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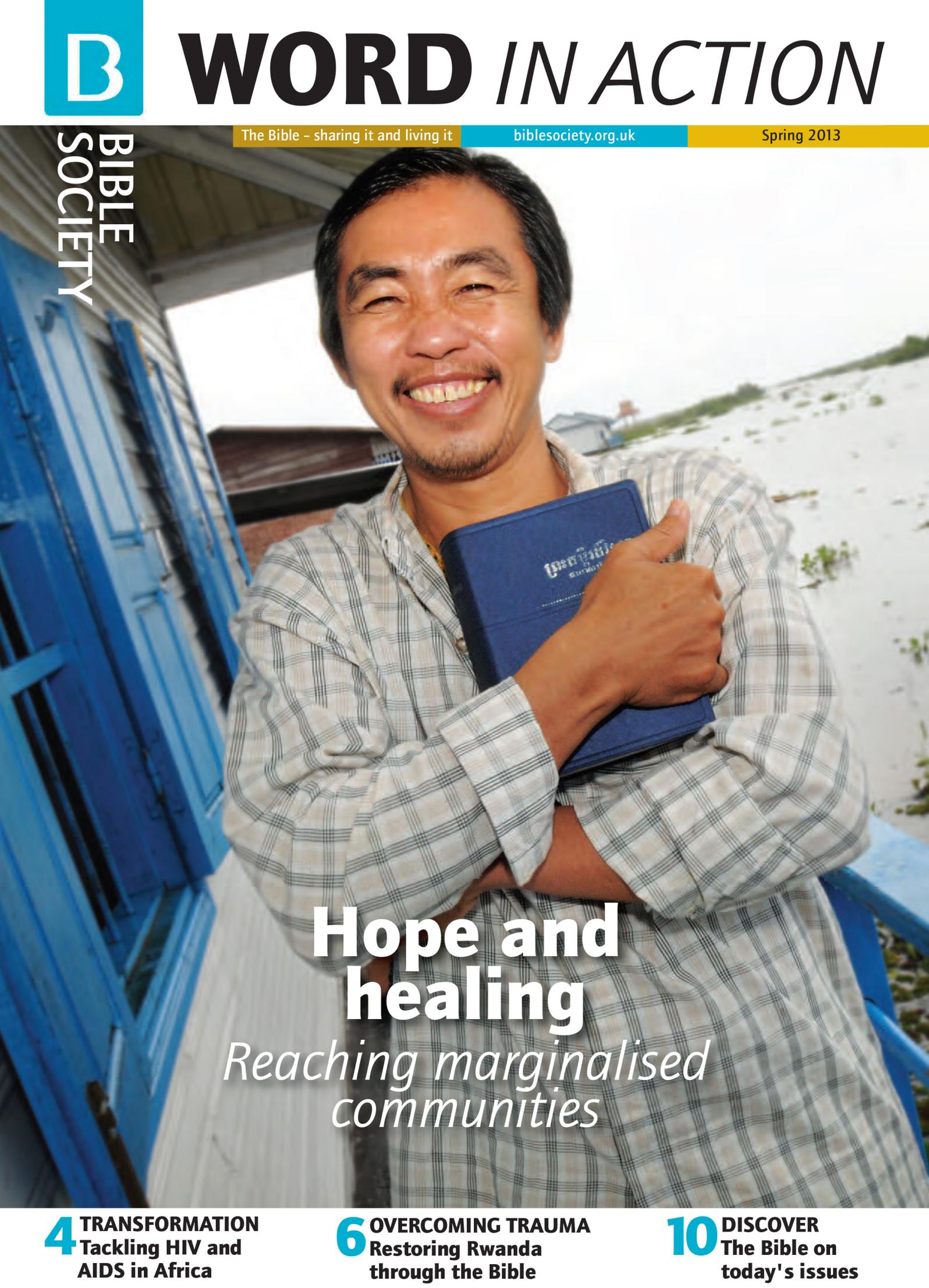
WORD *IN ACTION*

The Bible - sharing it and living it

biblesociety.org.uk

Spring 2013

BIBLE
SOCIETY

A photograph of a middle-aged man with a mustache, smiling warmly. He is wearing a light-colored plaid shirt and holding a blue Bible against his chest. He is standing on a blue metal structure, possibly a balcony or stairs, with a sandy area and some buildings in the background.

Hope and healing

Reaching marginalised communities

4 TRANSFORMATION
Tackling HIV and
AIDS in Africa

6 OVERCOMING TRAUMA
Restoring Rwanda
through the Bible

10 DISCOVER
The Bible on
today's issues



MORE THAN A BOOK

Our best seller *The Poverty and Justice Bible* – is an edition that literally highlights thousands of verses about these scriptural themes, and it's hard to read these verses – full of concern for the poor and passion for justice – and not be challenged or changed by them.

The Bible is 'more than a book'. The Scriptures are 'translated' into people's lives and actions, every day, every hour.

This edition of *Word in Action* is full of vivid demonstrations of this. From communities recovering from genocide in Rwanda to people living homeless on the streets of London, the Scriptures are speaking into even the hardest of circumstances both around the world and here at home.

You'll also see with this issue an important supporter survey. I encourage you to fill this out. We'd love to hear your views, what we could be doing better and helping to further our mission.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support, which make work like this possible, and enables people to encounter the Scriptures.

James Catford Group Chief Executive, Bible Society

Thank you for your support of Bible Society.
Donations to our work worldwide enable us to respond quickly where the needs are greatest. Please use the enclosed response form.



Front cover: Pastor Lim standing on the porch of the church in the 'floating village' of Mechrey, Cambodia.

Photo: Bible Society/Clare Kendall

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CHINA BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Following the success of the initiative in Africa (ABLI), 2012 saw the inaugural China Biblical Leadership Initiative (ChiBLI).

Religious, political and business leaders from China attended the event, which was held in Shanghai, as did senior British politicians. The aim of these events is to gather church and government leaders together to discuss what good society looks like and to consider the place of the Bible in that picture.

