

The future of ministry is **Open.**

As the global church continues to rise to the challenge of making disciples of all nations, there is an urgent need for discipleship materials that can be legally translated, adapted, used and re-distributed in any language, by anyone, anywhere in the world. There are many good resources that could be useful to the global church, but they are limited in their use by copyright law. The solution is not simply to sell the resources at discounted prices or give them away free of charge but to give people the freedom to translate and adapt the materials and resources for effective ministry in their own language and culture.

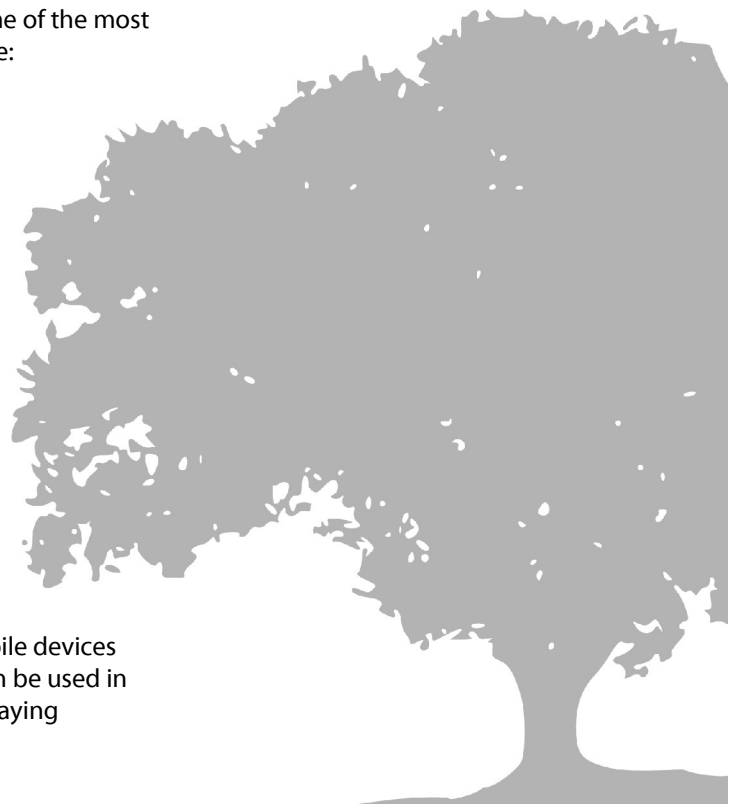
The concept of free & open discipleship material is not new. Some of the most common and well-known resources in the public domain include:

- The King James Version of the Bible
- Matthew Henry's commentaries
- Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary
- Many hymns of the church

The public domain is at the other end of the spectrum from copyright in that no one owns or controls the rights to a work in the public domain. Not surprisingly, works in the public domain tend to be used in more places, for more reasons, by more people precisely because they are freely available and can be legally used, modified and redistributed for any ministry purpose.

Distant Shores Media is helping to create a new generation of discipleship tools that are released under a Creative Commons license. This means that believers all over the world are legally permitted (and encouraged!) to translate, adapt and re-distribute their work in any way they choose for any ministry purpose. With the rise of the Internet and the prevalence of mobile devices everywhere in the world, these free & open discipleship tools can be used in new ways and in any language anywhere in the world without paying royalties or risking the violation of copyright law.

The future of ministry is Open.





Share, reuse and remix — legally.
www.creativecommons.org

A growing movement

There is a movement starting among some believers and ministry organizations toward a “free & open” approach to discipleship resources. Instead of defaulting to restricting all use of ministry content unless otherwise permitted, some are taking the opposite approach and allowing any use of ministry content by anyone, subject to certain conditions.

This is a great opportunity for ministry and has the potential to create a global ministry context where free use and re-use of discipleship content for any ministry purpose becomes the norm, not the exception. This becomes especially important as we consider the critical need for discipleship resources to equip the global church to grow in spiritual maturity. By releasing discipleship resources so that they can be legally translated and adapted for use in any language and culture, the global church will be able to effectively use resources that would not otherwise be accessible to them.

