



United Bible
Societies

Life in all its fullness

Bible Ministry Magazine | Issue 1



I have come
in order that
you might have
life – life in all
its fullness.

Jesus
JOHN 10:10



THE BIBLE BRINGS LIFE

In the Parable of the Shepherd, Jesus says that he has come to bring “life in all its fullness”. He describes himself as the Good Shepherd who calls each of his sheep by name and is willing to lay down his life to protect them and see them thrive.

What a beautiful illustration of our God and his extravagant love for us! He wants us to know his love and experience the abundant life he makes available to us.

The message of the Bible has the power to transform lives. Ensuring that everyone gets the chance to encounter that message is the shared mission of the nearly 150 Bible Societies that compose the United Bible Societies Fellowship.

As you read the following pages you will get a glimpse of the wide variety of work that Bible Societies do to make this happen – from translating and distributing Scripture to helping people engage with it and apply it to their lives.

You will witness the joy of a community in Eritrea who recently received the New Testament in their language, the delight of a man who learnt to read and write through a Bible-based literacy class in rural Cambodia, the hope that trauma healing classes are bringing to Syrian children...and so much more.

May you be blessed as you see just some of the ways that our Good Shepherd is at work in people’s lives around the globe.

I invite you to partner with us in this life-changing mission by reaching out to your local Bible Society and offering your support through volunteering, prayer or giving. You can also use the prayer pointers scattered throughout this magazine to pray for specific areas of our work.

God’s grace and peace.

Michael Perreau
Director General
United Bible Societies

A movement of hope from the rubble of war

"The deepest need of the human soul is for the positive – the great 'Yes' to life. There is no book in the world other than the Bible which replies to that deepest longing."

REV DR J. KRENEK, BIBLE SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVE FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA, AT THE 1946 MEETING WHERE UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES WAS FOUNDED.

THE STORY of United Bible Societies is one built on a legacy of faithfulness, courage and sacrifice.

It was in May 1946, less than a year after the guns of World War Two fell silent, that representatives from Bible Societies in 13 countries gathered in Elfinward, a retreat centre in Haywards Heath, England. Their nations had been at war with each other, and several delegates had survived years in prisons or concentration camps. But all of them had kept their faith alive, clinging to the words of hope in the Bible.

Although the Bible Societies had long desired to work together and had been in discussions before global conflict broke out, their war-time experiences made them even more determined to do so.

"There is not much hope in the world but there is very much hope in the Bible," noted Bishop Eivind Berggrav from Norway, who spent much of the war in solitary confinement. "Peace and hope are two of the chief words in the Bible, and now the world is asking how we can find our way into the new future."

On May 9, 1946, "moved by the need of the world for the Word of God and by the deep Christian fellowship of those who work together for its spread", the Bible Societies agreed to form United Bible Societies (UBS).


Over the years, more and more Bible Societies were formed and joined the UBS Fellowship. **Today, around 150 Bible Societies are working in more than 240 countries and territories to make the life-giving words of the Bible available to everyone.**

"We had all come through London and had seen the sprawling wasteland of rubble in the centre of the city and realised it must be far worse in Rotterdam, Dresden and Stalingrad."

— DR EUGENE NIDA, ONE OF THE AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES AT THE MEETING



Delegates to the meeting in Elfinward, England, in May 1946, when United Bible Societies was founded.



But the earth will be as
full of the knowledge of
the Lord's **glory** as the
seas are full of water.

