

# BIBLE A MONTH

APR/MAY 2021  
Issue 206

## Computing with confidence in Egypt

EYEWITNESS REPORT

“

Here in Egypt we find almost limitless opportunities for Bible work.

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When the pandemic reached Egypt, I expected to start receiving depressing reports regarding Bible work here. After all, churches were closed due to the lockdown and large events were prohibited. This all meant that local funds for Bible work in Egypt dropped significantly in 2020.

But although Covid shut down most of the country, God was still at work, and here at Bible Society in Egypt the Lord inspired us to create a host of new opportunities for Bible work.

**The pandemic forced us to speed up our digital outreach, and your support through Bible a Month is now helping us take giant steps forward in making the Scriptures widely available online.**

Through one of our bookshops in the [Nile] Delta, where there are few Christians, one minister has 1,900 people in WhatsApp groups who are

receiving our Daily Bible Readings.

In January 2020 a new app was made available that guided users to read the whole Bible in a year. By December, 5.7 million chapters had been requested by 121,392 different users!

Miriam told us she was delighted at the impact it had on her and her friends. ‘God opened a door for me to spread his word. I send the daily readings to 100 people,’ Miriam said.

The digital revolution is the second period of massive progress in modern times in Egypt in relation to how the Bible is presented and distributed. When I first became leader of the Bible Society in Egypt in the 1990s, the country had been steered away from socialism to a free market economy. Brand new colourful ads appeared on billboards and the dusty old Bible shops didn’t look appealing alongside the gleaming shoe shops.

So we transformed the shops, allowing colours and light to shine.

If the Bible was the most valuable book in the world, it should be presented in the best possible way. Thanks to the kind giving of people like yourself, we began producing colourful and beautiful Scriptures and resources for adults and children alike. In 2019, more than 1.1 million children's Scriptures were distributed in Egypt alone, out of 3.7 million distributed by Bible Societies worldwide!

**Thanks to your support, we are able to provide Bibles and scriptural resources at subsidised prices. This is crucial because 32.5 per cent of Egyptians live below the poverty line on just £1 per day.**

Massive free distributions of Scriptures take place and Bibles are provided to students, orphans, prisoners and blind people. At Christmas, thousands of poor children are given free backpacks full of illustrated Scriptures.

I want to thank Bible a Month supporters for your generosity. As you read this, your kind giving is helping us build a Digital Media Hub, which will accommodate a huge indexed

online library. A user will find not just the Bible text, but also an audio reading, dramatised children's stories, colouring pages, quizzes, study notes, maps and so on.

*The Story* audiobook, a Bible that reads like a novel in a single grand narrative, is being recorded and we also hope to double our social media outreach in 2021. Last year, our Facebook reach was 4.4 times the number of the previous year, and our YouTube views in 2020 were 5.9 times more than in 2019.

**Here in Egypt, we see the glass as half full, not half empty. And the part that's full contains opportunities stretching far into the future. We may not have the same legal system, human rights situation or freedom of speech you enjoy in the West. But here in Egypt we find almost limitless opportunities for Bible work.**

Doing so much work would not be possible without your amazing support through Bible a Month. I want to assure you that your generosity is reaping great dividends here in Egypt. Praise the Lord!



**Ramez Atallah**  
Leader of Bible Society  
in Egypt



Bible Society bookshops in Egypt are hubs for people to freely discuss Christianity, and during the pandemic their staff have embraced online outreach to great effect.



Bible Society workers in Egypt social distance while holding a Zoom meeting.

# Thank you for keeping Bible mission alive!

## MISSION UPDATE



Valente Tseco, Bible Society leader in Mozambique, is so grateful for the support of Bible a Month members.

..... “ .....  
God won't allow Covid-19 to stop the plan for his people to get his word.  
..... ” .....

It looked bleak for Bible work around the world 12 months ago. The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns had left 30 Bible Societies in 'critical' condition and another 65 'at risk' of going under.

Lockdowns prevented work from taking place and local funds had dried up due to the closure of churches and a ban on events. Two-thirds of Bible Societies worldwide, from Costa Rica to Albania to Mozambique, were facing serious difficulties.

