



Bible a Month

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Abouna Abra'am, a Cave Church priest, thanks you for your support, which helps his church provide a Bible for every visitor. Envelope photo: A Bible study group in Cairo supported by you.
Photos: Alex Baker/Bible Society

Eyewitness Report

How you're supporting Christians in Cairo's Garbage Village.



By Stuart Ford

Catholic Engagement Officer

Scriptures are set in stone in EGYPT Egypt's gigantic cave churches

We were surrounded by mountains of rubbish. Bag on top of bag, on top of bag. On the sides of the road, piled high on cars, even on the rooftops.

The people living in what is called the Garbage Village of Cairo are the city's rubbish collectors. They collect rubbish from across the city and bring it back to their neighbourhood, or even their homes, to be processed. They're desperately poor, sometimes being paid as little as 30p a month per residence for collecting all of their garbage.

Many of these people are also Christians. As we passed through the streets on our way to the Cave Church complex where they worship

we saw crosses and pictures of Jesus pinned to the walls. And their faith has been strengthened year after year thanks to your kind giving. Not only are you giving them Scriptures, but you're also enabling the training of Bible study group leaders so they can engage with God's word more deeply.

We drove through a little archway and the mountains of rubbish gave way to a mountain of stone. This is Mokattam; a mountain of great significance to the Coptic Christians of Cairo. It's home to the relics of St Simon the Tanner, a tenth century man who is attributed with an extraordinary miracle through his prayers. It's believed that having read Jesus' words in Matthew 17.20 that faith as small as a mustard seed

can move mountains, he prayed for Mokattam mountain to move and it raised out of the ground three times, and high enough to see the sun underneath it.

Gargantuan reliefs depicting Bible stories are etched directly into the mountainside.

It was here in the 1970s that a Coptic priest called Abouna Simon and the wider Christian community began to carve several huge holes directly into the rock which would serve as churches. The biggest cave can seat thousands and is believed to be the largest church in the Middle East.

The sheer magnitude of one of the cave churches I entered took my breath away. Not only the size, but the beauty of the gargantuan reliefs depicting Bible stories that they etched directly into the mountainside. To stand beside the mountain and look up is to view a Bible in stone: a testament to faith and a monument to stand for the ages.

'The Bible is light and life. Without it we have no light or life,' said Sara,

who worships at Mokattam. She had an open Bible on her lap and eagerly showed me the passages that spoke of this life that comes from God – passages like Jeremiah 5.24. 'I send the autumn rains and the spring rains and give you the harvest season each year,' she read.

For decades, Bible Society of Egypt has been distributing tens of thousands of Bibles from this central and popular hub. It's a ministry that your regular giving through Bible a Month has been fuelling over the years.

Whenever a person is welcomed into one of the cave churches, they receive a Bible. When a couple gets married, they receive a Bible. The team at the Mokattam churches then follow up with them, helping them to encounter God through that Bible. And thanks to your regular giving, hundreds of church leaders are being trained in Egypt and Bible study groups are being supported to help people understand the Scriptures they are being provided with and encounter Jesus.

The Church in Egypt estimates that about 15 per cent of the country's population are Christian – that's more than 15 million souls.

Abouna Abra'am, who has served the Mokattam community as a priest for nearly 40 years, told me: 'There is nothing more valuable you can get than the Bible. The word of God gives life.' That's exactly what the people receive when they come here.

The Bible is bringing life in the midst of poverty and beyond, all across Cairo and Egypt.

As worshippers continue to pour into the cave churches at Mokattam, the support you are providing to Bible Society of Egypt is more crucial than ever.

The need for Bibles is great, as more and more people flock to the cave churches at Mokattam.

As we left, Abouna Abra'am, told me to say thank you to all the Bible Society supporters in England and Wales.

Your support helps continue a four-decade ministry of inscribing the Bible not just into the stones of the mountain, but into the hearts of the people living in its shadow.



'Without the Bible we have no light or life,' says Sara, who worships at the Mokattam Cave Church complex in Egypt.



One of the Egyptian cave churches that seats thousands. Everyone who enters gets a Bible.

Mission Update

Your support helps us bring the Bible to people through spoken word, as Dai Woolridge explains.