HABAKKUK 2:14

THE BIBLE TRANSLATION LANDSCAPE

1.5 billion

people do not have the full Bible in their language



More than half the world's languages have no Scripture

246 million people

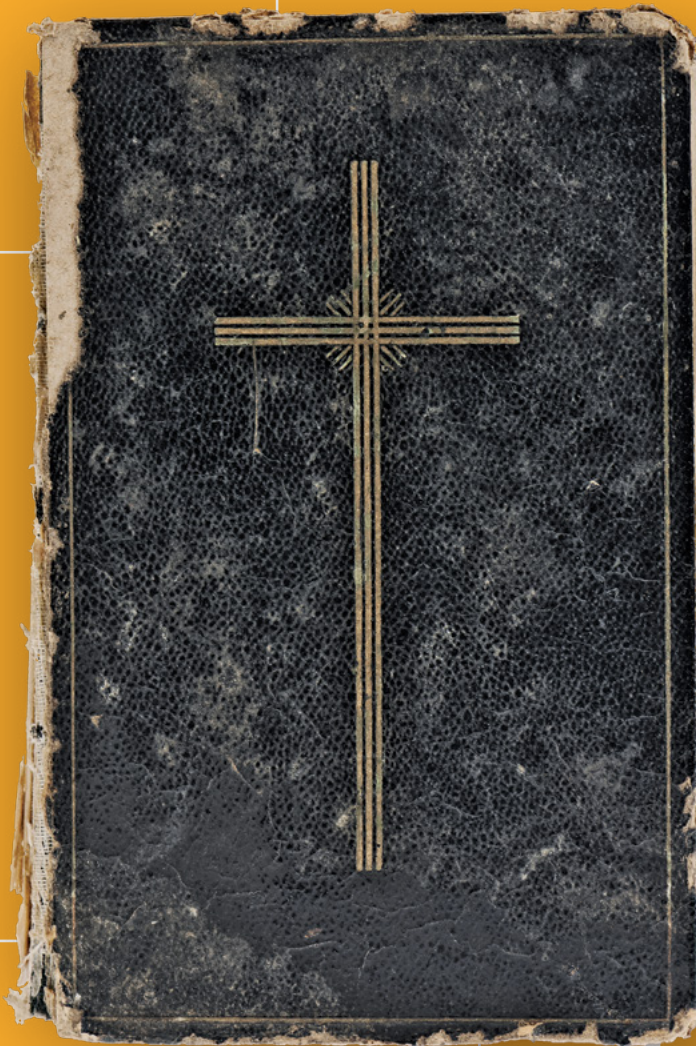
have no Scripture in their language at all



692 languages used by

5.6 billion

people have the full Bible



Only around 40 of the world's 400+ sign languages have some Scripture



The full Braille Bible is only available in 45 languages

Figures as at 1.1.2019, compiled with the help of Bible Societies and Progress.bible™ (January 2019). Figures for the number of language users are based on the best available data, which, when rounded up, totals 7.1 billion people, less than the world population of over 7.7 billion people.

Letensea in Eritrea with the first New Testament in her language, Blin.



Breathing words of life into people and communities

SOMETHING PROFOUND happens when a community receives Scripture in their language. People feel that God is speaking directly to them, from among them. "God speaks my language!" is a common joyful reaction.

And as people encounter God's life-giving words without the filter of a language not fully their own, they start to understand their value and purpose in life, and that gives them hope.

When the Suriname Bible Society provided the New Testament in the Saramaccan language in audio and print, they were amazed at the changes that followed.

"For us working daily in the field, we can see how Bible translation changes people's lives – it changes character, families, communities, and it can change your whole country."

"Within the Saramaccan community there's a revival going on, a revival that you cannot stop," says Suriname Bible Society General Secretary Erny van Axel. And the songs being sung in the newly-planted churches are being written directly from the Scriptures available in Saramaccan.

"I felt like the fear that was inside me was gone," said Sister Medai, who had been depressed and fearful of evil spirits. "So I took the words from the Bible and made songs of God's Word. I couldn't stop praising the Lord because it was the solution I was looking for."

"For us working daily in the field, we can see how Bible translation changes people's lives – it changes character, families, communities, and it can change your whole country," says Erny.

That's why Bible translation is at the heart of Bible Society work: it releases the Bible's life-transforming words and enables Bible Societies to create opportunities for people to encounter and engage with Scripture in relevant and meaningful ways.

In 2018 Bible Societies completed Scripture translations in 66 languages used by 440 million people. 44 of those languages used by over 77 million people received first translations.