This is a really 'hot topic' in China, according to Bible Society's International Programme Manager, David Smith. 'In China, the idea of the Church contributing to society in a practical way is cutting edge, revolutionary,' he said. 'ChiBLI is a great way of showing the contribution both the Church and the Bible can make to China.'

This year's event will be held in Shanghai in October and is set to focus on the Bible and social services, such as schools, hospitals and emergency care.

JAMAICAN LAUNCH

The Jamaican New Testament was launched in Kingston, Jamaica, two months after its publication in the UK. The launch in Jamaica was postponed when Hurricane Sandy swept through the Caribbean causing devastation.

In December the translation was dedicated at a special service at Bethel Baptist Church. Revd Courtney Stewart, General Secretary of Bible Society of the West Indies said, 'It was a wonderful time of rejoicing and celebration as we received the translation of the Word of God in our very own Jamaican.'

The dedication in Jamaica follows a launch at the Jamaican High Commission in London in October. The New Testament is Available both in print form, and

as an MP3 download from our online shop:
shop.biblesociety.org.uk/jnt-wia

QUEEN AND PRIME MINISTER TALK UP FAITH AT CHRISTMAS

Both the Queen and David Cameron talked about the Christian faith and the Bible this Christmas.

The Queen highlighted the great contribution made by volunteers at London 2012. And she added, that Jesus set the example for self-giving. 'This is the time of year when we remember that God sent his only son "to serve, not to be served"', Her Majesty said in her television address. 'He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ. 'It is my prayer...that his example and teaching will continue to bring people together to give the best of themselves in the service of others.'

The Prime Minister's Christmas message also took an unusually religious tone, with David Cameron referring to the Gospel of John, saying that Christ's birth 'brings hope' and that Jesus' life 'was the light of all mankind.

CHRISTIANS CALLED TO TACKLE CORRUPTION

Governments, businesses and churches across the globe are being challenged to expose and tackle corruption. It's claimed that it is one of the major factors in keeping millions of people in poverty worldwide.

Bible Society has joined an international coalition of Christian organisations, called Exposed. Dr Dion Forster, International coordinator of Exposed, claimed that every year over \$1 trillion 'goes missing through mismanagement, illicit business practices and poor governance'. 'It doesn't have to be this way,' he added. Exposed was launched last October at Westminster Central Hall and will culminate in a global vigil

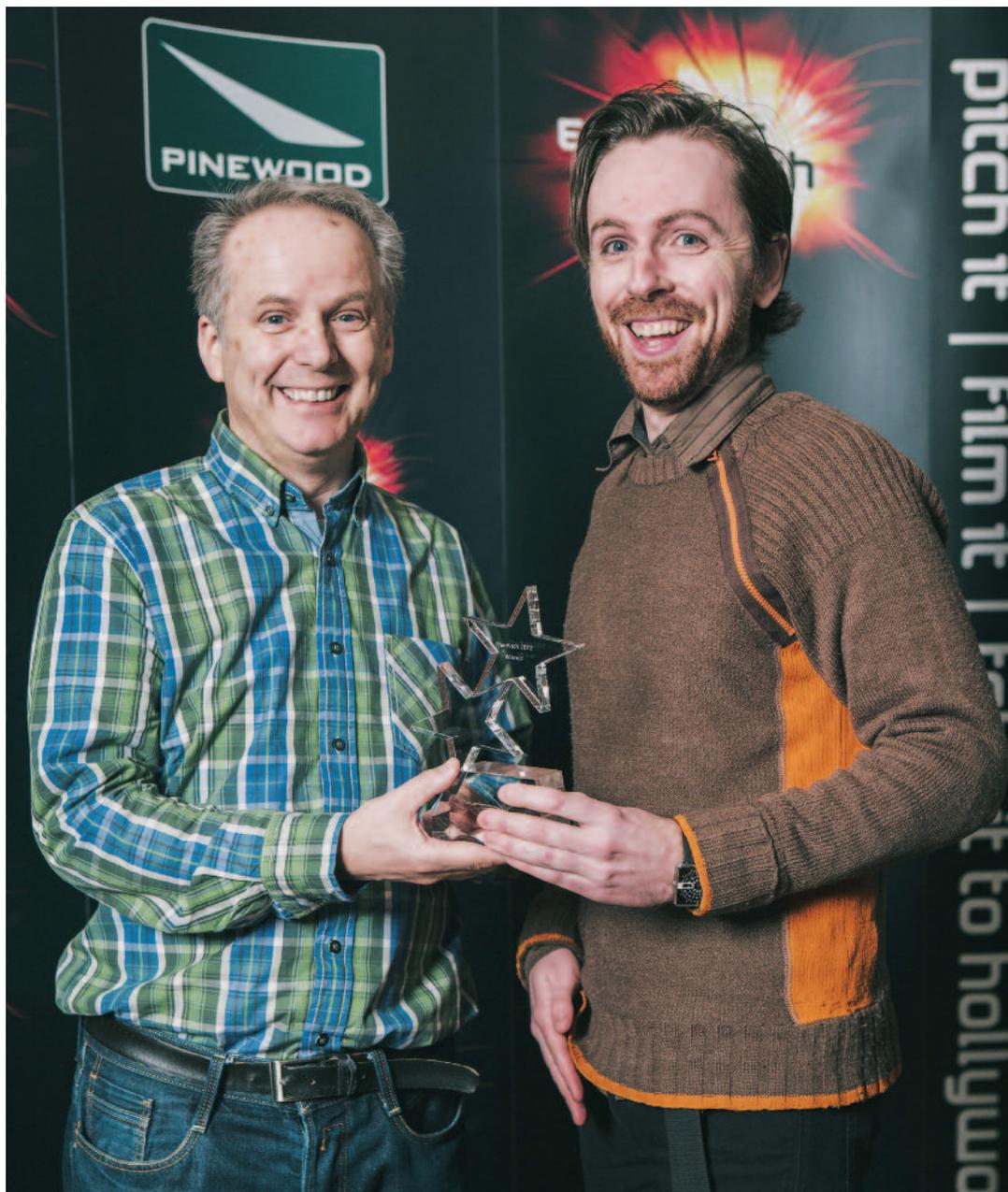
2012 PITCH WINNER ANNOUNCED

Simon Cookson's short film idea 'The Light' was considered the best by a top industry panel including Oscar winning animator Nick Park. Simon's story is based on the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus. It is set in America in the 1950s during the Red Scare era. A police lieutenant rejects his former oppressive ways, but realises the biggest struggle will be to convince everyone else he's truly a changed man.

