversation, then I have missed the point.

Translation must become visible.

So I have made some commitments before God about the husband and father I want to become.

The first is that my relationship with Christ must remain before every other assignment.

I cannot love my wife well or father my daughters well from an empty place.

I cannot consistently produce patience, gentleness, wisdom and emotional safety through willpower alone.

John chapter 15 has become personal to me.

Jesus did not tell us to manufacture fruit.

He told us to abide.

The fruit is the outcome.

Abiding is the instruction.

I want my wife and daughters to experience the fruit of a man who remains connected to Christ, not merely the pressure of a man who is always trying to produce.

The second commitment is to keep choosing my wife intentionally.

Not only in the large decisions, but in the daily ones.

To choose listening over defensiveness.

Connection over the need to win.

Vulnerability over withdrawal.

Friendship over familiarity.

To support what God has placed within her without trying to control its shape.

To protect laughter, conversation, affection and the small rhythms that keep covenant alive.

Marriage does not become strong by accident.

It becomes strong because two people continue choosing one another.

I want Chabala to look back over our life and know that while I may have built many things, I never stopped building us.

The third commitment is to remain present with my daughters.

Not perfect.

Present.

I want to keep entering their world.

To keep my word.

To listen before their questions become too private to bring to me.

To correct them without crushing them.

To affirm them without making them dependent on applause.

To help them know Christ and know themselves.

One day they will not need me in the same ways they need me now.

Childhood will not wait for my schedule to become convenient.

I do not want to provide for every future need while missing the season in which they simply wanted their dad.

The fourth commitment is to make my home the first place where my growth becomes visible.

It is possible to sound wise publicly and remain unchanged privately.

I do not want that.

If I am becoming more patient, my family should experience it.

If I am learning emotional governance, it should be visible in the way I handle tension.

If I believe identity is settled before performance, my daughters should feel that in the way I love them.

If I speak about covenant, my wife should experience its protection.

The people closest to me should not receive the least translated version of me.

They should receive the first fruit.

Finally, I want to finish well as a husband and father.

When my daughters are older, I hope they do not simply remember that Dad worked hard.

I hope they remember that Dad was there.

That he listened, prayed for them and delighted in them.

That his strength did not make them afraid to approach him.

When my wife looks back over our marriage, I hope she remembers that I kept choosing her.

That I learnt to hear her.

That I created room for her to flourish.

That as God enlarged our assignments, I did not allow success to make our covenant smaller.

I still believe another bus is coming.

I still believe there are professional assignments, books, businesses, ministry responsibilities and doors ahead.

But I no longer want to reach the next destination at the cost of the people God has placed beside me for the journey.

The bus stop has taught me that waiting is not empty.

While I thought I was waiting for the next assignment, God was bringing my attention back to my first ones.

My wife.

My daughters.

My home.

I do not stand before you as a man who has mastered marriage and fatherhood.

I stand as a man who has become more conscious of their weight, their privilege and their place in God's work of translating me.

I am still learning.

Still being corrected.

Still becoming.

But I am grateful that the Translation Principle did not only give me language for the next season.

It brought that language home.

And my prayer is that long before anyone else is impressed by what God may do through my life, my wife and daughters will be able to testify that what He taught me became flesh among them.

For me, that is what translation in marriage and fatherhood looks like.

Thank you.