"Today, I have received food that can fill us up more than anything in the world," beamed Letensea in Eritrea, as she held the very first New Testament in her language, Blin, published in 2018.

It was an unforgettable moment for the Blin community, both young and old. 82-year-old Kudusan recalled how much her father had longed to see the Bible available in his language.

"Today I came to see this special inauguration on his behalf, as well as for myself," she said. "I can't read but my granddaughters and sons will read to me from this golden, newly-translated New Testament!"

Growing collaboration between Bible agencies is enabling Scripture translations to be completed more efficiently and at the highest quality. As a result, God's Word is being made available to more people at a faster rate than ever before.

The Bura Bible translation centre in Nigeria, destroyed in a Boko Haram attack in September 2014. The Bura Bible was launched in December 2014.



A LABOUR OF LOVE

BIBLE TRANSLATION is a painstaking, time-consuming and costly task. Each completed Scripture translation represents years of sacrificial effort by many people across the world from all walks of life: local churches,

communities, translators, Bible scholars, and local and international donors and prayer supporters.

"Thanks to the Bura Bible, the church is growing and more light has come to that part of the world."

Many Bible translators work in remote areas and struggle with regular power cuts and other logistical challenges. Some live in countries where it is dangerous to

be a Christian, and need to carry out their work in secret, at great risk. Despite these challenges, Bible translators live and breathe their work, determined to make God's Word available to their people.

Today, Bura-speaking Christians in Nigeria are able to read the full Bible in their language thanks to the dedication of the translation team who completed their work under constant threat from terrorist group, Boko Haram. In 2014, the year that the Bura Bible was published, the translation office was burnt down and the project secretary killed.

"The churches destroyed by Boko Haram have been rebuilt," reports Benjamin Mordi from the Bible Society of Nigeria. "Thanks to the Bura Bible, the church is growing and more light has come to that part of the world."

In Venezuela, translation teams are continuing to work as best they can amidst the deepening economic and political crisis, which has brought the country to its knees. The sign language translation team had their recording equipment stolen three times in 2018, and unrest and logistical difficulties have made it impossible to carry out the initial training of translators working on the newly-begun Pemon New Testament project.

"They are continuing work in a rudimentary way because **they have the firm intention to give their community access to the Word of God,**" notes General Secretary Javier Chacón.

Pray for all those working to make Scripture available to their communities – that God will stay close to them, bless them and equip them. Pray especially for God's protection over Bible translators working in difficult and dangerous contexts.



STEPPING OUT IN FAITH: A BOLD PLAN TO REDUCE BIBLE POVERTY

"THIS IS AN EXTRAORDINARY MOMENT for Bible translation," says Alexander Schweitzer, UBS Director of Global Bible Translation. "Bible agencies and donors are partnering more effectively than ever before, and developments in technology are creating unprecedented opportunities."

To steward this momentum, in 2018 UBS embarked on the Bible Translation Roadmap – a bold 20-year journey that aims to provide around 600 million people with new access to Scripture in their heart language. If Bible Societies receive the funding that they need, this will involve the completion of 1,200 translation projects by 2038. This Bible Translation Roadmap contributes to a multi-agency effort called the ETEN* All-Access Goals, aimed at ensuring that God's Word is available to all people, no matter where they live or what language they speak.

"Our 20-year vision and mission strategy builds on a legacy of sacrifice and generosity passed down by generations of faithful servants," says Michael Perreau, UBS Director General. "Now we continue that mission with fresh momentum by working more closely than ever before with partners around the world, including modern day Bible heroes living lives of sacrifice and dedication so that we all might have access to the life-giving Word of God."

*ETEN (Every Tribe Every Nation) is an alliance of Bible translation agencies and donors.

**Watch for the new thing I am
going to do. It is happening
already – you can see it now!
I will make a road through
the wilderness and give you
streams of water there.**

ISAIAH 43:19




**600 million
people**



**1,200
languages**

**20
years**



The words
I have spoken to you
bring God's
life-giving Spirit.

