

GOD'S WORD WHERE NEEDED MOST

Record

SPRING 2017

CHINA'S SPIRITUAL HARVEST

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to Life in Rwanda

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Leaning into the Promises of God



Dear Friends,

Every Lenten season, I am moved once again by the promises of Christ's death and resurrection contained in the Old Testament. One of my favorite descriptions of Christ's sacrificial love is found in Isaiah 53:5 (GNT): "Because of

our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received."

This Old Testament promise took on new meaning for me when I visited rural China this past fall. During our trip, Rita and I sat with the East Lisu people as they heard the book of Isaiah read in their heart language for the first time.

I'll never forget their reaction.

The people smiled from ear-to-ear and leaned forward on the edges of their seats as God's promises came to life in the language of their hearts. They couldn't wait to hear how much God loved them in their own language.

This life-changing encounter with God's Word was made possible by you, our prayer and financial partners. As you'll read in this issue of *Record*, your faithful support helped a team of East Lisu believers translate the entire Bible for their people. I'm pleased to report firsthand that God's Word is bearing much fruit in rural China thanks to your generous partnership.

You are also helping spread the love of Christ in Rwanda, where the End-to-End partnership is bringing the Bible to life for non-readers through Scripture listening groups. People are rallying around God's Word in our own country as well. A new method of Scripture engagement in Charlotte, N.C., helps skeptics read and ask honest questions about the Bible.

None of these ministry endeavors would be possible without you. Thank you for imitating Christ's sacrificial love by serving spiritually hungry people around the world. I pray the testimonies in this magazine strengthen your faith and reaffirm your partnership with us.

As we prepare our hearts for Easter, let's follow the example of China's East Lisu people—leaning forward on the edges of our seats, eager to experience God's love through the Scriptures.

Serving Together,

Roy L. Peterson
President & CEO

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The mission of American Bible Society is to make the Bible available to every person in a language and format each can understand and afford, so all people may experience its life-changing message. American Bible Society is a member of the United Bible Societies, a partnership of the Bible Societies throughout the world cooperating to make Scriptures available to people everywhere in their own language.

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Photo credit: Doug Nottage.

Police Officers Find Strength in God's Word



American Bible Society President & CEO Roy Peterson (center) presents a "Strength for the Streets" Bible to Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross Jr. (left).

On December 16, 2016, Philadelphia police officers and chaplains gathered at American Bible Society's headquarters for the launch of "Strength for the Street," a new Scripture engagement resource that equips law enforcement officers with the power of God's Word.

"These Scripture resources feature real stories from Philadelphia police officers and police chaplains," explains American Bible Society's Philadelphia Mobilizer Malcolm Byrd. "They provide encouraging Scripture passages and devotional content to meet the spiritual needs of our brave police officers."

At the launch event, American Bible Society President & CEO Roy Peterson formally presented Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross Jr. with a "Strength for the Street" Bible and offered words of encouragement to the Philadelphia police force.

"Even the strong need strength, and we want to encourage the strong officers of our city to ... turn to his Word," Peterson said. "We are grateful for what you do and the way you serve."

American Bible Society also honored the 18 police officers and chaplains who shared personal testimonies for the "Strength for the Street" resource.

"We thank God for this new partnership through our Philadelphia police chaplains," Byrd says.

Commissioner Ross says he's thankful to American Bible Society and its financial partners for supporting police officers in this way.

"Thank you for this endeavor," he says. "It means the world to all of us. Thank you so, so much."

To help share God's Word with those who need it most, visit
ABSRecord.com/Bibles



CHINA: Bibles Reach a Growing Church

Amity Printing Company helps spread God's Word in China by printing Bibles for China's growing church.

Amity Printing Company in China reached a historic milestone on July 18, 2016, when it published its 150 millionth Bible. Of the Bibles printed by Amity in its 30-year history, 74 million have been distributed in China to meet the needs of a growing Christian church.

In 1987, American Bible Society joined with United Bible Societies and Amity Foundation to help to establish Amity

Printing Company, now one of the largest Bible printing companies in the world. Through United Bible Societies China Partnership, American Bible Society's financial partners donate costly Bible paper, allowing Bibles to be printed and distributed throughout China. Please pray that God will continue to use Amity to spread God's Word in China and throughout the world.

ECUADOR: Healing after the Earthquake

American Bible Society's generous financial partners helped bring Bible-based trauma healing to suffering communities in Ecuador after a magnitude-7.8 earthquake struck on April 16, 2016. The deadly quake killed more than 600 people and injured 12,000. The ministry offered spiritual healing by combining the redemptive message of God's Word with mental health best practices.

A Bible-based trauma healing participant named Jessica Michel was a Red Cross responder after the earthquake. "For me, trauma healing has been a huge blessing. Thank you for bringing this project to [Ecuador]," says Michel. "I know this is truly God's ministry."



