

BIBLE A MONTH

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Issue 211

Dr Yinxuan Huang

CHINESE CHURCH IN THE UK

A complex mission field

EYEWITNESS
REPORT

“

It was a complete change from a lion to a sheep. I saw God change his heart, he became so humble and tender.

”

Dr Yinxuan ‘Yin’ Huang is carrying out a comprehensive and up-to-date study of the Chinese Church in the UK. Here, Yin wants to thank Bible a Month members for their support of Bible and Chinese Community in Britain Research and tell you why it is so important:

My dad was a hardcore atheist with a very strong personality. Before I left home to study in Europe, Dad told me, ‘Never go to a Christian church; they are liars and bad people.’ This is not so surprising in China, but about a year later, I had a phone call from my mum.

She said, ‘Your dad has been weird, he’s been going to a church and wants to be baptised.’ This news stunned me and I soon found out that this lion of a father had been transformed into a sheep. God had transformed his heart. He became so humble and tender. I went to church to figure out why this was happening to my dad, and that’s

where I learned about Christianity.

That’s a little of my background, but now I want to tell you about why I am carrying out research into the Chinese Church in the UK.

The Chinese Church here faces a watershed moment and we don’t exactly know what will happen next. Covid, social and political changes, restrictions on religion in mainland China, the movement of people from Hong Kong to the UK – there is so much to be considered.

In order to respond to the mission field, we need to know what the mission field needs. We need to know demand and provision. We must identify gaps and see the big picture, in order for all churches, and not only Chinese churches, to engage in this crucial ministry.

When we speak of the Chinese Church in the UK, it’s inaccurate to refer to a

single community. It's a complex and uncertain mission field; highly diverse in language, regional background and political views.

We are still waiting for the new census results, but the 2011 census reported the Chinese diaspora at around 0.7 per cent of the UK population. It's not large, but it is growing fast. There are now around 140,000 Chinese students here in UK. China not only sends the most students here of any country – it sends more students than countries two to eight on the 'most students list' added together!

Then there is Hong Kong and three million people eligible to come to the UK. For the first time ever there are now British Hong Kong churches just for Hong Kong migrants.

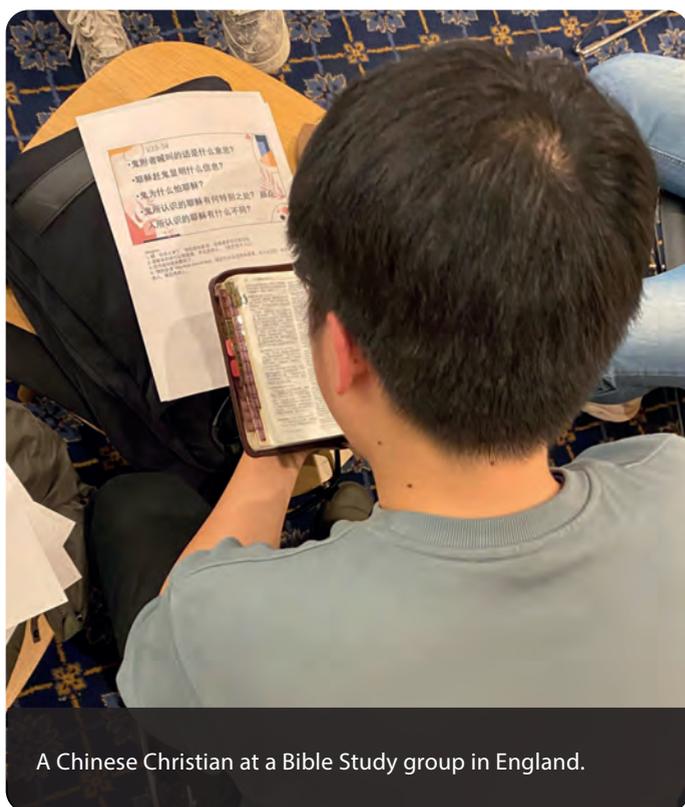
There's been some research on the Chinese Church in the UK but nothing up-to-date and comprehensive. The initial stage, the first 18 months, of my research is to establish a broad picture. The main research will be a

national survey, focusing on Chinese Christians in the UK and the wider Chinese community.

If you look at participants in the Chinese Church here, most new congregants are Christians coming from outside the UK – so, migrant believers from Hong Kong and mainland China. We want to identify the needs of these churches and work together so that they grow and reach out in their communities.

Also, how do we prepare and equip with resources those Chinese Christians here in the UK who one day will go back to their homeland? This is a long neglected and under-served mission field, which has strategic importance for nurturing young leaders for China. Thanks to your regular Bible a Month support and prayers, we hope to be able to provide the resources or training they need in years to come.

