



Word in Action



Arleen Luo visits remote Christian communities in China.

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Take a peek at an exciting new children's Bible, as well as our Christmas resources.

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58,000 women in Pakistan learn to read using the Bible.

PAGE 8

Welcome to the Winter Edition

EDITOR'S NOTE

Brothers and sisters,
Some of you may know I edit *Bible a Month* as well as *Word in Action* (please take a look at the BAM insert in this edition). I just received a wonderful letter from a *Bible a Month* subscriber. She said there are no Christians in her family apart from herself and her daughter, who has Down's Syndrome. She told me how they're both thrilled to be part of Bible mission and are inspired by Bible impact stories (they'll love Pastor Bao's story on page 3!). Her enthusiasm greatly encouraged me. She shows the stories to her non-Christian friends, so they can see the positive impact of Scripture. Sharing stories about the power of the Scriptures is important. It draws people closer to God as they read about miracles happening right now as people embrace Jesus and encounter the Holy Spirit. Please don't hesitate to write in and share your stories. The Bible is packed with stories and we can tell our own modern-day amazing stories about the Bible's power too.

God bless you all.
Simon Bartz,
Editor



Cover photo: Elder Tian in Pastor Bao's church in Yunnan province, China.
Photo credit: Arleen Luo/Bible Society



LETTER FROM OUR CEO

A great opportunity

Many of you will probably have your own stories of people who have been drawn to faith through the Bible itself – impacted by its power and its story – and encountered Jesus there.

What is incredibly exciting for Bible mission today is that this is happening with increasing frequency as we see an increased level of spiritual openness in the UK and many other western countries.

The early results of Bible Society's ongoing Global Research Project have confirmed this growth. This phenomena is a huge opportunity for Bible mission and the Church more broadly. We don't want to miss this opportunity to reach people who are searching for truth and starting to ask questions.

We are partnering with churches and Christian organisations to help grow the confidence of Christians in the Bible itself, because we know many Christians have become somewhat downhearted or uncertain about the Bible's trustworthiness. Resources such as *The Bible Course* and the new *The Romans Course* can help build this confidence.

The second thing Bible Society is doing is getting much more involved and engaged externally in all different spheres of non-Christian society. We're putting the Bible out there, whether that's in schools or in families through the new Children's Bible (see page 6), in parliament, the media or the arts. And we also want to get the Bible into the business arena, which is often neglected, so that is one change you can expect to see in the coming year, as we start to highlight the relevance of the Bible's wisdom as to how we conduct our working lives.

Traditional touch points with the Church such as Christmas and Easter become even more significant in this context and create a greater opportunity than they have done in the recent past, so this Christmas you might want to think about how you are engaging non-Christian friends and neighbours.

You can find some great Christmas resources at biblesociety.org.uk/christmas

Paul Williams, Bible Society's Chief Executive

Online ordering: shop.biblesociety.org.uk/wia
For all enquiries call 01793 418222

A miracle in the mountains of China

High in the mountains of China's remote southwest, in a region which has been a centre for drug production and trafficking for many decades, there is a beautiful church.

Inside, more than 100 people, many in the colourful clothing of the Wa people, are singing songs of praise. When they finish singing, Pastor Bao begins to read from a Bible.

Bao used to be a drug addict until, in 2016, something arrived in Bao's village that changed everything – a Bible translated into the Wa language. For the first time, Bao could read the Bible in his heart language.

'My eyes were opened. I truly understood God's love and forgiveness and I gave my life to Christ,' he told Bible Society's Manager of Asia and Chinese Mission, Arleen Luo, during a recent trip to the village.

Bao stopped using drugs and started helping other addicts instead, many of whom were ill with HIV or AIDS and had lost all hope. He'd visit them in hospital or buy them medicine and take them to be tested.

One day a nurse asked him what he was doing and he said, 'I am simply caring for my friends, who I love.'



'Thank you for giving us a Bible we can read so easily,' says Pastor Bao, here seen standing outside a typical church in southwestern China. Many of the churches look identical in the Wa region.

