

WORD//ACTION

WE OFFER THE BIBLE TO THE WORLD



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BIBLE
SOCIETY

In her Christmas message, Her Majesty The Queen drew attention to the refugee crisis that has dominated the world's media over the past year, and parallels between the life of Jesus and the plight facing refugees today.

'For Joseph and Mary, the circumstances of Jesus's birth in a stable were far from ideal, but worse was to come as the family were forced to flee the country,' The Queen said.

'Despite being displaced and persecuted throughout his short life, Christ's unchanging message was not one of revenge or violence, but simply that we should love one another.'

During a recent meeting of Bible Society colleagues from Europe and the Middle East, I was struck by the way in which recent events have pulled these parts of the world together. In the last year alone, over a million people have fled countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Eritrea. The work of Bible Society in these parts of the world is truly challenging and transformative.

The Queen, who is patron of Bible Society, celebrates her 90th birthday on 21 April. To celebrate the occasion, Bible Society, together with HOPE and the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, has published a new book. We would be delighted to give every Bible Society supporter a free copy of this publication as an expression of thanks for your ongoing support of our shared mission. If you would like to receive a copy, please get in contact (see details on the page opposite).

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Word in Action*. We want to see a world where everyone has access to the Bible and can recognise its value for them, their families and communities. Thank you for partnering with us as we work towards the fulfilment of this vision.



Paul Woolley
Interim Chief Executive



Photography by Bible Society



CNN producer scoops Pitch film-making prize

Twenty-eight year-old Vanessa Perdriau, from Blackheath, London has won The Pitch film competition this year with her short historical drama *The Widow's Last*. The film draws on the biblical story of Elijah and explores the paradox that in giving we gain. Vanessa, who currently works at the broadcaster CNN, said, 'I am so excited. I cannot wait. I have been desperate to make this film for such a long time. I am humbled and honoured that they have selected this film to be made.' She has won a cash budget of £25,000, with additional film production support to see *The Widow's Last* made. The Pitch competition is in its seventh year. Each year it enables an aspiring film maker to produce a short film based on a passage, story or character from the Bible.

Luke Walton, producer of The Pitch said, 'The unique challenge of The Pitch is to come up with a contemporary film idea



Photography by Bible Society

that draws on the Bible for inspiration.' This year, ten finalists were shortlisted to present the ideas for their films at Pinewood Studios in January. Vanessa pitched her film idea, set during the Irish potato famine, to a panel of five industry judges including Nev Pierce (the editor of *Empire* magazine); Laurie Hutzler (story and character consultant for the BBC, ITV and Disney); Debbie Paterson (director and writer of *Africa United*); Alison Sterling (producer) and Lucy Scher (founding director of *The Script Factory*).

The Widow's Last is about a destitute widow who stumbles across her last chance to save her sick son. Runners up this year were Paris Zarcilla and Hannah Lee who have both won production budgets of £2,500 to help bring their ideas to reality.

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Clare Kendall



The Servant Queen

When, at 2.40am on 21 April 1926, the first child of The Duke and Duchess of York was born by caesarean section, nobody expected her to become Queen. The little girl was named Elizabeth Alexandra Mary after her mother, who was born Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. Following the abdication of Edward VIII in 1936, however, Princess Elizabeth's life changed forever. This year marks The Queen's 90th birthday. To celebrate, Bible Society has joined forces with HOPE and the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) to publish a new book about The Queen's Christian faith.

The book is a 64 page publication with colour photographs. Including a foreword from Her Majesty, it draws on The Queen's own words to describe her faith in God.

Queen Elizabeth II is Britain's longest-reigning monarch and the longest-reigning queen regnant (a female monarch who reigns in her own right) in history. Since her coronation in 1953, her reign has encompassed a huge diversity of personal experiences and

rapid global change: from rationing to moon landings, a British Olympic year to an 'Annus Horribilis', wars to garden parties. Spanning 12 Prime Ministers, 97 outward state visits, 3.5 million items of correspondence and more than 30 corgis. Marked by the joys of becoming a grandmother (and great-grandmother) and the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales. In all this, however, one thing has remained consistent: Her Majesty's Christian faith.