'I was in despair and had sleepless nights,' admits Valente Tseco, leader of the Bible Society in Mozambique.

How would these Bible Societies pay their bills and continue to make God's word available at this most crucial of times?

**That is when the generosity of Bible Society supporters throughout the world, such as yourself as a Bible a Month member, came to the rescue.**

**The Solidarity Fund, also known as the Rescue and Recovery Fund, was**

**set up. By February, the kind giving of people like you in 19 countries had raised almost £3.5 million and about 40 Bible Societies had received support. In England and Wales alone, through our Solidarity appeals and direct donations, more than £800,000 was raised!**

It's hoped that with global support the fund will eventually reach £5 million to provide help for about 60 struggling Bible Societies in total.

What you have done through Bible a Month is help prevent many Bible Societies from going under, which would have deprived those nations of a local base for Bible mission and delayed or denied access to Scriptures for countless people.

'We feel relieved, happy and blessed!' said Valente. 'This means that God won't allow Covid-19 to stop the plan for his people to get his word.'

If you want to give more please go to **[biblesociety.org.uk/solidarity](https://biblesociety.org.uk/solidarity)**

## Prayer pointers

Pray for Bible Societies whose operations have been badly affected by the pandemic. Pray that none of them will have to permanently close their doors.

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Ask God to give workers at struggling Bible Societies wisdom, creativity and strength as they seek ways to continue to serve their audiences in very difficult circumstances.

.....  
Ask God to bless ongoing fundraising efforts that will allow more Bible Societies to receive the help they need.

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Pray that the pandemic comes to an end but that people's desire to come to know God through the Bible will increase.

# SHARING PRAYERS IN THE PANDEMIC

'Lord Jesus Christ, we ask for your blessing on all who have been brought low by this pandemic. Give strength and skill to all medical and research staff in their efforts to overcome this virus. We pray also for all who are facing anxiety and isolation. Lord, in your great mercy, hear our prayer that we now make in your most precious name. Amen.'

That prayer was from Anthony, one of many Bible a Month supporters who took up our invitation in the Dec-Jan issue to share a prayer related to the extraordinary year we had just witnessed.

On the Bible Society website we now have a page called Prayers in the Pandemic. There, you can join with others to lift up issues arising from the pandemic in prayer to God.

Many people are feeling weary as the fight to overcome the pandemic stretches on with all its implications – personal, societal and global.

We plan to put a selection of the prayers into

a free booklet. In addition we invited church leaders from the entire Christian spectrum to submit an appropriate prayer in the pandemic.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Most Revd Justin Welby, was one of many who responded, with this prayer: 'Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ suffered for us on the cross that we might have eternal life, be present with us in our suffering as we endure the pandemic. Be present to the sick; be present to the dying; be present to the bereaved.'

'We know that in your love all things shall be made whole. Strengthen in us that hope which comes only from faith in your unfailing love. This we ask through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, ever one God. Amen.'

*In a world like this the power of prayer is vital. Please join us in prayer at [biblesociety.org.uk/pandemic-prayer/](https://biblesociety.org.uk/pandemic-prayer/)*

## YOUR STORIES & COMMENTS

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

### Mary and Phil

It warms our hearts to get some good news, and to know a bit about your valuable work in Costa Rica and Mozambique. Also very excited about the Psalm 23 garden. We also have made one in our Shropshire churchyard. There is a tree where people can write and hang up their prayers.

### Gillian

It is so exciting, refreshing and encouraging to see the younger generation's offerings of service to our Lord. It makes my heart sing to read reports of your work and the diversity of approach. I am very grateful to be a Bible a Month supporter.

### Brian

I was deeply touched by the accounts in the latest Bible a Month newsletter and therefore spiritually motivated to increase my monthly donation accordingly.

### Laurence

I love the large, clear, colour photographs. The photograph of the Christian children in the Iraqi refugee camp was really poignant when one considers the dangers described in those places. I loved the large stag beetle on the church wall also.

