



BIBLE A MONTH

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Issue 197

Studying the Bible with the Egyptian Coptic Church

EYEWITNESS
REPORT

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We want to ensure
the Scriptures we’re
distributing are
actually being used
and studied.
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I will never forget what I saw as I entered St Timothy's church on my trip to Cairo a few months ago. It was the end of a long day. My Egyptian colleagues and I were hot, dusty and hungry and not altogether sure what to expect. But the purpose of my visit was clear.

I wanted to see for myself one of the Bible study training sessions my colleagues have been running for Coptic church leaders over the last four years.

As we entered the walled church compound through noisy wrought iron gates, we quietly tip-toed into a hushed room to witness a session in action. Approximately 25 people were gathered together, being given the skills they need to become trainers in Bible study in their congregations.

I'll admit the creative methods used to encourage complete immersion

into the Bible text seemed unusual at first. Bible passages were handed out on large sheets of paper without paragraphs or verse references. To encourage notes and annotations, the text was printed in a large font with plenty of space between the lines. As I witnessed the trainers engage with the Colossians passage they were given, I saw them pick out and highlight themes using different colours. Some underlined or circled words. Others scribbled notes in the margins.

After a while, the facilitator invited each of the trainers to share their thoughts on the usefulness of the study methods they were being taught. Many shared how the layout of the text on the page helped them think creatively about the passage. One participant explained: 'The things I've learned have already affected my teaching style as I lead our youth group.'

I am able to encourage and stimulate discussion, and the students are more involved now that they are participating.'

It's thanks to your generous support that my colleagues are able to bring the Bible to life in this way. After the session, my colleague Mona told me how these methods are helping Coptic leaders communicate the Scriptures in a better way, making the message more understandable and practical. The team's goal is to ensure that the Scriptures they're distributing are actually being used and studied. And that's not all. By encouraging participants to start their own Bible Study groups, this project is helping transform the missional outlook of the Coptic Church as well.

For many of us here in England, the concept of delving into the Bible to study God's word might seem relatively straightforward. But for many Christians in Egypt, the idea of running a Bible study session often seems daunting and unfamiliar. 'It really is quite revolutionary for lay people to be encouraged by the Orthodox Church to lead Bible Studies,' I was told. 'For many Egyptians, being "Christian" simply means being baptised, married and buried in the

Church. A lot of people are culturally Christian, very passionate about their religion, simply because they are intentionally non-Muslim.

Thanks to these training sessions, leaders actively encourage church members to run inductive Bible study sessions in their own congregations.'

As the participants shared the impact of receiving the training, I sensed a genuine sense of the Holy Spirit among them. They told me they never tired of opening God's word, no matter how many times they came back to the same passage.

Their enthusiasm for the Bible study method was infectious. Of all the projects I've visited during my time at Bible Society, this was one of the most applicable to my own life and I felt inspired to open the Bible in a fresh way all over again. Witnessing God's word at work in such a powerful way, I was filled with gratitude for the generosity of the Bible a Month community, who are making such a big impact around the world.

Thank you so much for your faithful support each month, which is equipping Christians in Egypt to delve into God's word for themselves.

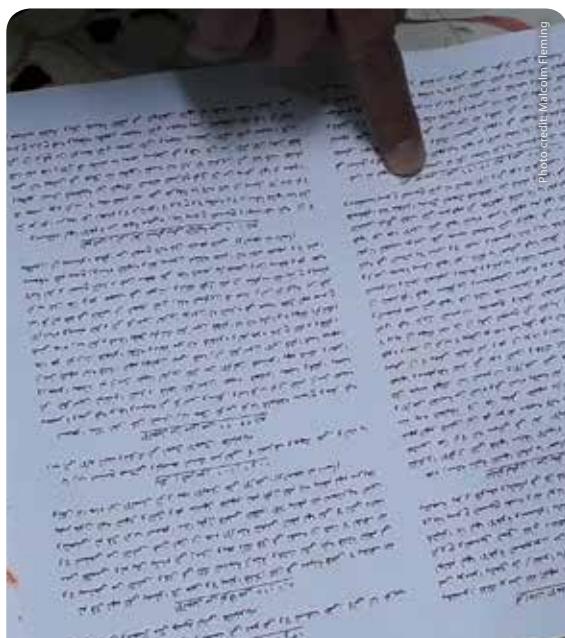


Malcolm Fleming

Key Relations Manager



The participants in the training session.



The page layout of the new Bible study material.

Photo credit: Malcolm Fleming

Luganda becomes the 45th language to have the full Bible in Braille

MISSION UPDATE

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We can feel the excitement and joy of our blind friends as they touch and read God's word with their fingers.