The annual Christmas message is perhaps the most publicly visible articulation of this faith. But it is hardly the only one. Over the years, The Queen has made repeated reference to the God she serves and the importance of her Christian faith. In the records of her public speeches alone, there are allusions to a host of Bible stories and passages: the nativity, the Good Samaritan, the epistles of Paul, the prophesies of Isaiah, and the Gospel of John.

And yet, for all that, we do not often hear much about this deeply significant aspect of her life and character. Whilst many commentators have noted the depth of her trust in God, few have explored it.

That is one of the reasons Bible Society, HOPE and LICC have produced this new book. Called *The Servant Queen and the King she serves*, the hope is that it will introduce more people to this often-overlooked, yet essential, aspect of The Queen's identity, character and activity. Or, perhaps more accurately, to the God and the faith within which she 'lives and moves and has her being'.

We would like to give every Bible Society supporter a free copy of this book. If you'd like one, please complete the form provided and return in the enclosed envelope.

To receive a free copy of *'The Servant Queen and the King she serves'* please complete the enclosed form and return in the envelope supplied.

If you would like to purchase more than one copy please call 01903 263354 or online www.cpo.org.uk/thequeen

For information on how you can use the book to build relationships and have conversations with neighbours, community groups and colleagues, please visit our website biblesociety.org.uk/queen



Photography by The Press Association

'FLIGHT!'



Hazel Southam

Chief reporter
Advocacy

Recently Hazel Southam flew to Austria to report back on our work in one of the busiest refugee camps in Europe. She found, as we so often do in times like this, that the demand for Bibles and spiritual support was exceptionally high.

These people have left everything behind and in many cases their hope for the future is found within the pages of the Bible and the support from local churches.

A woman with a lilac headscarf is squatting on the pavement, cradling her baby in her arms and rocking slightly. She looks stunned. Around her are the bags that represent the remains of her life.

She is one of 86 people who have been dumped on a motorway by traffickers, just outside Vienna. We associate Vienna, Austria's capital, with chocolate cake, The Sound of Music and opera. But right now, Vienna lies on the Balkan route – an overland trafficking route from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and also Africa.

The woman in the lilac headscarf is about to be added to the 4,800 people in the reception centre in the village of Traiskirchen some 30 miles outside Vienna.

Traiskirchen is in the heart of the wine growing region, famous for its robust red wines, and vineyards surround the camp on two sides. But the numbers coming into the camp have swollen so much that, last summer, Amnesty International dubbed the conditions there 'inhumane'. It is something with which the Bible Society Director in Austria, Dr Jutta Henner, agrees.

'It is really shocking to see people in tents at Traiskirchen,' she says. 'It is a difficult political issue, because the

question is if 80,000 people came during 2015 and it continues in 2016, there is a real challenge of how we integrate people into a rich country. But to keep people in poor conditions just to show that they shouldn't come here is to put suffering on the shoulders of poor people. I feel ashamed,' she says.

Bible Society is one of a very few agencies to get inside the camp. We are able to make Bibles available to those who want them and hundreds do. In fact, across Austria we're offering Bibles, and small books about hope and being a refugee, using biblical texts, to those going through the asylum process. Some 2,500 books were distributed free last year.

This includes nearly 200 to the Syrian Orthodox Church in Vienna. Its congregation has swelled to 600 people in 2015 as increasing numbers fled their homes in Syria. The pastor, Chorepiskops Emmanuel Aydin, has converted side-buildings into bedrooms and bathrooms so that more people can be accommodated as they go through the asylum application process.

