

LIVES CHANGED BY GOD'S WORD

# Record

CHRISTMAS 2019

## GOD BRINGS LIFE AFTER THE FLOOD

A New Testament in  
Toba is transforming  
this indigenous  
Argentinian group

PAGE 18

CHRISTMAS GIFT CATALOG INSIDE!



AMERICAN  
BIBLE  
SOCIETY

“I am here with good news for you,  
which will bring great joy to all the people.”

LUKE 2:10



LEADERSHIP

**Chairman of the Board**  
Jeffrey Brown

**President and CEO**  
Roy L. Peterson

**Leadership Team**  
Robert Briggs  
Andrew Hood  
Steven Kao  
Whitney Kuniholm  
Mark Wilson

RECORD STAFF

**Executive Director**  
Tom Mathew

**Executive Editor**  
Bran Van Deirse

**Creative Director**  
Rob Giorgio

**Editor-in-chief**  
Laura Chan

**Art Director**  
Caleb Komorowski

**Proofreader**  
Barb Delp

**Production**  
Brian Maloney

CONTACT

**American Bible Society Record**  
ABSTRecord@AmericanBible.org

**Bible-A-Month™ Partnership**  
888-227-8262  
BAMInfo@AmericanBible.org

**Catalog or Bible Requests**  
800-32-BIBLE  
Bibles.com  
Info@AmericanBible.org

**Gift Planning Programs**  
(for Stock or Real Estate Gifts, Gift Annuities, Charitable Trusts, Bequests, Wills, and free Estate Planning Services) 215-309-0900 or GiftPlanner@AmericanBible.org

**Partner Care**  
866-895-4448  
ABSDonor@AmericanBible.org

GET UPDATES

Twitter.com/AmericanBible  
Facebook.com/AmericanBible

ABOUT THE COVER

Zacarias Florencio is a Toba speaker from Argentina. He received his first copy of the Bible in Toba in 2019. He says he used to abuse alcohol and use drugs, but having Scripture in his language helped him change these negative behaviors and follow the God of the Bible.

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 United Bible Societies, a fellowship of the Bible Societies throughout the world cooperating to make Scriptures available to people everywhere in their own language.

Published since 1918, American Bible Society Record is the official periodical of American Bible Society and the second-oldest continuous publication in the United States. It is published three times a year and is sent to as many of our supporters as budget allows.

Postage is paid in Philadelphia, PA, and additional mailing offices. Other publications are encouraged to reprint the text of any Record article, but prior written permission must be obtained from American Bible Society Record to reproduce any images. Publications reprinting the text of a Record article must include a credit line. Please send a copy of the issue to the Record at 101 North Independence Mall East FL8, Philadelphia, PA 19106-2155.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the Good News Translation® © 1992 American Bible Society. All rights reserved.



GREAT JOY TO ALL PEOPLE

A message from Roy Peterson,  
American Bible Society President and CEO

*“The angel said to [the shepherds], ‘Don’t be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people’”* (Luke 2:10).

I love the unlikely scene of a host of angels announcing the Savior’s birth to shepherds. I wonder if those shepherds felt unworthy to be the ones to receive the most important news in history. I wonder if their lives were forever changed when they heard Jesus had been born to bring great joy to all the people, including them.

Thanks to the generosity of partners like you, I’ve seen many people go through a “shepherd moment.” For those of us who have always had access to a Bible in our language, it can be difficult to grasp the significance of being without God’s Word—and then suddenly having the Good News in words that speak directly to your heart. When people groups receive their first-ever copies of the Bible, it’s a light shining from heaven. It’s the angels’ announcement being made all over again: There is good news that will bring you, and others like you, ultimate joy!

Then, here at home, many people need a Bible too. Even if they have one, they often do not see how it speaks to their lives. When a pastor or friend helps them understand the truths of Scripture are for them, it opens their eyes to God’s reality. It’s a shepherd moment. Similarly, when people have had their hearts shredded by trauma, it’s incredible how the balm of Scripture can lead them to their own shepherd moments. I’m blessed by how the Bible-based trauma healing ministry is helping people across the globe find healing and great joy in Jesus.