Ecuadorians are finding spiritual healing through God's Word in the wake of a deadly earthquake.

Photo credits: Andrew Hood; Laura Burgueno.

CUBA: Sign Language Bible Strengthens Deaf Christians

American Bible Society's financial partners are bringing the Scriptures to Cuba's deaf community through a sign language Bible, translated through a partnership with the Biblical Commission of Cuba and Cuban Council of Churches. "God is doing an amazing work in Cuba," says American Bible Society's Senior Vice President of Ministry Geof Morin, who visited the translation project in January 2017. "The Scriptures are coming alive for an often-overlooked language group."

Translators are currently working to have the books of Luke and Acts translated and distributed by 2019. The new sign language Bible, which is published through digital videos and DVDs, is bringing the life-changing message of God's



This sign language translation team is bringing God's Word to life for Cuba's deaf community.

Word to deaf people in Cuba, many of whom do not easily read Spanish.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Spiritual Refuge for Displaced People



Trauma healing workshops offer spiritual hope in Central African Republic.

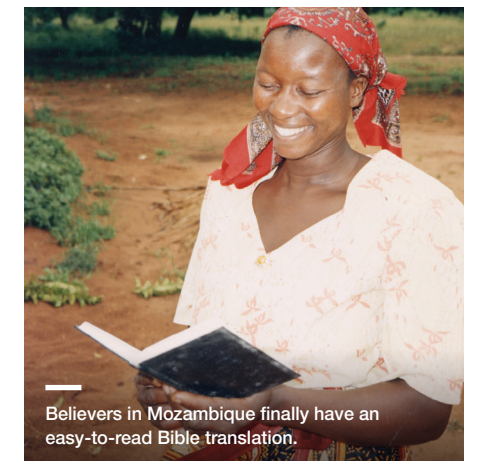
Suffering communities in Central African Republic found strength through God's Word, thanks to a series of Bible-based trauma healing workshops coordinated by American Bible Society and its partners in the fall of 2016. "People shared things they had been holding on to for a long time, unable to forgive, and God gave them the freedom to let it go," reports Trauma Healing Facilitator Cami Robbins.

Central African Republic is suffering from a severe humanitarian crisis. An estimated 385,000 people are displaced internally due to rampant disease, poverty and violence. Through support from American Bible Society's financial partners, many of these suffering people are now discovering the healing power of God's Word.

MOZAMBIQUE: God's Word Reaches Waiting People

A new Bible translation for the Xirhonga people, primarily located in Mozambique, is set to launch in 2017, bringing God's Word to people who have waited more than 40 years for an understandable Scripture translation.

Xirhonga speakers do not understand their original Bible translation due to changes in their language structure. This updated Xirhonga Bible translation was started in the 1970s, but progress was delayed by 16 years of civil war. Thanks to the generous support of American Bible Society's financial partners and the perseverance of translators in Mozambique, God's Word is now available in the heart language of a new generation of Xirhonga people.



Believers in Mozambique finally have an easy-to-read Bible translation.

Photo credits: Shamala Snipe; SL, Cami Robbins; Bible Society in Mozambique; Evariste Muryabarama.



American Bible Society has served U.S. military members and their families for 200 years, including the World War I troops pictured here.

MINISTERING TO AMERICA'S ARMED FORCES FOR 200 YEARS

This year, American Bible Society celebrates 200 years of ministering to the U.S. military with God's Word. In 1817, American Bible Society presented 65 Bibles to sailors aboard the *U.S.S. John Adams*, launching a ministry that has since delivered nearly 60 million Bibles and Scripture resources to military members and their families.

Today, American Bible Society equips the comprehensive military family through Bible engagement resources

for troops, teenagers, military wives and veterans. Thanks to the support of faithful financial partners, these resources have strengthened U.S. military members and their families for 200 years and counting.

To provide God's Word to the men and women who bravely serve our country, visit ABSRecord.com/Bibles

SURVEY REVEALS THAT AMERICAN TEENS WANT TO READ THE BIBLE MORE

Although 14 percent of teenagers in the United States saw their Bible reading decrease this past year, 18 percent increased their time in God's Word, according to "2016 Teen State of the Bible." The survey was commissioned by American Bible Society and conducted by Barna Group. Additionally, 53 percent of teenagers say they wish they read the Bible more.

"[This] report shows that a majority of America's teens have respect for and interest in the Bible," says Arthur Satterwhite, who oversees national movements for American Bible Society. "[We] will continue to develop tools and resources to help teens dive into God's Word and experience its life-changing message."



U.S. teens say they wish they read the Bible more.