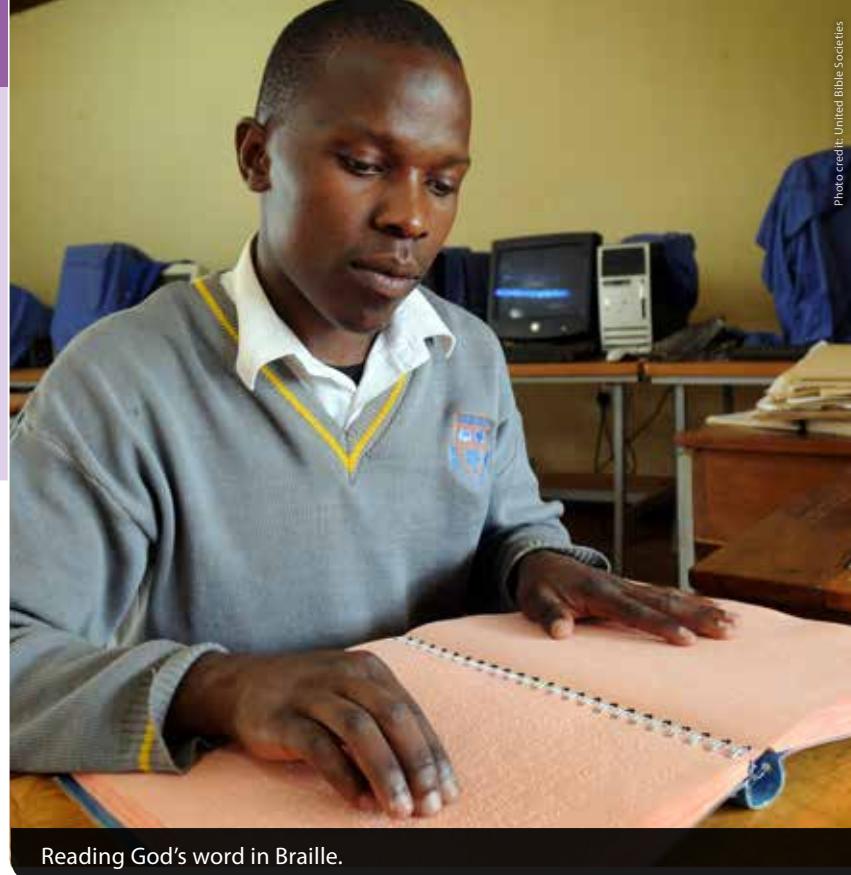
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Last October, our colleagues in Uganda joyfully celebrated the launch of the Bible in Braille in the Lugandan language, making it the 45th language to have the full Bible available for people with visual disabilities.

The day's celebrations attracted over 500 people, and extra chairs had to be brought out to accommodate everyone. The 40 large books which made up the full Braille Bible were stacked high on the stage for everyone to see.

Our colleague Ingrid, who was present on the day, described the impact of launching a Braille Bible in a new language: 'It is a precious moment when a Bible in Braille is released for the first time,' she says. 'We can feel and share the excitement and joy of our blind friends as they touch and read God's word with their fingers. We have heard from blind readers all over the world that there is nothing comparable to this'.

It costs £450 to print one complete Braille Bible. Thanks to your donations through Bible a Month, our team in



Reading God's word in Braille.

Uganda was able to provide 40 Braille Bibles to schools and churches last year and they're hoping to print a further 60 in the year to come.

As well as providing people with God's word, this incredible project also has strong social implications.

Uganda has one of the highest rates of visual impairment of any country in the world, and most people with visual disabilities come from poor families who cannot afford the Bible. They are often marginalized by the communities around them, and live in remote areas with little access to education and employment opportunities. Thanks to your support, the Bible Society of Uganda has become a leading advocate for people with visual disabilities in the country. By running workshops with government officials, community representatives and church leaders, the Ugandan team is able to raise awareness of the challenges they face, and the skills they can offer.

Thank you so much for your generosity through Bible a Month, which is making this important work possible.

Prayer pointers

Praise God for the commitment and determination of our Ugandan colleagues, who've been helping the visually impaired gain access to Scriptures in Braille, Audio and large print format since 2011.

Thank God for the outstanding partnership between the Bible Society and government agencies and churches around the country, which is helping transform the conversation around visual impairment in Uganda.

Please pray for our team in Uganda as they work on the full Braille Bible in more of Uganda's languages in the coming years.

EGYPT

There are around 10 million Christians in Egypt, making it the largest Christian population in the Middle East. The majority of Egyptian Christians belong to the Coptic Church and form a close-knit community, bound together by a common historical and cultural heritage.

By providing new Bible study methods, our Egyptian colleagues are encouraging church leaders and young people to go beyond the traditional teachings of the Coptic Church. '2019 will be the fourth year of our Bible study programme and we have more requests for Bible study training from across the country than we can handle. It is hard to express the enthusiasm,' we were told.