This Christmas season, I pray you have your own shepherd moment. I hope you experience anew the gift of Jesus. I hope you appreciate anew how the Bible changes our lives when we soak in its words. May you have a blessed Christmas full of God’s light.

Serving together,

COVER PHOTO: Shamalia Snipe, American Bible Society; OPENING SPREAD PHOTO: Joyce van de Veen, Netherlands Bible Society

TOP RIGHT PHOTO: Shamalia Snipe, American Bible Society; BOTTOM RIGHT PHOTO: Joyce van de Veen, Netherlands Bible Society

Record

Christmas 2019 | Volume 165 | Number 3

INSIDE

12 FIVE BIBLE MINISTRY UPDATES

*How your gifts are making a difference around the world*

25 PARTNER PROFILE

*A church is sharing the Gospel from Houston to the Holy Land*

28 QUIET TIME

*What we can learn from Scripture and stained glass this Christmas*

30 IN MEMORIAM

*Remembering our loved ones who have passed into glory*



18 FORGOTTEN, FLOODED, FOUND

*Floods and centuries can't keep God's Word away from the Toba of Argentina*



6

I AM A CHILD OF GOD

*“Untouchable” orphans in India discover their heavenly Father’s love*

I  
AM  
A  
CHILD  
OF  
GOD

“UNTOUCHABLE” ORPHANS  
IN INDIA DISCOVER THEIR  
HEAVENLY FATHER’S LOVE

*by Windsor Groves*



iny hands, on tiny arms, on a tiny, hungry body. Four-year-old Aisha\* waded into the rubbish pile lining one of the many slum streets of Bangalore, India.

She picked through the scraps in search of a salvageable bite. Her tummy growled for warm roti, but a mango pit, darkened by days in the blistering sun, would have to do. She closed her eyes, pretending she was dipping into a bowl of curried lentils like mum used to make.

That was before mum got too sick. Before papa went out and never came back. Before Aisha and her two brothers were left to fend for themselves on the streets.

Now, at the age of four, Aisha scavenged among the poorest, lowest caste of India's social system—the “untouchables.”

## “IS ANYONE THERE? PLEASE, SOMEONE HELP!”

As the sun set, casting an amber glow across the trash-scape, the familiar raspy wheeze arose in Aisha's chest. It was much worse tonight. Tuberculosis—Aisha couldn't even pronounce it, but she knew it made people go away and not come back. Panic and pain writhed between the coughing fits.

Aisha cried out, “Where are you, mum? Papa? Is anyone there? Please, someone help!”

It seemed like only a miracle could save Aisha.



For children living among the poorest of India's poor, there is no social safety net. Too often, children end up on the streets scrounging for food and hope.

### ■ GOD HEARS AISHA'S CRY

Isaiah 49:15 says, “Even if a mother should forget her child, I will never forget you.” God heard Aisha's cry. He was there with her, though she didn't know it. He would make Himself known to this precious child. He would call on His people to reach out and rescue Aisha.

### ■ GOD BUILDS AN ORPHANAGE

Years before Aisha found herself on the streets, God gave a woman named Latha\* a vision: to be a mother to those without. “I decided I wanted to save children,” Latha says. “Children for whom no one else cared.”

Latha and her husband followed God's call and built an orphanage to care for the abandoned street children of India, the Aishas waiting for a miracle.

At their orphanage, dozens of desperate children are loved and cared for all the way into adulthood. It isn't easy to keep up with so many eager mouths and growth spurts of a family this size. But God provides, day by day. And because of generous hearts like yours, these children receive rich, spiritual nourishment, too. Through your gift of God's Word, these children grow up with access to eternal hope.

“Every morning we have a devotion here and tell [the kids] Bible stories,” Latha says. “We want to give the love of God to these children who have been abandoned by their parents. They are loved and wanted by Him.”

Today, because of you, Aisha knows her true identity. She is not untouchable. She is a child of the living God.

“WE WANT TO GIVE THE LOVE OF GOD TO THESE CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN ABANDONED BY THEIR PARENTS. THEY ARE LOVED AND WANTED BY HIM.”

—MOTHER LATHA, HEAD OF AISHA’S ORPHANAGE

■ GOD PROVIDES FOOD FOR THE BELLY

“Wake up! Breakfast!” Mother Latha bellows from the orphanage’s kitchen. Ten years have gone by, and a 14-year-old Aisha jumps up, zig-zagging between beds, nudging the younger girls to get up.