To read the full report, visit ABS.Bible/TeenStateOfTheBible

LEADERS RALLY AROUND GOD'S WORD IN NEW YORK CITY



A group of leaders gathers in prayer during Movement Day 2016.

In October 2016, Christian leaders from around the world gathered in New York City for Movement Day, an annual conference hosted by The New York City Leadership Center that focuses on transforming urban communities through collaboration and God's Word. This year, attendees took home a 28-day devotional through the book of Acts from American Bible Society.

"In Acts, we see a new community, where every life was important and even the most marginalized of people could find hope for a new future," says American Bible Society's New York City Mobilizer Enid Almanzar. With support from American Bible Society's financial partners, a vast network of Christian leaders is pursuing this biblical vision in New York City and around the world.

BIBLE-BASED TRAUMA HEALING LAUNCHES IN CHARLOTTE

In September 2016, American Bible Society and its partners equipped leaders in Charlotte, N.C., to serve their communities through Bible-based trauma healing. During the weeklong training, participants learned how to combine the redemptive power of Scripture with mental health best practices to care for spiritually wounded people in Charlotte.

With its large population of refugees and military veterans, along with enduring racial tensions, Charlotte has a growing need for the healing power of God's Word. Through the generous support of American Bible Society's financial partners, a growing network of trauma healing facilitators in Charlotte is now equipped to help meet that need.

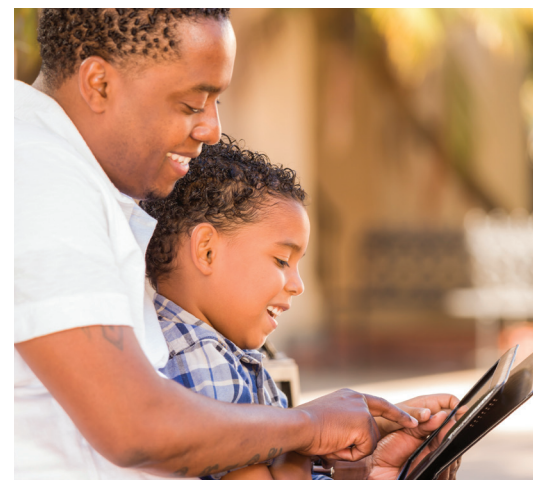


American Bible Society's financial partners are helping equip trauma healing leaders in Charlotte, such as Renée Carter, pictured here.

NEW BLOG ENGAGES SPANISH-SPEAKERS WITH GOD'S WORD

In December 2016, a new blog launched for Spanish-speakers living in the United States. "Blog de la Biblia" encourages readers to draw inspiration from God's Word as they face everyday challenges, such as asking for forgiveness or facing trials as a family.

"Latino culture is very family oriented, so the blog is all about families engaging with God's Word," says American Bible Society's Spanish Scripture Engagement Content Associate Juan Rojas-Hernández. Thanks to American Bible Society's generous financial partners, a new generation of Spanish-speaking families is drawing spiritual strength from God's Word.



A new blog engages Spanish-speakers with God's Word.

To read the blog, visit ABS.Bible/BlogEnEspañol



HERO

and Heeding God's Word

A vibrant Bible partnership is inspiring Rwandans to love their neighbors in remarkable ways.

At first glance, there's nothing special about Rugero Gaudance's house in Rwanda's Southern Province. Perched on a mountainside, the blind widow's one-room home is comprised of four walls caked with mud and small, reddish stones. The roof is a sheet of metal slung across wooden beams.

But as Rugero hobbles around her humble abode, she knows that her house is anything but ordinary. In fact, it's nothing short of a miracle: Rugero's house was built by the Bible.

It all started when a Scripture listening group began to meet in Rugero's village. As her neighbors

huddled around a Proclaimer®, a small, black audio Bible, God's Word came alive. With the teachings of Jesus ringing in their ears, Rugero's friends decided to build a house for their vulnerable neighbor, who had no home of her own.

God Speaks to His People

Although Rugero's story is extraordinary, it's not unique. In Rwanda, thanks to support from American Bible Society's financial partners, God's Word is inspiring people in Audio Scripture listening groups to serve their neighbors and families in powerful ways.

This spiritual transformation stems from the

Photo credit: Doug Notlage.



In Rwanda, God's Word is coming to life for non-readers through portable audio Bibles called Proclaimers®.



One Scripture listening group built a house for a blind widow named Rugero, pictured here.



QUIET TIME

“Yes, grass withers and flowers fade, but the word of our God endures forever.”

Isaiah 40:8 (GNT)

End-to-End partnership, which helps people in hard-to-reach places engage with God's Word through screenings of the JESUS film, Faith Comes By Hearing® Audio Scripture listening groups, and Bible reading groups. In Rwanda, the Scripture listening groups are especially effective.