The nurse suggested Bao apply for a government grant to set up a community centre for drug users. Today, 800 people a year come to the community centre for support, advice and care. And you can guess what else Bao provides.

So as not to attract unwanted attention, Bao couldn't openly share the gospel. Well, not in theory. 'I sat under my favourite tree and read those Bible stories aloud. And if anyone happened to walk past I guess they could "accidentally" hear me,' he says with a smile.

But now, Bao is the pastor of a church of more than 100 new believers that has been registered with the authorities.

This faithful community is flourishing because Bible-loving people like yourself helped provide God's word in their heart language.



Bible Society's translation expert Dr Simon Wong came up with the idea of using the English alphabet for the Wa Bible. The Wa people are now even using this newly invented written language in their daily lives. Prior to that, they had been using almost century-old Scriptures in a script that very few people now understand.



Scan here for our China appeal or visit biblesociety.org.uk/china23wia

Turn the page for more from Arleen's trip to China.



A 100-year dream comes true in China

WORDS BY SIMON BARTZ

Thanks to your kind giving, these East Lisu women in the mountains of southwest China have received the full Bible in their own dialect for the first time. Photos: Arleen Luo/Bible Society

Trying to reach the remote village in the mountains of southwest China was like playing a video game where you conquer one level of challenges only to be presented with yet another.

'It was a nine-hour round trip by car,' said Arleen Luo, Bible Society's Manager of Asia and Chinese Mission. 'Imagine what it must have been like for the first British missionaries 100 years ago.'

The Lisu people are scattered over a wide mountainous area and speak in many dialects. The East Lisu community that Arleen visited previously had no Bible in their own dialect and had to make do with the Chinese Bible, which many elderly people

cannot read. That changed when, thanks to your support, an East Lisu translation was published in 2013.

'Having a Bible in their heart language means this community of people can now engage with the Bible on a much deeper level of understanding,' said Arleen. 'I saw the big difference the translation has made. There has been a sizable increase in the number of believers, but it's best we don't reveal the true figure. Sometimes in China it's best not to attract too much attention.'

The translation team reunited for Arleen's visit. They worshipped together and then chatted and shared a huge bowl of rabbit stew.

'One of them, Liang, is the great-grandson of the man who acted as an assistant for one of the missionary teams 100 years ago. Liang's great-grandfather prayed for Bibles when the missionaries left and many years later his son (Liang's grandfather) appealed to the local authorities for a Bible in their own language, and the officials granted the request and contacted Bible Society. The final result was the 2013 translation.'

'We're now exploring the next steps. We are already equipping and supporting teachers who will train pastors, and there is also a Study Bible in the pipeline. A translation project for a minority language in China is multi-faceted. It doesn't end

with a translation, as what we are looking for is Bible engagement. We're working on that for the East Lisu and the Wa people right now.'

As Arleen was leaving, Liang's grandfather approached and, full of joy, said, 'I know God loves the East Lisu people because we are among one of the 700 tribes and nations who now have a full Bible. Please thank the people who gave us God's word in our own language.'



Simon Bartz,
Word in Action Editor



Five more translation projects are under way for remote communities in China thanks to your continued support.



Leading Chinese Bible scholar Dr Simon Wong (centre), Arleen (far right) and the East Lisu translation team. It took the team 12 years to translate the entire Bible.



The translation team in 1995. Photo credit: UBS-CP

A careful relationship with the authorities

In China, a person can buy a Bible and go to church. But if they get the Bible from an unauthorised vendor or go to an unregistered church, they could get into trouble and even be prosecuted. Online religious activities face significant restrictions as well. The Chinese authorities emphasise maintaining 'harmony' by tightly regulating religious activities to prevent perceived disruptions.

The true stories of smuggling Bibles into authoritarian countries are powerful and inspiring but the way Bible Society goes about business in China has evolved over the years.