Presenting Simon with his trophy at Pinewood studios Wallace and Gromit creator Nick Park said, 'this is my fourth year on the jury - the standard of storytelling is going up each year. The Bible is full of interesting characters which is brilliant material to base films on.'

'I'm still in a dream - it feels amazing!' said the winner. 'I adore this story so can't wait now to get to work on developing it further.'

Luke Walton, project director for The Pitch added 'Simon stood out to the judges with his particularly fresh original context. By going back to the McCarthy era in the States I think was a clever way of replaying the story of Paul. He's a talented young man.' You can watch Simon's winning pitch at enterthepitch.com/wia



Simon Cookson, 34, winner of Enter the Pitch film competition with Nick Park (left) one of the judges

against corruption planned for 14-20 October 2013.

MOSES ON YOUR IPAD

A mobile game based on the story of Moses parting the Red Sea is being devised for iPhone and iPad. *Open Sea!*

Developed by Ian Thecleric, scooped the prestigious Best Mobile Action Game award in 2011. The game, which can currently be played on Android tablets and phones, gives people

the chance to save the lives of those attempting to cross the Red Sea. Speaking from his home in Montpellier, France, Ian told Bible Society that he liked the idea of saving lives rather than killing characters.

'It's a story I knew well from childhood. It's so dramatic. I believe that games have an impact on the way people think,' he said. 'Even if it's entertainment, it has an impact, even if it's unconscious.'

Bible Society's Ben Whitnall said, 'It's great to see someone owning a Bible story for themselves, finding that it is just as applicable on modern-day tablets as stone tablets and having some fun with it.' *Open Sea!* will be available on iPhones and iPads soon.

HIGH PROFILE BIBLE

There continues to be a steady stream of high-profile individuals 'doing Bible'. Author Philip Pullman said the Bible was one

of three books everyone should read, pop star Rihanna tweeted Bible verses about temptation and forgiveness. On the big screen, Naomie Harris, star of the latest Bond film *Skyfall*, spoke in an interview about how she was 'obsessed' with the Bible when growing up. And Hollywood A-lister Denzel Washington also told how he reads the Bible every day. Meanwhile, iconic rocker Alice Cooper explained his own conviction, saying 'I believe every word of the Bible.'

Cecilia Mwangatua, 19, was reunited with her family through the Good Samaritan project. Today she helps bring the Good Samaritan message to many more

The p of a p

In Africa the stigma of AIDS is tearing communities apart. But the Bible's words of love, compassion and hope are helping to overcome this. *Hazel Southam reports.*



A role play of the parable The Good Samaritan is played out to a crowd in Kasarika, Malawi

ower arable

The village of Kasarika in southern Malawi was dying on its feet. Some 25 per cent of its population was HIV-positive. The local pastor spent his days burying the dead. He could do more than four funerals a day. 'It was soul-destroying,' he says.

Now, less than three years on, all that's changed. Kasarika is a village with a future. The pastor can go for a month without hearing that anyone's died. And the HIV prevalence rate has been axed, down to 15 per cent.

The extraordinary news is that right at the heart of the change is Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan.

Using this parable, Bible Society has created a whole programme that instils compassion, care and mutual support in communities fractured by fear and ignorance of the virus. Through role-play, group discussion and readings from the Bible, the project teaches basic facts about HIV, blows away myths and crucially shows God's love for those living with the condition. It teaches that they are unique and loved in God's sight, and can know that there is hope in Christ.

The *Good Samaritan* project currently runs in 14 African nations, but it is in Malawi that the most impressive changes are being seen.

Over 365,000 people in the country have heard the *Good Samaritan's* message over the last three years. One of them is Hilda Ntiya, 46, who lives in Kasarika. She heard all of this in 2010 and was 'inspired'. 'I knew I couldn't keep quiet,' she says. 'I wanted to help other people who were suffering.'

In the last two years, she's set up a one-room community centre and orphanage. Some 111 AIDS orphans from Kasarika live there. She's seeing them all through school. Additionally, she feeds 45 AIDS widows and 145 elderly people whose



Cecilia Mwangatua, 19, with her grandparents. Two years on she has completed her studies in tailoring and would like to set up her own business

Just over the border in Tanzania, your support totally changed the life of 19-year-old Cecilia Mwangatua and her family. You may remember we told her story in *Word in Action* Winter 2010.

Aged nine, Cecilia was seriously ill with measles. Her parents both gave blood to save her life. But it was a donation that could ultimately cost her life, as Cecilia's parents were unknowingly living with HIV.

Diagnosed HIV-positive aged just 12, her grandparents shunned her after her parents had died. Forcing her to live in a dimly-lit room alone for three years and banning her from talking to her brothers. 'We thought that through eating and sharing a room with her we

would be infected,' says her grandfather, 73 year-old Yohane Mwangatua Ndahane. It was a wretched experience borne out of ignorance.

But God's love spoke into this situation. In 2007, the local pastor brought Bible Society's *Good Samaritan* project to five churches around the village of Nala. Cecilia was reunited with her family.

'I used to pray that someone would come and talk to my people and help them to understand me,' Cecilia told me two years ago. 'Now we eat together and sleep together. I am happy that the family are all united.'

Today, thanks to your prayers and donations, Cecilia is physically well.

She has completed her studies and is now working. Things at home are still really good. And, because of all of this Cecilia continues to bring the Bible's message of hope and love to others facing HIV in her area. She regularly volunteers with local Bible Society staff, bringing the messages that she learned through the *Good Samaritan* to many hundreds more.

She added, '*Good Samaritan* should continue to reach more people like me. I don't know where my life would have been without it. I am sure there are many young girls who live with the HIV virus just like me and need this programme. Please make enough efforts to ensure you reach them as well and God bless you.'

families have died.