“It's not a secret—we have a lot of people who don't know how to write and read,” says Father Fidel Mutabazi, a priest in Rwanda's Mushishiro parish. “But they need to hear the Word of God.”

Scripture listening groups meet this great need by making God's Word easily accessible for non-readers.

Here's how they work.

Participants gather regularly around a solar-powered Proclaimer®. First, the group listens to a chapter of Scripture. Then they listen to it again. Finally, with the guidance of a leader, they ask questions and discuss what they've learned together.

To the casual observer, this routine might seem unremarkable. And that's the point: Scripture listening groups provide an ordinary method of Bible study for people who would otherwise be cut off from the power of God's Word.

But this ordinary method of Scripture engagement is producing extraordinary results throughout Rwanda.

A Living Faith

“Before I heard the Word of God, I was wandering through the world like a blind person,” says Tamar Mukagakwiya, a listening group member in Muhanga. “I came to Mark 8:22, where Jesus opened the eyes of the blind. ... It entered my soul, and I started living in the light of the Word of God.”

Today, Tamar wants other people to experience the

power of Scripture, just as she did.

“I feel strong and empowered to ask others to come and listen to the Word of God,” says Tamar. “I have a gift to talk to other people so the Word of God can comfort them.”

In some cases, God's Word inspires Rwandans to reconcile with family members they have wronged. Nshutiraguma Donath, a former thief, decided to care for his disabled mother after he heard Paul's conversion story in the book of Acts.

“I heard how he persecuted the people of God,” he recounts. “I compared it to the way I caused problems in my family. After listening to the Bible, I decided to repent and follow the way of the Lord.”

A Stronger Church

And the Scripture listening groups aren't just for non-readers. Hearing the Bible read out loud inspires some Rwandans to dig deeper into God's Word on their own.

“After listening to the Proclaimer, we went back to the printed Bible to understand it deeply,” Kampire Marie Claire says.

Whether people read, hear or watch the message of God's Word, the result is the same: lives are changed. And church leaders are grateful.

“Thank you for [thinking] about us and developing this program, which helps us grow in our faith,” Mutabazi says.

Kari Randall is a writer at American Bible Society.

You can help support Bible translation projects around the world. Visit ABSRecord.com/Bibles.

MAY

- 1 Hebrews 6:13-20
- 2 Hebrews 7:1-14
- 3 Hebrews 7:15-28

National Day of Prayer

- 4 Psalm 78:1-31
- 5 Psalm 78:32-55
- 6 Psalm 78:56-72
- 7 Psalm 110
- 8 Genesis 1:1—2:4a
- 9 Genesis 6:1-22
- 10 Genesis 7:1-24
- 11 Genesis 8:1-22
- 12 Genesis 9:1-29
- 13 Genesis 12:1-20

- 14 Genesis 13:1-18
- 15 Genesis 14:1-24
- 16 Genesis 15:1-21
- 17 Genesis 16:1-16
- 18 Genesis 17:1-27
- 19 Genesis 18:1-15
- 20 Genesis 21:1-21

- 21 Genesis 22:1-19
- 22 Genesis 25:7-26
- 23 Genesis 28:1-22
- 24 Genesis 35:1-15

Ascension Day

- 25 Acts 1:1-11
- 26 Acts 1:12-26
- 27 Psalm 47
- 28 Exodus 19:1-25
- 29 Exodus 20:1-21
- 30 Exodus 23:20-33
- 31 Exodus 24:1-18

JUNE

- 1 Romans 8:1-17
- 2 Romans 8:18-39
- 3 Romans 12:1-21

Pentecost

- 4 Acts 2:1-28
- 5 Acts 2:29-47
- 6 Acts 4:32—5:11
- 7 Acts 5:12-26
- 8 Acts 5:27-42
- 9 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
- 10 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
- 11 1 Corinthians 14:1-25
- 12 1 Corinthians 14:26-40
- 13 Acts 11:1-18
- 14 Acts 11:19-30
- 15 Acts 14:1-20
- 16 Acts 14:21-28
- 17 Acts 15:1-21
- 18 Acts 15:22-41
- 19 Acts 16:1-15
- 20 Acts 16:16-40
- 21 Acts 17:1-15
- 22 Acts 17:16-34
- 23 Acts 18:1-23
- 24 Galatians 1:1-24
- 25 Galatians 2:1-21
- 26 Galatians 3:1-14
- 27 Galatians 3:15—4:7
- 28 Galatians 4:8-31
- 29 Galatians 5:1-26
- 30 Galatians 6:1-18