He also helps find homes for refugees around Vienna and if they can't pay the rent, he covers it. Every week, all the asylum seekers eat together, and German classes have been organised. Dr Henner has come to the church to



Photography by Bible Society, Claire Kerudill

A little girl peers out from Traiskirchen refugee centre, Austria

distribute Bibles that have been requested.

Teenagers run into the building and line up to receive their own personal copy, now one of the few things they own, having left everything behind. They kiss the Bibles and hold them to their brows in an act of reverence. Upstairs, 22-year-old would-be Syrian dentist, Issa, is sitting in a room that he shares with four other men, while the renovation work goes on.

He's a Christian and has been granted asylum. 'I decided to leave Syria because so-called Islamic State were killing women and babies,' he says.

'They asked if we were Christians. They said if we didn't convert to Islam then they'd kill us.' The family moved out of their home and went into hiding. Twice. Then finally, when ISIL caught up with them, they fled Syria.

In the camp at Traiskirchen, some 1,500 people are camping under canvas. Everyone I speak to has lost everything that they ever had.

Issa is dismissive of the notion that he might have converted to Islam. 'My faith has not changed,' he says. 'God helped me to end up here which is a good thing for me.'

He says he reads the Bibles that are available, in Arabic, in the church. But, having fled his home with nothing, he hasn't got one of his own. 'Would you like one?' Dr Henner asks. His face brightens. 'Yes, I really would,' he says. So Dr Henner presents him with a soft-backed, Arabic Bible. He holds it to his chest and smiles.

In the camp at Traiskirchen, some 1,500 people are camping under canvas. Everyone I speak to has lost everything that they ever had. In those

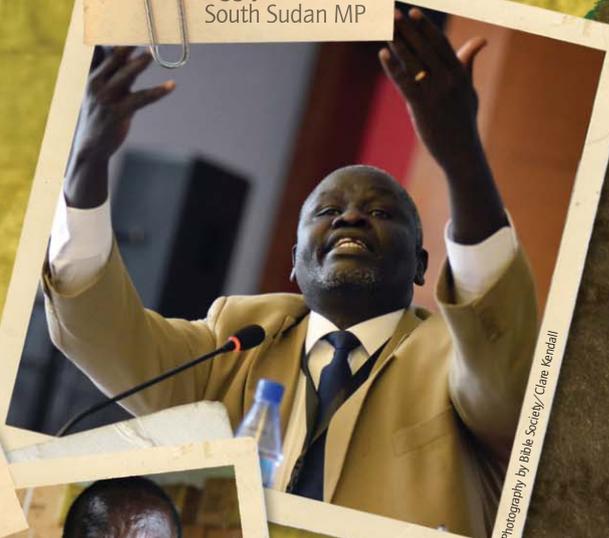
circumstances, why give Bibles? I ask Dr Henner isn't there a need for more aid? 'There are NGOs who do great humanitarian work,' she says, 'and have real experience of it. We work with them. Our aim is that Christians who come to us have a Bible, since arriving in Austria is not the end of their journey. It is the beginning of struggles and hardship and a completely new situation.'

'In the Bible they find stories of people who, like them, found themselves far away from home, facing an uncertain future, not being made welcome, being persecuted and afraid.'

'They can cry to God as they read and I hope that they will find that there is always hope in Jesus Christ.'

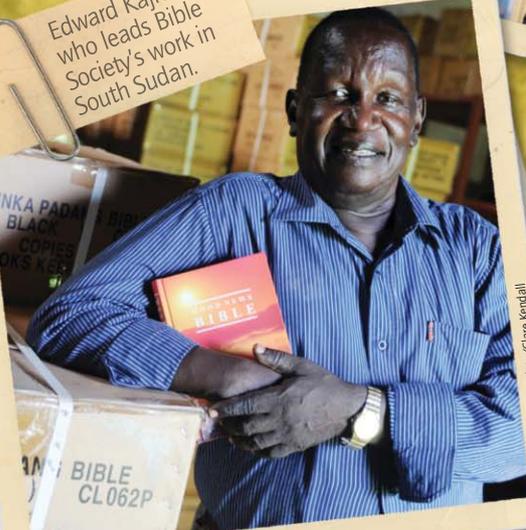
'Africa will be saved'
and soon the whole
room is singing, praying
and swaying.