She talks about how the village has transformed thanks to the *Good Samaritan* project. 'Before we started there was a lot of death. There was a lot of promiscuity and that led to a lot of quarrels and disputes. There was a sense of fatalism too,' she recalls. 'Everyone was sleeping with each other and they thought that everyone

was living with HIV and was going to die, so they might as well live like that.

'Now things have changed. People know how to live positively.'

Transformed from fear and bitterness to a community moved by compassion to care for the sick and love the poor, the life-changing message of the Gospel has given this community hope.

Reconciling a nation

How do communities recover from the horrors of genocide? We're working to put the Bible right at the heart of healing nations.

During 100 terrible days in 1994, an estimated one million people were murdered in the East African country of Rwanda. As much as 20 per cent of the population lost their lives in this horrific massacre, the culmination of longstanding tensions between the Tutsi and Hutu people.

The slaughter of Tutsi and some Hutus was extensive. Soldiers and extremist militia hacked their way through villages with machetes and blew up churches where people took refuge. Extremists exploited and manipulated communities to commit unprecedented atrocities.

In July 1994, the government collapsed and a ceasefire was declared. Today, nearly two decades on, individuals and communities still bear the scars of the genocide. But Bible Society in Rwanda is right at the heart of healing those wounds – and is working towards a future where such killings are never repeated.

Reuniting families

In the village of Rwamiko, North Rwanda, 40-year-old Bernard Mbarushimana and his wife Chantal Iryamwiza, 37, share a joke with his sister-in-law Petronille Mukagatsinzi. They've met with their *Faith Comes By Hearing* (FCBH) Bible listening group in the hills where they farm, and have just returned home. The happy scene may not seem unusual. But for 18 years, Bernard and Chantal didn't speak to Petronille or her family – even after the death of her husband, Bernard's brother. Bernard doesn't say exactly what happened, but the fall-out tracks back to the chaotic aftermath of the genocide...

'Many people were stirring and



Farmers in the Rwamiko village take a break and join their FCBH Bible listening group

spreading rumours,' he said. 'We got married with this conflict between us and didn't even go to each other's weddings. We couldn't stand to be in the same room.

'But then we listened to Matthew chapter 7 at our FCBH group, that no person may judge others and that we must first remove the log in our own eye. Now we have taken the time to understand one another and forgive each other. We have reconciled our differences and today we are living in peace and share everything. We are here together, and testify to the work God has done in our lives.'

As Bernard talks, the two women share a giggle and a hug. Their story is remarkable – but not exceptional. Bible

Society in Rwanda is working to promote the Bible across 16 areas of the country. In the area of Rwamiko alone, 20 new *Faith Comes By Hearing*

Chantal and Petronille embrace as sisters after 18 years of feuding



: the Bible in Rwanda



Photo: Bible Society/Olivia Styles

groups were launched last year, and lives are being changed as people encounter words in Scripture about forgiveness and healing.

David Nkurunziza, who is managing the listening group expansion, said, 'We are using *FCBH* to bring communities together to learn about the Bible and apply it to their lives. We want people to work through reconciliation so we can learn from what happened in 1994 and become a nation based on the Bible.'

Looking forward

He and his colleagues are also taking a long-term look at what it means to create a 'nation based on the Bible'. They've developed an ambitious, strategic project, which provides special Bible training to high-flying university students who are expected to become the politicians, businessmen and civic leaders of tomorrow. Called *Developing Future Leaders*, it's all about investing heavily in a generation which will shape Rwanda's future.

Michael Gasare, who runs the programme, grew up as a refugee when his family fled Rwanda before

The Bible is not a book for Sundays. It is a tool which teaches about the entire person

1994. Michael lost family in the genocide, he said, 'even now, the scars of the genocide remain. It's still there and everybody feels it.

'We hope to raise up a generation that will not take revenge, and will not kill. We need to raise a generation of peace, reconciliation, with a spirit of protecting one another. When you are transformed by the Word of God, you have the eyes to see the value of humanity. The younger generation has this responsibility. We need to help them live in harmony and ensure that genocide never takes place again here or anywhere else.'

As Rwanda begins to work towards a new future, enjoying economic prosperity while not forgetting the horrors of the past, Bible Society of Rwanda is playing a critical role in offering up God's Word as the foundation for change. Projects, from

FCBH to Scripture distribution to biblical training with future leaders, all interlock to create a solid base for people to find hope and healing in the Bible.

For Emmanuel Kayijuka, General Secretary of the Bible Society of Rwanda, the Bible was central to helping him through his own experience of the genocide. Now, he says, 'The Bible is not a book for Sundays. It is a tool which teaches about the entire person – the body, the soul and the spirit.

'Our aim is to convince people to have the Bible, secondly to read it and third, to be transformed by it. It is what we are teaching through everything: that the Word of God teaches us a new way to be a Christian. Not just to be a church member, but to be a disciple of Jesus Christ ready to sacrifice for other people.'

• **Claire Smith** is a freelance journalist working for Bible Society

Lifting a nation **out** the Bible in Cam

Your support is providing Scripture for some of the poorest people in Cambodia – and it's having a profound impact.

Balanced on floating rafts made of bamboo poles, 200 or so wooden homes hug the sides of the flooded river.

At the entrance to the 'floating village' of Mechrey in Cambodia, four wooden buildings perch on the water to form the classrooms of the local primary school.

Children begin to arrive at the school veranda. Travelling together in wooden canoes, they've been from home to home to pick up classmates. Now they tie their canoes to the planks and leap into class for the 11 am bell.

While all this activity is going on, there's a hum of excitement nearby. At least 15 boats are arriving, carrying mothers, grandmothers, toddlers and babies to the church next door: another white-washed one-storey building that gently floats on its bamboo platform.

Pastor Lim is excited. Bible Society of Cambodia is bringing a long-awaited delivery of Bibles to his church.

'A lot of people here don't have Bibles,' he tells us. 'And the service once a week is not enough for them to know God. When they have a Bible, they can know more, and they can reflect on what I have been teaching them.'