JULY

- 1 Matthew 18:15-35
- 2 2 Corinthians 2:5-17
- 3 2 Corinthians 5:11-21
- 4 2 Corinthians 6:1-13
- 5 Exodus 1:1-22
- 6 Exodus 2:1-25
- 7 Exodus 3:1-22
- 8 Exodus 5:1-21
- 9 Exodus 5:22—6:13
- 10 Exodus 12:1-20
- 11 Exodus 12:21-36
- 12 Exodus 12:37-51
- 13 Exodus 13:1-10
- 14 Exodus 13:11-22
- 15 Exodus 14:1-31
- 16 Exodus 15:19-27
- 17 Exodus 16:1-21
- 18 Exodus 16:22-36
- 19 Exodus 17:1-16
- 20 Leviticus 16:1-19
- 21 Leviticus 16:20-34
- 22 2 Samuel 9:1-13

- 23 Psalm 32
- 24 Psalm 43
- 25 Psalm 56
- 26 Psalm 57
- 27 Psalm 68:1-20
- 28 Psalm 68:21-35
- 29 Psalm 80

- 30 Psalm 103
- 31 Psalm 113

AUGUST

- 1 Philippians 1:1-30
- 2 Philippians 2:1-30
- 3 Philippians 3:1-21
- 4 Philippians 4:1-23
- 5 Colossians 1:1-23
- 6 Colossians 1:24—2:5
- 7 Colossians 2:6-19
- 8 Colossians 2:20—3:17
- 9 Colossians 4:2-18
- 10 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
- 11 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
- 12 1 Thessalonians 2:17—3:13
- 13 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18
- 14 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28
- 15 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
- 16 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17
- 17 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18
- 18 1 Timothy 1:1-20
- 19 1 Timothy 2:1-15
- 20 1 Timothy 3:1-16
- 21 1 Timothy 4:1-16
- 22 1 Timothy 5:1-25
- 23 1 Timothy 6:3-21
- 24 2 Timothy 1:1-18
- 25 2 Timothy 2:1-26
- 26 2 Timothy 3:1-17
- 27 2 Timothy 4:1-22
- 28 Titus 1:1-16
- 29 Titus 2:1-15
- 30 Titus 3:1-15
- 31 Philemon 1-25

Photo credits: Doug Nottage; Rebecca Silva.

Photo credit: ThinkStockPhotos.com/vvilita.



In October 2016, American Bible Society Board Member Cheryl Holland and her daughter Hannah (seated third and fourth in the front row) helped distribute newly translated Bibles to the Miao language group in rural China.

Taking Part in God's Grand Story

A member of American Bible Society's Board of Trustees helps bring God's Word to waiting people groups.

When Cheryl Holland reflects on the story of her life, she sees God's fingerprints on every page.

"This is a God story," Cheryl says. "God has always stood by me."

Cheryl traces God's faithfulness back to when her father accepted Christ at a Billy Graham revival. As a result, Cheryl's childhood home was firmly rooted in the Christian faith.

"The church was a part of our home," she says. "It runs deep in our family."

Cheryl also sees God's handiwork in the way she joined American Bible Society's Board of Trustees. God started tugging on Cheryl's heart as she got to know the ministry of American Bible Society through

college and work connections.

"This is going sound really strange," she told her husband one day at lunch, "but I think I want to be on the board of American Bible Society."

When they returned home later that day, an invitation to interview for a position on the board was waiting for Cheryl.

Since then, God has only grown Cheryl's love for Scripture and for the people who need it most. Especially meaningful, says Cheryl, was a trip to Bolivia, where she helped distribute Bibles to orphans and women suffering from major trauma.

"It set in cement my commitment to Bible translation and distribution," Cheryl says. "That's where my passion has been."

Photo credits: Jared Wong.



Cheryl's daughter Hannah received hugs from several elderly Miao women who had waited their whole lives to receive Bibles of their own.

In October 2016, God further stoked Cheryl's passion when she traveled into the mountains of China to distribute newly translated Bibles among minority language groups.

After receiving a Bible, one 85-year-old woman started weeping and hugged Cheryl's daughter Hannah. The woman explained that she had waited her whole life for a Bible.

"Can you imagine waiting 85 years for a Bible?" says Cheryl. "To be able to read the Bible in the language that you use to sing lullabies to your children is a powerful, powerful gift."

While Cheryl has seen the power of God's Word unleashed in China, she knows that there is still much work to be done.

"They need additional translations and they need more pastors," Cheryl explains.

To help meet this need, Cheryl and her husband have named American Bible Society as a beneficiary in their Wills. Cheryl trusts American Bible Society and its global partners to carry the torch of Scripture translation for generations to come.

"I have a front row seat, and I want to trust my money to American Bible Society, even after I have no control," Cheryl says. "That's a vote of confidence."

"I have a front row seat, and I want to trust my money to American Bible Society, even after I have no control. That's a vote of confidence."