Aggry Idri,
South Sudan MP



Photography by Bible Society/Clare Kendall

Edward Kajivora,
who leads Bible
Society's work in
South Sudan.



Photography by Bible Society/Clare Kendall

Bible Society in South Sudan

Bible Society in South Sudan was established in 2012. A year later the fledgling country was engulfed in civil war. Bible Society's Executive Secretary in the country, Edward Kajivora, was forced to sleep under his bed to avoid stray bullets as rival Nuer and Dinka tribes fought in the streets.

Two years on and he's supplying Bibles to both sides of the former divide. But, he says, there are never enough. Now he's planning for the future and peace. 'The fighting is likely to end and the two groups will again be living together,' he says. 'Our priority is to conduct trauma healing workshops for the two groups together. For the country to be in peace it should be based on the Christian principle of forgiveness and love.'

'Thanks to the vehicle from you in the UK we can now get out into the villages with Bibles. This was just a dream before.'

'Why is this worthwhile? Well, I met a woman whose husband had been killed in the violence in 2013. She had been lonely and believed that God had killed her husband. She refused to go to church in protest but, one day as she was passing our office, she saw many people come in to buy Bibles.'

'So, she decided to come in and buy one too, despite the fact that they cost more than a day's wage. As she's continued to read her Bible, her life has been changed. Now she says that her favourite verse is John 1.45 because she has discovered God.'

ACTS OF *peace* IN THE FACE OF WAR

'We must pray,' says a voice from the front of the conference hall in Malawi.

With that, some 150 church, government and civil society leaders stand up and encircle two men and a woman.

They are MPs from South Sudan, the world's youngest country. It has been riven by a two-year civil war, which resulted in thousands of deaths and 2.2 million people being made homeless. The extraordinary thing is that, just days after a peace agreement has been signed, MPs from both sides of the conflict have travelled to the Bible Society conference in Malawi and are talking as if they are old friends, which they certainly aren't.

People raise their hands over the MPs and pray in a host of different languages, earnestly seeking God's help for not just these three politicians, but the whole country. Then the 20-strong choir joins in singing 'Africa will be saved' and soon the whole room is singing, praying and swaying.

This is the African Biblical Leadership Initiative (ABLI) in action. ABLI is an annual conference run by us, now in its fifth year. It brings together church, government, business and civil society leaders in a bid to promote discussions about the key issues that face Africa.

This year, South Sudan, corruption and migration were high on the agenda.



'Being prayed for was incredibly moving,' says Paul Bonju (pictured left), a government MP from South Sudan. 'Tears were coming to my eyes and I was trying

not to cry.' He describes the moment when he first met Aggry Idri, a member of the opposition party, and theoretically until now, his sworn enemy.

'At first I was a little bit afraid and reserved,' says Paul. 'But when we hugged each other I knew in that minute that yes, we in South Sudan can overcome our problems and overcome all the killings and sufferings that we have experienced.'

'We can forgive each other for two years of war. Forgiveness is nothing new to us. I think we can do it.' Anne Linno MP, a grandmother of quintuplets in South Sudan and also a member of the ruling party, called on ABLI to found a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the country.

'I have lived most of my life at war,' Oshe says. 'So have my daughter and my grandchildren. We want to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and we want ABLI to be part of that.'

As he closed the conference, Lord Paul Boateng, a member of the House of Lords, said ABLI would be willing to contribute to the underpinning of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In a closing statement, he said, 'We commend both sides of the conflict in South Sudan for their willingness to take the first step on the journey to peace. We bless all the people of South Sudan and commit ourselves to welcoming them fully into the family of African nations.'