'If you don't have a Bible, you don't have a strong faith in God,' added Pastor Lim. 'We eat food every day. Reading the Bible is spiritual food that you must have every day.'

Overcoming challenges

There are two major factors that stop people reading Scripture in a place like Mechrey – and Bible Society in Cambodia is addressing both.

First, families live in desperate poverty, and without your help would have almost no hope of owning a Bible. The poorest of the poor – not even able to own land – they endure a hand-to-mouth existence, as they try to make a living through fishing.

Second, 90 per cent of people in the village can't read. The problem stems back to the 1970s when the Khmer Rouge regime killed nearly 2 million people, particularly targeting educated people. They destroyed schools and murdered teachers. Today many Cambodians still lack the opportunity to learn to read and write.

Church warden La Heng is one of the



La Heng leads a literacy class at the church in the floating village of Mechrey, Cambodia

Act!

Look out for our *Cambodia fundraising pack and appeal in April. Help give more Bibles to Christians like Sarout.*

Order your pack at biblesociety.org.uk/cambodia2013-wia

of poverty: mbodia

fortunate few who have been able to go to school, and as a result she's taken up the role of leading the Bible Society literacy class in the village – a programme which runs alongside the Bible distribution.

She also received a Bible a year ago –

The Bible has taught me how to trust God and how to pray

and it's made a significant difference. 'Before, when I faced a problem with not having enough money, I used to be scared. I didn't know what to do. But the Bible tells me to trust God.'

La Heng hopes her students will also start to trust God as they begin to read Scripture for themselves. But she also sees wider benefits as people learn to read and write – and this too is bringing transformation to the community.

'The literacy class is very important, so people will know how to calculate the amount they should be paid for fish, and how to talk to their family so there isn't any violence,' she said.

Pastor Lim added, 'If people don't know how to read, sometimes it's easy for other people to cheat them. When they can read, it will help them earn a living. But the most important thing is

Photo: Bible Society/Ed Powell



Sarout, 31, is looking forward to attending a literacy class

for them to read the Bible. I want them to understand more about God'.

Bibles and literacy

Bible Society in Cambodia has worked with Pastor Lim to run a literacy course at the church, and thanks to daily lessons over a period of three months, 20 women can now read.

More women are about to follow in their footsteps. As 31-year old mum, Sarout, waited for the Bible distribution ceremony to begin, she spoke of her need for both a Bible and literacy.

'I came to the church twice yesterday, thinking that was when the Bibles were coming! I am so happy about getting a Bible,' she said. 'I cannot read yet, so my husband will have to read it to me for now. But I hope to go to the new literacy course that's about to start, so I can read it for myself.'

'When I was a child, I grew up in a rural area that didn't have a school. We only moved here 13 years ago, because my mother decided to come here and try to earn a living by fishing.'

The joy that the women feel about having a Bible of their own – and their eager anticipation of how literacy will change their lives – is tangible.

Life here could easily be overwhelmed by poverty and hopelessness. But, thanks to your support, God's Word is shining its light in the darkness. The families of Mechrey are learning how to share one another's burdens, trust in God's faithfulness and hope for a brighter future.

• **Lorraine Kingsley** is a freelance journalist working for Bible Society

Photo: Bible Society/Claire Kendall



Word on the Street

How do we discover what the Bible has to say about today's issues? *Mike Simmonds* takes a look at homelessness

The early autumn sunshine isn't reaching the pavement of Victoria Street where 40-year-old Mark Alder sits. He's wrapped in a blue sleeping bag, wearing a thick black jumper and a stripy hat. People are streaming past him as if he's invisible.

'People think that if you're homeless it's your fault,' Mark says. 'And it's true that there are some people who get into drink and drugs and all that and end up making themselves homeless. But it also just happens to some people'.

Until April last year Mark was living with his girlfriend in Newcastle. Then the relationship turned sour and he found himself packing a bag and leaving. 'I wanted to get away and start afresh,' he says. Instead, he found himself in London's busy Victoria station at 6pm with nowhere to go. He's slept rough ever since.

Mark carries two large bags that are mostly full of bedding. But deep in one bag is his Bible. He was given it a few months ago and reads it eight hours a day. He's on his 14th read through.

'The thing that sticks out to us is how much of a nice bloke Jesus was. That's the only way I can put it, nothing was a bother to him. I would like to be like that.' Reading the Bible he says, 'gives us peace, it gives us solace; it gives us something to believe in. I like what I'm reading.'

You can imagine why that might be. Right at the start of his teaching Jesus, quoting the prophet Isaiah, claimed:

'The Lord's Spirit has come to me, because he has chosen me to tell the good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to free everyone who suffers.' Luke 4.18 (CEV)

This is just one of the verses highlighted in *The Poverty and Justice Bible*, which picks out more than 2,000 passages revealing the heart of God for the poor. As U2's lead singer, Bono says 'That's a lot of airtime'. How then do you and your church respond to someone like Mark? Just another homeless man? A problem in which we're helpless?

With some 400,000+ 'hidden homeless' without a place to call their own, most people know someone who has been affected. And we've all seen people like Mark.

Participants in our course, *h+ Making Good Sense of the Bible*, spend a session exploring what the Bible might say about this emotive subject.

Homelessness is not easy to find in the Bible. Jesus did say: 'Foxes



Mark Alder encountered the Bible while living on the street

PhotoBible Society/Clare Kendall

have dens, and birds have nests. But the Son of Man doesn't have a place to call his own.' Matthew 8.20 (CEV) – and there are plenty of stories about people 'on the road'. But there are few obvious or direct references to our contemporary concern. In fact a Bible search reveals possible 'texts,' but the context of each makes it uncertain that they apply to someone sleeping rough or crashing on a friend's couch.

Making good sense of the Bible is not about finding a 'proof text' that answers your questions on a modern issue. If it were, the Bible would be sadly lacking. Rather, seeking to discover a theme that runs through Scripture provides a lens through which to reach an understanding.

Placing the causes of homelessness, such as relationship breakdown, eviction, unemployment and mental health issues, alongside God's clear concern for the poor, it is not hard to see the parallels. You begin to recognise how Christians might respond in today's world.

