



Bible a Month

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You're sharing the love of Jesus with children with special needs and disabilities at the Tebow Down Centre in a very challenging region of Guatemala. Photos: Matt Cooper/Bible Society

Eyewitness Report

Open the Book takes Bible stories into schools worldwide and in Guatemala it's found a very special home.



By Beth Read

Head of Fundraising

Children with special needs love the greatest story ever told



GUATEMALA

Alfredo and Irene Salazar's son was an outcast in society. He wasn't even made to feel welcome at their local church. The reason for all of this was that their son Alfredo Jr. had Down's syndrome. But the couple, who live in one of the poorest regions of Guatemala, prayed for guidance and received an amazing response.

Thanks to the generous donations of Christians from other churches in the region they were able to set up Tebow Down Centre in northern Chimaltenango, an area where two thirds of residents live in poverty. The centre's aim is serve children who have special needs and/or physical disabilities.

But God's answer to prayer didn't

end there. Alfredo and Irene now run a total of four centres for a total of 150 children with special needs or disabilities. Here they receive a mix of therapeutic care and education. And, just recently, they set up a school, too.

Bible Society's Open the Book programme, which is flourishing in Guatemala since it began in early 2023 (see the Guatemala Country Profile), has also been introduced to the school. This amazing ministry is supported in Guatemala by your kind giving through Bible a Month. You're enabling these children to understand the message of hope found in the Scriptures, and to understand that Jesus loves them.

Scripture storytelling teams visit Tebow Down fortnightly and have adapted their Bible stories to be fully understood and appreciated by the children with special needs or disabilities that they serve.

When we visited, the children were having a ball in the classroom! The story was of God's creation, and the children would go to the front of the class and add pictures of animals to a huge book. Later, the children were pretending to be superheroes with face paint and capes. They were singing, running around, and pulling off some impressive superhero dance moves! It was a joy to watch, with Bible messages being clearly revealed. We could really feel the presence of the Lord.

There is little governmental support for children with special needs in Guatemala so Tebow Down Centre staff members meet with new parents who have just found out their child has special needs or a disability. The staff tell the parents that their child is such a special gift from God, which is so important when they are sometimes hearing negative views from other people

about their child.

The teachers at the school dream big for these children. The focus is on what the children can do and achieve, rather than the barriers and difficulties they face. Parents are also encouraged to expand the capabilities of the children by providing them with new challenges and then celebrating their amazing achievements.

The staff tell the parents that their child is such a special gift from God.

The oldest student at the new school, Josselin pictured below, is 18 and has both learning and physical disabilities. She loves to paint and dance, and make jewellery at craft lessons. And she really enjoys the challenge of mathematical puzzles.

'I'm so blessed here,' she told us. 'They lack facilities for me at the

public school so I couldn't stay there, so I came to Tebow Down when I was 16.'

At Tebow Down she also takes part in communication classes and benefits from physical therapy sessions, as well as learning how to cook. Tebow Down is teaching these children and young people crucial life skills so they can be independent in the future.

Though there's something greater to be learned at Tebow. 'I like learning about God, and that's why I love Open the Book,' says Josselin.

Thanks for your amazing support of the Open the Book programme. And you're not just taking the Bible into schools in Guatemala. Open the Book has also been introduced in Ecuador, Honduras, Argentina, Albania, Gambia, Uganda, Kenya, Angola, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique. None of this amazing work would have been possible without your kind giving here in England and Wales, which is where Open the Book started many years ago.



Bible stories are putting smiles on the faces of children and staff members at the Tebow Down Centre in Guatemala (Beth Read at back on the left).



Josselin, 18, says she loves learning more about God through the Open the Book programme.

Mission Update

With your help, more than one million Bibles have been distributed across Ukraine since the start of the war.



Thanks to your support, Revd Anatoliy Raychynets of the Ukrainian Bible Society has been able to get more Scriptures to troops on the front line.

'God came to me in the horrors of war'



For more than two years now, our colleagues at the Ukrainian Bible Society have been taking aid, medicine and the Scriptures to people across the country, and increasingly to areas of fighting.