'The Church,' he said, 'will play a big role in forging a way forward.'

Aggry Idri added that such a commission was, 'the most important cornerstone to rebuilding South Sudan.'

'The war has destroyed lives and livelihoods,' he said. 'It is time people came together and accepted the gross violations of human rights and that cannot be done without a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.'

'The Church,' he said, 'will play a big role in forging a way forward.' South Sudan was formerly part of Sudan, which experienced nearly 40 years of war in which millions have died and millions more have been displaced. The latest peace agreement was signed in August 2015.



The forgotten Christians of Calais

It's the smell that hits you first. The terrible stench of human waste mixed with the aroma of spices being cooked around the camp. You could be in Africa as you look around at the sea of faces but have to remind yourself that you are actually only 20 miles from Folkstone in the 'Jungle' – the name given to the refugee camp in Calais which is now home to 6,000 people including 400 women and over 150 children.

We travelled to the camp to give Bibles, to the many Eritrean, Ethiopian and Iraqi Christians living there. We'd heard there were many who wanted Scripture in their own languages of Tigrinya, Amharic and Arabic – and supporters like you had kindly donated money to make Bibles available. We also brought warm clothes, shoes and blankets.

Solomon* is one of the first to ask us for an Amharic Bible. He turns it over

The camp looks like a shanty-town in the developing world. There are hundreds of tents, as far as the eye can see.

in his hands and slowly turns the pages with a beatific smile.

'Can I read my favourite verse to you?' he asks, and then finds John 14.1: 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.'

Solomon has left a wife and three-year-old daughter in Ethiopia to escape what he calls 'politics' and to find a better life for them. It has been over a month since he last spoke to either of them as he has no money to top up his phone. He paid people traffickers \$6000 (nearly £4,000) to get here.

His little tent is cosy and warm. He's made it with wood and plastic tarpaulin donated by local charities. He sleeps in the day and at night he tells us he's been trying to teach himself English using Bibles given by British churches.

'You can't go out at night,' he says. 'Many of the men drink and fight. The tent next to mine was slashed and a man near here was stabbed ten times. I want to go to Canada but they will not take me.'

'I have given up trying for England. I am a taxi driver and wanted to work but my friend broke his leg jumping on a train. It is too dangerous. I don't want to be here but I wait on God.' Conditions in the camp are appalling. Researchers from the University of Birmingham described conditions here as 'diabolical' after they found the piped water was contaminated with faecal matter.

*Name changed to protect their identity



Photography by Bible Society/Clare Kendall



Photography by Bible Society/Clare Kendall

The 'Jungle' in Calais is home to around 6,000 people

The camp itself looks like a shanty-town in the developing world. Plumes of smoke rise from small camp fires, and music drifts across from a sound system. The chemical toilets don't look like they have ever been cleaned. These toilets have been erected along with street lighting and a couple of water points by the French authorities.

These small official gestures, along with the surrounding razor wire, add an air of permanence to the camp, which already has a small number of shops selling tinned food, cooking oil and other basic essentials. We are invited to look into the tent of a young Ethiopian man called Mima, aged 29, to whom we have given a Bible. He says his favourite verse is Mark 10.27: 'Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.'

'It has helped me through dark times,' he says, 'I have been here five months and I don't want to be, but I believe God is showing me patience.'

From inside his little tent, which is neat and clean and full of small teddy bears, Mima tells us that he was a university graduate and journalist in Addis Ababa. After he began working for an opposition party, however, he was jailed by government security forces who accused him of inciting violence and terrorist activity – a charge he denies.

After this he was sentenced to six months in prison where he was given electric shocks and beaten.

He also contracted pneumonia which meant he was transferred to a hospital from which he escaped and travelled on to Tripoli. From there he took a boat across the Mediterranean with 120 other people. As he tells us, he looks into the distance and whispers, 'Only half of us survived: the women and children could not swim.'