To read more of Yin's story sign up for extra Bible a Month content by email at [biblesociety.org.uk/emailbam](mailto:signups@biblesociety.org.uk)



A powerful witness in Egypt

MISSION UPDATE



This Egyptian boy was thrilled to receive a Bible Society Scripture book.

“

Christians here have been through tough times recently ... but they stayed strong (and) were gentle and humble.

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A month before the pandemic struck, a new 'Bible in a year' app was launched by Bible Society in Egypt. It was a phenomenal success.

By the end of 2020, more than 120,000 people had downloaded Scripture. One user, Miriam, said, 'God opened a door for me to spread his word. I sent the daily readings to 100 people and they were all happy to receive it.'

The app's popularity gives a taste of the unprecedented mission opportunities in Egypt. In this Muslim-majority nation, where Christians make up 10 per cent of the population, demand for the Bible is overwhelming.

Ehab Tanas, senior director of Bible mission in Egypt, said, 'Christians here have been through tough times recently. There have been terrorist attacks and other pressures. But their values were clear; Christians stayed strong when they lost loved ones, they forgave, they stayed in marriages, they were gentle and humble.

'That was a powerful witness in society – and it caused people to

question, "Why do you behave this way?" Today, as a result, many Egyptians are seeking Jesus and they come to Bible Society for help.

'In 2022, our team aims to reach 475,000 people with the Bible through a national campaign of print and digital Scripture distribution. This includes popular online Bible reading plans and an Arabic translation of *The Story* in audio. Easter and Christmas booklets, pocket-sized Bibles and New Testaments for students are among the printed items being handed out.

'We have 17 bookshops in cities across Egypt and also deliver to people discreetly – without revealing their identity – if buying a Bible is difficult. We are in a position to reach everyone, and anyone who wants a Bible can get one from us.'

Ehab believes this national outreach programme will impact the Middle East's most populous nation. 'This is the word of God that changed your life,' he said. 'When you put it into the hands of someone else, it will change their life too.'

Prayer pointers

Give thanks for the incredible opportunities to share God's word in this culturally conservative, mainly Islamic, society. Ask for God's protection over the Egyptian Church, the oldest Christian community in the Middle East.

Pray that as people read Scripture from Bible Society, their hearts will be touched by the message and love of Jesus.

Ask God to continue to strengthen the minority Christian community in Egypt so they will be powerful and faithful witnesses.

Pray for staff in our 17 bookshops across the country – for freedom and wisdom to engage seekers in gospel conversations.

JOURNEY WITH US THROUGH LENT, EASTER AND PENTECOST

Lent is a time of reflection when we journey with Jesus on his path to the cross and celebrate his resurrection. We have a whole host of Easter resources to help you reflect and celebrate. You can view them here: biblesociety.org.uk/easter

The Lent Encounter returns for 2022 and this year we follow the life and ministry of Jesus. We start with his baptism and encounter themes such as restoration, teaching the beatitudes and the power of God's word. It's free to sign up at biblesociety.org.uk/TLE and you'll receive a daily email with links to videos of Andrew Ollerton exploring the Holy Land. There will also be prayers, personal reflections from Bible Society staff, and conversation starters for you to try out with family and friends.

We have two new Easter booklets for 2022. *The*

Greatest Miracle of All by Bob Hartman is for ages 6 to 11 and it explores the death and resurrection of Jesus and explains why we celebrate Easter. *The Easter Poem*, also written by Bob Hartman with beautiful illustrations by Honor Ayres, retells the story of Jesus.

Those weeks between the resurrection and the day of Pentecost are jam-packed with amazing and exciting stories that link to the way we live out faith today. We have a collection of great ideas of how you can engage with these stories at church or at home. Many will be fun, they'll all be interesting, and there'll be different kinds of activities to suit all worship settings – youth or small groups, families etc.

Find everything here: biblesociety.org.uk/easter

ANSWER TO PRAYER



Praise the Lord that the Bike for Bibles event last autumn shattered expectations with more than 13,000 miles completed and more than £22,000 raised.

The event's success means more Bibles for children in Africa; pastors will be trained in China, and refugee children in the Middle East will learn more about the healing power that comes from Jesus.

One rider, Susan Wingrave, said, 'When riding uphill to Ilfracombe at 27°C I wondered how hot it is in Malawi. When cycling into Okehampton in a downpour, I wondered what the rain is like in Malawi. Most importantly we've been blown away by people's generosity for Bibles for children in Malawi.' Cyclists rode between 50 and 300 miles, but some saw action without leaving home. Ann Griffiths notched up 300 miles on her exercise bike!

