



Bible
Society

October 2017 – February 2018

prayer **in** action

We have heard that you
are Praying for us, we
Appreciate.

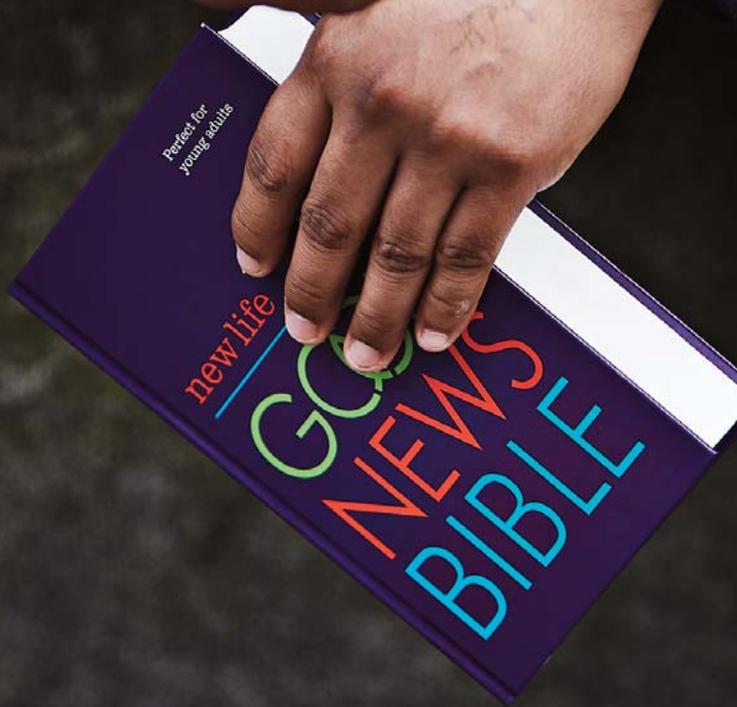


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Welcome to *Prayer in Action* for October 2017 – February 2018. We deeply value your prayer support and know we need God at the heart of all our plans. Please pray for our activities at home in this country to bear fruit and help to shape and influence culture and society.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
1 Thessalonians 5.16–18 (ESV)

Photography by Jon Challacom



October

1–7 October

- Give thanks for the Mission to Wales over the summer (find out more on page 3 of *Word in Action*). Praise God for all the conversations held on the streets of Wales. Pray for all those who prayed a prayer of commitment – that they will become flourishing Christians and experience a sense of home in the local churches who are following up their conversations.
- Please pray for all those entering our film competition The Pitch this October. May their experiences of exploring, interpreting, adapting and retelling stories from the Bible help inspire a new generation to open and explore the Bible. Please pray especially for Vanessa Perdriau, writer and director of the 2015 winning film *The Widow's Last*, and Harry Lighton, writer and director of 2016 winning film *Leash*, as these films make their way to festivals across the world. May all those who experience these films be inspired to read the Bible, and may Vanessa, Harry and all the filmmakers we work with, take their knowledge and experience of Scripture into their future roles in the film industry as they shape and influence culture and society.

8 – 14 October

- Please pray for Books for Life LIVE, taking place in Cheltenham on 10 October 2017. Pray for the speakers including Krish Kandiah, Bob Hartman and Professor Alister McGrath as they seek to encourage Christians with a range of inspirational topics and books. For further information please visit booksforlife.uk/live

- Give thanks for the book launch of Agor Y Gair Gyda Mari (Opening the Word with Mary) at the National Eisteddfod in Abergavenny. Inspired by the journey of Mary Jones, the book, written by women for women in Welsh, encourages readers to follow Mary's path. With a reading chosen each day for 26 days, representing the 26 miles of that journey accompanied by beautiful images of the local landscape, each section includes a reflection on a particular topic related to the journey as well as the Bible passage and a prayer. To order a copy go to biblesociety.org.uk/mari

15 – 21 October

- Please pray for the launch and promotion of *The Bible Course*, which we hope will bring clarity and understanding of the whole storyline of the Bible for both new and mature Christians alike. Pray that as new resources become available our promotion inspires leaders of churches and small groups to launch courses in the new year, helping many more people to grow in their own knowledge, understanding and love of the Scriptures. See page 10 in *Word in Action* for more details.

22 – 28 October

- Please pray for the work of our research team as they continue to help us explore and develop our insights on the church, culture and wider society. May the work they do and the information they gather help grow and shape our work so we can engage with more people and change more lives, for good.

This month please pray for Bible Sunday taking place on 29 October. Pray that churches will be inspired by their engagement with the Bible. Give thanks for the wonderful growth of our Open the Book project and pray for further growth as we seek to reach all primary school children in England and Wales with stories from the Bible.

