

*Palestinian Bible Society volunteer Sally with children at Bible camp*



TODAY BETHLEHEM is a far cry from the peaceful town we sing about at Christmas, but in this issue you can read how the Palestinian Bible Society, amidst turmoil and tension, are creating an oasis of joy and fun for children like 10-year-old Saliba Manoly, to learn and share the Bible.

You can also read an update from the world's newest nation, South Sudan, as the Bible Society there continues to trust in God's promises and provisions.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Bible a Month* and please join with us in prayer for both South Sudan and the Holy Land, that people young and old, will be transformed by the Bible.

**John Ranford** Bible a Month Co-ordinator



Photo © Bible Society/Claire Kendall



By Claire Smith

YOU CAN ALMOST FEEL THE AIR become heavy with tension as you approach the checkpoint. You pass through the wall, an angry scrawl of graffitied words and colour. On the other side, it's a jumble of taxis, cars and people.

We've arrived in Bethlehem, the town where Christ was born more than 2,000 years ago.

I was on my way to visit a children's Bible camp funded by the Palestinian Bible Society in Beit Sahour, a district of Bethlehem. It was my first visit to the Holy Land, and I wasn't prepared for the insistent way the wall depresses life here. Time and again,

we met Palestinian families dogged by unemployment, poverty and a grim limiting of their prospects and hopes.

But as we arrive at the Bethlehem Bible camp, it becomes clear that Bible Society has created a genuine oasis of joy in this troubled town. Children arrive for the day with broad smiles on their faces. They hug the leaders, chatter excitedly and line up ready for class.

At the Bible session, run by Bible Society volunteer Sally, I was moved to see the children's responses. They hung on her every word, enchanted by the story of blind

# Bible Society in focus

## CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH A CHILD OF BETHLEHEM

Seven-year-old Laith loves coming to Bible camps run by The Bible Society of Palestine. He's been able to attend two now – and he is already looking forward to next year's.

'I like the Bible sessions, and love the stories of Jesus that we learn,' he says. 'I have a book of Bible stories that I got from camp, and my sister and I read it together. Whenever I come to this camp, they tell me about Jesus, so he is in my heart.'

This Christmas we have loads of resources for your church to run a Child of Bethlehem Christmas service. Resources include:

- Nativity play script
- Children's activities
- Sermon outline
- Powerpoint slides
- Animation of the Christmas story

Your church's support will help send other children like Laith to a Bible camp, and bring the stories of Jesus to life.

Visit [biblesociety.org.uk/bam-christmasservice](http://biblesociety.org.uk/bam-christmasservice) to download the free resources for your church.



7-year-old Laith

Photo © Bible Society/Claire Kendall

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Bartimaeus. 'Jesus loved Bartimaeus enough to heal him,' she tells them. 'And he loves us too, each one of us.'

After the story, everyone is up on their feet for more singing (a song called *The Best Shepherd*), then Sally quizzes the group on what they've heard before they pray.

Later, I meet 10-year-old Saliba Manoly. He's a chess champ, and challenges me to a game. While we play, I learn about his life... Saliba's been to the camp a couple of times before and loves it. Last year, he was given a children's Bible, and he says he reads it every night. 'I like the story of the resurrection because it was a miracle,' Saliba says.

Despite the troubles, he tells me, 'I feel joyful about living near Bethlehem because I live near a place that's holy.' As Saliba romps to checkmate, the bell rings for the children's next session and we say our goodbyes.

Leaving Bethlehem, I notice the Bible reference 1 Corinthians 13 painted on the separation wall, and I'm reminded of a comment made by a colleague... These



10-year-old chess champion Saliba Manoly challenges Bible Society's Claire Smith to a game of chess

Photo © Bible Society/Claire Kendall

children's Bible camps are chipping holes in the wall, fostering love, kindness and hope, and letting the Bible shape the lives and values of children like Saliba.

In that haven of joy, fun and laughter – away from the military presence, violence and aggression of the region – the Bible's message is being brought alive for a new generation.

## AFRICAN LEADERS GATHER AROUND THE BIBLE

Africa in crisis, yet full of hope. This was the picture that dominated the third African Biblical Leadership Initiative (ABLI) in Uganda, run by Bible Society thanks to your support and donations.