In order to communicate what others are permitted to do with a copyrighted resource, it is necessary to release the work under a license that is both clear and legally enforceable. An organization called Creative Commons is making this potentially complicated task very easy.

What is Creative Commons?

Creative Commons (<http://creativecommons.org>) is a nonprofit organization that provides free, easy-to-use legal tools that give everyone from individual “user generated content” creators to major companies and institutions a simple, standardized way to pre-clear usage rights to creative work they own the copyright to. CC licenses let people easily change their copyright terms from the default of “all rights reserved” to “some rights reserved.”

Creative Commons licenses are not an alternative to copyright. They apply on top of copyright, so you can modify your copyright terms to best suit your needs. The Creative Commons has collaborated with copyright experts all around the world to ensure that our licenses work globally.

The Attribution-Share Alike License

There are many Creative Commons licenses, making for potentially confusing and legally crippling situations if ministries use incompatible licenses. A license that is coming to the forefront as an excellent license for “free & open” discipleship resources is the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike License (CC-BY-SA, see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>).



The CC-BY-SA License states that you are free:

- **to Share** — to copy, distribute and transmit the work
- **to Remix** — to adapt the work

Under the following conditions:

- **Attribution** — You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- **Share Alike** — If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same, similar or a compatible license.

See <http://www.dsmedia.org/license> for more on the advantages of CC-BY-SA for open discipleship resources.



Globalization has helped to bring about an increase in communication technologies and ease of worldwide travel, providing unprecedented opportunities for ministry all over the world. In addition to the increasing connectedness of the world, other significant factors affecting ministry include the use of media, orality cultures, the existence of thousands of living languages, and the rise of the global church in people groups that were unreached up until recently.

The world is becoming more connected

Recent studies show that 60% of the world's population owns a mobile phone (Source: TG Daily) and that even in some of the least-connected parts of the world, mobile phones are becoming a key tool for small businesses and social connectedness. The Internet also continues to extend its reach to the farthest corners of the globe as Internet coffee shops are opened in some of the most remote locations on the planet and mobile phone networks extend access far beyond the reaches of phone lines and roads. In the next 5-7 years, the number of mobile phones accessing the Internet is expected to equal and then surpass the number of PCs accessing the Internet (Source: Cellular News).

At the same time as the world is becoming more connected, technology is continuing to shrink in size and increase in capability. What used to require a PC at home, laptop for the road, cell phone, pager, PDA, CD player and GPS receiver can now be accomplished by a mobile phone at a fraction of the expense. People in developing countries are skipping directly to this "mobile phone as computer" phase without ever owning a PC and often long before the electric grid makes it to their village. These changes are bringing unprecedented opportunities for everything from global commerce to discipleship initiatives.

The world consumes media

The rise of the MTV/Internet generations and their portable media players along with the decline of reading in literate countries (see below) is resulting in more media being consumed by more people than ever before. This includes music downloads,

podcasts & videocasts, streaming audio/video (e.g. Internet radio stations, YouTube), etc.

The combination of growing global connectedness and the increase in consumption and worldwide distribution of media is resulting in the generations growing up with this as the norm having far more in common with each other (crossing cultural, linguistic and geographic boundaries) than any other generations before. While there are still significant differences, the younger generations from the vast majority of cultures around the world are growing more similar to each other, often at the expense of a widening gap between their generation and the generations before them. Just about everything that defines them – including the music they listen to, the movies they watch, the websites they visit, the dance moves they make, the mobile devices they own, and their postmodern/materialistic values and beliefs – is increasingly converging closer together. Whether this is an opportunity for the advance of the Good News or a hindrance to it is arguable, but the point is that it is happening at an increasing pace and is changing the rules of how ministry is done.

The world is oral, not text-based

The vast majority of the world's population is primarily oral in their preferred means of communicating and learning new information. Estimates suggest that over 85% of people worldwide (and some estimates are much higher) prefer to learn new information through non-print means (e.g. talking, listening to someone speak, watching the news, listening to the radio, etc.). This holds true for pre-literate societies (where people are 100% oral learners) as well as highly literate societies. Publishing companies in the Middle East, with all its millions of people, say that if a book sells only 5,000 copies it is a best-seller. There is a fairly high literacy rate in that part of the world but the people do not usually read to learn new information, they learn through oral means and memorize the material.