CHERYL HOLLAND
American Bible Society Trustee

As Cheryl seeks to further God's kingdom through her generous service, she knows that her incredible journey is only one small part in God's grand story.

"To the readers of *Record* who have been giving their whole lives, I want to say 'thank you,'" Cheryl says. "We are one thread of the tapestry God is weaving together around the world."

To explore how you can leave a lasting legacy, visit AmericanBible.org/GiftPlanning or call 800-549-3328

REAPING A HARVEST IN RURAL CHINA

After a century of waiting, China's East Lisu people finally have the entire Bible in their heart language.

China's East Lisu people are farmers by trade, but you wouldn't know it by their soil. Forced off their fertile farmland by more powerful tribes, the East Lisu people eke out a living on the hard, stony mountainsides of Yunnan Province—a rural territory in southwest China. In the dry mountain air, they can grow little more than potatoes, corn and yams.

But in October 2016, the East Lisu people reaped a harvest beyond their wildest dreams. A century after their ancestors first converted to Christianity,

China's East Lisu people received the complete Bible in their language for the very first time.

This spiritual harvest sprung from the labors of the East Lisu people themselves. With training and support from United Bible Societies China Partnership and American Bible Society's generous financial partners, a humble group of believers translated the entire Bible for their people. Through their sacrificial labor, God's Word is now taking root in this remote mountain community.



Photo credits: Jared Wong.

A Dream Fulfilled

The newly published Bible started out as the dream of a schoolteacher named Yang Hanquan, who began translating the Scriptures into East Lisu nearly forty years ago. In fact, Yang and his friends produced a rough draft of the entire Bible. But without means to have the Bible reviewed, printed and distributed, his people remained cut off from the power of God's Word.

That's when United Bible Societies stepped in.

From 2005 to 2016, a translation review team, comprised of five East Lisu farmers, made Yang's dream a reality. With guidance from a United Bible Societies translation consultant, the team edited Yang's Bible—all 30,000 verses.

"They wanted us to check every single verse," says United Bible Societies Translation Consultant Simon Wong, who led the review team. Wong says the East Lisu reviewers were sticklers for accuracy;

if they were going to translate God's Word for their people, they were going to do it right.

"Even when I wanted to reasonably speed up, they rejected it!" Wong says.

From Farmers to Scholars

While the native reviewers brought their enthusiasm to the table, Wong brought his expertise. On behalf of United Bible Societies, he trained the East Lisu farmers in the principles of Scripture translation. During their work on the Old Testament, he also taught the team to use ParaText—a world class Bible translation software. Until then, they had only used Microsoft Word.

"It's amazing to witness the learning curve of the translators," Wong says. "They are not well educated, but they work very hard."

The team's diligence extended well beyond the translation work itself. During the project, the East Lisu review team traveled six hours between their village of Taogu and



A schoolteacher named Yang Hanquan started translating the Scriptures into East Lisu nearly 40 years ago. Today, his dream has become a reality.



A team of five East Lisu farmers, pictured here, spent nearly a decade translating God's Word for their people. The translator on the far right is holding a bow, symbolizing the strength of elderly people.



East Lisu believers cling to their new Bibles at a formal launch celebration in October 2016.

translation sites in Kunming and Wuding. Away from home for long stretches of time, they had to hire laborers to do their farming for them.

"It was a sacrifice," says Wong. "But they were committed to the translation project."

Now their sacrifice is finally paying off.

Celebrating God's Love

On a sweltering hot day in late October, the East Lisu people donned their celebratory costumes—a dazzling neon rainbow—for the public launch of the East Lisu Bible. Packed like sardines into the courtyard of a church, East Lisu believers clutched the full Bible in their outstretched hands for the very first time.

A team from American Bible

Society attended the monumental celebration in Yunnan Province.

"They were crying," says Senior Vice President Laura Dabkowski. "There were huge smiles as I was handing out Bibles." Given how long the East Lisu people had waited to hold God's Word in their hands, their emotional response was hardly surprising.

"Imagine living in a village that's been Christian for 100 years, but never having a Bible of your own," says Cheryl Holland, who serves on American Bible Society's Board of Trustees.

The East Lisu believers also responded to a special message from American Bible Society President & CEO Roy Peterson.

"You are one of 600 languages in the world that have the whole Bible,"

"Imagine living in a village that's been Christian for 100 years, but never having a Bible of your own."

CHERYL HOLLAND
American Bible Society Trustee

“You are one of 600 languages in the world that have the whole Bible. God loves you!”

ROY PETERSON
American Bible Society
President & CEO



American Bible Society Senior Vice President Laura Dabkowski distributes Bibles to a group of East Lisu women.

he told them. “God loves you!”

When Peterson said this, the crowd of East Lisu believers gasped out loud. They couldn’t believe that, out of the world’s 7,000 language groups, God had chosen to bring his Word to them.

