



*Eighty men gather to take part in an Alpha course where they'll receive a Bible from Bible Society.*



IT'S ALWAYS WONDERFUL to hear stories in Bible Society's office of how your gifts are enabling people everywhere to encounter the Bible and it's even more wonderful to be able to share them with you. In this edition we take a look at the distribution of Bibles in prison, both in the UK and in Africa.

While it's relatively easy to give these Bibles to prisoners we are reminded again that for some having or even wanting Scripture can put lives at risk. But that doesn't deter communities in Indochina where, thanks to your support, four new translations are being worked on.

Please pray for all this work and thank you for being a part of our mission.

**John Ranford**  
Bible a Month Co-ordinator



Photo © Layton Thompson/Bible Society



## Bibles for Alpha by Esther Kayes

EIGHTY MEN ARE SINGING AND CLAPPING IN A WHITEWASHED CHAPEL. The wooden doors and windows are open. A small breeze slips through. It is 31 degrees centigrade and muggy. In the front rows men bang sticks together and shake tambourines, dancing as they praise God in their local language, Asante Twi. These 80 men are inmates in St James' Camp prison, Accra, Ghana's capital. Today there is an Alpha session. It's the seventh time a course has run in the prison.

After a prayer from a man with a tambourine we are introduced in both English and Twi on the low stage at the front of the chapel. They cheer – Bible Society is providing each Alpha participant with a Bible after the course. Selwyn, the prison chaplain, begins the meeting with a talk, one of ten. The Alpha course will run over five weeks with two sessions per week. After the talk the men move their chairs and gather in groups of eight to consider and discuss. Prison officers sit



# Bible Society in focus

## BIBLES FOR PRISONERS – KATIE WALKER

Here at Bible Society's Contact Centre, we receive many and varying requests for Bibles, some from individuals but mostly from prison chaplains and young offender's institutes. Where we can, we give Bibles or New Testaments. Last year we gave out over 2,800 Bibles in 21 different languages.

Back in 2013 we partnered with London City Mission to get Freedom Bibles in HMP Holloway. The reports we got back were always amazing and encouraging – the Holy Spirit was working hard. Again, in another well-known prison, the chaplaincy runs a faith course where participants receive a Bible. Here, men young and old, of faith and no faith are throwing their hearts into worship. This past year they had several non-believers attend, two of whom gave their life to Christ. One prisoner, who had received a Bible, sent us a monetary gift which reminded me of the widow's mite. He has so little yet he still gave to spread God's Word.

It's wonderful to be able to give Bibles to those who ask; we are all God's people, no matter what we have done. I need God's Word in my life, as equally as any offender needs it. Our mission is to offer the Bible to the world and it's a mission to everyone, the lost and the found.



Photo © Bible Society

Katie Walker has worked with Bible Society since she left school.



among them adding their own perspective to the discussion.

We are shown around the grounds. It is open, spacious and green. Ten men are playing football on the central field. Five dormitories border the grounds, this is where the inmates eat and sleep. Tucked in one back corner of the site there's a beautifully tended vegetable patch which the prisoners are responsible for. Men in blue jumpsuits are taking a car apart near the entrance of the prison; St James' Camp provides the opportunity to learn new skills like car mechanics and carpentry. These prisoners are receiving rehabilitation and re-offending rates have dropped dramatically from 57% to 21% since Alpha and Bible Society arrived.

We chat with five English-speaking inmates who were in the Alpha meeting. They show us to a low-roofed cabin and set out white plastic chairs under the fan and out of the heat.

Addy, a small stooped man with grey hair and glasses sits next to me. He is holding a black leather Bible. It is



Rev. Selwyn Okai, Deputy Chaplain of Ghana Prisons, who is responsible for the Alpha course.

Photo © Layton Thompson/Bible Society

well used, but it isn't his. He says he is borrowing it from another inmate. Before prison he was a professor in Accra but now he wants to teach the Word of God.

The inmates share their favourite Bible passages with us nodding as they hear each other's. They explain them, joyfully telling us the impact the Bible and Alpha is having on their life in prison. These men are full of hope and expectation for their futures. Being able to encounter the Bible in prison has set them on a new path.

## FOUR TRANSLATIONS FOR THREE OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES

Bible Society is working to provide four new Bible translations for three minority communities in Asia who are subjected to much oppression. The project is highly sensitive therefore, we have removed many identifying details from this article.

Despite enduring much suffering the Christians of the first community refuse to give up their faith and the Church is growing there. Most of the population have only a basic education so the leaders requested revised and simplified Bibles. These two new translations will be printed in two different dialects which will reach at least 500,000 people.

Another community have never had a Bible, only handwritten portions of Scripture. There is great excitement at this project as they have been waiting decades for a Bible in their own language.

The final translation is needed to allow clearer understanding of biblical texts. For this community much of their religious terminology is associated with ancestor worship. The words are considered offensive and are often misinterpreted. This new translation will allow the community to have a better understanding of the Bible from their cultural and religious background.

By offering Scripture to these communities in their own language Bible Society not only gives people the opportunity to read God's Word but also helps them to preserve and standardise their languages.

Please pray for the protection of all those involved in this sensitive project.



A translator works secretly to produce a Bible in a new language.

Photo © Bible Society

# Bible a month

August 2015

Thank you for helping others to encounter the Bible.

## GHANA

Photo © Layton Thompson/Bible Society



Elizabeth receiving her Bible after an Alpha course in Wuve village, Volta region.