In 1987, with permission from the authorities, we helped establish a Bible printing press, known as Amity Press, in Nanjing city. Since then, more than 90 million copies of Bibles have been printed there for distribution in China. It's getting more challenging for us to

do our work, but we are in a unique position in that we have our foot in the door.

Churches invite us to engage in Bible translation and literacy initiatives, support Bible students, and provide training for pastors and lay preachers. Many local authorities trust us as an organisation so they allow us to accept these invitations. And please remember that the pastors we help train, for example, will then be led by the Holy Spirit as to how they will go about their ministry.

So long as the door remains open to us we intend, with your support, to get as much Bible work done as possible.

To read more about the recent history of Bible Society in China go to biblesociety.org.uk/word-in-china



The all-new Children's Rainbow Bible is a 'work of love'

WORDS BY NOEL AMOS



Scan here for more info or visit biblesociety.org.uk/GNB-CRE

Children couldn't get enough of the new Children's Rainbow Bible at the launch party at Tadpole Primary School in Swindon. Photos: Bible Society

The Bible is the heart of Jesus made available to us on paper, and that's not boring. But how can we engage children with its teachings and stories when many are thinking, 'What does something written 2,000 years ago have to do with me?'

The scintillating new version of the Good News Bible – Children's Rainbow Edition not only answers that question, but is packed with ways to help children better engage with Scripture.

Lisa Cherrett, Bible Society's Editorial Project Manager, has been a part of this three-year project since its beginning. 'Bible literacy rates are increasingly low among children, so we knew we needed to create something that would stand out – something exciting for kids to look at,' she said.

This colourful, full-text Bible has been thoughtfully designed as just that: a multi-faceted experience of Scripture. Many of

the activities and illustrations, and even the cover design, were chosen with the input of children.

'I love being able to write in this Bible because normally you can't doodle in a Bible, but this one encourages you to,' said a year 4 student at Tadpole Farm primary school in Swindon, where the Bible's launch event was held.

With captivating illustrations, a key words list, and a reading trail woven throughout the text that connects the epic narrative

of the Bible, it presents God's word not just as a book full of information, but as a unified, living story.

The Children's Rainbow Edition, published last month, will be used by 7–11-year-olds in faith schools across the country. Bev Smith, the Head of Schools Work at Christian online resource site RE:QUEST, worked to make the interactions in the Bible complementary to children's home lives as well as their

“ Bible literacy rates are increasingly low among children, so we [created] something exciting for kids to look at.”

educational environments. 'We wanted it to work for a child connecting with God by themselves at home and when learning in school,' she said.

The Rainbow Edition is accessible even for children without faith backgrounds.

With articles that answer questions like, 'Who is the Holy Spirit?' and 'What's the meaning of Christmas?' it's an invitation for all young people to discover the truth of the gospel.

For Bible Society and RE:QUEST this has been a passion project – the fruit of a desire to help a generation of kids turn their hearts to Jesus. 'It's all there,' says Bev. 'Our prayer is that children pick it up and are captivated by it. This is a work of love.'



Noel Amos, Supporter Experience Officer



A peek inside the new Bible

The epic story of Scripture is told in a way kids can grasp in the Rainbow Edition with:

- 16 bright, full-colour illustrations depicting exciting Bible stories
- Over 300 activities and prompts that help draw children beyond the text
- A guide to the best ways to approach reading Scripture
- A full-page introduction to each book of the Bible
- A key words list to help kids understand the big ideas of the Bible
- A list of emotions paired with Scripture verses for children to reference and see what God's word says about how they might be feeling



Lives of Christian women in Pakistan transformed by Bible literacy project

Thanks to your support, almost 60,000 Christian women in Pakistan can now read the Bible and share the good news with others.

WORDS BY SIMON BARTZ

Photos: Pakistan Bible Society

Haniya* was only 12 years old when her father was killed in a suicide bombing attack on a church in Lahore during a worship service in March 2015.

'He was helping the security personnel at the church gate when a suicide bomber tried to get inside,' says Haniya. 'The suicide bomber had an explosives jacket strapped to his body and he triggered the bomb at the church gate.'