Jesus
JOHN 6:63

SCRIPTURE DISTRIBUTION BY BIBLE SOCIETIES

In 2018, Bible Societies distributed 354.6 million Scriptures, including 38.5 million full Bibles

North America

FULL BIBLES:
3.4 million
ALL SCRIPTURES:
4.5 million

Central and South America

FULL BIBLES:
14.9 million
ALL SCRIPTURES:
273 million

Europe

FULL BIBLES:
2.9 million
ALL SCRIPTURES:
5.8 million

Africa

FULL BIBLES:
7 million
ALL SCRIPTURES:
9.8 million

Middle East

FULL BIBLES:
0.3 million
ALL SCRIPTURES:
2 million

Asia

FULL BIBLES:
9.4 million
ALL SCRIPTURES:
58.6 million

Oceania

FULL BIBLES:
0.6 million
ALL SCRIPTURES:
0.7 million

Figures reported by Bible Societies. 82% of Bible Societies responded. In the case of non-respondents, the previous three years' average data was given as their 2018 distribution data. We thank YouVersion for their help in reporting on internet downloads of Bible Society Scripture texts in 2018.



Shining hope into all corners of the world

"It was like a gem that you look after, that you read every day."



FROM SPARSELY POPULATED VILLAGES in far-flung provinces to bustling mega cities, and from dusty refugee camps to affluent leafy suburbs, people everywhere are searching for meaning and hope.

In some contexts, poverty, restrictions and other barriers make it hard for people to access Scripture. In other parts of the world, Scriptures are readily available, but people don't choose to engage with them. Bible Societies across the world are working in creative, innovative ways to shine the hope of God's Word into their communities.

Each year they publish and distribute hundreds of millions of Scriptures, including tens of millions of full Bibles.

In Cuba, where Scriptures have been extremely scarce for many years, Bible Societies around the world have worked with 62 different church denominations to provide them with the Scriptures they so desperately want. Between 2013 and 2018, 1.3 million Bibles were provided for Cuban Christians, and another million are planned for distribution by 2022.

Jorge Luis Baker grew up when two out of five Cuban Christians did not have their own Bible, and had to borrow his grandmother's copy – the only Bible the family had.

"It was a great treasure!" he said, recalling the moment he got a Bible of his own. "It was like a gem that you look after, that you read every day, where you look for a message, something to help you live each day."

REACHING THE NEXT GENERATION

Children and young people are the future – of our families, churches, communities and nations. Helping them to discover and build their lives on the wisdom, hope and joy in God’s Word is a priority for Bible Societies across the world. How they approach it varies, depending on their context.



Photo: Layton Thompson

Malawi

IN MALAWI, where many families cannot afford Scriptures, the Bible Society’s project to distribute children’s Bibles through Sunday Schools is delighting children, parents and teachers alike. One church in Blantyre which received a consignment last year said that the number of children attending the Sunday School each week grew from around 80 to 250 as a result.

“This project could change Malawi,” said Joseph Khondowe from the Bible Society. “There will be more children in churches and their Bible knowledge will be deeper.”

“God is the one who created me and helps me. That’s why I want to get to know him, through this Bible.”

Gift, 12, Malawi, pictured above receiving a children’s Bible at his Sunday School.

Thailand

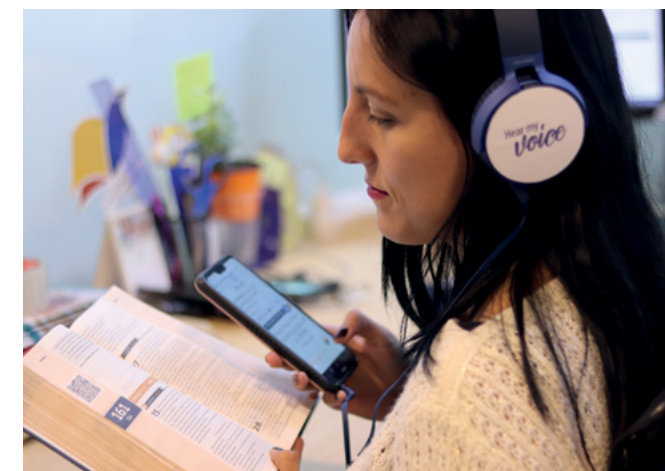
THE GROWING POPULARITY of an annual Bible Quiz in Thailand, where only 1.2% of the population is Christian, has taken the Bible Society there by surprise. Initially aimed at children aged 9-11, it has now expanded to high schools, by popular demand, and is eagerly anticipated by more than 1,000 children and teenagers each year.