When Ukrainian Bible Society Deputy General Secretary Revd Anatoliy Raychynets returned from a trip to visit troops on the front line in woods outside Bakhmut recently, he met soldiers not only manning a cannon, but also reading Psalm 91.

'We were interrupted by shell explosions,' said Anatoliy. 'When I found myself in a trench next to a soldier called Kyrlyo, he told me that two weeks ago Bible Society colleagues had come and given him a Bible.'

Kyrlyo told him: 'I have never been to church, never read the Bible, because I never had one. Here, at the combat positions, in short moments of silence, I started reading prayers from Psalms.

'I feel warmth inside me while reading. I have never experienced anything like this in my life. I

realised that it was God who came to me, a sinner, at the age of 57. He came here, to the swamp, to the horrors of the war, to find me. Thank you for the Bible. It revived me to a new life, a life with God.'

'I have never been to church, never read the Bible, because I never had one,' said one soldier in the trenches. He is now a Christian.

Then Kyrlyo asked Anatoliy to pray with him.

'A few minutes later, when everything had quieted down, we continued reading Psalm 91. My voice was a bit hoarse because it was -10 in the forest and I was quite cold,' said Anatoliy.

'God works in an amazing way. His word is alive and active. Thank you that we have Bibles and are able

to give them to people in difficult circumstances.'

In England and Wales, Bible Society supporters have responded to the war by generously donating more than £1.17 million. This has not only been used to help distribute more than one million Bibles, but also to provide the Bible-based 'Beyond Disaster' handbook to help people to deal with trauma suffered during the conflict, as well as other help for colleagues such as Anatoliy.

It was thanks to the regular giving of Bible a Month supporters that we were able to get Scriptures to Ukraine after the war started without any delay.

Anatoliy wants to thank you for your support. You can watch a video of him from the front line on your BAM extra webpage.

Go to biblesociety.org.uk/extrabam or scan the code below.



Answer to prayer ...

New Bible gets green light from Chinese authorities

The Chinese authorities have given the go-ahead for the printing of Bible Society's translation of the whole Bible into the Inner Mongolian minority language. Praise the Lord!

In last winter's edition of Bible a Month, you were informed that we were awaiting permission to publish the translation. Well, just a few months later permission was granted, what an answer to prayer this is!

The approval caps an amazing project that has taken 18 years to complete, with the translation itself being completed in 2021. Your regular giving through Bible a Month made this long-term project possible.

The Bible proofs can now be sent to the printer for publication and later distributed in China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, a vast swathe of land that borders the country of Mongolia. The success of the project is an example of the trust the authorities in China have in Bible Society. We've carefully built up and maintained this trust over many years, and it means your giving has direct impact in mainland China.

'We appreciate the prayers of Bible

Society supporters all these past 18 years,' said Liu Zhanrong of the translation team, a group of experts that you've been supporting.

'The translation of the Bible into the Mongolian language holds extraordinary significance for the 4.2 million Inner Mongolians who share a common heritage. Throughout history, Mongolians have predominantly worshipped idols, performed rituals to drive away evil spirits, burned incense and worshipped mountains and rivers, ancestors, and sought auspicious days for important events such as weddings, funerals and starting businesses,' explained Liu.

'Due to the spread of the gospel, believers have been freed from such superstitious practices. But there are still many who do not yet know God. Through God's word they can be saved.'



A woman wearing the Inner Mongolian traditional costume during an earlier celebration of the New Testament translation into their minority language. Your kind giving means the whole Bible will soon be published. Photo credit: Tan Tan Yeo/UBS-CP

JULY PRAYERS

Thank God that the Chinese authorities approved this Bible Society translation. Pray for a smooth publication and distribution process for the new Bible.

Pray for the people of Inner Mongolia, that they will trust in the gospel truth only, and that many more people will come to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ, helped in many cases by their engagement with their new Bible.

Free online Pentecost Reflection series

The Holy Spirit is alive and active, blowing like a powerful wind and burning like an unquenchable fire!

This Pentecost, explore the dynamic working of the Holy Spirit. Discover how the Holy Spirit moves through the Bible and inspires journeys in our own lives.