Christians make up less than

two per cent of Pakistan's overwhelmingly Muslim population and they are often targeted by Islamist extremists. The blast that killed Haniya's father was one of two suicide attacks on churches in Lahore on the same day, which killed 14 people and injured 70, according to media reports.

Haniya's father was a Christian man but had not received any kind of education. After his death, Haniya and her younger

sister were offered places on a literacy programme run by the Pakistan Bible Society and supported by you here in England and Wales.

The sisters learned how to read the Bible and how to write. Using her literacy skills, Haniya secured a job in a local garment factory. Her skills impressed the factory manager and she was promoted.

'Now I am a supervisor of the garments which we bring home and distribute to other women,'

“
Christians make up less than two per cent of Pakistan's overwhelmingly Muslim population”

she says. 'I have now started giving work out to more women in the area, on which I get a small commission.'

In addition to the practical social benefits of being able to read and write, the Christian women graduating from this programme are now able to more easily share Bible stories with family and friends.

Haniya was recently honoured to read from the Scriptures at the Pakistan Bible Society's annual general meeting.

'I miss my father. If he had seen me read the Bible in the big church in front of the gathering, he would have been very proud. I am thankful for our church leaders, teachers, and Bible Society for providing the beacon of light in our lives.'

*Name changed for security reasons.

Facts & figures



Since 2014, more than **58,000** women have learned to read the Bible through this literacy project in Pakistan.



Last year, **5,655** students were provided with a certificate of achievement and an Urdu Large Print New Testament from the Pakistan Bible Society after graduating.



A further **3,500** women are expected to graduate this year.



The literacy rate for Pakistani women is **64 per cent** – already substantially lower than the global average of 83 per cent, according to UNESCO. However, within the predominantly Muslim country, the literacy rate for Christian women is only 34 per cent.

“
The Christian women graduating from this programme are now able to more easily share Bible stories with family and friends.”



Celebrate Christmas with Bible Society!

Brand new resources for 2023 – including two brilliant children’s booklets for both primary and toddler ages with accompanying resources, festive Christmas cards and stickers, and so much more – are waiting to be explored.

Order now from biblesociety.org.uk/christmaswia or call 01793 418222.

1 Festive Fred Finds the Greatest Gift

(primary age booklet) – journey with Fred as he snoozes in his bedroom and wakes up in the middle of the very first Christmas! Also available in Welsh, Ukrainian, Russian, Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese as the perfect missional gifts for your church and community. £3 per copy; bulk discounts apply.

Accompanied by an energetic free instant nativity and charming video retelling with the author, Dai Woolridge.

2 It’s Nearly Time! A Christmas Rhyme

(toddler age booklet) – sing the story to the tune of ‘Twinkle, twinkle, little star’, count the stars, find the animals and make their sounds in this delightful interactive Christmas booklet for your little ones. Also available in Welsh. £3 per copy; bulk discounts apply.

Accompanied by craft and prayer activities for your toddler group to engage with during the Advent season.

3 Family Advent Box

The Family Advent Box will make for a FAB Christmas season in your home. It’s packed with ideas and everything you need for interactive, memory-making family fun, suitable for all ages. Learn more about Christmas and each other, while engaging in some easy and inexpensive activities. £12 per box.

4 Festive Christmas stickers

to brighten up your cards and gifts: £2.75 for a pack of four sheets.

5 Colourful Christmas cards

with a verse inside. Available to buy in packs of 10, with five great designs: £5.50 per pack.



1

2

3



Scan here for more info or visit biblesociety.org.uk/christmaswia

4

5



YOUR Scripture in the kitchen

The recipe for Abraham and Sarah's Happy Meal was sent in by Margaret from Cumbria.

WORDS BY SIMON BARTZ

Last time, I invited you to send in your own Bible-inspired recipes, and one of them, from Margaret in Cumbria, got tastebuds tingling among Bible Society staff at our head office in Swindon.

