

Bible for Cuba's youth

In a country that has suffered under a communist dictatorship for almost 60 years, thousands of young people are getting their very first look at a Bible. It is entitled the *Truth for Youth Bible*. In the front of this Bible are graphic novel-formatted short stories that deal with issues young people are up against today. The Cuban Department of Religious Affairs has given permission for the *Truth for Youth Bible* to be distributed to 1.4 million young people in Cuba.

OneNewsNow

Welcome reversal in Sudan

The Sudanese government has cleared a shipment of Arabic-language Bibles believed to have been held in Port Sudan for six years. This is an answer to prayer for two million Sudanese Christians who need Bibles. The release of the Bibles coincided with the return of property to 19 Sudanese churches.

It is believed these actions of the Sudanese government are part of its push to be removed from the US list of terror-sponsoring nations, though there is little evidence of progress regarding human rights in general. The government's aim is still to Arabise and Islamise Sudan totally. The nation is ranked fourth on the World Watch List of countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

World Watch Monitor

India's child brides

One third of all the child brides in the world are in India. Statistics from one Indian state reveal that almost 52% of women in the 20-25 age range were married before they were 18. This widespread practice means that children are deprived of their dignity and forced into cruel relationships while still in their early to mid-teens. Often they are sold into prostitution before they are 20.

Various Christian organisations are working among these captive women to bring practical aid and the hope of salvation.

FEBC

From a church elder in Malawi:

"We distribute these books to churches, Bible colleges, Christian workers and schools, and also give clothes to the elderly, disabled and orphans. These help many people to have understanding about God's information and get practical help because of their poverty and long distances to walk to places of worship.

When we visit people in many districts we meet them sleeping with empty stomachs and tough times. We explain the Bible and give them food and clothes when we can, and we need your guidance how to ease the suffering. Please don't leave us alone. Thank you for sponsoring Bible helps to our especially dry bones through your messages and anointed books. These are the only books and aids we have and we are proclaiming God's love with them."

Bridgeway

A one-time 'Christian city' in Iraq

When Islamic State advanced into Mosul in 2014, about 200,000 Iraqi Christians fled the city and its neighbouring regions on the Plains of Nineveh. These Christians lost everything, and the light of Christ in Mosul seems to have been all but extinguished. Only a handful of Christian families have dared to return to the city, but they no longer own houses and work is hard to find. The militant Islamists may have gone, but the local Muslims have taken over most Christian property (even though it is mostly rubble) and are hostile to the return of the original owners.

The Christians of Turkey

Estimates vary, but it is believed that in Turkey the number of committed followers of Jesus Christ is 5,000 to 7,000 (out of a population of nearly 80 million). Spiritual development in churches and individuals moves ahead slowly, hampered by inadequate biblical knowledge among both church leaders and members. But solid conversions remind us that God is still able to work through the people and resources available. There is also an influx of Iranian Christians, though the infiltration of Iranian secret police has forced Iranian believers to keep a low profile – for the sake of local Christians as well as themselves.

New Life

Tunisia and Mauritania

The Muslim countries of Tunisia and Mauritania, in north and north-western Africa, have for many centuries had very few indigenous Christians. But in both countries a new church, made up of converts from Islam, is slowly emerging. In some isolated areas believers have been found who were unaware of the existence of other Christians in their country. These believers are experiencing a new sense of peace, joy and fellowship.

The Tatars of Russia

Across Omsk, Siberia, good numbers of Tatar Muslims are turning to Christ. A congregation of Russian and Tatar Christians, which for three years met in cafés and other hired premises, now has its own building. Christians can now meet for worship, hold ministries for children and the disabled, and have their own cultural centre, decorated in traditional Tatar style. This also gives them training space for outreach ministries. They have a 'field' of 10,000 people and, now that they have their own church building, the authorities have for the first time shown some acceptance and trust. At other times and in other places the authorities see Protestant Christians as a dangerous sect.

Barnabas Fund

'Sword' of weaponised Islam in Indonesia

In 2016 Islamists in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation, prevented Ahok, a popular ethnic Chinese Christian, from being re-elected Governor of Jakarta. First they warned Muslims against voting for him (citing the Koran); then they used a trumped-up charge of blasphemy to destroy him. Today, as Ahok serves his two-year prison term, the 'sword of Islam' hangs over the head of every potential leader.

In April 2019 Indonesia will hold its first presidential election of the 'post-Ahok era'. To protect himself, President Widodo has chosen a fundamentalist Islamic cleric as his running mate. This running mate, as chairman of the Ulema Council and one of Indonesia's most influential clerics, was the one who signed the *fatwa* that destroyed Ahok.

But out of this anti-Christian environment comes news that Indonesians are converting to Christianity at a greater rate than ever before. Figures are hard to verify, but some reports claim that three to four million have 'turned to Christ' over the past year. However, because religious conversion is such a sensitive issue, many 'converts' still dress as Muslims. Whatever the true situation may be, these are clearly pivotal days in Indonesia.

Religious Liberty / Assist News

Violence with Impunity

Most persecuted Christians live in cultures that have little respect for human rights or Christian values. Christians are viewed as counter-cultural. In many cases police and local authorities hate Christians more than they respect the law or their duty to uphold it. When belligerents know that Christians can be bashed, raped, robbed, imprisoned or even murdered with impunity, violent persecution quickly becomes the order of the day. For Christians in the West, such extreme insecurity is (currently) unimaginable.

Religious Liberty

Sign language for the deaf

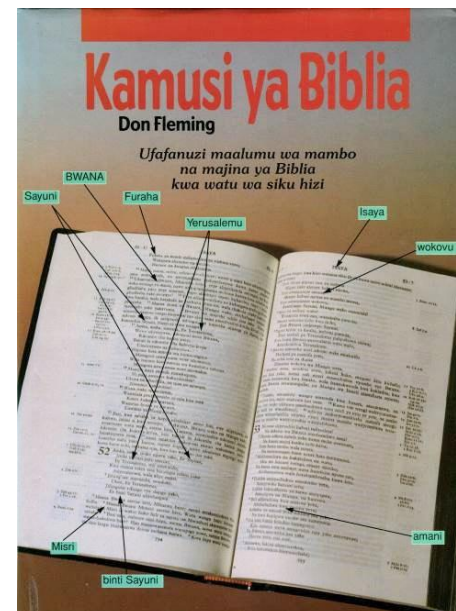
Auslan is the name of a project started twenty years ago to translate the Bible into Australian Deaf Sign Language. The productions were originally on video tape, then on DVDs and now are about to go onto an app that can be easily downloaded. The challenge is the same as for the paper versions of the Scriptures, namely, to ensure that the Word of God is available to bring people to saving faith and to equip them for Christian living.

Sower

Publisher in Tanzania

"The number of Bridgeway books we have produced in Swahili is now over 200,000. We have just printed another 7,000 of the Bible Dictionary. It is the best seller. It goes into many book sets of Bible colleges. Last Sunday I was at a Bible college graduation in South Tanzania, and each of the graduates received a set of books that always included the Bible Dictionary.

Bridgeway



Swahili: Bridgeway Bible Dictionary