Latha stirs a steaming pot of curried potatoes over the fire. A young boy shoves sticks into the flames while another spoons the fragrant sauce over mounds of fluffy rice. The room of thirty chattering children quiets as bread is dipped and rice is shoveled and every little belly grows a bit bigger than it was before. Aisha no longer has to imagine food in her hands.



Christian orphanages like Latha’s provide more than just food and shelter: they teach kids about their true identity in Jesus. Through the generosity of partners like you, we are able to provide children’s Bibles that help kids develop a strong relationship with God.

■ GOD PROVIDES FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Next on the menu is spiritual breakfast.

“Who knows where Job is in the Bible?” Latha asks. It’s a race as hands flip through the pages of Bibles you made available. The children settle down and listen as Mother Latha tells Job’s story.

Aisha’s eyes and ears are fixed as she takes in the Word of the Lord. “I really think of Job as an example. He literally lost everything and everyone,” Aisha says. “He continued to trust God. That is a lesson for me: do not rely on people but on God.”

Aisha thinks back over her life. The sickness, starvation, and abandonment. But a miracle took place: God saw her, rescued her, and used His Word to reveal Aisha’s true identity to her.

Now Aisha wants others to experience this same kind of miraculous transformation. “I can take care of the little ones and show them that they are God’s children. I want to continue to do this for poor children later on.”

Thank you for sending God’s Word to the fatherless. His promises are reaching the Aishas of the world, giving them a hope and a future. He is speaking to their hearts with this message of love: “I will never forget you.”

*\*Names changed to protect privacy.*



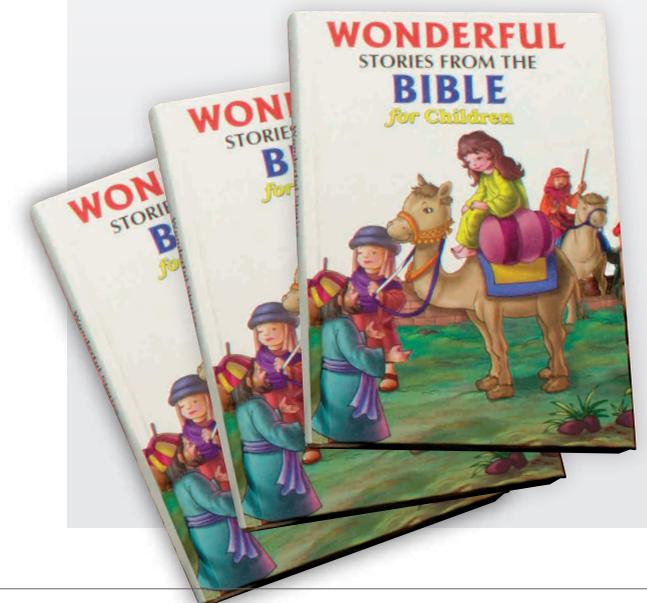
Tell children like Aisha that God will never forget them. Visit [give.bible/orphans](https://give.bible/orphans)



Now 14 years old, Aisha (left) is grateful to Mother Latha (right) for caring for her and teaching her about the God of the Bible.

40,000

children’s Bibles have been put into the hands and hearts of orphans like Aisha in the past three years, thanks to people like you!



# 5 BIBLE MINISTRY UPDATES

## FROM AROUND THE WORLD

GLIMPSES OF HOW GOD IS CHANGING LIVES ACROSS THE GLOBE, THANKS TO YOU



The Rev. Dr. Hung gives thanks to God for a Bible in the Cho language from the third highest peak in Myanmar, Mount Victoria.

1

### CHO BIBLE LAUNCH IN MYANMAR

For more than half a century, the Cho Chin (or *Mindat Chin*) people of Myanmar have been waiting for a Bible in their language. So when the Cho Bible was finally completed last May, there was a jubilant celebration. The day after the launch, Cho Chin people and the Bible Society gave thanks to God for His Word by hiking to the peak of Mount Victoria, the highest mountain in Myanmar's Chin State.