Our 'resident poet', Bible Communicator and Creative Specialist Dai Woolridge, has a wonderful way with words. Thanks to your support, Dai led events on the Spoken Word Stage at Big Church Festival. Photo credit: Alex Baker/Bible Society

The poetry of good news spotlights the great creator

📍 ENGLAND AND WALES

'Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!' David wrote in Psalm 34.8, words dripping with profound and poetic truth. The psalmist paints a picture for us, that a relationship with God is one to experience and encounter.

At Big Church Festival recently, Christian poets not only entertained, but demonstrated to an audience of 400–500 people yet another way in which we can jump into the Scriptures and engage with God's word.

Thanks to your support, Bible Society helps run the Spoken Word Stage at the festival, and it's been a real privilege for me to serve as the programme leader for three successive years.

One of the Spoken Word Stage's highlights is the Big Church Poetry Slam – a competition of knock-out performance poetry inspired by the Scriptures.

There were three rounds, each with a Bible focus: (1) a poem inspired by

a Bible character, (2) a poem sharing a Bible passage, and (3) a poem inspired by Romans 12.15: 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep' (ESV).

'My peace comes from the fact that the word is alive and active and so it does all the hard work for you.'

The tent was packed for the Poetry Slam, and up to 500 people were given the opportunity to experience the Bible in an exciting and entertaining way.

One audience member enthused, 'Even at my old age, I still find the Bible a bit intimidating sometimes. I don't know where to start but to actually have it on this face-to-face human level is amazing.'

It was also an opportunity for

Christian poets to immerse themselves in Scripture.

Poet Eloise Twyford said, 'It's been interesting to sit with the Bible and ask God what he'd like his people to hear and how this should be shared. I think my peace comes from the fact that the word is alive and active and so it does all the hard work for you.'

We're so grateful that your generosity through Bible a Month is helping us bring the living words of Scripture to life for many people, and in so many different ways.

Let's join in with Eloise's prayer for future events such as this: 'My prayer is that these pieces of Scripture will speak to the people in the audience(s) and help them grow in relationship with the greatest author.'

• To find out more and listen to Dai, go to: biblesociety.org.uk/spokenruth

Answer to prayer ...

King Charles III backs Bible Society

We are thrilled and so thankful to let you know that King Charles III has stepped into his mother's shoes and become Bible Society's Patron.

Bible Society has had a royal patron since 1943, when King George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth, became joint patrons. Queen Elizabeth II was our sole Patron from 1952, when she acceded to the throne, and since succeeding her, King Charles III has continued to donate to Bible Society from the Privy Purse. Our royal connections go back even further, though, to when Queen Victoria became a member of Bible Society in 1838.

King Charles said he would be 'delighted to accept the patronage of Bible Society'. He has said that his faith is 'deeply rooted' in the Church of England and told faith leaders on his accession to the throne that he was 'a committed Anglican Christian'. He promised at his coronation to 'maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the gospel'.



King Charles and Bible Society's President, His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos, at a church event in Hertfordshire. Photo credit: Coptic Orthodox Church UK

The King was a guest of Bible Society's President, His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos, at The Coptic Orthodox Church Centre in Hertfordshire recently. Archbishop Angaelos introduced the King to Bible Society's Chief Executive, Paul Williams. They talked about Bible mission around the world, and the King asked especially about our work in the Middle East.

Paul said: 'We're absolutely delighted with this news, and very thankful. The King's patronage is a sign that the Bible is being taken seriously at the heart of our country's life, and we're so pleased that the connection with the royal family which meant so much to us under Queen Elizabeth is to continue.'

OCTOBER PRAYERS

Give thanks to the Lord that King Charles has given Bible Society his backing. Pray that this example will be noted by, and influence, many.

Pray for the King's health, and the health of Catherine, Princess of Wales, both of whom were diagnosed with cancer. Pray that they will turn to Jesus for the greatest comfort there is.

Pray for each member of the royal family, that they will treasure God's word and put their faith in Jesus.

Lace up your walking boots

Step out for Scripture is a sponsored walk to raise money to get more Bibles to more people.

Whether you walk five miles, fifty, or more, you set the rules. It's that easy. You can do it alone, breathing in the beauty of nature, or turn it into a fun day out with friends from church. How about incorporating a picnic and prayer time at the halfway stage?

