



Outside the church where Bible Society's Algeria office is located.



'IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR.' Yes, once again we rejoice in the birth of our Saviour. How do you celebrate the good news of Christmas with your family and friends? We have many resources and initiatives on offer to help you share the Bible this Christmastime. Check out *In Focus* for more information.

We also remember those in persecuted countries who cannot share their faith with their families. This issue we hear from Algeria, where the Church faces many restrictions. Despite this, our team out there continues to supply the growing Church with Bibles.

Thank you for your generous gifts throughout 2015. So much has been accomplished: from new translations to new projects. Thanks to you we are providing Scripture all around the world. From everyone here at Bible Society, happy Christmas and have a wonderful New Year!

John Ranford
Bible a Month Co-ordinator



Photo © Bible Society in Algeria



Our reporter in Algeria

(we cannot identify them as they may not be allowed back into the country)

CHURCHES SHARE THE WORD IN ALGERIA

Father Bertrand* isn't a typical priest here in Algeria, where the Catholic Church is very wary of being accused of proselytism. When he first arrived in Algeria, Father Bertrand asked his bishop for Bibles to give to people who requested one. He was told: 'Let's wait a little...'

The people who'd asked for a Bible searched everywhere, and eventually

bought one via the internet. It turned out the organisation they bought the Bible from was a recognised cult – and they narrowly avoided being drawn in.

'Now, it is agreed I can give a New Testament or even a Bible to whoever requests one,' explains Father Bertrand. 'When people really want a Bible, they'll find one. So you see, the subsidised Bibles we buy at Bible Society are completely indispensable to us. Bible Society is the only place in Algeria where we can buy Scriptures and,



Bible Society in focus



LAST YEAR, we launched **#AdventChallenge**, an online Advent calendar encouraging you to share goodwill to others at Christmas.

Over 34,000 challenges were accepted. Around 2,000 donations were made to charity shops. Nearly 700 parents/guardians were given some time to themselves through offers of babysitting. That's just a small glimpse of what happened last year. And the best bit: we're doing it all again this year.

Throughout Advent, we're challenging you to share goodwill with those around you. **#AdventChallenge** is inspired by the Bible which is packed full of inspirational stories like the 'Good Samaritan' which show mercy, generosity and compassion – even when it comes at a cost. Choose from three challenges each day and see how you can impact the lives of others.

Be a part of something inspirational and challenge your family and friends to do the same.

Sign up at: biblesociety.org.uk/adventchallenge2015



despite the long drive, I regularly go to Algiers to bring some back.'

Ali Khidri, General Secretary of Bible Society in Algeria, nods and smiles. Father Bertrand is a regular customer and they get on well. When Father Bertrand heard we would be visiting his region, he insisted we come and stay at the presbytery for the night.

The area isn't easy. We are far from the Berber-speaking communities where a Christian revival is taking place. Here, there are many Muslim extremists. But this energetic priest is not discouraged. 'I promised my friends and relatives back home I would be careful and do my best to stay safe,' Father Bertrand says.

Father Bertrand's community is like a beehive. People of all ages and nationalities come to visit or attend services. In the chapel that hosts us for the evening service, a candle is shining and flowers from the garden brighten the room. Father Bertrand has asked Ali to share the Word, and a young student from sub-Saharan Africa reads the gospel. Another student plays the guitar. For a moment, we could be



A service in a small house church, in a village near Akbou, Kabylie.

Photo © Bible Society in Algeria

anywhere in the world, brothers and sisters united around the same God.

But that night, I'm woken by what sounds like gunshots. It turns out to be an anti-mosquito device! Even after my heart is beating normally again, I'm unable to go back to sleep. I don't dare tell Father Bertrand how scared I was by that sound in the silence of the night.

This is a dangerous country in which to be a Christian. I am here for a few days. These Christians live here all the time. In my view, they are heroes.

* name changed to protect his identity



OVERFLOWING CHURCHES

In the city of Hawassa, in Ethiopia, Bibles are being given out in the local prison. The prison looks like a village; people are playing volley ball and games in a courtyard. Children, who were born in the prison, run around the grounds and visitors catch up with the inmates through a wooden fence. Currently there are 2,500 people here but there's only one Bible between every 50 prisoners. Despite this there are three overflowing churches, all run by inmates.



One of three overflowing churches in Hawassa's local prison.

Photo © Grace Smithy/Bible Society

The prison chaplain is also a prisoner; he came to faith during the second year of his sentence when he received a Bible from Bible Society and started to attend church. Now he uses his time in prison to share the Bible and promote peace and fellowship in the prison.

One prison warden noted the change in the inmates since Bible Society started working there, 'I've been working here for three years and can say that the Bible has really changed the entire atmosphere of the prison. Suddenly people have hope; they are content and happy to be alive. They're stuck in the prison and could be angry and riot, but instead they have this sense of peace. It's amazing. On behalf of the prison authorities, we are so grateful to Bible Society for supplying Bibles.'

Bible a month

December 2015

Thank you for helping others to encounter the Bible.

ALGERIA

Photo © Bible Society in Algeria



Ali gives Ryan, 11, his own Arabic Bible when visiting his village.

OFFICIALLY, there's freedom to worship in Algeria, this large country on the northern coast of Africa, where there are 58 registered churches. But evangelism is illegal and Christian activity is closely monitored. The reality is that Christians face constant harassment from family, relatives and neighbours. Marriages have broken up and people have lost their jobs through being open about their faith.

Hundreds of unofficial house churches meet in secret. Yet there

are more Christians who never attend church, because it would put them at great risk. No one knows just how many Christians there are in the country, but estimates put it between 100,000 and 200,000 people.