The Cho Chin people group was introduced to the saving power of Jesus 70 years ago. At the time, missionaries to the area said people almost never used the word "forgiveness." Instead, they leaned on revenge for justice, making murder commonplace. Now, however, because of the Good News of Jesus, they have dramatically

changed their behaviors. People now forgive and care for one another, and there are several large churches in town. On May 25, 2019, they received the first Bible in their language—allowing them to finally hear and understand God's full message.

The key Bible translator on the project, the Rev. Thang Ngai Om, is especially grateful to God for this Bible. He was born and raised in a Buddhist family. Then he met Jesus, and everything changed. When he decided he wanted to learn English, a local missionary convinced him to go a Bible school—even though he knew nothing about the Bible. He scored a zero on biblical knowledge on the entrance exam, but the principal allowed him to be admitted because he saw he was a promising student. He was right: Thang Ngai Om went on to study theology and become a pastor. Then he found his true life's calling in translating the Bible into Cho.

Thang Ngai Om dedicated more than 25 years of his life to finishing the Cho Bible. The journey to the translation office in Yangon from his home town took him almost a week each way, but he endured. When floods washed out the roads during the rainy season, he still made the journey to meet with translation consultants—almost losing his life and the Scripture manuscripts in one particularly risky river crossing.

In May, Thang Ngai Om held the completed Cho Bible for the first time. Through tears he declared every sacrifice he'd made to be worth it. "Even if God calls me, I am ready to go now," he says. "I am more than 70 years old now, and I am happy with my life—being a Christian, being a pastor, and being a Bible translator."

Thang Ngai Om believes this Bible will help draw his children and his children's children to God. "I have seen the Bible in my life, and it's all my legacy for the next generations," he says.

This translation is special to Thang Ngai Om for another reason: his father-in-law and mother-in-law, both more than 100 years old, were alive for the Bible dedication. They were elated to finally have the Bible in

their language. Thang Ngai Om's father-in-law spoke a emotional blessing over the Bible. Just one month later, he passed into eternity. Thang Ngai Om says, "Grandpa was waiting for the Holy Bible in our language."

Now, local believers are carrying hundreds of copies of the Cho Bible to their churches. Thank you for supporting translators like the Rev. Thang Ngai Om in bringing God's Word alive—both for current generations and for generations to come.

"GRANDPA WAS WAITING FOR THE HOLY BIBLE IN OUR LANGUAGE."

Translator Thang Ngai Om's father-in-law, who waited a lifetime for a full Bible in his language, prays a blessing over the new Cho Bible.



### BIBLE TRANSLATION IN MYANMAR

45

Bible translations completed, thanks to you

3

Bible translations launched in 2019

19

Bible translations waiting to start



PHOTOS COURTESY OF: Khori Lam, Bible Society of Myanmar



2

## USA: THE RELIEF OF GOD'S WORD

In 2019, you sent people affected by natural disasters in the U.S. more than 85,000 copies of Scripture, encouraging them in their time of need.



**25,000**

Bible portions to those impacted in the Carolinas by Hurricane Florence



**10,000**

Bible portions to Florida after Hurricane Michael



**10,000**

Bible portions to tornado survivors in 20 states



**5,000**

Bible portions to Tennessee after severe storms



**35,000**

Bible portions to those impacted by Hurricane Dorian

3

## BIBLES AND CHURCH GROWTH FOR AMERICA

### 2019 U.S. BIBLE BONANZA

Thanks to your generosity, 5.1 million people in America received Bible resources in 2019! Millions of Americans now have age- and language-appropriate Bibles and are receiving weekly devotionals to encourage them and help them live out the truths of God's Word. Some 1.34 million people surveyed said these resources help them grow in their relationship with God.

5.1M BIBLE RESOURCES DELIVERED TO



AMERICANS IN 2019, THANKS TO YOU

### A LOOK INSIDE AMERICA'S CHURCHES

Ministry leaders in 17 of the largest U.S. cities are receiving a toolkit that gives an in-depth analysis of their church's demographics, spiritual health, opportunities for growth, and strengths! Pray with us for the timeless answers of the Bible to support congregations across America. **Learn more and register your church at [abs.bible/healthychurch](https://abs.bible/healthychurch)**

4

## BIBLE-BASED TRAUMA HEALING

When in deep distress, people often conclude that God has abandoned them, is punishing them, or doesn't exist. Bible-based trauma healing exists to help people express their pain and connect to God. Adaptations of the ministry are helping children, teens, disaster victims, and prisoners. Story-based oral versions are speaking truth in communities with low literacy. Bible-based trauma healing radio and TV programs are declaring the healing power of God's Word to millions in remote areas.