“Now those high school children who have graduated are asking when we’ll take the quiz to colleges!” says General Secretary Dr Seree Lorgunpai. “We get to touch the lives of the children each year as they grow up, and that’s really valuable.”

Almost half the participants are not from Christian families but their parents are supportive of their children taking part and learning about the Bible.



“Now those high school children who have graduated are asking when we’ll take the quiz to colleges!”



Colombia

YOUNG PEOPLE IN COLOMBIA have grown up with a backdrop of conflict and violence. At the same time, they face the same pressures as all young people trying to make their way in a fast-paced, ever-changing world. Little wonder that many feel overwhelmed by life.

The Colombian Bible Society believes that the Bible brings hope and healing. To make it as easy as possible for busy young people to engage with God’s Word at home or on the go, it has created a multi-platform resource. *A Daily Encounter with God* consists of a printed Bible with daily readings and QR codes that link to the readings online in text or audio format.

It also encourages young people to study the Bible together by releasing a weekly Bible Study on the app.

United Kingdom

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK, as in many parts of the world, are growing up in an increasingly secular environment, where the Bible is seen as irrelevant. And yet so many young people have questions as they try to make sense of the world and how they fit into it.

Who better to design something to meet young people’s needs than young people themselves? That’s how the new, interactive Youth Edition of the Good News Bible came about, through a partnership between the British and Foreign Bible Society and Youth For Christ. Links to YouTube videos on topics important to young people, spaces to draw and journal, and plenty of material to explain the Bible text are just some of the features in the new Scripture, which was launched in 2018.

“It’s really going to help non-Christians read the Bible,” commented one young girl in the focus group.



Pray for children and young people as they build the foundations of their lives. Ask God to bless efforts to engage them with the Bible.

GLOBAL LITERACY LANDSCAPE

1 billion
people
cannot read or write

500 million are women

250 million are men

250 million are children,
who are failing to acquire
basic literacy skills

UBS LITERACY WORK

Around **30** Bible Society literacy
projects each year in nearly
60 languages



162,000
people benefited in 2018

UBS's literacy work is
recognised by UNESCO



"It's never too late to learn,
even when you're old."
— MR SOVANN, CAMBODIA

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH BIBLE-BASED LITERACY



LITERACY IS ABOUT DIGNITY, INDEPENDENCE AND WHOLENESS. It opens up opportunities for employment and further education, and provides a foundation on which people can grow and flourish. Literacy is such a key requirement for life that UNESCO defines it as a human right. Yet around 1 billion people cannot read or write.

Bible Societies are working together to tackle this injustice, providing Bible-based literacy materials and running literacy programs in partnership with churches and other organisations. These are helping more than 100,000 people each year to develop life-changing literacy skills and engage with the Bible, too.

In a village in Cambodia, Mr Sovann, 38, is unrecognisable from the man he was just two years ago. Unable to read or write, he would feel a pang of frustration and sadness when he saw his wife reading her Bible. He wished he could at least write his own name.

Feeling hopeless, he would drink heavily with his friends and fight with his wife. When she invited him to church he would refuse. He had no interest in Christianity.

When the Bible Society's literacy program came to his village, aimed at helping children learn to read and write, his son was asked to be one of the class facilitators. Curious to see him in action, Mr Sovann quietly sat in a corner to watch.

Soon he was sitting on the floor with the children, listening to the lesson on the MP3 player and working with the alphabet and other basic literacy materials in Khmer. As he started to learn he felt his spirits lift and his heart open.