Thanks to all the Bible a Month members who took part in or prayed for the event! Hope to see you in the saddle next autumn for Bike for Bibles 2022! (biblesociety.org.uk/bikeforbibles)



YOUR STORIES & COMMENTS

You are part of a community of more than 20,000 people, committed to seeing God's word change lives around the world. Here's a snapshot of what some of you have to say!

Lorraine

Of all the great charities and causes, I think the truth in the Bible offers the most hope for everyone everywhere and I love what you're doing.

Roz

I really appreciate the way Bible Society keeps us updated on what our donations are achieving. I'm so glad to have helped Long Xinrong (BAM issue 210) get a motorbike, and I'll be praying for his ministry and for his wife's health.

Hilary

I love the fact I can give a Bible a month.

Margaret

I feel more and more how important it is for people to be able to read the good news of Jesus Christ in their own native language. The children's faces light up when they receive a Bible of their own.

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/bam

EGYPT

The Church in Egypt has deep roots. Thought to have been established around AD42, it's the Middle East's oldest Christian community. It has endured pressure and persecution as well as growth, and today there are more than 10 million believers in Egypt.

Your generous gifts through Bible a Month are supporting this ancient Church in two key ways.

Firstly, you are providing thousands of Bibles and Scripture booklets (see Mission Update story). In a nation where a third of people live in poverty, your help is vital to share God's word.

Secondly, you are inspiring children and young people to take the Bible's message to heart. Within Egypt's Orthodox and Catholic Churches, there's little emphasis on personal Bible study. Sunday school teaching

can be old-fashioned and young people risk growing up with a limited understanding of faith.

Thanks to your support, 300 Sunday school teachers and 600 Bible study group leaders will be trained and provided with resources this year. Mena ministers to 80 teenagers and she said, 'It introduced me to many methods to present the Scriptures. I can encourage and stimulate discussion, and use that to make the Bible practical in our lives.'



Women with Scripture study books at a church in Cairo.

February prayer pointers

Thanks to your support, thousands of Coptic Church leaders have been trained to run Bible study groups recently.

In Egypt's Muslim-majority society, it's easy to talk to people about God and religion – but still, it can be difficult to pass a New Testament to your neighbour. Pray that Christians will share their faith wisely, in word and action.

A third of Egypt's population are under 15. Pray for the many children and young people who will benefit from our leadership training programme. Pray that they'll engage with God's word, and grow in faith and understanding.

ESWATINI

The launch of the ESV Study Bible New Testament in Eswatini is a welcome burst of light in a Southern African country where political upheaval has cast a shadow over what was, until recently, a flourishing Bible mission.

An initial 7,553 copies of Bible Society's Study Bible in the local siSwati language have been printed in the nation formerly known as Swaziland.

Church leader Revd Siphon Hlutsi said, 'Study Bibles are mostly in English so we are proud of this resource in our own language. It will help us understand the Bible even more clearly.'

Churches, the Bible Society bookshop and schools, which had a government agreement to receive Scripture resources from Bible Society, have at times been closed due to Covid-19 and violent protests demanding political reform.

The closures have severely hit the income of Bible Society, with workers laid off or going without pay.

Ninety per cent of the Eswatini population identify as Christians and they need your prayers. Poverty is widespread. The rate of HIV in adults is the highest in the world. Your generosity enables Bible mission to continue despite the difficulties, with work currently in progress on the Study Bible Old Testament.



Eswatini church leaders say the new ESV Study Bible is a huge boost to their ministries.

March prayer pointers

Thank the Lord for the ESV Study Bible New Testament in siSwati. Pray that pastors and churches in Eswatini will be not just strengthened but invigorated by this invaluable new resource.

Please pray for wisdom for the authorities and the groups that have taken part in the protests.

Ask God to provide, both physically and spiritually, for the Bible workers who were laid off.

Pray that the Bible Society of Eswatini will recover from the recent setbacks and once again flourish, enabling more people to engage with God's word.

EGYPT



FACTFILE



Area

386,662 square miles, about four times bigger than the UK



Population

106 million



Languages

Arabic (official), English, some French



Literacy rate

71.2%

'We will not keep them from our children; we will tell the next generation about the LORD's power and his great deeds and the wonderful things he has done.'

Psalm 78.4 (GNB)

ESWATINI



FACTFILE



Area

6,704 square miles, about 14 times smaller than the UK



Population

1.1 million



Languages

English and siSwati (both official)



Literacy rate

88.4%

'Do not deceive yourselves by just listening to his word; instead, put it into practice.'

James 1.22 (GNB)