Understanding what these Bible verses meant to their original readers (more likely hearers) and how to interpret them in 2013 can be challenging and compelling. Dr Helen Cameron, Public Affairs Officer for the Salvation Army, said that after doing the h+ session on homelessness, her church paused to take stock of their own response to the issue.

In the meantime, Mark has found a place in a London hostel and is looking to rebuild his life. If you are able to help Mark with a job opportunity please email us at: helpmark@biblesociety.org.uk

• **Mike Simmonds** is an h+ Making Good Sense of the Bible consultant working for Bible Society

This activity will only take a few minutes and will give you an insight into h+ and help you to begin exploring how to make better sense of what the Bible says about today's issues.

'I'll tell you what it really means to worship the lord. Remove the chains of prisoners who are chained unjustly. Free those who are abused! Share your food with everyone who is hungry; share your home with the poor and homeless. Give clothes to those in need...' Isaiah 58.6-7 (CEV)

This verse appears to be a direct challenge from God via the prophet to his hearers/readers about homelessness and other related issues. Take a moment to:

1 Look behind the text

Find out some *historical information* around Isaiah 58 (e.g. in a print or online Bible commentary, study Bible or Bible lexicon). See how this helps you better understand the passage.

2 Look within the text

Read the whole chapter (Isaiah 58) and then look at the verses above (6-7) in their *context*. What does 'true fasting' mean?

3 Look in front of the text

How should we interpret verses 6-7 *in our culture*, where the State is responsible for many issues of social justice?

Behind/within/in front of the text

By looking at the Isaiah passage from these three angles (behind/within/in front of the text), you've just applied a key principle of biblical interpretation.

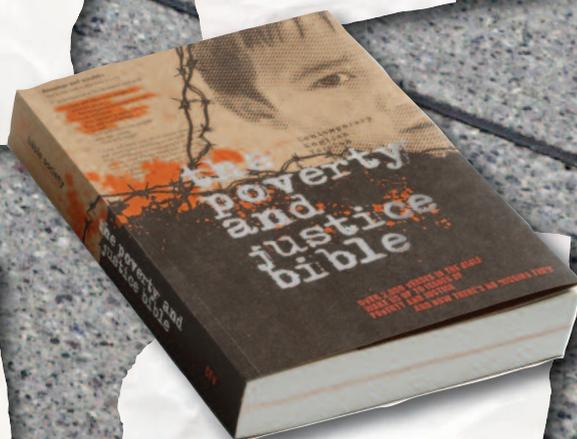
h+ *Making Good Sense of the Bible* is a 10-session programme to help you interpret the Scriptures. To run an *h+* course in your church a potential facilitator needs to attend a training day:

28 February, Warwick

25 April, Dawlish, Devon

2 April, Colchester, Essex

Visit hplus.org.uk/wia for more training dates later in the year.



The Poverty and Justice Bible is available for £12.99 from our online shop: shop.biblesociety.org.uk/wia

Supporting refugees

Your response to our Syria emergency appeal last year was overwhelming. Fundraising Officer *Naomi Buckler* visited Jordan to see the difference your gifts are making.



Photo: Bible Society / Naomi Buckler

Faraj Ali Khalifa with his family receive essential supplies from the local church thanks to your support

In a tiny house with just two bare rooms, I am sitting cross-legged on a mattress and listening to Faraj's story.

Faraj is a friendly, open man and as his youngest children crawl around him it's clear he is a doting father who loves his family. He fled Syria to escape the conflict engulfing his country. And his story is not unusual in this Jordanian border town.

Faraj Ali Khalifa, 43, was forced to leave his wife and six children in search of urgent medical treatment. He feared the army would capture his family to bring him back to Syria, so they were constantly hiding, moving from house to house. After several failed attempts, Faraj finally smuggled them over the border in March last year.

Now, this former art teacher, his wife Seham and their six children aged 12 and under, live in a sparse apartment - but Faraj is grateful to have his family, his life and his freedom.

Thanks to the support of people like you, he has received essential supplies and food parcels every week.

The Lord sent you to me.

Faraj told me he met Pastor Nour, from the local church, on the day he arrived in Mafraq - and Pastor Nour helped him straight away. The church provides basic needs and food packages through weekly visits, as well as spiritual support. 'When I first came to this house there was spiritual sadness,' Faraj says, 'but Pastor Nour prayed and the sadness left.'

The fact that Christians helped the family has had a profound impact on Faraj, who told me, 'I changed and became loving of Christians when I saw that they are honest. Now I know Jesus more. The Lord sent you to me.'

Life is still extremely hard. Faraj has no work. The family go for almost a month with rice, and no meat. They wash clothes by hand and children's education is basic.

However Faraj has not given up hope. He asked me to pass on this message to supporters like you who gave generously to our appeal: 'I thank you and I thank God for you. You help many - not

just me, but many Syrians.'

Faraj is among thousands who ended up in Mafraq, a town in the desert on the border between Jordan and Syria.

Only a few kilometres south of the rebel town Dira'a where the uprising started, Mafraq is currently swollen with an estimated 215,000 refugees. Often, four families will share one apartment. I was told people are 'renting anything with a cover' - such is the desperate need for housing. Every day another 200-300 people come over the border.

There are now over 1,000 families registered with the Alliance Church in Mafraq. Your support has helped Bible Society in Jordan equip the church so they can offer practical help and spiritual support to these refugees.

Before we leave Faraj and his family, we gather together and pray. The oldest girl asks for a book of Bible stories. We give her a copy and as we drive away she clasps them happily to her chest, waving to us as we leave.