CANCER SURVIVORS IN ARMENIA

Each year, 1 in 15 Armenian women are afflicted by breast cancer. This disease is often treated by a mastectomy, which leaves many women depressed, even after reconstructive surgery. Bible Society of Armenia is piloting Bible-based trauma healing for a group of 60 breast cancer survivors, providing them with spiritual, psychological, and social support. The women will be reminded that God is with them and that they are precious to Him!



FAMILIES OF VICTIMS IN SRI LANKA

In 2019, 359 people were killed in church bombings on Easter Sunday. The local Bible Society immediately responded to the deep emotional pain of these bombings by hosting Bible-based trauma healing groups. Through these groups, hundreds of Sri Lankans are finding fresh hope.



UNCHURCHED ADULTS IN THAILAND

In Bangkok, you helped launch 20 Bible-based trauma healing groups in churches this year. Through this ministry, churches in this key Thai city are becoming known as places where anyone can find peace and help to overcome past traumas. Pray for this church ministry to grow!



PRISONERS IN CALIFORNIA, USA

Catholic prison ministers serving in the San Francisco Bay Area are providing Bible-based trauma healing to inmates at San Quentin and other area prisons. Trauma healing is helping inmates see themselves through God's eyes and move toward emotional and spiritual healing.



PERSECUTED YOUTH IN GHANA

Youth in Ghana are often forced into domestic service, street hawking, heavy labor, and the sex trade. But praise God that around 5,000 youth each year are learning that God loves them and has more for their lives! Bible-based trauma healing is being introduced to Ghanaian children and teens who have been subjected to devastating physical, emotional, and spiritual abuses—helping them understand their true identity as God's children.



You can share Bibles and Bible-based trauma healing with even more people today! Visit [give.bible](https://give.bible)

>> **354.6M**  
 SCRIPTURES DISTRIBUTED  
 GLOBALLY LAST YEAR



**5** SUPPORTING THE CHURCH, GLOBALLY



**20,358**  
**NEW TESTAMENTS**  
**IN PERU**

In 2019, the Peruvian Bible Society gave 20,358 people copies of the New Testament and Bible reading plans. By the end of 2020, the Bible Society plans to share Bibles with more than 100,000 Peruvians! Please join us in praying for new believers who are receiving their first Bibles and for churches carrying out evangelization campaigns.



**PLANTING**  
**CHURCHES**  
**IN INDIA**

Over the past year, your gifts provided 39,500 Bibles to train new evangelists who want to plant churches in India. Of the 1.3 billion people in India, about 80 percent are Hindu, 14 percent Muslim, and only a little over 2 percent profess faith in Christ. These new pastors are needed to spread the Gospel message and plant strong churches!



**AUDIO BIBLES**  
**FOR RURAL**  
**GHANA**

Church ministry in Ghana can be difficult, especially in rural areas where few people can read. Yet in just one year, your generosity helped provide 3,000 Bibles, started 350 Scripture listening groups, and planted 40 new churches. That's because your support provides Audio Scripture players that are used to form Bible listening groups. These groups become the expression of the local church in areas where there isn't yet a formal, physical church.



TOP PHOTO: Douglas M. Nottage, American Bible Society; PERU PHOTO: Andrea Rhodes, United Bible Societies; INDIA AND GHANA PHOTOS: Joyce van de Veen, Netherlands Bible Society

**FAITH  
 AND  
 LIBERTY  
 DISCOVERY  
 CENTER**

# Stand with Heroes of Faith and Liberty

*with a Limited Edition Charter Membership for the Faith and Liberty Discovery Center*

**fldc.americanbible.org**



F O R G O T T E N

F L O O D E D

F O U N D

FLOODS AND CENTURIES CAN'T KEEP  
GOD'S WORD AWAY FROM  
THE TOBA OF ARGENTINA

*by Laura Chan*

P

Picture: a woman named Aurelia, raised on rainwater and the promise of better. But things get worse and worse over a few short years: The river bursts its banks. Her home washes away, the mud walls dissolving in the downpour. The lands her community has worked for years are as devastated as its farmers. The sheep that yielded good wool have run for the hills. Her family is forced to relocate—away from electricity and what comfort they had.