Sign up for free to Bible Society's Pentecost Reflection series and you'll receive eight short devotions

directly to your inbox. Written by Bible Society contributors from a diverse range of backgrounds, you'll be encouraged to open your life more fully to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Why not include these devotions in your quiet time? Or plug in your headphones and listen to the audio as you go for a morning jog or wash up after dinner?

Join us for this journey with the Holy Spirit and be inspired to go deeper with God in your life.

Sign up for free today at biblesociety.org.uk/pentecost

(This is an online only resource.)

**Pentecost
2024**

'Sent out by the Holy Spirit'
ACTS 13:4

Guatemala



Q'eqchi speaker and teacher Gwenda Chung said, 'Scripture in our language really helps children understand God's word.'
Photo credit: Bible Society of Guatemala

Open the Book has been an amazing success story in its first year in Guatemala, and what a blessing this is in a country where 32 per cent of the population are aged 14 or under – that's twice as many children as in the UK.

If you enjoyed the Eyewitness Report, you can read more amazing stories about this project at biblesociety.org.uk/extrabam

But Open the Book is not the only project you support in the most populous nation in Central America at 18 million. You've also been supporting long-term Bible translation projects in a country that boasts more than 20 languages.

In 2019, a huge parade was held when the Bible was published in the Achí of Cubulco language. And right now you are supporting the translation of a revision of the Bible into Q'eqchi, another Mayan language. The Q'eqchi community numbers 1.5 million people and it has a strong cultural identity, with many not speaking Spanish. This much-needed revision, combined with a literacy and Bible engagement programme, will strengthen the Christian identity of this community.

MAY PRAYERS

Pray for wisdom, strength and perseverance for the translation teams working on the revision of the whole Bible into the Q'eqchi language. Pray for the day when the Bible is accessible in all Mayan languages.

Open the Book teams are now taking Bible storytelling into deprived areas of Guatemala City, where many young children are lured into gangs. Pray that children will look to Jesus rather than getting involved in crime.

Ukraine



A Ukrainian girl holds up a gift box and a Children's Bible that you have helped provide. Photo credit: Ukrainian Bible Society

Anatoliy was carrying his sleeping seven-year-old son Georgy in Kyiv as Russian missiles rained down all around. He laid him down near beside a concrete wall in a bomb shelter. Georgy woke up with the words: 'Dad, are there rockets again? Why doesn't God answer our prayers for the war to end?'

The Ukrainian Bible Society Deputy General Secretary was reminded of

the story of Simeon (see Luke 2), who waited on God's promise that he would not die until he saw the Christ, the salvation of all nations.

Inside the shelter, Anatoliy shared Simeon's story with Georgy and other children, saying it was a reminder that the Lord always fulfils his promises.

'Sometimes we just need to wait patiently, trusting him,' said Anatoliy as explosions were heard outside.

By the time you read this, it will have been two years since the war started. At the time of writing there is no peace in sight and if and when this conflict ends, only God knows. But one thing is for sure, Ukraine will be needing our healing prayers for many years to come.

For more Ukraine content visit biblesociety.org.uk/ukrainelatest

JUNE PRAYERS

Pray for peace in Ukraine. Ask God to bless the victims of this violence with courage, perseverance and hope.

Pray that people in Ukraine will engage with the more than one million Bibles that have been distributed by the Ukrainian Bible Society.

Thank God that soldiers such as Kyrylo (see Mission Update) have given their life to Christ on the front lines of the conflict after receiving Scriptures. Pray that more soldiers, both Ukrainian and Russian, will encounter the love and peace found only in Jesus.

Guatemala

FACTFILE



AREA

42,042 square miles,
about half the size of
the UK



POPULATION

18 million



LANGUAGES

Spanish (official),
with 23 officially-
recognised indigenous
languages



LITERACY RATE

83.3%



‘Jesus said to them, “Go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to the whole human race.”’

MARK 16.15 (GNB)

Ukraine

FACTFILE



AREA

233,032 square miles,
two and a half times
the size of the UK



POPULATION

43.5 million



LANGUAGES

Ukrainian (official),
Russian



LITERACY RATE

100%



‘God says, “I will save those who love me and will protect those who acknowledge me as LORD.’

PSALM 91.14 (GNB)