"I am a changed man!" said Mr Sovann who proudly read his Bible out loud for Bible Society staff who visited his village. "I don't drink or smoke and my wife and I don't argue so much."

He is now one of the leaders of the church, and is helping to start more literacy classes for adults and children in his village and in neighbouring villages.

"It's so important that parents send their children to school," he added, "but it's never too late to learn, even when you're old."

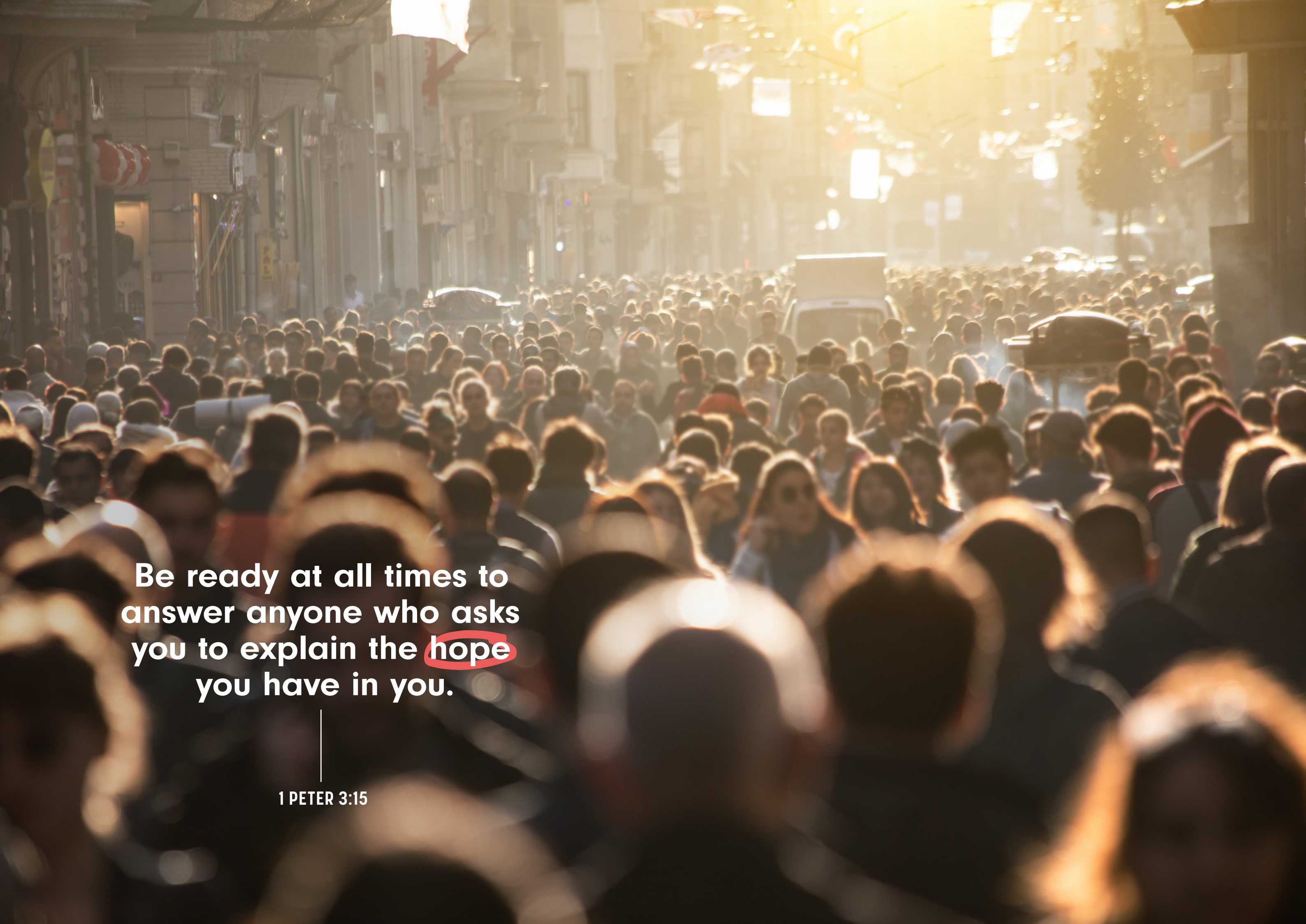
Around 8,500 people take part in these literacy classes each year, most of them in rural areas. Bible Society of Cambodia General Secretary Pisit Heng says it is having a tangible impact on families and communities.