Remember these commands and cherish them. Tie them on your arms and wear them on your foreheads as a reminder. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working. Deuteronomy 11.18-19 (GNB)

**Children at St Mary's, Cheltenham
enjoying an OTB assembly**

November

29 October – 4 November

We are asking churches around the country to celebrate Bible Sunday this week. Please join us in praying for everyone taking part, that:

- People will recall the value of the Bible for their own lives
- They will be inspired to read God's word for themselves
- Lives will be changed for good as people engage with the Bible

Please also pray for the following people whose stories we are sharing in the materials, that they will continue to know God's presence with them through reading the Bible:

- Cecilia and her family in Tanzania. She has HIV/AIDS and has been reunited with her family as a result of the Good Samaritan programme.
- Salma (not her real name), who is a Muslim background believer and living as a refugee in Jordan.
- Pastor Wenfu who helped translate the Bible into the Black Yi language in China.
- Chris (not his real name) and his wife as they mourn the loss of their baby.

For more information on Bible Sunday go to biblesociety.org.uk/biblesunday or call 01793 418222.

5 – 11 November

- Please pray for Open the Book, that the new 'Christian Values: A biblical approach' materials we have produced are well received by primary schools, children and Storytellers and enable more children to hear Bible stories for the first time.
- Praise God for our 15,000 faithful

volunteer Storytellers as they plan, prepare and get into costume to dramatize Bible stories which involve the children's participation. Please pray for enjoyable, fun story times that are eagerly anticipated and provoke deeper thinking.

12 – 18 November

- Please continue to pray for our Training and Development team who are making great contacts and seeing teams start in urban areas like Birmingham.
- Thank God that we are now celebrating two years of Open the Book in Ghana. Please pray for the 56 young volunteers who are impacting 11 primary schools in Greater Accra and Cape Coast in the Central region.

19 – 25 November

- Open the Book Awareness Week will be happening in the second week in February 2018. This aims to celebrate, publicise and spread Open the Book to other churches and their local primary schools. Pray for our Storytellers as they step out in faith to tell other churches of the vision and that churches will be inspired to start new teams or join existing ones.

26 November – 2 December

- Pray for more churches in the Chichester and Chiltern areas to come forward to start Open the Book teams.
- Pray that God will continue to bless this work and provide the funding needed to support the international development work and expand the work here at home.

December

The Christmas journeys of Mary, Joseph, the angels, the shepherds and the wise men are all part of the Christmas story. But the greatest journey of all was the one that Jesus took in coming to earth as a tiny baby. The writer John described this moment in very poetic terms: 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us'. The birth of Jesus was an amazing event for all involved.

This December we will use the Scriptures to follow the incarnational journey of Jesus to help us prayerfully get ready for Christmas.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
John 1.14 (ESV)



3 – 9 December

In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.

John 1.1–5

And God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him.

1 John 4.9–14

- Please pray that people will be blessed and encouraged through using our Christmas resources.

10 – 16 December

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. They lived in a land of shadows, but now light is shining on them. A child is born to us! A son is given to us! And he will be our ruler. He will be called, 'Wonderful Counsellor', 'Mighty God', 'Eternal Father', 'Prince of Peace.'
Isaiah 9.2, 6–7

She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger – there was no room for them to stay in the inn.
Luke 2.7

- Please pray for the Wintershall Nativity, which this year runs from Wednesday 13 December to Sunday 17 December. May all at Wintershall who are performing this year's plays



When they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshiped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.

Matthew 2.10–11

- Pray with us using our Daily Lyfe reflections, go to biblesociety.org.uk/lyfe and click on Daily Lyfe for Scriptures, reflections and prayers for morning, noon and night.

24 – 30 December

Happy Christmas from Bible Society! The journeys of the shepherds and wise men signal the start of something new. In Jesus' day, shepherds were outsiders, needing to follow their flocks to water, living on the outskirts of society and, therefore, unable to follow the purity laws of their faith. The wise men were outsiders of a completely different kind. They had travelled far from the east, from a foreign court, to worship Jesus.

It is striking that the people that welcome Jesus first are outsiders, the very people with whom he will spend most of his life.

In the birth of Jesus, a new dawn breaks. The song of the angels and the arrival of the wise men remind us that Jesus' birth marks the start of a journey to a new era of hope, justice and peace... and that's why it's worth celebrating 2,000 years later. No-one is excluded – this is good news for everyone!

- Praise God for the gift of his son Jesus to us. Pray for all those who feel excluded at Christmas, for the marginalised, the homeless, refugees and those without family, that they will know the love of Jesus and the real meaning of Christmas.

communicate the timeless story of Jesus' birth with clarity and integrity, and inspire those watching to explore the Bible for themselves. We pray that all those who experience this moving narrative of the birth of Jesus truly reflect on and are transformed by the real story of Christmas.

17 – 23 December

Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God:

'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!' When the angels went away from them back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us.'

Luke 2.13–15

January



Happy New Year 2018!

Recently we sent Claire Smith, a freelance writer, to Swaziland to report on our work. Claire gathered many prayer requests during her visit, so in January and February we are praying for the people of Swaziland and for our work. Their prayers are on the following pages.