The annual conference, which brings African leaders together around the Bible, began with a clear call for the continent to return to God and live according to biblical principles – delivered by Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairman of the African Union Congress.

Concerns raised during the two-day event in August included the growing threat of Islamist terrorism in Nigeria, women in leadership and how best to reach out to heal those traumatised by war.

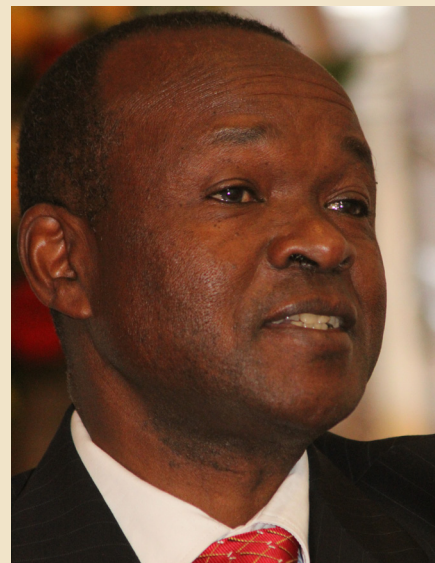
ABLI also heralded the launch of the Exposed campaign, which aims to highlight corruption. The forum heard that \$1 trillion goes missing each year due to corruption.

However, it wasn't all bad news. African business leaders were upbeat that prosperity was heading Africa's way.

Following the success of this year's ABLI, we are committed to continue to develop it in 2013. David Smith, Bible Society's International Programme Manager, said, 'The Bible is inspiring a generation of African leaders, whether in business, politics, diplomacy or the Church. And ABLI is inspiring the Church to apply the Gospel.'

He added, 'Initiatives like the ABLI forum are significant to the future of Africa. What constitutes authentic biblical leadership is crucial to this continent.'

To hear more from Erastus Mwencha and others who attended the ABLI conference you can watch a short film at [biblesociety.org.uk/abli](http://biblesociety.org.uk/abli)



ABLI keynote speaker, Erastus Mwencha

Photo © Bible Society/Andrew Boyd



## HOLY LAND



Ibrahim Altalash

WITH MORE THAN HALF of Palestinians under the age of 18, working with children is an essential ministry for the Palestinian Bible Society. And running Bible camps across the region, like the one Claire visited (see eyewitness report), is at the heart of this.

Every year, Bible Society reaches around 5,000 children across Palestine with the message of Gospel through Bible camps and events at Christmas, Easter and in the summer. The aim is to present the Bible's values of justice and hope to a generation who have

grown up against a backdrop of aggression and violence.

At the Bethlehem camp, YMCA director Ibrahim Altalash has seen a noticeable change in the children. 'First, I look at the good relations between the children, then I see the joy on their faces,' he said. 'We have excellent feedback from parents. They tell us the children come home singing the Bible songs and retelling the stories they've heard. They are so into these stories.'

He added that feeding children with the Bible's message from a young age is critical. 'It's so important to present Jesus Christ's message of love to these children. They really absorb this message.'

'When we give them this full package from childhood, we see the impact on the future is godly men and women. That is vital for us in Palestine.'

## PRAYER POINTERS

- Give thanks that the Gospel stories have been brought alive for 10-year-old Saliba, attending the Bethlehem Bible camp. Give thanks that he reads his Bible daily, and pray for him to be rooted in God's written Word as he grows up.
- Give thanks for the Palestinian Bible Society staff and volunteers who run the Bible sessions for children. Give thanks for their passion for God's Word and for their wisdom in explaining the Bible's stories clearly and simply.
- Pray that opportunities would open up to reach more children in the West Bank, and also in Gaza where no Bible camps can currently operate. Pray for the team as they pursue new opportunities, particularly for safety and protection as they travel.
- Pray for peace across the Holy Land.
- Prayer for the unity of Christians in the Holy Land.

To discover other ways of making the Bible heard visit [biblesociety.org.uk](http://biblesociety.org.uk)

## SOUTH SUDAN



A school girl in Juba, South Sudan

BIBLES HAVE BEEN FLYING off the shelves in the world's newest nation, South Sudan – to such an extent that Bible Society had completely sold out within six months.

The Bible Society in South Sudan was registered in January 2012, but by July they had sold out of Bibles in all languages including 6,000 copies of the newly translated Dinka Padang Bible, launched in April.