"Wherever the project is implemented there is less domestic violence and crime, people are able to find jobs or start small businesses, and churches grow."

"Wherever the project is implemented there is less domestic violence and crime, people are able to find jobs or start small businesses, and churches grow."



Pray that Bible-based literacy programs reach into the communities that need them most and help people to flourish.

A large crowd of people is walking down a city street, filling the frame from the foreground to the background. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a setting or rising sun, creating a hazy, atmospheric effect. The crowd is diverse in age and appearance, and many individuals are looking towards the camera. In the background, city buildings and streetlights are visible, some with flags hanging from them. The overall mood is one of a busy, yet peaceful, urban gathering.

**Be ready at all times to
answer anyone who asks
you to explain the hope
you have in you.**

1 PETER 3:15

GLOBAL BIBLE-BASED TRAUMA HEALING

10m+
people

have benefited



10,000+ people
are trained
and registered
facilitators



materials
available in

135
languages

delivered by

200
partner
organisations



activities
underway in

109
countries

Figures provided by American
Bible Society's Trauma Healing
Institute (2019).

Speaking words of **truth** into every situation

"We have stopped
talking about war
now...We are talking
about building – about
rebuilding people!"

HEALING THE WOUNDS OF TRAUMA

TRAUMA AFFECTS every society in every part of the world. Abuse, gang violence, crime, natural disasters, war, displacement...so many things in our fragile, complex world cause suffering that lasts far beyond the traumatic event itself.

When a missile exploded in a street in Aleppo, Syria, George Andrea, who leads Bible Society work there, noticed how survivors responded: they simply picked themselves up and quietly began to clear up and help their injured neighbours. There was no weeping or screaming. Years of war had caused them to completely shut off their emotions.

Mr Andrea and his team, who have kept the Bible Society operating throughout the conflict, are all too aware of the trauma experienced by so many Syrians. That is why they are working to bring Bible-based trauma healing to Syrians from all walks of life, in partnership with American Bible Society's Trauma Healing Institute (THI).

The THI's *Healing the Wounds of Trauma* program is developed by mental health professionals and based on biblical principles. It is also contextualised for each country in which it is delivered. Through train-the-trainer workshops, more than 10,000 people across the world, including Bible Society staff and church leaders, have been equipped to deliver trauma healing to the hurting people in their communities.

In Syria, where the need is so immense, Mr Andrea aims to have at least 200 people a year trained as facilitators.

"We have stopped talking about war now – eight years are more than enough," he says. "We are talking about building – about rebuilding people! We want to build a new generation of trained facilitators who help people to heal after the horrors of war."

– continued overleaf

Painting by a refugee who
was rescued from ISIS.



Pray for people around the world who are suffering trauma. Ask God to bless the work of Bible Societies, churches and other partners who are bringing them the hope and healing in God's Word.



"When I took part in the trauma healing, I felt that I could breathe again."

Children in Syria have experienced horrors that no child should ever have to go through. Experts from the THI have been working with the Bible Society and other professionals in Syria to develop a curriculum specially tailored to their needs.

"This is one of our dreams that is coming true – being able to help children who have lost their life story and who are suicidal or apathetic," says Mr. Andrea. "The need is urgent."

Maya, a young woman who helps deliver trauma healing to Syrian children, remembers how six-year-old Mustafa sat quietly, looking up at the Cross, at the end of one workshop. "It was as if he were having an internal dialogue with Jesus," she says.

He was one of a group of refugee children who had started out deeply distrustful and unruly. But by the end they were opening up as they were encouraged to share their stories and cry out their grief.