Mima now spends his days helping in the camp's large Ethiopian Orthodox church known as St Michael's. It is a beautiful church made of tarpaulin, wood and corrugated metal donated by a French Catholic charity. There is an amazing sense of peace inside; candles flicker while people kneel to pray. Like Solomon, Mima believes that this is, for the time being, where God wants him to be – giving hope to others in the same situation. 'I have given up trying to get across the Channel to England,' he says, 'Too many have been injured or died and it is not worth it. I would rather go home than stay here but I have no money. My faith and my Bible give me hope.'



Photography by Bible Society/Clare Kendall

Mima, 29, received a Bible from us

'I would rather go home than stay here but I have no money. My faith and my Bible give me hope.'



Rachel Rounds

Head of Media
Communication

Intrepid walkers embark on the 28-mile challenge



Emma Dixon, 27: I signed onto the walk relatively last minute and didn't really know what to expect. I have done a lot of hiking in the past, but never in Wales and was amazed at just how beautiful it was.

We walked through hills and valleys, past lakes, cattle and wild flowers. The group was great, everyone was friendly and I met some really wonderful people.



Ryan Haylock, 37: I'd highly recommend the Mary Jones Challenge.

For me, the most enjoyable aspect was getting to know the fellow walkers. During the walk, you get to speak to the majority of the group, and what really stood out was how open and engaging everyone was. People told their life stories, listened to mine with genuine interest, and everything always came back to Christ and the Bible. The walk was by no means easy, but the spirit of the group really helped me to cross the finish line.



Mary Jones Challenge

walk for refugees

Could you walk 28 miles for the Bible?

Photography by Bible Society

Last year 30 adventurers walked across the hills and mountains of north Wales for 28 miles to take on the Mary Jones Challenge. This walk re-traces the steps of 16-year-old Welsh girl Mary Jones, who made the same journey 200 years ago, for a Bible of her own.

The group raised money to give free Bibles to participants on Alpha courses in Africa. Between them they raised an incredible £28,000. We are so thankful for all for their hard work and commitment, and to everyone who sponsored and supported our 2015 challengers.

A small church in Llanfihangel-y-pennant marks the start of the 28-mile route, which has lengthened due to roads and private land restrictions over the years. From there the journey takes participants up hills, across fields, past lakes and through forests.

Approximately 12 hours later the finish line outside Barclay's bank in Bala, (once the home of Thomas Charles) comes into view.

Rob Hare, who led the challenge last year, said, 'The best thing about the Mary Jones Challenge is looking back when you've completed it, tired, exhausted but elated by new friendships, overcoming fatigue, making it to the finish line and gratitude that you've been able to help others to receive a Bible.'

As well as our fantastic walking team, we have also met and learned of other inspirational teams taking on their own Mary Jones Challenge to raise money for Bibles for Alpha.

Helen Munday is the children's leader from Derby City Church. She inspired her Sunday school (Kidzone) children by telling them the story of Mary Jones, her quest for the Bible and her influence in

the beginning of Bible Society. 'I wanted them to understand the great need for Bibles still around the world and to see that children can make a difference,' Helen said.

A few weeks later, Helen and a team of helpers transformed one of the church buildings into their own version of north Wales. Twenty-two children aged between five and 11 completed 26 laps of the building. In each room they were given challenges including walking bare foot, climbing over 'mountains' and crawling through tunnels, as well as reading relevant Bible verses that were displayed along the way. They were given a challenge card that was stamped after each lap and a *Pass it On* booklet as a prize at the end.

This wonderful group of children raised £250 for Bibles for Alpha and their intrepid leader then went on to complete the Mary Jones walk in north Wales with our team in July.

'I first heard about Mary Jones 30 years ago when I came across a Bible Society leaflet in church. It's a story that has stayed with me and I was so pleased to take part in this significant, meaningful challenge. The walk was fabulous. Meeting like-minded people and raising money for a great cause really added to the sense of achievement. I would definitely recommend it to others,' said Helen.