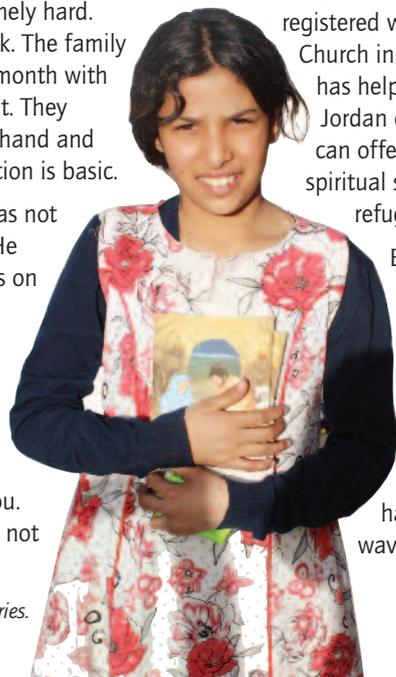


photo: Bible Society / Naomi Buckler

Faraj's daughter clutches her new book of Bible stories.

Inspire your church

BIBLE SOCIETY'S team of volunteer speakers are ready to visit churches around the country to give talks about how your support is changing lives. To book a visit, call us today.

Brenda Piper is a volunteer speaker for churches in the South East region. A member of a local community church – she loves

volunteering and sharing her passion for the Bible.

'Being a volunteer speaker for Bible Society is a great opportunity to share the wonderful power of God's Word,' said Brenda. 'Over the past decade, I've had the privilege of visiting China and Ethiopia, and seen the tremendous impact the Bible has in liberating and transforming countless lives.'

Brenda recently visited St Peter's Church in Woodmansterne, Surrey and rector Mick Hough said, 'Brenda's talk perfectly suited the mixed age congregation at St Peter's. She outlined the great need for Bibles to be provided to Christians in countries where the church is growing – and told stories of the joy that it brings.'



If you would like to invite a speaker to your church, find out more about local Action Groups, or if you have a story to tell, please call us on 01793 418222 or email contactus@biblesociety.org.uk



The Cardiff Ladies' Action Group meet for a social

Action groups need you!

WE HAVE Action Groups all over the country and new members are always welcome. Perhaps you'd like to join one?

These teams of volunteers and fundraisers do a vital job in rallying support, organising events and raising the profile of this amazing mission we share, to bring the Bible to people around the world. At the top of the agenda for many groups is to have fun and enjoy each other's company.

Mair Morgan, 66, is secretary for the Cardiff Ladies' Action Group, and has been a member for 15 years. 'There are 15 of us involved, from nine churches.

The youngest are in their 50s and the oldest, Nansi, is 92 – she's been an Action Group member for 40 years!' said Mair. 'I enjoy being part of the group. They are a lovely bunch, very sociable and friendly.'

The Cardiff group meets twice a year and holds two main fundraising events – sometimes a coffee morning, sometimes a choral concert, and every autumn an evening service and coffee. All this helps raise around £2,000 a year

to provide people with Scripture.

'You get a lot of satisfaction from being a member of an Action Group,' said Mair. 'Some people might think they have to commit to lots of meetings, but we raise plenty of money and only have two meetings! I have made some good friends and got to know people better. We have a lovely time.'

There are over 200 Action Groups in England and Wales – and there's one just waiting for you to get in touch.

Congratulations to many of our Action Groups who are celebrating their bicentenaries. What an achievement! If you're part of an Action Group that is celebrating your bicentenary, we'd love to hear your story.

Make time this Lent

LISTEN TO THE whole New Testament in 40 days this Lent, with our free dramatised audio recording by Riding Lights Theatre Company – available to download now. *You've Got the time* (YGTT) is a Bible listening programme which involves downloading half-hour recordings over 40 days of Lent. There's a listening plan to go with it, and a discussion guide for your home group if you intend to do this as a group.

Last year, hundreds of supporters

like you took part – and your feedback suggested it was inspiring, challenging and even life-changing. One family told us they listened together after tea. Teacher Sandra Webster listened with her class during snack time, and Raymond Adams, vicar of St John's Church in Haydon Wick, Swindon, said, 'YGTT has raised the spiritual temperature in our church.' Many people said it was the ideal way to bring the Bible back into the busyness of everyday life.

With Lent just around the corner it's not too late to download YGTT and the 40-day listening plan. Visit biblesociety.org.uk/yggt-wia





In our last issue of Word in Action, we asked for your thoughts and comments. Here's what you told us...

SHARING GOOD NEWS

Dear Bible Society

Thank you for the stickers. I always enjoy sharing the Good News and I think the stickers may just remind some folk what the origin of our happy time at Christmas is.

Ruth, Bristol

JAMAICAN TRANSLATION...

Dear Bible Society

It was especially good to read the story Child of Bethlehem and glad to see in the press about the Bible's translation into Jamaican Patois.

Gillian, South Yorkshire

...ON THE AIR

Dear Bible Society

It was great to hear Revd Courtney Stewart read the Lord's Prayer in Jamaican Patois on the radio. I had read about the translation in *Word in Action*.

Monica, Calne

Editor's response

We're thrilled with such a positive response to the launch of the Jamaican New Testament, which is now available both in print form, and as an MP3 download. You can buy a copy of the Jamaican New Testament from our online shop: shop.biblesociety.org.uk/jnt-wia

WONDERFUL ARTWORK

Dear Bible Society,

I have just received the Bible Society calendar for 2013 and it is BEAUTIFUL. I am thrilled and inspired by the wonderful artwork, needlework, the colours, the textures... wonderful creations extending God's creation. I also like the format for the Advent calendar this year - great! I feel inspired to carry on faithfully seeking to bring God's Word to all people.

Gill, Exeter

DISMAYED

Dear Bible Society

I express my dismay that you are spending precious funds donated to bring the Scriptures to a needy world on a calendar and advent stickers and a postcard. You must have allocated quite a budget to it. We believe in your ministry but we have to be good stewards of what the Lord has given us.

David, Rochford

Editor's response

Thank you to everyone who sent feedback about the calendar, which was overwhelmingly positive. Please be assured we carefully consider and try to spend every penny wisely. The calendar cost 14p to print, which was less than last years' calendar. We think this is excellent value, and many of you have told us how much

you appreciate Sue Symons' tapestries and the prayer reminders for the various Bible Society projects at home and around the world.

VIEW THE PITCH

Dear Bible Society

The Pitch is such a good idea. Is it possible to view them anywhere?