Thanks to your generosity, the Bible Society in Egypt is able to produce even more tools to bring God's word

to life all over the country. As well as running Bible study training sessions, our colleagues recently produced a new Arabic Study New Testament, complete with historical, geographical and background notes, and they're now continuing their work on the Old Testament.



October Prayer pointers

Praise God for the willingness of the Coptic Church to partner with the Bible Society and explore new ways of engaging with the Bible.

Please lift up to God Christians in Egypt, that they would be filled with a desire to delve into Scripture and study God's word for themselves.

Thank God for the ingenuity of our colleagues, who are creatively exploring Bible study methods to equip the Egyptian Church in its teaching and outreach.

Please pray that the new Study Bible will be a blessing to Arabic speakers in Egypt and across the world, helping them to engage more deeply with God's word.

NIGERIA

With a population of over 200 million people, Nigeria is the most densely populated country in the whole of Africa. The richness and diversity of its many ethnic groups make the country a melting pot of languages and dialects – it's hard to believe that Nigeria is home to more than 520 indigenous languages, with more still to be officially classified!

While all official communication is made in English, the majority of Nigerians living in remote, rural areas only communicate in their indigenous languages, and have little to no access to Scripture.

Thanks to your generosity through Bible a Month, our Nigerian colleagues have just begun work on a new translation into the Epie language. Made up of 700,000 people living in

Southern Nigeria, the Epie community has never had access to the Bible, an audio-Bible or even a Jesus film in its own language. Please pray for our colleagues as they begin the arduous work of translation into this new language.



Epie women rejoicing at the prospect of receiving the Bible in their language.

November Prayer pointers

Thank God for the determination of the Nigerian team. 'If we are to preach about Jesus' coming, we must give people the Word,' we were told.

Please lift our colleagues up to God, as they plan to train four new Translation Consultants to become full-time, certified members of the translation team in the coming years.

Please pray for the Epie people as they begin to interact with the Bible in their own language, that they would cherish God's word in their lives.

Pray for continued safety for the Bible Society of Nigeria, where increased acts of terrorism in the north make them the subject of attacks from religious extremists.

EGYPT



FACTFILE



Area

386,662 sq miles, approx. 4.1 times as large as UK



Population

99.4 million, approx. 1.52 times as large as UK



Languages
Arabic (official), English and French



Literacy rates
80.8 %

'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth'

2 TIMOTHY 2.15 (ESV)

NIGERIA



FACTFILE



Area

356,669 sq miles, approx. 3.8 times as large as UK



Population

202 million approx. 3.1 times as large as UK



Languages
English (official), over 500 indigenous languages



Literacy rates
59.6 %

'This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.'

JOSHUA 1.8 (ESV)

CELEBRATE BIBLE SUNDAY WITH US

With so many translations, formats and sizes available, the chances are you own a Bible or two. You've probably looked up a particular verse on the internet and you might even have a Bible app on your smartphone.

In our society, accessing God's word has never been easier, but do we truly realise the treasure we have? After all, it's as we read God's word that we actually encounter him, the creator and Lord of all. Incredible!

On 27 October 2019 we'll be celebrating Bible Sunday and thanking God for the precious gift of his word along with many churches across the nation. To help you and your church celebrate with us, we've put together an inspiring pack of resources including:



Join us as we celebrate Bible Sunday!

A fully written sermon based on Psalm 119.129-136

Sermon notes so you can easily adapt the talk to suit your situation

Activities for junior church classes

A poster to promote your event

A donation form to help support Bible mission across the globe

We look forward to hearing how this Bible Sunday refreshes your desire to seek God in his word, as you allow it to shape and transform your life and help others around the world to do the same.

Visit biblesociety.org.uk/biblesunday to find out more.

YOUR STORIES & COMMENTS

You are part of a community of over 23,000 people, committed to see God's word change lives around the world. Here's a snapshot of what some of you have to say!

John

It was so good to read that Open The Book is reaching Ghana! I have been part of a team for several years. The children recognise us in the street and tell their parents what we do in school.

Judith

I have access to the Bible so readily and have several in my house. It only seems fair that others should have access to this book which teaches us about God's love and living a fulfilled life in him.

Graham

The Lord Jesus laid Bible Society on my heart. I think the Society is doing a wonderful job of seeing God's Kingdom come. My prayer is that more and more people will have God's guide book in their own language in their hands.

Christine

I am eternally (literally!) grateful to my parents who brought me up to know and love the Bible. This is why I support Bible Society work to bring the Bible to both children and adults worldwide.

We love to hear from you. Email us your thoughts at bam@biblesociety.org.uk or use the comments form attached.

You can also find an online version of the prayer letter at biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/bible-a-month/