Our work in Algeria is led by Ali Khidri. His main aim is to keep the growing Algerian Church supplied with Scripture, and his office is the only place in the country where people can be sure to get a Bible. These books are heavily subsidised, and sales don't even cover the cost. So your support keeps his ministry alive – and ensures Algerians have access to God's Word.

Ali passed on this message to Bible a Month supporters: 'Thank you for being a blessing for this people and this country. You are partners with us; you are actively taking part in God's work in this vast country. Thank you.'

PRAYER POINTERS

- ★ Ali Khidri, who leads Bible Society's work in Algeria, said, 'Please keep praying for lives to be deeply transformed by God's Word. It isn't easy in such a difficult context. Pray that, as we see whole families come to faith, they will be a solid base for the Church to continue to grow.'
- ★ For the lifting of restrictions on Christian activity in Algeria. A law passed in 2006 means evangelism is a criminal activity, and you could spend five years in prison for giving someone a Bible. Ali's dedicated ministry over many years means he can work at the very edge of what's permissible, but still Bible work can be curtailed by the authorities.
- ★ For Father Bertrand (see eyewitness report). Give thanks for the way he and Ali Khidri are able to work together, and pray for God's protection over the priest as he courageously shares the Bible in this dangerous region.
- ★ For the large numbers of secret Christians in Algeria, particularly women, who have to hide their faith from their families. Pray they will be sustained through reading Scripture, and through Christian broadcasts on Algerian TV and radio. Pray that Ali will continue to reach many secret believers with Bibles.

To discover other ways in which we offer the Bible to the world visit biblesociety.org.uk

Bible a month

January 2016

Thank you for your faithful prayers.

TANZANIA

Photo © Bible Society of Tanzania



A group work together as part of a Good Samaritan workshop.

ONE AND A HALF MILLION PEOPLE IN TANZANIA are living with HIV – making it the seventh most affected country in the world. In the Kagara region the situation is worse, due to a large influx of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi in 1995. Lack of education has led to the spread of the disease and stigmatisation.

Through the *Good Samaritan Project* Bible Society is addressing discrimination and lack of education while promoting biblical values. One of the team

running workshops says, 'When churches are equipped with sufficient knowledge about HIV and empowered by Christ's love for their neighbours they will extend their social responsibilities to those affected without fear, bias or discrimination.'

Through workshops, Scripture Materials and discussions we are encouraging a greater openness and giving guidance so people can make informed decisions for their own health.

Furaha Emmanuel said, 'With the *Good Samaritan* I have learnt to be the Good Samaritan to other people, regardless their social status and social wellbeing. I can now differentiate from HIV and AIDS and, above all, from right and wrong, so I shall no longer fear those with HIV. I know now what I am supposed to do. I am the Good Samaritan.'

PRAYER POINTERS

- ★ Praise God for Furaha Emmanuel and all the other people who have been impacted by this project. Pray for the continued transforming of lives and communities as churches show the love of Christ to those living with HIV.
- ★ The team in Tanzania hopes to expand the project and increase the impact across the region. Please pray for the funding needs and the practical arrangements.
- ★ Over the last 20 years HIV prevalence has fallen and antiretroviral drugs are more widely used. Praise God for this and pray that fewer and fewer people would be affected by HIV.
- ★ The *Good Samaritan Project* runs across a further 20 African countries. Please pray for the teams and volunteers and all that they do in their fields.



Bible a month

December 2015

'Can anything separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, suffering, and hard times, or hunger and nakedness, or danger and death?' Romans 8.35 (CEV)

ALGERIA FACTFILE



Area: 2,381,741 sq km approx. 10 times larger than UK

Population: 39,542,166 approx. 62% of UK population

Literacy: 80%

Languages: Arabic (official), French, Berber dialects

Bible a month

Club Corner

Thank you for every gift you generously give. Through your support of *Bible a Month* Christians from Cambodia to Guatemala are receiving Bibles. Translations are being given to people groups who have never before had a Bible in their language. Prisons are being transformed. The illiterate have begun reading the gospel. We are offering the Bible to the world!

Over time the cost of translating, printing and distributing Bibles rises; in the past three years the cost of paper in China has risen by a third. It now costs an average of £5 a month to give a Bible to Christians around the world. This past year we have updated our literature and started getting the word out to supporters. To everyone who has increased their monthly giving as a result of this, thank you!

We understand that increasing your financial giving is not always possible, but if you would like to amend your monthly gift then please do get in touch.

Your support is vital. On behalf of everyone at Bible Society and all those who, because of you, have received a Bible, thank you so much for your gifts and prayers.

If you wish to amend your giving please call: 01793 418222. Thank you.

Don't get tired of helping others. You will be rewarded when the time is right, if you don't give up. Galatians 6.9 (CEV)

FOLD

To discover other ways in which we offer the Bible to the world visit biblesociety.org.uk

Tear along perforation

Bible a month

January 2016

'The command that Christ has given us is this: whoever loves God must love others also.' 1 John 4.21 (GNB)

TANZANIA FACTFILE



Area: 947,300 sq km approx. 75% larger than UK

Population: 51,045,882 approx. 80% of UK population

Literacy: 70%

Languages: Swahili (official), Kiunguja, English, Arabic, local languages

Bible a month

Look out for your next *Bible a Month* prayer letter which will feature reports from **Pakistan** and **China**.

Thank you so much for your support which is helping others to encounter the Bible.

Remember that if your circumstances change you can alter your gift at any time. To increase or decrease your regular donation call us on: 01793 418222.