What God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world.
James 1.27 (GNB)

31 December – 6 January

Revd Rikus Geyer, former deputy CEO of Bible Society in South Africa, has now retired and been acting as a consultant to the team in Swaziland since 2015. 'Please pray for stability in the work of Bible Society. Pray for the growth and drive of the staff, many of whom are young. My prayer is that their energy will benefit Swazi people right across the country. My vision is that this small Bible Society will become the example, or the blueprint, for other small Bible Societies across Africa.'

7 – 13 January

Grandfather-of-seven, **Samuel Kunene**, who's training to be a Sunday school teacher among Swaziland's many children orphaned as a result of the high rates of HIV/AIDS. 'Pray for the children. We have a lot of children who need help, and educating them is, at times, difficult. If a child is hungry, you have to get them food before you can teach them, because they can't concentrate. They have no one to pay for them to go to school. Yesterday, I was trying to get shoes for a little girl whose parents have passed away. These are children who lack the word of God. It can be difficult to counsel them, but we can pray for them.'

Albert Makhanya, aged 54, who lives with albinism. In Swaziland, there's a belief that the body parts of people living with albinism have special powers to bring wealth or healing. As a result, there's been a spate of brutal killings and mutilations. People like Albert live in fear. 'Pray that we will be sustained in our faith, and for protection over me, my family and our home. Please pray for our

family; when the head of the house is unemployed it's really hard to survive, and it's hard for my wife because she has to be by my side and watch me. We are living under the grace of the Lord'

14 – 20 January

Phillemon Gama, founder and leader of the Swazi Association of Persons with Albinism. 'My biggest prayer is for an office for our organisation, so that issues to do with albinism in Swaziland can be dealt with directly. Secondly, please help us by praying that we will be successful in raising awareness and dispelling myths around albinism, so that it can be properly understood. Many of the challenges we face are down to a lack of understanding.'

21 – 27 January

Susan Motsa is the headteacher at Kuhlahlhla Primary School, in the north east of Swaziland. The school has 270 pupils, aged six to 13. Almost a third of them are vulnerable or orphaned. Our team are supporting 40 families in the school, providing Bibles, counselling and practical help to grow vegetables and keep chickens. Mrs Motsa, who's been leading the school for five years, said, 'I wake up at 5 am every morning to pray for this school and the children. I pray that God gives the children wisdom and courage, so they can learn irrespective of their problems at home. Please pray for sympathetic teachers, who will act like a parent to the most vulnerable children and have insight into their troubles. Pray for the parents. And I ask God to lead this school, then I will follow. Please join me in praying for this.'

February

SiSwati study Bible translation group in Swaziland



After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,

clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'
Revelation 7.9–10 (ESV)

27 January – 3 February

Pastor Samuel Dlamini leads a Bible school in Swaziland and is one of three people researching and writing the SiSwati Study Bible. They've completed the four gospels and are now working on Romans and Acts, with the aim of publishing Swaziland's first New Testament with study notes early in 2018. It takes four months, on average, to produce notes for each book of the Bible. 'My hope is that the churches will be unified and enriched as a result of this Study Bible. I hope this will bring a revival, once people can understand the true message of the gospel. Definitely, this Study Bible will change lives.'

4 – 10 February

Pastor Ndlelaluoa Dlamini, who leads a rural church of 40 people, has received the first two books of the SiSwati Study Bible. He said, 'I had read the parable of the sower but never really understood that it was a reflection of my heart, until I had the notes in the Study Bible. I have learned that I can choose to be good soil, and that refers to my heart. I am learning to trust and depend on God more, and I want to receive that seed every day. Pray for me as a church leader.'

11 – 17 February

Siphiwo Mkhonta, aged 14, attends the Siteki School for the Deaf and was one of the first children to see the Bible in sign language. His headteacher says he's a responsible, bright and promising pupil, who endured a tragic event several years ago when his mentally-ill mother tried to poison Siphiwo and killed his little sister. Siphiwo now lives with his grandmother when he's not at school. 'Pray for my life.

Pray that one day I will be a doctor in a hospital – I want to drive an ambulance! I know God loves me and cares for me, and I love Jesus. God has helped me... he's prolonged my life, and he protects me.'

18 – 24 February

Pastor Anthony Langwenya teaches at the Siteki School for the Deaf, and is one of the three translators working to record 132 Bible stories as sign language videos. They've completed 25 so far, and tested them with children at the school. Pastor Anthony is himself deaf, and sign language is his first language. 'Please pray for me and my family, that God gives me power and wisdom in this ministry. Deaf children understand things differently from hearing children – they learn visually. So pray that children at our school will understand the word of God and his will. Pray we will minister to and care for deaf children such that they grow in Christ and live their lives according to God's will.'

25 – 3 March

Cebsile Ngcamphalala is the project coordinator for Bible Society in Swaziland. She's only 25, and started work with Bible Society in February 2017. 'Revelation talks about people sitting around Jesus' throne from every nation and tribe and language. For me, each day that's what I want to see in Swaziland. I want every group of people – the ignored, overlooked, the marginalised – to be represented. Let there be nobody who says we weren't reached. To me that's the dream, that's the prayer. Let this vision go through the generations, so that everyone knows there's a task to be completed.'