In her transient shelter, Aurelia gives birth to another child, making it four children and one mother at home. When illness strikes, it nearly takes her life and her four-year-old daughter's.

Everything changes, however, when she cries out to God and asks for healing. The illness recedes, and the family learns how to trust God.

PHOTO: Terry J. Lawrence via iStock/Getty Images Plus



Aurelia Curchi, a mother of four and a Toba speaker, recently received the New Testament in her language, and it has changed how she sees God.

Through the local Bible Society, Aurelia's family receives literacy training and a copy of the New Testament in their language, West Toba. The truth slowly changes how they understand existence, their purpose. They begin to rely on God, casting their fears at His feet. Although their community faces big challenges, they feel prepared to face them with God on their side. In God's Word, they find strength for what's next.

#### ■ A PROMISE FOR THE TOBA

Flashback to 1851. A young missionary named Allen Gardiner lays dying on the beach in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. His crew had attempted to evangelize the Fuegians but had not been well received. They ended up dying from lack of access to food and fresh water.

The words Gardiner leaves behind—letters strewn on the beach—issue a promise to the Toba people: a translation of the Bible in a language that speaks to their heart.

He writes, "We have sent this Book to many other nations, and all who have received it have been made happy and wished they had known it sooner. Why should the Toba nations be the last to receive this Book?"

The Toba are indigenous to the lands from the Pilcomayo River to the Bermejo River in Northern Argentina. Of all the native groups in Argentina, the Toba have best preserved their language. That's partially why it's been such a challenge for them to understand the Bible in Spanish; it doesn't resonate for them.

**"WE HAD TO CRY OUT TO GOD TO HEAL MY PAIN AND MY DAUGHTER. I HAD TO OPEN MY HEART TO GOD."**

Sadly for the Toba, Gardiner's vision died along with him on that beach. Future missionaries to the area chose to work with different people groups. The Toba were left with an unfulfilled promise.

In the years following 1851, the Toba subsisted on fishing and gathering honey and fruits; they never tasted the sweet words of Scripture.

Now, however, 168 years later, Gardiner's promise is being revived. Your support and a local translation team are bringing a Bible to the Toba people. The Toba New Testament was completed last year, and a full Bible is scheduled to be released in 2025!

#### ■ A NEW TESTAMENT FOR AURELIA

Aurelia was taught to survive off the lands along the river. She was taught how to fish and cook over an open fire—and she was taught not to anger the spirits that inhabited all things. Aurelia, like most of the Toba, followed shamanic practices—until she fell ill and couldn't find relief. "I was sick and my daughter was sick. We thought we wouldn't live," she says.

Although Aurelia wasn't a believer, God supernaturally drew her to Himself. "God touched my heart," she explains. "We had to cry out to God to heal my pain and my daughter. I had to open my heart to God."

This experience changed Aurelia for good. Aurelia started taking her children to church where they could learn more about God. She asserts, "God healed us so we can come to Him."

Then, four years ago, Aurelia hit an important milestone in her faith walk: She received the New Testament in her language from the local Bible Society. "Since Spanish is not our language, [the Bible in Spanish] was hard to understand," Aurelia explains. But she has found the Toba New Testament to be fully understandable and helpful. "I love to read the New Testament," she says. "I use our Bible and learn the history. Today we studied Luke 3, and I used the Toba New Testament to understand what the pastor was preaching."

Although she faces long days as a hardworking, single mom, Aurelia finds strength in the Word of God. "The most important thing is to listen to and read the Word, because it cleans me. I am not thinking bad things, and I am praying for the health of my family."

Aurelia believes it's critical for her to know God's Word so she can raise her children up right. A desire to see her children grow in their faith drives her forward.

"Since we are mothers, we have to read the Bible and understand it... The kids should be in church to learn the Word of God, listen to music so God can speak to them."