LAST YEAR 5,375 people took part in 88 Alpha courses across Ghana. This year that number has doubled and looks set to double again to 20,000 in 2016.

The courses run in villages, prisons, secondary schools and churches. Through Alpha, people are discovering that Christianity is a relationship, not a religion. Because there's an opportunity to discuss faith and ask questions people get clarity, and answers; they develop an understanding of the Bible. That's why Bible

Society has partnered with Alpha; to supply the Bibles to those who desperately need them.

Kwasi Bobo, Director of Alpha in Ghana says, 'When you take people through Alpha, they establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ...But they also need to be nurtured. It's like giving birth to a baby, a full human being. The baby needs to be fed, clothed and protected to enable it to grow. Providing Bibles to new Christians is like giving spiritual food which is the Word of God.'

The transformation that is happening in Ghana is incredible. There was an idol-worshipping community in Southern Volta only reachable by canoe. Preachers had been there but with no success. Then an Alpha course started. The whole community, 400 people, gave their lives to Christ and all of them now have their own Bible.

To discover other ways in which we offer the Bible to the world visit [biblesociety.org.uk](http://biblesociety.org.uk)

# Bible a month

September 2015

Thank you for your faithful prayers.

## GUATEMALA

Photo © Bible Society



The Wings of Refuge project aims to show God's love to children in the government's custody.

THE HOME SHELTER in San José Pinula, Guatemala, is a place for children in the government's custody who have been involved in crime. These children do not know how long they will be there. Some of them no longer see their parents. It's a hard place to live especially around holidays as it reminds the children that they are not at home.

Bible Society is working with the Home Shelter to give comfort and support to the children living there through Bible lessons and activities. The programme is called *Wings of Refuge* and above all it aims to show the children that God loves them.

Fifteen-year-old Benjamin says, 'I cannot read but I try to listen to the Bible when Bible Society comes. I know God exists and loves me but it is very difficult to change my life, I hope to do this.'

Osmar who works with the children told us, 'working with these children has made us see that the process is long, but surely, the seed crop is sown in time and worth seeing as God begins to transform hearts to complete His work. There are many children like Benjamin who are very hurt and marked by his past, but found a refuge in the Bible.'

## PRAYER POINTERS

- Praise God for the partnership of Alpha and Bible Society and the lives that are being transformed.
- Please pray for all the participants receiving a Bible for the first time, particularly Addy and those who encounter God in prison. Pray that they would live out their transformation after their release.
- Pray for those who began a personal relationship with Jesus through Alpha, and pray the Bible will sustain and nurture their faith.
- Pray for more volunteers so that Alpha courses can continue to expand around the country.

## PRAYER POINTERS

- Give thanks for the Home Shelter, as it seeks to house children who have fallen into a life of crime, and praise God for the opportunity for ministry. Pray that the children would be kept safe and treated well.
- Pray for 12-year-old Victor; he and his family were involved in the drugs trade, now Victor is in the home. Pray that God would transform his life and his family's life.
- Praise God for the *Wings of Refuge* programme and how the volunteers are sharing God's love in the home. Pray that God would change lives. Thank God for the effect it has already had in Benjamin's life.
- Pray for San José Pinula. Many neighbourhoods have been abandoned as they are too dangerous only those who cannot afford to move are left. Pray that the area might be transformed.

# Bible a month

August 2015

*'The Spirit of the Lord God has taken control of me! The Lord has chosen and sent me to tell the oppressed the good news, to heal the brokenhearted, and to announce freedom for prisoners and captives.'* Isaiah 61.1 (CEV)

## GHANA FACTFILE



Area: 238,533 sq km approx. 3% smaller than the UK  
Population: 25,758,108, approx. 35% of UK population  
Literacy: 76.6%  
Languages: English (official), Asante, Ewe, Twi, Fante and other regional languages

# Bible a month

Club Corner

## BIBLE A MONTH PASSES 20,000 MEMBERS

It's been a privilege to watch *Bible a Month* grow from a small group to over 20,000 *Bible a Month* members. What has been achieved is amazing. From literacy programmes and braille Bibles to new translations and distribution, you are changing lives all around the world. Thank you for being part of our mission.

Do you know someone who would love to be a part of *Bible a Month*? Invite them to join us so that together we can accomplish even more.

Thank you for all your support and continuous prayers. You are making a difference!

To submit your story to Club Corner, please email [bamc@biblesociety.org.uk](mailto:bamc@biblesociety.org.uk) or write to us at the address at the bottom of the page. Your Club Corner story may be edited and we cannot guarantee its inclusion. Please ensure you include a return address so we can return any materials.

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To discover other ways in which we offer the Bible to the world visit [biblesociety.org.uk](http://biblesociety.org.uk)

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# Bible a month

September 2015

*'He will spread his wings over you and keep you secure. His faithfulness is like a shield or a city wall.'* Psalm 91.4 (CEV)

## GUATEMALA FACTFILE



Area: 108,889 sq km 44% area of UK  
Population: 14,647,083 approx. 22% of UK population  
Literacy: 78.3%  
Languages: Spanish (official), Amerindian languages

# Bible a month

Look out for your next *Bible a Month* prayer letter which will feature reports from **Costa Rica** and **Austria**.

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.

If you're paying by direct debit you can fill in the form below and post it to us at: Bible Society, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon SN5 7DG.

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