



BIBLE FOR LIFE

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China: Literacy at Last

Feng Guimei was born in 1956 in rural China, into a poor family with many siblings. She never learnt to read and write. Sadly, her story is not unfamiliar, even in 2021. A high percentage of Christians living in rural areas are illiterate or semi-literate.

Recently, Guimei's story has changed. She heard that her church was starting literacy classes and immediately grasped the

opportunity to sign up. She also signed up her young granddaughter, Zhao Ying.

Now, grandmother and granddaughter are learning, side by side, from the Bible. Zhao Ying says, "My grandma is old, and she can't remember a lot of things, but I help her recall each lesson and revise with her at home." Zhao Ying also listens to the teacher read Bible stories.

"I know more about the Bible now than ever before. I'm enjoying coming to these classes more and more because I can feel the love, care and peace here!"

With your support, older generations have been given a fresh chance to learn literacy skills, and their families are given an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the Christian faith through reading the Bible.

Pitjantjatjara Bible Project: Preserving the Heart

For 4000 Australians, the language that speaks to their heart is Pitjantjatjara. With your support, the Pitjantjatjara Bible Project is providing access to God's word for these thousands of people in Central Australia.

Heart languages like Pitjantjatjara are crucial for communicating important concepts to people's hearts. Tragically, many Indigenous Australian languages are rapidly disappearing. Translation projects like this are preserving languages, ensuring that future generations can speak the language of their parents and grandparents.

Twenty local translators are making rapid progress with the translation of the Old Testament, which is just under 20% completely translated, while the majority of the remaining 80% is in the early stages of translation. This will eventually be published before accompanying the New Testament which is completely translated and published.

Anne Jack, who is one of the Pitjantjatjara Bible translators, recounts how the first missionaries learnt their language, and helped their grandparents translate Bible stories. She, in turn, learnt those stories from her grandparents, and grew up with a knowledge of God's kindness, love and

power. She says, "Now we are translating the rest of those stories for our children and grandchildren, to teach them about God so they will know and follow him."



Cameroon: A Source from which Blessings Flow

Those who live in the Podoko and Mafa villages in the mountainous areas of far-north Cameroon are close to the Nigerian border. This leaves the villages vulnerable to violent raids and the plundering of the little livestock and food they have.

Yet, with your support this year, Bible Society is empowering the church in Cameroon to reassure the people, to encourage them to trust God and dig deep into his life-giving word.

The literacy project being run for these language groups aims to raise awareness and educate the people through Scripture. As well as learning literacy skills, they learn to think like entrepreneurs and learn how to diversify their income.

"I could neither read nor write, nothing! Now I read, I calculate, I write," Emmanuel* declares.

*Name changed to protect his identity.

"I am already a source of blessing to others today. Every evening, we get together with my family and my neighbours. I read the Bible in Mafa, I explain it and we pray together. There is a big change in my life on all levels."

This year, Bible Society plans to train 42 new teachers and launch 104 new literacy classes.

Ghana: A Dream Fulfilled

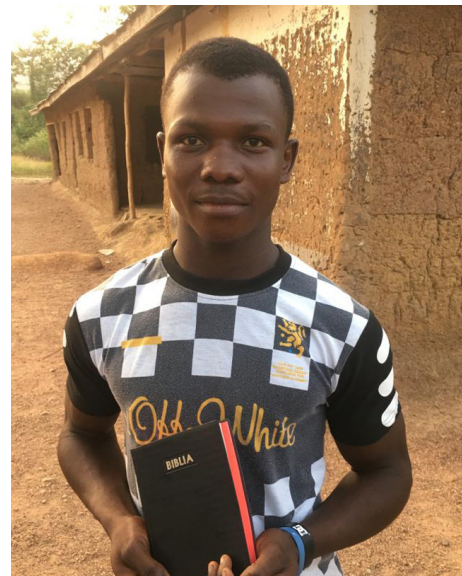
The battle for literacy in a country is fought on many fronts. Ghana has about 50 indigenous languages, and the country has prioritised education and the eradication of illiteracy. Yet illiteracy remains pervasive. Some drop out of school before acquiring literacy skills; in other cases, children never have the opportunity to attend school at all.

Stephen is one such as this. Due to poverty and isolation, the 26-year-old never went to school, although he dreamed of being able to read. As an adult, he could not even read the Bible in his own language which he had bought. He says, "I decided to quit church to end (my) frustration."

Then, Stephen's friend introduced him to a literacy class started in a church near his village. "This was like a dream," Stephen says. "I never thought there was any possibility to (learn to) read and write."

With your support, Bible Society is running a program in Ghana which seeks to assist over one million non-literate people in 10 languages. Now Stephen reads the Bible in services at his church and encourages others to enrol in the literacy classes.

He has a new dream: "My dream is to be a literacy teacher in my class."



Vietnam: Love, Life and Literacy

Hang Thi Plong, 25 years old, belongs to a minority ethnic group living in the mountains of Vietnam, among a people who are among the last to receive the gift of literacy in the country. Plong's inability to read touched every part of her life: she desperately wanted to help her husband and children, but could not, even with her husband's efforts to teach her.

Then, thanks to your support, she had the opportunity to attend Bible Society's literacy classes. Her desire to learn was so strong that she overcame many difficulties, including her severe shyness.

Within half a year, Plong's life changed dramatically. She reads, she writes. She helps her husband in his role as church treasurer. She helps her children with their homework. Best of all, she reads the Bible for herself, a special goal she held.

Plong's journey towards literacy touched every part of her life. She says, "Going to class with my husband (was) like a date for me... (the work) draws us closer to each another. It does not only help me to get closer to God, but also to my husband. This is the best special time in my life."



Lebanon: Education Despite Conflict

Ongoing conflict has many repercussions. For the Syrian and Iraqi youth finding refuge in Lebanon, one byproduct of war is the loss of their education. The challenge of integrating the refugee youth into Lebanese schools is huge, with social, linguistic, economic and bureaucratic obstacles in the way. It has been estimated that nearly half of the 500,000 school-aged Syrian children registered in Lebanon are not enrolled in formal education.

Bible Society, with your help, is seeking to change this by providing these children with a safe environment and a literacy course based on Bible stories, to help them get back into the formal education system.

11-year-old Siham* finds the Bible stories the program uses fascinating, which helps her focus on the literacy lesson. Siham can't wait to pass on these stories at home. "I feel that I cannot keep the stories to myself," she says, "so I share them with my family. I even saw once my dad listening to the Bible story I was telling. His look was full of interest! A kind of look that I rarely see." Another student, eight-year-old Samir*, says, "I now have the opportunity not only to learn how to read and write but to also know more about Jesus. I want to be a doctor when I grow up. I want to help others and heal them like he did."

*Names changed to protect their identities.