The next walk will take place on Saturday 16 July 2016 and we have a maximum of 40 places available. Each participant will be asked to aim to raise £1,000 to help give Bibles, Christian counselling and practical aid to refugees fleeing their homes in the Middle East. If you are feeling inspired to take part, you can!

Full details are available on our website: biblesociety.org/maryjones

Mary Jones World is opening for the 2016 season on Saturday 26 March with our Family Fun Day. As part of the celebrations, there will be drama, music and an Easter egg hunt. Visit biblesociety.org/maryjones for more details.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

'... give them something to eat.'

Matthew 14.16

In our last issue we invited you to send us your own re-tellings of Bible stories. Thank you so much to everyone who sent us stories and poems. Congratulations to Caroline Gill and Glenys Adams whose poems we've featured in this issue. If you want to read some of the other Bible story re-tellings, you can find them online at biblesociety.org.uk/wia-comp

You must have longed for peace and rest when others needed you: your boat set sail, but it was plain that there were things to do.

You came ashore to heal the sick: a crowd had gathered there. Your heart went out to one and all, but was there food to share?

You wanted to provide a meal and make the people stay: you spoke these very words to us, 'They need not go away.'

You seemed so sure: how could we know? Your tale is ours to tell: we searched until we found two fish, and five small loaves as well.

You made us ask these hungry folk to sit upon the ground. You blessed and broke and gave us bread: we passed it all around.

You knew there would be food to spare: faith cannot be explained. We gathered up the leftovers: twelve basketfuls remained.

You helped us feed five thousand men, five thousand men indeed, plus women and the young ones, too: your hand supplied their need.

You showed your Father's love for all. We watched you as you raised your head towards the heavens first: our Father's name be praised!

CAROLINE GILL - IPSWICH

He looked around, as if to invite
Admiring eyes to catch the light
Of his great bounty, shining bright,
Which, held aloft at holy height,
He proudly gave. But, as was right,
His countless treasures, still held tight.
Her eyes downcast, she hid her plight
Of constant need, of hunger's bite,
Of weary bones; the daily fight
Of making do, as best she might.
But God is good! And in his sight
Alone she gave her widow's mite.

GLENYS ADAMS - LIVERPOOL



TEST YOURSELF

Cut out this page and send your answers along with your name and contact details to WiA Quiz, Bible Society, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon, SN5 7DG to be in with the chance of winning one of two leather ESV Bibles. With 32 pages of full colour illustrations and maps, and the words spoken by Jesus highlighted in red.



Across

- 2 A supernatural being that tells God's messages to the people or protects those who belong to God
- 6 The town where a woman poured perfume over Jesus' head in preparation for burial
- 8 A Zealot criminal who was released at the Passover feast in Jerusalem (5, 8)
- 9 One of the first female disciples (4, 9)
- 11 The time at which the sky turned dark and stayed that way until three o'clock
- 13 The English version of the Greek word Kokkinos
- 16 Roman governor under the Emperor Tiberius
- 17 This man came from Arimathea and asked Pilate for the body of Jesus
- 18 To be nailed or bound by the hands and feet to a cross and put to death

Down

- 1 The name which means 'place of the skull'
- 3 The place in which 25 of the 33 great miracles were performed
- 4 In this book, the death of Jesus is written in chapter 19, verses 28-30
- 5 The state of one risen from the dead
- 7 The man who betrayed Jesus to the chief priests (5, 8)
- 10 A person who saves, rescues or delivers
- 12 The words spoken to Jesus as he was kissed and betrayed (5, 7)
- 14 Celebrated to remind the people of Israel how God rescued them from slavery in Egypt
- 15 A garden or olive orchard on the Mount of Olives

YOUR LETTERS

& COMMENTS

I was amazed to read of the translation for those with dyslexia. How wonderful! Many thanks and may God bless you in all your efforts for his kingdom.