Margaret admits she borrowed the recipe from an old book, but that's fine, because as we all know, old books are the best!

What Margaret has cleverly done is given this recipe a biblical context, and that's what Scripture in the Kitchen is really all about.

'My daughter loved it and said Abraham and Sarah definitely had something else to be happy about,' said Beth Read, our Fundraising Campaigns Manager, who tried out the recipe at home.

But let's allow Margaret to do the talking ...

Hi, I would like to say how much I enjoy the Scripture in the Kitchen column and wish to suggest a recipe I came across in an old cookery book (although I confess I haven't tried it!). It goes by the rather prosaic title of Beef Stew with Cheese; however, I prefer to call it Abraham and Sarah's Happy Meal as it recalls the food served by Abraham to the three men who visited him bringing the good news that he and his wife Sarah would have a child in their old age. Sarah, as we know, famously laughed at the very idea. (Read the story in Genesis 18.1–15.)

Abraham and Sarah's Happy Meal

INGREDIENTS

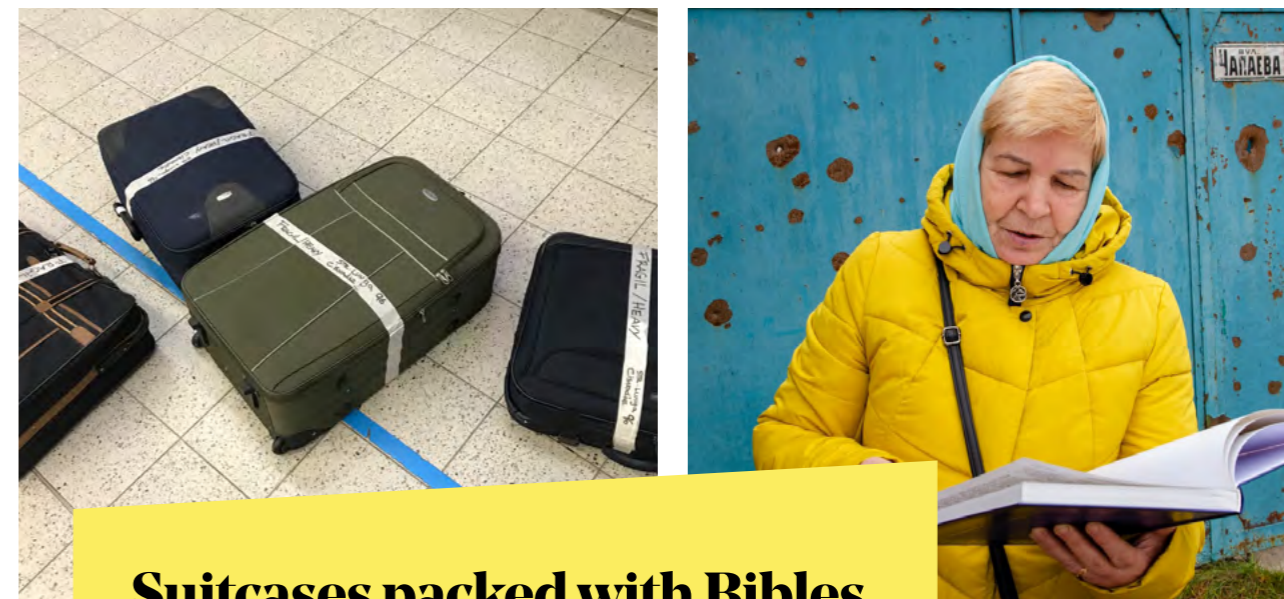
- 1kg brisket of beef, cubed
- 45ml mustard
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 50ml oil
- 1kg leeks, sliced
- 5ml sugar
- 30ml Worcestershire sauce
- 225ml beef stock
- 225g cheese, grated

METHOD

Mix together the beef, mustard and garlic. Heat oil in a flameproof casserole. Add the meat and fry until evenly browned. Throw in leeks, sugar and Worcestershire sauce.