The team are expecting more copies to arrive, thanks to funds from your regular giving. But they face challenges – working out of a bomb-damaged warehouse with an erratic electricity supply – and need your prayers.

Revd Edward Kajivora, who leads Bible Society in South Sudan, says the country is finding its feet and churches are growing. 'Signs of the Christian faith are everywhere!' he told us. But, with the economy in tatters, widespread corruption and wars along the border with Sudan, he said the people desperately need the Bible's message of peace and hope.

'Building a new country is not easy, and neither is building a new Bible Society,' said Edward. 'Although things are tough, we continue to trust in the Lord's promises and are thankful for the prayers of people around the world who support our work.'

## PRAYER POINTERS

- Give thanks for regeneration in the capital city of Juba. Give thanks for building work and employment, as well as good rains this year which promised a plentiful harvest. And give thanks for the establishment of Bible Society in South Sudan.
- Pray for the two Bible Society staff, Revd Edward Kajivora and Revd John Malesh. They are working hard to kickstart Bible work with limited resources. Pray for energy and wisdom, and clarity as they focus their attention on key Bible needs in South Sudan.
- Give thanks that, over the past year, Bible Society has run trauma healing workshops in South Sudan. Pray for those affected by war, tribal fighting and violence. Pray that they will be touched by the Bible's message of healing and peace.
- Pray that the demand for Bibles will continue to be high! And pray that God would use Bible Society to meet all the Scripture needs in the country.

# Bible a month

October 2012

*'These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.'*

John 15.11 (ESV)

## HOLY LAND FACTFILE



Area: 28,292 sq km, approx. 11% area of the UK.

Population: 11,718,000, approx. 18% of the UK pop.

Literacy: 94%

Languages: Arabic, Hebrew, English

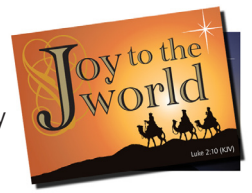
# Bible a month

Club Corner

Thank you so much to all who took part in our 35th anniversary celebrations by ordering their free copy of *Who?* and to those who also increased their monthly gift at the same time. We've been trying to speak to some of you on the phone as well – over a third of you to whom we have spoken, have increased your monthly giving and/or changed to Direct Debit. This has already resulted in the equivalent of 12,000 more Bibles a year!

In these difficult times we realise not everyone can increase their regular gift, and so we thank God for each one of you, faithfully and prayerfully giving whatever you are able. It is a great joy to us that the work of *Bible a Month* has actually been able to grow, despite the economic situation, and so many more have been provided with the gift of a Bible as a result. Please continue to pray.

PS Look out for your Christmas stickers in your latest *Word in Action* magazine. They're a great way to share the true meaning of Christmas, Jesus, with family and friends. Visit [biblesociety.org.uk/bam-childofbethlehem](http://biblesociety.org.uk/bam-childofbethlehem) to order your stickers and other resources.



To submit your story to Club Corner, please email [bamc@biblesociety.org.uk](mailto:bamc@biblesociety.org.uk) or write to us at the address below. Your Club Corner story may be edited and we cannot guarantee its inclusion. Please ensure you include a return address so we can return any materials.

To discover other ways of making the Bible heard visit [biblesociety.org.uk](http://biblesociety.org.uk)

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# Bible a month

November 2012

*'Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.'*

Proverbs 3.5-6 (ESV)

## SOUTH SUDAN FACTFILE



Area: 644,329 sq km, approx. 63% larger than the UK.

Population: 10,625,176, approx. 27% of the UK pop.

Literacy: 17%

Languages: English, Arabic, regional languages include Dinka, Nuer, Bari, Zande, Shilluk

# Bible a month

Look out for your next *Bible a Month* prayer letter which will feature reports from **China** and **Ethiopia**.

It's been a difficult economic climate lately and many people are finding things tough. That's why we want to make sure that you are giving at a level that is right for you. If you are paying by direct debit and would like to change your gift, please just indicate your new gift amount below, sign it and return to us at the address at the bottom of this prayer letter. Alternatively, please call us on 01793 418222.

I would like to change my monthly gift to .....

Please sign here.....

If you are giving by standing order and would like to change your gift amount, please call us on 01793 418222.