"On the last day these children, who had been so wild, were writing letters to God in complete silence," recalls Maya.

Being able to show her children love is one of the changes that Miriam has reported after going through a trauma healing program in a refugee camp in Jordan. Having fled the conflict in Iraq, her troubles followed her to Jordan, where her husband continued to drink heavily and abuse her. Desperately unhappy, she passed her pain onto her young sons. At one point things got so bad that she poured kerosene over herself and got ready to set herself on fire. She is only alive because one of her sons begged her to stop.

"When I took part in the trauma healing, I felt that I could breathe again," she says.

"I needed someone to listen to me. I needed to tell someone what had happened to me."

Now Miriam says she feels very close to God.

"All the love I get from Jesus I give to my children," she smiles. "The Bible has been life-changing for me."

He heals the broken-hearted and bandages their wounds.

PSALM 147:3

Mateo* in Guatemala.

ACROSS THE WORLD in Guatemala, Mateo* lived in his own personal hell for many years. Sexually abused by a relative as a child, he discovered, as a teenager, that he was HIV positive. In total despair, he attempted suicide.

"But God gave me the gift of life again," he smiles. Today, he is happily married and has a young child. He and his wife serve together in church and help many young people deal with their traumatic experiences.

"When we learned in trauma healing about why people suffer it was as if God had opened my eyes and allowed me to heal my heart," he says. "What's written in the Bible is not out of date. It's applicable today because God suffers with those who suffer and he wishes to heal them."



Mateo* holding hands with his wife.

*Not his real name

BRINGING THE BIBLE INTO THE PUBLIC SQUARE

IN MANY COUNTRIES, amid a rising tide of secularism, fewer and fewer people feel that the Bible is relevant to their lives. It is ignored, misquoted, misunderstood and even despised. Bible Societies in these contexts are finding creative ways to bring the voice of the Bible back into the public square, and equipping Christians with fresh confidence in its message.

"We aim to 'drop the drawbridge' and walk into the public square, confident that Christianity still has something vital to say about life's biggest questions," says Allan Dowthwaite, Director of Media at the Centre for Public Christianity (CPX) – part of the Bible Society Australia Group. It does so partly through research on key topics and getting articles, videos and podcasts into the

mainstream media. Its documentary *For the love of God*, for instance, explores some of the good and bad moments in Christian history and its impact on our world today. It was screened in cinemas across the country and broadcast to a national television audience of nearly 400,000 people.

Bible Society Australia's Christian news site, Eternity News, was set up to help and encourage Christians and engage with mainstream media on current events.

"As a professional media outlet, Eternity News wants to share what God is doing in Australia and around the world," says Deputy Editor Ben McEachen. "We can do that by providing a Christian perspective on news and current affairs, with integrity and boldness."

"We aim to 'drop the drawbridge' and walk into the public square, confident that Christianity still has something vital to say about life's biggest questions..."

Public Bible reading marathons are another way that some Bible Societies are literally taking the Word of God into the public square. In 2018, Sofia Square in Kiev, Ukraine's capital, resonated with the sound of God's Word for 77 hours as the whole Bible was read out loud by more than 320 people, including church leaders and prominent public figures.

"It was an amazing experience," said Ukrainian Bible Society Deputy General Secretary Anatoly Raychynets (pictured below). "Security guards working in nearby buildings were coming to us

and saying, 'We are listening night and day as you read the Bible. I've never been in touch with the Bible before – do you have a copy for me?'"

The event was part of a Year of the Bible campaign, which was promoted by the country's president himself, to remind people of the Bible and its important place in their society and history.



Please pray for those working to release the truth, hope, love and justice in the Bible into the lives of all people everywhere.



United Bible
Societies

*The Bible
for everyone*

This Book of books,
the Word of God,
has the power to
change lives.

Rev Dr Robert Cunville
UBS PRESIDENT

unitedbiblesocieties.org

United Bible Societies, UK Hub
Stonehill Green, Westlea,
Swindon SN5 7PJ, England

Tel +44(0)1793 236 200
Email comms@biblesocieties.org

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