Maureen, Worcester

Editor's response

Thanks to everyone's comments about The Pitch film competition. You can now watch the finalists entries on our website at enterthepitch.com/finalists-wia

OLYMPIC BIBLES

Dear Bible Society

I'm so glad to read about the work in the interfaith room, and the donation of Bibles at the Olympic village.

Margaret, Bath

PASSIONATE SUPPORT

Dear Bible Society

Can you believe it? I can beat 60 years. I have supported Bible Society since the 1940s. I have no computer but I still write and paint. My joints are full of osteo-arthritis and I have a heart condition but I am still very active in my prayer and support my local church. I am a member of a local Methodist Church and have always been a representative in all my churches when I have travelled the world!

Betty, Christchurch

Editor's response

Congratulations Betty, and thank you for letting us know. We love to hear stories from you about your passion and commitment to sharing the Bible. It's so encouraging.



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Bible Society

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ΩΗΝΑΙΩΝΙΟΝ

We recently posted this text on our facebook page and asked if anyone recognised it.

Here are some of your responses...

James

I know I should recognise it – but just now it is all Greek to me.

Lornie

It's Greek, probably Katharevousa and speaks of His only begotten Son but I don't recognise the verse.

Chris

I don't think it's long enough to be the Lord's Prayer.

Tressy

It's Greek. The second line includes the word Theos. It's not the Lord's Prayer, that starts with Pater.

Darren

It's the eye chart from my opticians!

Thanks for all your responses and well done to everyone who said John 3.16. This is the original Greek rendering of that verse – which, as you can see, has no spaces or punctuation.

Come and join the debate on facebook and Twitter. Search for Bible Society – and we'll see you there.

Please send us your feedback. We love to hear your thoughts and comments, particularly on stories or features in *Word in Action*.

Email us 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.

Quotes



Prince of Peace

'Indeed God's Word reminds us that Jesus was the Prince of Peace'

PM David Cameron – Christmas speech (bbc.co.uk/news)



Photo: Heathcliff O'Malley / Rex features

Love and service

'This is the time of year when we remember that God sent his only son 'to serve, not to be served'

HM The Queen
Bible Society Patron (mirror.co.uk/news)

One verse

Perseverance and faith

'For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.' Hebrews 10.36 (ESV)

My grandparents gave me a postcard with this verse on when I was going through a tough time in my life. I keep it in my wallet and occasionally take it out to remind myself of God's big promises. It also makes me smile as I remember the faith and phenomenal perseverance and love my grandparents showed, especially in the really difficult last years of their lives.

Believing that God is good and his will for us is for our benefit (however confusing that can sometimes be) encourages me to keep reading the Bible and seeking his guidance. I am also encouraged

Bible people

God with us

Just 300 metres from the former government soldiers position, Pastor Emmanuel Kayijuka and his family and colleagues hid in a house praying for the genocide to end.

It was 1994 in Rwanda, and ethnic tensions had erupted.

At Emmanuel's home, vegetables in the garden were harvested and buckets under the roof caught rainwater. 'There were some days we were unable to collect water,' says Emmanuel, 'but when we finished the water we had collected, the rain would come again. It was a miracle how the rain came at the right time. Each evening we harvested the food and in the morning there was always more.'

Back in 1970, when



Pastor Emmanuel Kayijuka

Emmanuel first gave his life to Jesus, he knew he wanted to serve others. During his time working in a bank, Emmanuel was given the Scripture, Isaiah 30.15. 'It helped me understand my life doesn't depend on money,' he said. 'My life depends on God, who is able to change any situation for his good and for his glory.'

Emmanuel re-trained to

become a pastor and, when the genocide came, his faith helped him survive. Every day he read the Bible and it encouraged him to know that God was with him.

Today, as General Secretary of Bible Society of Rwanda, Emmanuel's passion for seeing others transformed by the Bible is fuelled by his own experience of God's living Word. Many of their projects help bring reconciliation to families and communities, and to teach biblical leadership.

'Our vision is that every Rwandan will consider the word of God,' says Emmanuel. 'It teaches us a new way to be a Christian. Not just a church member, but to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.'

Tim Bassford



that there are plenty of biblical characters who fell outside of what we would see as God's perfect will for them but because of their perseverance and God's amazing grace they were still massively blessed!

I have just come back from an incredible trip to Hollywood as part of Bible Society's *The Pitch* film competition prize. I got to hang out with inspirational guys like Ralph Winter (producer of the *X-Men* movies) and David Oyelowo (*Last King of Scotland*, *Rise*

of the Planet of The Apes) who have founded their lives on the importance of seeking God's will.

Inspired, I'm continuing to try and live within God's will with perseverance and faith. This can sometimes feel like the hardest way to live life, but conversely when those two things combine I believe that's where God often releases some of His most amazing blessings.

• **Tim Bassford** is the 2011 winner of *The Pitch*, watch his pitch, *The Black Scholes Conspiracy*, at enterthepitch.com/past-entries-wia

'I can't thank you enough'

Your legacy gifts will change lives forever

(An open letter from James Catford, Group Chief Executive)

Dear Bible Society supporters

I'm astounded by your response to my request last summer to remember us in your wills. I can't thank you enough. By leaving a legacy to Bible Society your love for the Word of God will endure in future generations.

A single Bible can change a life, which can change a family, which can change a community, which can change a nation.

When I went to see the distribution of the Bible in a village just a few hours from Nanjing in China, **I remember watching an elderly woman literally sing out for joy as she clutched her Bible in her arms.** It's a moment I'll never forget.

Bible Society has accomplished a lot in its 200-year history. We've translated the life-giving scriptures into 2,000 languages. Yet there are still 4,400 people groups without a Bible in their own language.

There's so much left to be done. And yet with your generous support, our vital work will continue. A heartfelt thanks to all of you who have remembered us in your will. I pray many more will join you in this great work of giving.



James Catford
Group Chief Executive

PS If you'd like to join others who've added a gift to Bible Society in their will, we'd love to talk to you. **Call Claire Routley on 01793 418222.**

Share your passion for the Scriptures. Leave a legacy to Bible Society.