



Worshippers attend a service at Meineng Village Church, Yunnan Province, holding their new Black Yi Bibles.



The Bible for the first time
By Hazel Southam



Isaiah 43.19 has been shared a lot here at Bible Society recently, and I'm reminded of it again.



'I am creating something new. There it is! Do you see it?'

Well here's the evidence! Many more people all round the world are meeting God through his word – a new Bible translation in China, a new hope for Middle Eastern refugees, and new ways of engaging with the Bible at home in this country. I hope you're as encouraged as I am.

Thank you, as always, for your faithful support.



John Ranford
Bible a Month
Co-ordinator

The air is thin up in the Cloudy Mountains in southern China, home to Zhi Chao village where I visited at the end of 2016. At 2,800m above sea level, Zhi Chao is twice as high as the top of Ben Nevis!

On the day of my visit it wasn't cloudy. The sun was shining over fields of maize, beans and chillies. Outside Li Guangen's house, chickens were scratching for food.

Guangen became a Christian 28 years ago. But it was only in October 2016 that he received the Bible in his own language for the first time. Thanks to your regular gifts, we were able to work with locals in the area to translate the Bible into local languages, such as Black Yi.

What is the Yi language? Well, it's a tribal language spoken by four million people in and around Yunnan province, right down in the south of China.

It's a part of the country where there are many ethnic minorities. The Black Yi is one of the largest groups.

The majority of them live up in the mountains, like Guangen. Because of this remoteness – and the lack of an education – many don't speak Chinese. This means that they can't read a Chinese Bible, and until now, the millions of Black Yi people have had to rely on church services to hear snippets of the Bible.

Now it's been translated and printed and is being distributed in the villages. Guangen was among the first to be given a copy.

'Before we had the Bible we largely relied on the preaching every week,' he said. 'We learned about biblical truth through the songs that we sing, through prayers.

'I am really thankful that we have the Bible and for the support given to us by people overseas.

'When the pastor brought the box of 20 Bibles to the village I was so happy and I asked him for a copy. Everyone wanted to

In focus

Helping you dig deeper into the Bible

We're working hard here at home in this country to help people engage more deeply with the Bible. One way we're doing that is by developing unique engagement resources.

Bible Book Club was launched at the beginning of 2017 and is designed to help you read the Bible with your friends – one book at a time.

It is all about conversation; a new, informal way to explore God's word. Get started today by heading to biblesociety.org.uk/BibleBookClub

The Super Cool Story of Jesus is our newest resource, released for Easter 2017. This children's booklet combines the 'super cool' words of poet Dai Woolridge with beautiful illustrations from Emma Randall to tell the amazing story of how Jesus lived and loved.

Designed to help children engage with the story of Jesus, we've made booklets available at special discounted prices for you to giveaway. Call 01793 418300 or check it out online at biblesociety.org.uk/supercool

The Bible Course looks at the big picture of the Bible. Perfect in large settings, small groups or 1-2-1 coaching, The Bible Course will give you the confidence to apply the Bible to your own life. Find out more at biblesociety.org.uk/biblecourse

Please pray that people at home in this country will encounter God in new and fresh ways through his word as they use these resources.



read it. We were all very excited to have our own copies of the Bible.

'When we read the Yi Bible we are more able to understand it. My two daughters, one is a believer and one isn't. I pray that with the Black Yi Bible it will help them to be drawn closer to the love of God.'

When in Zhi Chao village I also met Zhang Wenfu, 76, who is a pastor. He was among the team that spent 14 years translating the Bible into the Yi language. I remember him laughing about the arguments that the translation team had as they went about their work.

'It was worth it though,' he said, 'because we have a strong translation now.'

He added, 'For me, it's been a great year. My greatest hope has been fulfilled.'

'I would like to give thanks to God and those who have translated the Bible into

the Black Yi language and we also give thanks to those people in Britain and Bible Society for helping feed us.'

I've reported from China three times now. Meeting Guangen and Zhang and seeing the excitement around the Black Yi Bible was the most thrilling thing I've most reported from China so far.

China feels a long way away, even in our globalized world. Yet, I've seen how the money you give is bringing real joy in rural communities where the Black Yi live. And it's only just beginning. The future could be really exciting.



Zhang Wenfu, 76, Pastor and Translator, Zhi Chao Village, Yunnan Province.

Reconcile!

Lebanon is now home to over one and a half million refugees from Syria and Palestine. Entire generations are being born and brought up in confined camps with limited resources, where hate, despair and vengeance are commonplace. Yet amongst it all, Bible Society is present and active.

'Reconcile!' is a program run by Bible Society offering hope to refugee children, based around the sharing of Christian values within interactive drama presentations.

Based on Biblical stories, the drama presentations contain humour to help engage children in a positive way. Most have been affected by traumatic experiences and are encouraged to forgive, hence the name 'Reconcile' their perpetrators.

The presentations aim to use the Bible as a basis for addressing the common psychological needs of the refugee children, such as feelings of security and safety. The story of Noah is used to show how God protected him in the stormy waters, and also protects us in times of trouble.