“THE BIBLE HAS CHANGED ME. I AM A NEW  
[PERSON] AS A RESULT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT  
IN WEST TOBA.”

In addition to spiritual strength and wisdom, Aurelia has found practical help in the Bible. Although her physical situation is uncertain and precarious, the Bible has taught her to trust the Lord through all things. She says, “Sometimes I feel sick, but I have to trust God. Sometimes I suffer and I don’t have anything, and I have to trust God in providing [for me] and letting me know what to do, and He has helped me. Sometimes I dream and have bad dreams, but when I pray, the Lord helps me.”

Aurelia is grateful for Scripture that deepens her relationship with God and helps her in her day-to-day life. She smiles, “The Word helps me to feel closer to the Lord.”

■ FROM SPIRITS TO SCRIPTURE:  
BIBLES ORIENT TOBA  
TO TRUTH

Although most Toba are now professing Christians, some have folded Christian concepts into their preexisting animistic and shamanic beliefs. For example, traditional belief asserts that nonhuman or supernatural beings govern all existence. After early Christian influence, people still believed these beings existed—just that they were demonic. However, now that they have the New Testament, Toba Christians are standing on biblical truth and recognizing the God who is the ruler of all.

The Toba are shifting away from age-old practices. For example, Aurelia says, “Some

people take their kids to the witch doctor, but I don’t. I ask God for help to heal them and money to take them to the doctor, and God helps me.”

The Bible is also helping the Toba cope with displacement. When they lost their homes in the Churchal plains due to flooding, they had to resettle in camps further inland. “The flooding and having to move was very difficult,” says Susana Molina, a sister to one of the West Toba translators. “The Bible has helped me deal with this situation of the flooding and moving. ... The Bible has helped me not to be angry with God. The Bible has given me hope in this situation.”

Like Aurelia, many Toba have seen how different their lives and outlook are thanks to their newly translated Scripture. Susana says, “The Bible has changed me. I am a new Susana as a result of the New Testament in West Toba. The Bible changed my thinking and behavior. I realized that I don’t talk bad to my neighbors, I need to treat other people well and talk to them well, and I have started to treat them well.”

The Bible isn’t just helping individuals; it’s changing the whole Toba people group. Like we’ve seen time and time again, when a community receives the Word of God in its language, people start acting differently—wisely and more graciously. Susana reports, “There is a change among the women. They are used to talking bad and criticizing each other, and through reading the Bible we realized it is



When the Toba lived on the Churchal plains, many kept sheep and sold their wool. When the plains flooded, the sheep died or fled. Now, many Toba exchange goods like tin from their houses to get wool. Although weaving wool takes a long time and doesn’t pay well, it’s still a treasured craft.

not good to do that and it has changed how we relate to each other.”

Zacarias Florencio, a West Toba speaker, was a heavy alcohol and drug abuser, but he says, “After reading the Bible in my language, I changed and left those things and changed the behavior and stopped drinking alcohol. The community drinks a lot of alcohol so this is a significant change.” Praise God for how His Word is breaking chains for the Toba!

■ A FUTURE, BECAUSE OF YOU

Because of the generosity of partners like you, the Toba can understand and apply the words of life. Thank you.

Our work is not done, however. The Toba people have grown leaps and bounds after receiving the New Testament. Now they’re longing for the full story, scheduled to be completed in 2025. “When we have the Old Testament, we will be able to learn everything that the Bible says,” Zacarias says.



Toba children typically speak variants of Toba at home but Spanish at school. Thanks to you, Toba literacy classes are being taught from the Toba New Testament to help students learn important language skills and God's truth all in one!

## AURELIA KNOWS THAT THERE IS A GOD WHO LOVES HER, AND SHE LOVES GOD BACK.

“When we have the Bible, we will have to live it, understand more, and we will be able to share more with other people.”

Picture now: Aurelia and her children, full of eternal hope. Things get better and better—Aurelia is happier and kinder, the siblings care for one another, the whole community pitches in when someone is in need. Aurelia knows that there is a God who loves her, and she loves God back. Her children grow up strong and certain: *My God will provide.* They grow up confident

and resilient: *My God is alive.* They grow up reading John 20:31 and living on its promise: “These have been written in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you may have life.”