Pour on the stock and bring to the boil. Cover and put the casserole dish into the oven preheated to 180C or Gas mark 4. Cook for two hours. Sprinkle over the cheese and cook uncovered for a further 10 minutes until cheese is golden brown. Serve with warm bread, preferably homemade!

Abraham's guests appear to have been offered milk to wash down their meal, but Margaret suggests something more fruity to accompany it!



Suitcases packed with Bibles. Destination: Ukraine

WORDS BY JAMES HOWARD-SMITH

A woman looks at a Scripture book given to her by the Bible Society in Irpin, where eight civilians were killed by Russian shelling as they tried to flee the area. Photo credit: Ukrainian Bible Society

One stand-out case of Bible outreach for Ukrainians is Jay Diaz, a pilot who flies from Stansted. Through his partnership with a Romanian charity, Finding Hope, where his friend Jack works, Jay was able to get 100 kilogrammes' worth of Scripture resources into Ukraine itself. From Bible Society, he ordered just over 200 Bibles and New Testaments, plus 150 copies of the Scripture-based *Beyond Disaster: A Survivor's Guide to Spiritual First Aid*.

He packed them all, swaddled in clothes, into four suitcases. It's only by a miracle he didn't face monstrous luggage costs. 'It was going to be £50 for each additional item of baggage,' Jay said. But the online order form he was using crashed, and when he logged in to pick up the process he found the charge had inexplicably plummeted to £20 per item. 'It was a miracle – an actual miracle!'

So Jay flew to Romania and he handed over his immense

Scripture haul to the Finding Hope charity. Finding Hope serves Romania's orphaned children and, since the war, it's been supplying Ukrainian churches.

Finding Hope happened to have a girl from Ukraine staying when Jay arrived with his four suitcases. She was on her way back to Kyiv to be reunited with her father, a pastor, so she took the first batch of Bibles into Ukraine.



Jay and his friend Jack

The majority of the haul formed part of a huge shipment, including generators, that went by road to the Odesa region in the south of Ukraine. Jay heard that Bibles had been shared

between two churches, one Baptist and one Pentecostal. It was a while after Jay had returned home that he got news that a pastor who leads a church in Sokhil had received the final suitcase.

Jay's inspiration is a verse from Romans: 'In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body' (Romans 12.5, GNB). 'I'm not a great missionary,' he says. 'God just calls us to serve according to our blessings and abilities. He brings us together from different backgrounds for his great purposes.'



Scan here for updates on Ukraine or visit biblesociety.org.uk/ukrainelatest



James Howard-Smith, Digital Fundraiser

Your letters & comments



WIA is very informative and encouraging. Articles would be better kept short and with photos making it easy to absorb, quick to read.

Sid, Taffs Well

Compared to Bible in Transmission (our theological journal – Editor), Word in Action is insubstantial and unsatisfying. I used to enjoy the intellectual rigour of Bible in Transmission. I never read red top newspapers or ‘celebrity’ (populist) magazines and I never do more than glance through WIA.

John, Ellesmere Port

Thank you again for another wonderful WIA magazine. It’s full of encouraging news from so many areas of your mission. I’m so glad to learn that the Open the Book storytelling project (see photo) is prospering in so many nations and giving joy to more and more children. Every page it ‘relates’ news that’s heart-warming and positive. A joy to read.

Lillian, Blackburn

Simon: As you can see from the above three comments, our supporters have wide-ranging reading tastes. In WIA, I try to cover as much ground as possible to give you a greater idea of the impact your support is having. You can view Bible in Transmission at: biblesociety.org.uk/bible-in-transmission



I usually read the whole of Word in Action and in the past when I was producing a church magazine I have asked permission from Bible Society to quote from an article.

Catriona, Glasgow

Simon: We are very pleased when supporters such as Catriona ask us if they can reproduce one of our articles in their church magazine. So please do contact us about this, folks. All we usually ask for is that Bible Society is credited when you republish.