In addition to the "preferred orality" of some cultures, there is what some refer to as "secondary orality" where societies that are literate become more oral in their communication and learning preference. Western societies tend to be moving in this direction as media consumption increases

(television, radio, audio books, etc.), reading becomes more limited to text messages, Facebook updates, web pages and e-mails and fewer people read for pleasure or learning.

Regardless of how societies have come to where they are now, the fact that oral learning is the norm and not the exception all over the world is a critical understanding for any ministry that wants to have a lasting impact for the Kingdom.

The world is multilingual

There are ~7,000 living languages in the world today. Every one of these languages will someday have believers in it that will understand the Truth better and learn to obey everything that Jesus has commanded more readily if they can hear it and learn in their own language. Ministry organizations all over the world continue to find that effective discipleship efforts use the "heart" language of the person being disciplined to communicate at the heart level. A person may understand other languages and those languages can be used with some good results, but penetrating to the point of changing the deepest beliefs of a person's worldview requires communicating the Truth of the Word in the language that speaks to the deepest part of who they are.

The global church is on the rise

God is at work all over the world to raise up for Himself people from the least-reached and least-privileged cultures and language groups. People in Papua New Guinea are literally walking out of the jungle with a call from God to translate the Bible into their own language. Brazilian Indian believers are rising up with the call of God in their hearts to take the Good News to their fellow Indians who have not yet heard. Churches in Thailand are stepping out in cross-cultural ministry to the desperately needy and lost people in neighboring countries. These examples, and countless others like them all over the world, illustrate the wide-open door for ministry organizations to come alongside these local believers and churches in a supportive role. By providing assistance and tools to the global church according to its need, the church everywhere is equipped to accomplish the specific call of God in their lives with increased efficiency and effectiveness.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do you keep cults from introducing false teachings and heresies into "open" discipleship material and distorting the truth?

"Open" has to do with copyrights and the legal relinquishing of their restrictions using a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike License (CC-BY-SA). Copyrights are generally considered a civil matter and thus very limited in how enforceable they are, especially at an international level. What this means is that, if the cults wanted to take existing materials and corrupt them with their own distortions and heresies, they already could. In fact, they may already be doing so with existing copyrighted material and the copyright holders might never find out. There is no way for any copyright holder to know with certainty that their copyrighted material is not being abused anywhere in the world, especially in languages they do not understand.

In addition, there are many resources in the public domain that could already have been downloaded from the Internet, corrupted by the cults and redistributed. History indicates, however, that this is not generally the tactic used by the cults. Instead, they usually author their own work as an "explanation" of an existing resource (e.g. explaining the KJV Bible) and then they target young, vulnerable believers who have not yet had the opportunity of growing in maturity as disciples of Christ.

So, the idea that copyright prevents derivative works of an inaccurate nature is unproven. What copyright does accomplish, all over the world, every day, is legally prevent law-abiding brothers and sisters in Christ from building on the excellent work of others, in faithful keeping with sound doctrine in order to further discipleship with people of their own language. Instead, they are required to either create everything from scratch or hope for a copyright holder to grant a special exemption to the copyright restrictions. In either case, the lack of unrestricted access to free & open, biblically-sound discipleship materials not only limits their spiritual growth but makes them extremely vulnerable to the advances of the cults and heresies. In that regard, one could argue that copyrights on these resources not only do not prevent the rise of cults and false teaching, they could actually facilitate it.

What if a derivative work of discipleship content is created that is doctrinally inaccurate but has an attribution to the creator of the original content?

The CC-BY-SA includes the "Attribution" condition that requires any derivative work to attribute the original work to the original creator, usually with a link to their website. So, by releasing discipleship content under the CC-BY-SA, anyone is legally allowed to make derivative works of discipleship material that someone else has written, meaning that doctrinal errors could be introduced into derivative works either intentionally (e.g. by a cult) or unintentionally (e.g. by a well meaning but under-trained believer). In either case, the copyright holder can request "non-Attribution" such that their name does not appear on these materials. This is the

approach we are taking with the Door43 project (see <http://door43.org/copyrights>).