We love to hear from you. Email us your thoughts at [bam@biblesociety.org.uk](mailto: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/bam](https://biblesociety.org.uk/bam)

# Egypt

Among the nations of North Africa and the Middle East, Egypt has by far the biggest Christian population. Around one in 10 people are believers, and the majority belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church.

As such, Bible ministry in Egypt takes place on a big scale – thanks to your generous support – and there’s a major focus on children and young people.

In 2020, a national online Bible competition for teenagers attracted more than 1,500 participants from 15 regions. They each read an abridged, chronological version of the Bible story, and were quizzed on the contents. With churches closed for most of the year, the competition was a way for families to stay connected. Many shared and discussed their daily readings via WhatsApp groups.

One participant, 16-year-old Daniel\*, said, ‘My favourite book was Acts, an adventure story that tells how God fulfils the Great Commission. Because of that, we have our church here in Egypt. I feel I am part of this adventure story.’

Thanks to your support, work is also pressing ahead to produce a new Arabic Study Bible. Written classical Arabic is a very difficult language to grasp, so this resource will help many people better understand the Scriptures.

*\*Name changed.*



## April prayer pointers

Thank God that, despite lockdown, Bible bookshops remained open throughout 2020 and 1.5 million Scripture items were distributed in Egypt.

Pray that God’s word will touch people’s lives daily as they access the Bible through various online ministries.

Pray for the 1,500 teens who took part in the Bible competition in 2020. Pray God’s word will touch their hearts as well as their minds, so their lives will be changed by Jesus.

Give thanks for progress on the Arabic Study Bible, and pray for the translation team in 2021.

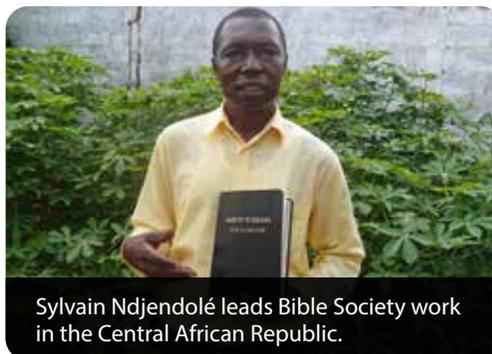
# Central African Republic

Earlier this year, the Central African Republic was in an ‘apocalyptic situation’ following vicious rebel attacks launched amid a contested election result.

This description, by a former prime minister, was no exaggeration. Since December, this poorest and most unstable of African countries has been in the grip of escalating conflict. A state of emergency has been declared and more than 200,000 people have fled their homes. All this comes on top of years of civil war.

One Bible Society office was closed as a result of recent fighting. But Sylvain Ndjendolé, who leads our work in CAR, said, ‘Praise God, our headquarters in downtown Bangui have remained open. By the grace of God, all the staff and our families have been spared from violence.’

Even amid the turmoil, Sylvain and his team are working towards a better future. Your support is helping to distribute Bibles to people who want God’s word. And you’re funding a new project which will engage young people with the Bible, to develop Christian values and work towards reconciliation and peace. Within three years, 2,000 young people will have a ‘blueprint’ for Christian living, to transform the landscape of the culture.



## May prayer pointers

Pray for Sylvain Ndjendolé, who leads our ministry in Central African Republic. Ask for God’s protection over him and his team.

The project to engage young people with the Bible is in its early stages. Pray for those writing the resources and for enthusiasm among young people.

Pray for a swift and safe end to the violence in Central African Republic.

We long to see the spiritual transformation of Africa. Pray for strong church relations and Christians passionate about the Bible in public life.

# EGYPT



## FACTFILE



### Area

386,662 square miles, four times larger than the UK



### Population

106 million



### Languages

Arabic (official), English and French widely understood



### Literacy rate

71.2%

‘And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”’

Matthew 21.9 (ESV)

# CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



## FACTFILE



### Area

240,535 square miles, two and a half times the size of the UK



### Population

5.4 million



### Languages

French (official), Sangho, local languages



### Literacy rate

37.4%

‘When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.’

Isaiah 43.2 (ESV)