“One of ‘the least of these’ has become one of the most blessed,” Peterson says.

And as the East Lisu community dives deeper into God’s Word, these blessings are multiplying.

Growing in God’s Word

With support from United Bible Societies China Partnership, the East Lisu translation team is now teaching their neighbors how to read the Bible through Scripture literacy classes.

“[Translation] is only the beginning,” says Wong. “Literacy plays a very vital role to sustaining a translation.”

In addition to the Scripture literacy classes, the East Lisu people need trained pastors who can accurately teach them God’s Word. By equipping Bible schools in China with Scripture tools and resources, American Bible Society’s financial partners are helping train new pastors in China. According to the national average ratio, there is currently only one ordained pastor for every 6,700 Chinese believers.

“There is such a shortage of pastors, especially in the minority language areas,” says Peterson. “It is so important that we seek a trained pastor for every village.”

But the demand for more pastors in China is a good problem to have, as they say. The spiritual harvest is simply so abundant that it’s difficult to keep up.

“The church in China is growing at an incredible rate,” Peterson says. “In the past decade, the numbers have almost doubled.”

While this exponential spiritual growth in China is astounding, its cause is no secret.

As the East Lisu people in rural Yunnan Province will discover for generations to come, amazing things happen when people encounter the love of Christ in the language of their hearts—whether in the pew of a church or out in the rocky fields they call home.

Jack Newman is a writer at American Bible Society and managing editor of Record magazine.

You can help bring the Bible to waiting language groups. Visit ABSRecord.com/Bibles



Literacy classes from United Bible Societies China Partnership help the East Lisu people read God’s Word for themselves.

PRAY AROUND THE WORLD



Bible Societies around the world are helping to share God’s message of hope and love with those who need it most. Here are prayer requests from a select group of Bible Societies that ask you to lift them up in prayer.

Argentina

Praise God for the progress of Bible translations in West Toba and Argentine Sign Language. Also pray that the Bible Society of Argentina would help Christians engage more with God’s Word through culturally relevant ministry initiatives.

Armenia

Bible Society of Armenia asks you to pray for God to help them spread the Bible’s message to more people across the country, especially to young people and children. Praise God for the work he has done in Armenia throughout the last year.

South Pacific

Join the Bible Society in the South Pacific in praising God for the December launch of the Gospel of Mark in the Koronubu-Ba language. Please pray that God’s Word would continue to provide support and encouragement to the people of Fiji who are still recovering from the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Winston.

Mali

Bible Society in Mali asks that you would pray for the staff to be able to teach Bible principles to a new generation of young people and children. Please also pray that publishing projects currently underway would bring the power of God’s Word to more people.

Namibia

Praise God for the new Khoekhoegowab Bible translation, the Otjiherero Bible revision and the Dhimba New Testament in an audio format. Pray for encouragement and guidance for people who can now access Scripture for the first time in their own language.

Lebanon

Thank God for the Bible distribution and Bible-based trauma healing ministry that have helped Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Lebanon. Pray for the safety and encouragement of Bible Society staff as they go about their work.

You can join our online prayer community at ABS.Bible/RecordPrayer

BACK TO BIBLE BASICS

A no-frills approach to Bible engagement in Charlotte, N.C. is spreading God's Word beyond the four walls of the church.

“I really made a mistake,” thought Mark Gott, a Christian attorney in Charlotte, N.C.

Gott had invited one of his colleagues to help start a Bible reading group for law professionals in their city. Only she wasn't just any colleague.

“[She was] actually a judge who presides over some of my cases,” Gott says. “She never replied.”

For two long days, Gott worried that his reputation as a lawyer was in jeopardy. That's when the judge stopped him in the hallway.

She was in.

Thanks to Gott's leap of faith, he and his colleague now lead a thriving Bible reading group for law professionals in the Charlotte area. But the experience taught Gott a valuable lesson.

“It's easy to do ministry in the context of a local church,” Gott says. “It's a lot harder in your workplace.”

While sharing God's Word in his workplace hasn't been easy, Gott says the unique format of his reading group has made all the difference.

The “Bible Cluster” that Gott helps

facilitate is a no-frills approach to Bible engagement that's gaining traction in Charlotte. By emphasizing communal reading rather than formal teaching, Bible Clusters provide a safe space for seekers to explore God's Word, often for the very first time.

And with support from American Bible Society's financial and prayer partners, a ministry called Charlotte Awake is training new Bible Cluster facilitators to help spiritually curious people encounter the power of God's Word beyond the four walls of the church.

The genius of this approach resides not in its novelty, but rather in its simplicity.

“At the heart of Bible Clusters is a focus on encountering God in his Word,” says David Ingrassia, the stewarding pastor of Charlotte Awake and one of the leaders behind the Bible Clusters movement.