Wouldn't it be better to keep the copyrights in place and just allow translation and distribution? Wouldn't that be safer than allowing the material to be modified?

It is important to understand that licensing a work under the CC-BY-SA does not nullify the copyright. The use of the CC-BY-SA makes it so people who encounter the work know what they are permitted to do with the copyrighted material by the original creator of the content.

Another thing to consider is that as soon as a content creator allows translation of content, they lose control of the content for every language they do not understand (and we do not see this as a problem). Good quality translation necessarily assumes adaptation or modification of the text in order to accurately communicate the intended meaning. Some languages and cultures are so far removed from the linguistic and socio-cultural context of the original audience of the Scriptures that effective and accurate translation cannot be accomplished without some degree of adaptation of the material.

There is no way for the holder of the copyright to police every one of the world's ~7,000 languages for accurate translations. But this is not necessarily a problem if we approach the accuracy and quality of translation from the perspective of "by their fruits you will know them" as opposed to controlling the translation process and assuming the result is good quality. In Bible translation, for instance, even when a translation is made using impeccable translation processes by scholars using the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic texts as the source, the resulting work may be less than ideal and may even be considered to be an inaccurate or biased translation. The solution is not to try and place the original texts under copyright in order to limit how they are translated and used. The solution is to make or use a different translation that is accurate.

Why should I use a Creative Commons license? My resources are already free on my website and anyone can use them.

Without a very clear and legally precise license stating what is and is not permitted inadvertently puts anyone who makes a translation (and thus a derivative work) of such resources into potential legal trouble. One of the significant advantages of using a the CC-BY-SA is that Creative Commons has already done (and continues to do) the hard work of creating and overseeing licenses specifically designed to encourage freedom and building on the work of others. This includes translating the licenses and porting them to jurisdictions in many other countries so that the licenses are enforceable worldwide. Each license contains the deed which is understandable by people with no legal training, the license (for lawyers), and the machine-readable code that makes on-line content easily located by computers.

Doesn't the CC-BY-SA allow someone else to make money by selling my work? Why not include a "Non-commercial" condition in the license?

The primary focus of the Open Discipleship Network is to equip the global church with discipleship resources that belong to them so that they can grow in maturity as followers of Jesus. Many members of the church around the world come from societies that are not as affluent as many Western societies. Because of this, we do not want to legally prevent them from making their living by the Gospel. In this case, that means not preventing them from selling the discipleship resources to recover their expenses and make a living.

For example, a rural African pastor can do one of two things: he can either cultivate his maize crop to try and put his kids through school or he can translate and adapt discipleship resources for effective use in his language and culture. He is not able to do both and if he is legally prevented from generating income and providing for his family by selling the discipleship resources he creates then he will not be able to create them.

What about if another ministry sells material that was created by another ministry? Are they required to share the proceeds?

No, they are not required to share the proceeds. There are a few things to consider on this topic.

1. Attribution changes everything — In the economy of the Internet, mindshare (or "attention") is the new currency. Even if a "competitor" (see below) were to take content created by someone else and sell it for a profit, they are legally required to attribute the work to the original creator with a link to the creator's website. Visitors to the website will find that the content is freely available online. "Free" generates attention and as more people find out about it, it is unlikely that anyone will be able to make a profit on what is freely available on the original creator's website.

2. "Share Alike" changes everything — Even if a "competitor" were to create a derivative work from content created by someone else and sell it for a profit, they are legally required to release it under the same license ("Share Alike"). Anyone who purchases the content is legally allowed to release it in any other format, online for free use and re-use under the terms of the CC-BY-SA. Not only is the content freely available but it can be legally re-incorporated back into the original work, should the creator of the work so choose. Consequently, it is unlikely that anyone will be able to make a profit from content that has been freely given away under the CC-BY-SA.

3. There are no competitors in ministry — Even if a secular company were to take someone else's discipleship content and sell it for a profit, our response is: "What does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this [we] rejoice." Philippians 1:17-18 NIV.