OLIVE, BATH



The Open the Book team of Holy Cross, Woodchurch, Birkenhead, were asked to perform a story at the Festival of Transport in Birkenhead Park in September 2015. We illustrated the story of Noah, and the Bishop said how much he had enjoyed it!

ANNE, BIRKENHEAD

I think the *Bible Bedtime* story is great. Just right for today's modern children! I'm 86 but I think my great-granddaughter (two-and-a-half going on 20!) will love it.

HELEN, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

On a recent holiday to Wales, we visited Mary Jones World in Bala and were very impressed with the exhibition, the warm welcome and the cakes in the café!

SUSAN, NANTWICH

It's wonderful to put the precious gift of God's Word into each person's hand. May God bless your work.

JOICE, SUTTON

WE LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Email us your thoughts and comments at wia@biblesociety.org.uk or use the comments form attached. We reserve the right to edit letters for style and length. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of Bible Society.

One verse



Photography by Bible Society

'You did not choose me. I chose you and sent you out to produce fruit, the kind of fruit that will last.' John 15.16 (CEV)

'I have had a close relationship with this verse for 30 years, since it was given to me at my confirmation. At the time I was very angry with the pastor for choosing it; I was a young person who wanted to change the world and I didn't like to think this was out of my control.

'But I had this verse on my wall, and over time I realised it was not about my comfortable and convenient plans. It's about following Jesus, and accepting that his plans are always better than ours.

'I've been leading Bible Society in Austria for 19 years, and we've been working with refugees for ten years. The ministry just developed out of our prison work, and today we see baptisms and new life among refugees. This is 'fruit that will last' - and it's beautiful.

'There are churches in Austria with four or five elderly members, and now young refugees are knocking on their door asking to join Bible study groups. It may not be the plan of this church, but it's what God has chosen for them.'

Dr Jutta Henner is General Secretary of Bible Society in Austria

Biblepeople:

As Bible Society's patron, HM The Queen, prepares to celebrate her 90th birthday this year, we speak to her former domestic chaplain, Revd Prebendary William Scott.

What did your position at the palace involve?

'As domestic chaplain I was available to everyone involved in palace life, from members of the royal family to domestic staff, Christians and non-Christians. I saw the Queen at occasions in which I was taking part and when I was given an audience. She is a very great example of devotion to duty and the wisdom of tradition and custom.'

How important is the Bible for you?

'It is so much part of life to read and listen to the Bible that I daresay its importance is paramount to my life as

a Christian. I love the warmth of Luke, with the wonderful parables.'

Does the Bible have a place in public life?

'Parts of the Bible have formed the culture of our country and have a very great role in public life. Difficulties arise when people use texts from Scripture to beat other people. I remember as a child sometimes hearing the readings announced as 'the word of the Lord as contained in...' The Word of God is alive and active and certainly can't be contained! We have to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church and the nation. Burning witches did not stop because people stopped reading the Bible, but because they went on doing so.'

Revd Prebendary William Scott



Photography by Bible Society

On Sunday 12 June, the Mall in London will be transformed for its largest ever street party to celebrate The Queen's patronage of over 600 charities and organisations on her official 90th birthday. Bible Society representatives will be in attendance, and we have two tickets to give away.

If you would like to nominate someone for their service in offering the Bible to the world, please email us and tell us why in no more than 150 words. Please put 'The Queen's birthday lunch' in the subject heading and include the name and address of your nominee. contactus@biblesociety.org.uk

The Passion of Jesus – Trafalgar Square – 25 March 2016

On Good Friday, the Wintershall Players plus their animals come to the heart of London to re-enact the annual Passion Play, which is a free event. The Passion has grown enormously over the years and now welcomes 20,000 people over two performances at 12 noon and 3.15 pm. They perform it again on Easter Saturday on Guildford High Street at 12 noon and 2:30 pm.



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