To help participants seek God in the pages of Scripture, Bible Clusters eliminate many elements found within traditional Bible studies, most notably, a leader who teaches



“At the heart of Bible Clusters is a focus on encountering God in his Word.”

DAVID INGRASSIA
Stewarding Pastor of
Charlotte Awake

through a curriculum.

“We remove the middle man,” says Ingrassia. “We go straight to the Word



An attorney named Mark Gott leads a Bible Cluster for law professionals in the Charlotte area.



Bible Clusters help spiritually curious people engage with God's Word by providing a safe space for reading, discussion and prayer.

of God to let God speak for himself.”

What results is a weekly small group in which participants do three simple things.

“They read the Bible, they talk about the Bible, and then they close in prayer,” says Ingrassia. “In that process, they're encountering God through his Word. That's the key to the whole thing.”

But maintaining this simple formula is no simple task. That's why Bible Clusters rely on group facilitators to keep discussions focused on the text of Scripture and to ensure that everyone can safely voice their thoughts and questions.

Gott knows firsthand that this isn't always easy. Fostering honest discussion about the Bible—especially among new believers—means biting your tongue when somebody voices an opinion you disagree with.

“We really have to rely more on the Holy Spirit and trust those in the group,” Gott says.

But Gott insists that the benefits of this open discussion far outweigh the challenges.

“I'm seeing different flavors, if you

will, of what the Church is,” he says. “What unites us far outweighs what divides us.”

To train believers like Gott in the art of running a Bible Cluster, American Bible Society's financial partners have come alongside Charlotte Awake to produce an online video training module for new facilitators. In addition to growing this vibrant ministry in Charlotte, the online training materials make it possible to scale Bible Clusters well beyond the Carolinas.

“People don't even have to come to Charlotte Awake to get Bible Clusters,” says Ingrassia. “Every believer actually becomes an ambassador of the gospel, because now they can engage at work ... in their neighborhoods ... at home. There are no barriers to this.”

For now, Ingrassia is happy to see this Bible movement changing lives in his hometown. One of his favorite testimonies comes from a banker who felt comfortable enough to bring his Hindu coworker to a Bible Cluster.

“By the time [the Hindu coworker] left, he could see through the people, the love of God, and through the Word,

the truth of God,” says Ingrassia. “Those were the first steps of evangelism.”

Through the faithful support of American Bible Society's financial and prayer partners, everyone from lawyers to bankers to students to retirees are more confident than ever sharing God's Word in every sphere of life. Bible Clusters aren't reinventing Scripture engagement, but they are injecting fresh life into the Church's 2,000-year-old mission.

“This is a way in which everybody can engage in the mission that Christ gave us—to make disciples of all nations,” Ingrassia says.

Jack Newman is a writer at American Bible Society and managing editor of Record magazine.

To equip leaders in the U.S. with the power of God's Word, visit ABSRecord.com/Bibles

IN MEMORIAM

“The LORD is my protector; he is my strong fortress. My God is my protection, and with him I am safe. He protects me like a shield; he defends me and keeps me safe.” *Psalm 18:2 (GNT)*

Barbara Bidwell

Given by Keith P. Robinson

My parents,

Myrle and Lois Bly

Given by Ronald P. Bly

My son,

Paul Bly

Given by Ronald P. Bly

Doc Butler

Given by Jimmy P. Fitzgerald

Rev. Byron Cleeland

Given by Keith P. Robinson

Sylvia A. Cleeland

Given by Keith P. Robinson

My father,

Jere Lawrence Crook Jr.

Given by Senter C. Crook

James Dawson

Given by Keith P. Robinson

My husband,

John R. Espenlaub

Given by P. K. Espenlaub

My parents,

Art and Dorothy Evans

Given by P. K. Espenlaub

Jimmy P. and Charlene Fitzgerald

Given by Jimmy P. and Jackie E. Fitzgerald

Della Fitzgerald

Given by Jimmy P. Fitzgerald

My husband,

Ewald H. Friedemann

Given by Katherine E. Friedemann

My father,

Don Gardanour

Given by Peggy E. Taylor

John S. Huggins

Given by Dr. and Mrs. H. S. Huggins III

Steve King

Given by Karen Louie

Our parents,

Lewis and Carol McDonald

Given by Abby McDonald Schwartz and James L. McDonald

Arnold A. Ohst

Given by Mr. and Mrs. Philip H. Lange

Arnold A. Ohst

Given by Mr. and Mrs. Philip H. Lange

Charles H. Smith Jr.

Given by Sandra P. Smith

Ida Stith

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“What you have done will be praised from one generation to the next; they will proclaim your mighty acts.” PSALM 145:4 (GNT)



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