This magazine is so encouraging and could be summed up by the phrase ‘faith in action’. Hopefully we’ll be looking at The Romans Course and putting our faith into action!

John, Cheltenham

Simon: You can find out more about The Romans Course on our website. And don’t worry, Andrew is sans Roman helmet while presenting the course. Blame me for dressing Andrew up in that garb for the cover of the last edition!



Very encouraging to hear about Bible Society work in Egypt where it is easy to forget we have Christian brothers and sisters living under pressure, and great news that Bible Society is to have a presence in the new city area of Cairo.

Peter, Little Broughton

Email us your thoughts at WIA@biblesociety.org.uk

We may publish your comment together with your first name and your town, city or county. If you do not wish your comment to be published then indicate this by writing ‘not for publication’.

We reserve the right to edit letters for style and length. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of Bible Society.

One verse



Noel Amos
Supporter Experience Officer
‘Good answer!’ he said. ‘Now go home, for the demon has left your daughter’ (Mark 7.29, NLT).

I love this response that Jesus gives to the Syrophenician woman in Mark’s Gospel. Jesus often commended people for their faith, but this is the only time in all the Gospels that Jesus commends someone for their intelligence – and it’s a

woman. She would have been marginalised for her gender, her race and her daughter’s condition, but Jesus honoured her.

I remember reading this verse the first time this became apparent to me, and feeling not only loved by Jesus as a woman, but in awe of him in a new way.

I now knew a Jesus who let himself be beaten in an argument by an outcast Gentile woman with a demon-possessed daughter. He wasn’t afraid to take on public shame for losing to her if it meant uplifting her in front of people that had decided she was worthless.

I’m thankful for verses like this one that not only celebrate women, but bring me closer to a Jesus who was willing to give up his power and rights as the son of God to serve humanity.

Bible people



Lisa Cherrett
Editorial Project Manager

My faith journey started when my infant school teacher told me there was a mysterious thing called ‘Sunday school’. I got permission to join one, and there I heard my first Bible stories, which we kids then illustrated for ourselves with wax

crayons on rough, coloured sugar paper. My first Sunday school prize was an RSV Bible, which was soon rendered out-of-date when a young trendy curate introduced the Good News Bible to Family Service. Bible studies at church and youth group were still a bit boring (lots of facts with no real engagement), but passages like Psalm 91 and Isaiah 40 were my go-to chapters when I went through a time of anxiety in my teens.

After A Levels in English, History and Music, I took a somewhat bizarre detour that gave me a BSc degree in Psychology and no idea what to do with it. But a lightbulb moment at the age of 25 brought me to my first editing job. I moved into

Sorry!

‘The Supporter Care Team have seen many changes these last few months, including the installation of a new database and phone system. We’re aware there have been a number of technical issues and this has resulted in a dip in our normal service levels.

‘We all wish to express our gratitude for your patience during this time. We are glad to say that we’ve worked through these difficulties and are looking forward to serving you better. Thank you.’

Katie Knight, Supporter Care Manager.

If you wish to share any feedback or thoughts about the Supporter Care Department, please email:
elaine.dony@biblesociety.org.uk

Christian publishing eight years later and spent the next couple of decades editing a huge range of books, from RE resources to prayer guides, to commentaries by academic theologians. I’m now the Editorial Project Manager at Bible Society, working mainly on the publication of full Bibles, including new editions of the GNB (like the Children’s Rainbow Edition). I would never have imagined doing that when I was a child in church!

The Bible, to me, is like a kaleidoscope. It reveals different patterns with every twist in our experience – from childhood, throughout the different life stages of adulthood, and on into old age. There’s always something new to discover!

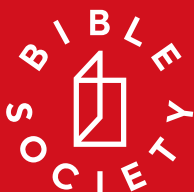
Brand new children's Christmas booklets! Order your copy today.

The perfect gifts for primary and toddler age children in your family, church, school and community, to share the nativity story.

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Scan here for more info or visit biblesociety.org.uk/christmaswia



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