Wissam Rajha, an actor in Lebanon, performs as a clown and totally disconnects the children from their trauma context.

'I invented the character 'Billy Cookie' to engage with children based on Bible stories delivered in a creative and humorous way,' he said. 'We live today in a world where pain and sadness surround us. Laughing is an essential way to help children recover from these traumas.'

'During my childhood, my family and I suffered from the cruelty of the war and had to migrate in our own country; I wished back then to have someone that makes us laugh to forget our pain.'

'When I'm on stage and I watch children laughing, praying and asking Jesus to enter their hearts, honestly, it is then that I get healing from Jesus as well.'

Alongside the drama presentations, children receive Bible stories highlighting the theme of reconciliation. Bible Society also distributes Arabic Peace & Justice Bible to refugee camp leaders, and heads of families.

Please pray for Wissam and all the other leaders of 'Reconcile!', that they would be able to offer hope and healing through God's word to refugee children affected by trauma in Lebanon.



Wissam Rajha with children in Lebanon after a 'Reconcile!' drama presentation.

China

April 2017

There are 55 ethnic communities in China, many of whom do not have sufficient understanding of Mandarin to read the Bible in Mandarin Chinese. This means there is a great need for God's word to be translated into local minority languages.

In addition to the Black Yi language, Bible Society has also helped to complete translation of the Bible into the East Lisu and Wa languages. It is estimated that over 300,000 local Chinese Christians could benefit from these translations.

Bible Society is working on a further 10 translations that will reach hundreds of thousands more Christians across China speaking minority languages. In fact, one million people could benefit from these translation projects.

Your regular gift is helping to sustain and fund this translation work. You are helping people to hear God's word for themselves and helping them to study the Bible for themselves in their own language for the very first time.



Black Yi people with their Bibles.

Prayer pointers

- Praise God that the Black Yi people now have the Bible in their own language for the very first time.
- Pray that those who now have a Bible in their own language understand it and be impacted by it.
- Give thanks for Zhang Wenfu's tireless work as both a pastor and translator of the Black Yi Bible.
- Pray for a good working relationship among translation team members, and resources to keep translation work going for other language groups.

Albania

May 2017

Bible translation was banned in Albania during the 50 years of communist regime, so when the communist system fell in the 1990s, there was a great opportunity. The Bible Society in Albania quickly moved to translate the New Testament into a language that was accessible to all Albanians.

After its release in 2007, one journalist who was given a copy of the translation said, 'I had never read the Bible because I didn't understand a word of it. But now with this translation I have read it and appreciated it very much, understanding it for the first time!'

Now the team are working on an Old Testament translation, which means the Albanian church will soon have its first ever full contemporary Bible translation that everyone will be able to understand.

Translator Oldi Morava said, 'It's a great privilege. When you think that God is going to use that translation to speak to individuals and communities and change their lives, and you are an instrument in that — that's what keeps you going when you're undertaking such a big task!'



Bible readers from different church traditions at an annual Bible reading event to promote the new Bible translations and encourage reading.

Prayer pointers

- Thank God for the hard work of the translation team in working on the new Bibles.
- Give thanks for all that Bible Society in Albania is doing to promote the new Bible translations, including annual Bible reading events.
- Pray for wisdom and favour on the team as they distribute trial editions of the new translations.
- Pray for a positive reception from the general Albanian public towards these new translations.

China

'Your word is a lamp that gives light wherever I walk.'

Psalm 119:105 (CEV)

Factfile



Area – 9, 596, 960 sq km, approx. 39x larger than UK

Population – 1.37 billion, approx. 21x larger than UK

Literacy rate – 96.4%

Languages – Mandarin (official), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghaiese), other local languages

Club Corner

Thank you for your stories

In case you've missed it, 2017 is the 40th anniversary of *Bible a Month*! In the last edition of this newsletter, we asked you to let us know how long you've been supporting *Bible a Month* for and to send in your stories. Thank you to those of you that have written in or emailed us! We've really enjoyed reading your messages.

If you haven't written in yet, it's not too late. Email us to tell us how long you've been supporting *Bible a Month* at bamc@biblesociety.org.uk or write to *Bible a Month*, Bible Society, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon, SN5 7DG.

The next edition of this newsletter will be a very special edition to mark our 40th anniversary – make sure you don't miss it.

We'll be sharing some of your stories (with your permission), showcasing archived material, and including a special message to you from Bible Society's new Chief Executive, Paul Williams.

Over 23,000 people like you are part of *Bible a Month*. That means we can print and distribute the equivalent of well over a quarter of a million Bibles each year. What an amazing thing you are part of. Thank you.

Albania

'No one can have faith without hearing the message of Christ.'

Romans 10:17 (CEV)

Factfile



Area – 28, 748 sq km, approx. 12% of UK

Population – 3 million, approx. 5% of UK

Literacy rate – 97.6%

Languages – Albanian (official), Greek, other (including Macedonian, Turkish and Italian)

Look out for your next *Bible a Month* prayer letter which will be a special 40th anniversary edition.

Thank you so much for your support which is bringing the Bible to life at home and around the world.

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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