Step out for Scripture is part of our 220th anniversary celebrations, and every penny you raise will help get

even more Bibles to people who really need them.

And as it's our birthday, we'll give a special medal to any individual who raises more than £220, or any group that raises more than £2,200.

You may know that the inspiration behind Bible Society's foundation 220 years ago came when, a couple of years earlier, 15-year-old Mary Jones walked 26 miles through the rugged terrain of North Wales to buy a Bible in her own language.



Find out more at biblesociety.org.uk/step or scan the code



Step out for Scripture

Egypt



People of all ages enjoy a Bible Study in Cairo, a vibrant ministry supported by your kind giving. Photo credit: Alex Baker/Bible Society

'I called my son out of Egypt' (Matthew 2.15) said the evangelist Matthew, quoting the prophet Hosea. Egypt is a land of deep history and of great significance in the Bible. Christians have lived in Egypt through all the ups and downs of the last two thousand years.

Christians are a minority in Egypt, estimated by our colleagues there to make up about 15 per cent of the population. Bible Society of Egypt

ministers to these mainly Coptic Christians, and anyone else who is interested in the Bible, through a variety of projects.

With your help, Bible Society of Egypt hopes to distribute 115,000 heavily subsidised Bibles and New Testaments in 2025. Vast amounts of these affordable Scriptures are purchased by church leaders, evangelists and others and given to people for free. Last year, almost 120,000 were distributed.

You're also training leaders of Bible Society groups to help people engage with the Scriptures they have been provided with. And finally you are supporting Egypt's exciting digital Bible project, which is making the Scriptures easily accessible through apps and audio Bibles. This digital mission also provides the Bible in the local Egyptian dialect of Arabic.

AUGUST PRAYERS

Pray for the Christian minority of Egypt: that their faith would continue to be nourished and deepened by the Bible.

Ask God to grant wisdom and inspiration to Bible Study leaders, as they lead many to more fully engage with and understand God's word.

A Coptic prayer of thanksgiving: 'O Lord, Master and Almighty God, the Father of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ, we thank you on every occasion, in every condition and for all things, for you have protected, assisted, preserved, accepted us, had compassion upon us, supported us and brought us to this hour. Amen.'

England and Wales



The exciting new version of the Good News Bible – Children's Rainbow Edition was produced with your support.

Photo credit: Bible Society

Bible work on our own shores is more important than ever. Your regular support means you are fighting for the gospel to be heard and doing your best to reverse our country's sad slide into secularity.

Thanks to you, we're celebrating 25 years of Open the Book, which takes

Bible stories into schools. We have thousands of volunteer Storytellers who are introducing Bible stories to hundreds of thousands of children across England and Wales. These children are hearing the greatest story ever told, the story of Jesus.

You're also enabling us to provide resources such as *The Bible Course* and *The Romans Course*, and hold Bible events in England and Wales, including the Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast, in which we connect with politicians.

Our prison ministry is thriving as convicts find hope and forgiveness in the gospel. Last year, 2,629 *Bible Course* manuals and 1,814 Scriptures and Bibles were provided to prisoners.

Thanks for your amazing support!

SEPTEMBER PRAYERS

Praise the Lord for the success of the Open the Book ministry. Pray that the children who are hearing about the greatest story ever told will never forget it.

Pray that more and more prisoners will ask us for a Bible. Pray that they will find peace, love and forgiveness in Jesus, and turn their lives around, becoming witnesses to the power of the gospel.

Ask God to bless the Bible events we hold (see Mission Update). Pray that more non-believing politicians will attend our parliamentary events.

Egypt

FACTFILE



AREA

386,662 square miles,
about four times
bigger than the UK



POPULATION

111 million



LANGUAGES

Arabic (official),
English, some French



LITERACY RATE

73.1%



**‘He is the Rock, his works are perfect,
and all his ways are just.**

**A faithful God who does no wrong,
upright and just is he.’**

DEUTERONOMY 32.4 (NIV)

England and Wales

FACTFILE



AREA

58,316 square miles



POPULATION

57 million (England),
3.1 million (Wales)



LANGUAGES

English, Welsh



LITERACY RATE

99.9%



**‘All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching
the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving
instruction for right living.’**

2 TIMOTHY 3.16 (GNB)