Bring first Bibles to more communities at [give.bible/translation](https://give.bible/translation)

LEFT PHOTO: Shamalia Snipe, American Bible Society; RIGHT PHOTO COURTESY OF: First Presbyterian Church of Houston



Our partner, First Presbyterian Church of Houston, is declaring that Jesus saves—from Main Street America to the Holy Land and back again!

**NAME:** First Presbyterian Church of Houston

**LOCATION:** Houston, Texas

**ESTABLISHED:** 1842

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Compelled by the love of Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we carry the Gospel to Houston and to the world

# Houston & the Holy Land

by Laura Chan

It all started with a church trip to the Holy Land in 2000. Participants couldn't wait to walk where Jesus had walked. They wanted to see where He healed people in Galilee, to stand on the Mount of the Beatitudes where He declared “Blessed are the peacemakers,” to contemplate His crucifixion at Golgotha.

The tour group from First Presbyterian Church of Houston (FPC) did those things, and they

were powerful. But by the end of the trip, it wasn't the history of Jesus's work in the region that had captivated them. Instead, it was the Jesus they saw still alive today in the ministry of His followers, descendants from the earliest churches. It was the hope they felt for Jesus to be the peace so desperately needed in the Middle East. It was the compassion they'd witnessed from staff at Palestinian Bible Society, sharing the Bible's message of love and hope with Muslim, Jewish, and unbelieving communities around them.

Before they'd even gotten on the plane to return home, the group was asking: *How can we be the hands and feet of Jesus to Palestinians and Israelis, all the way from Houston, Texas?*

Mary-Floye Federer, Director of Ministry Partnerships and Engagement at FPC, says the partnership was an easy choice for their



Members of First Presbyterian Church of Houston take annual trips to the Holy Land to see where Jesus conducted His early ministry. Here, the General Secretary of Palestinian Bible Society, Nashat Filmon (light green shirt), shows the group the site of a new community outreach center.

church since two of their missions focuses are “engaging the Muslim world” and “equipping the saints with the Word of God both locally and globally.” The Bible-oriented and evangelistic focus of Palestinian Bible Society was a good fit. Mary-Floye says, “Having seen many ministries in the Middle East, I was impressed by how the Bible Society shares the love of the Christ and the Word of God so tangibly.”

In September 2000, just months after the FPC group had returned home, the Second Intifada erupted. In this armed uprising of Palestinians against Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, thousands of innocent civilians on both sides of the conflict were injured or worse, and Palestine entered a severe economic downturn.

The entire congregation of FPC was all in: *how can we help?* Through a ministry called Operation Palestinian Child, FPC bolstered Palestinian Bible Society’s emergency response to children and their families. They continued to support the Bible Society as it announced the Prince of Peace in a war zone—telling kids about the Jesus who loved them and who could wipe away their tears and fears. FPC also partnered in prayer, with groups getting together for months to petition God to bring His healing touch to the region.

“That’s the hope for the Holy Land,” says Mary-Floye. “The Bible Society doesn’t hesitate to share the love of Christ with compassion, and they are Jesus to the people they encounter. As

we’ve always said, Jesus has to be part of any sort of peace or solution in that part of the world.”

Now, almost 20 years after that first visit, the FPC family is still a close partner with Palestinian Bible Society. They know one another’s faith, families, and fears—and they rely on one another. “When the church hears the need, suddenly in the offering, there’s a significant gift,” FPC Pastor Jim Birchfield says. “Church members understand they’ve been blessed with resources they want to share with the world.”

FPC has a deep love for ministry—both global and local. Church members know the power the Bible carries abroad is the same power it carries at home. Pastor Jim says that although the congregation is eager to support ministry in the Middle East, they also never forget that, “The part of the world that really needs the Bible in our own hands is our own country.”

That’s why FPC recently became a founding partner for the Faith and Liberty Discovery Center (FLDC), a Bible museum experience American Bible Society is launching in Philadelphia at the end of 2020. Mary-Floye says that when she heard about how the FLDC is part of a broader plan to get Americans back into the Bible, she thought, “Oh, wow. There’s hope for America!”

FPC is excited about the FLDC because it has seen time and time again the difference engaging in Scripture makes in a person’s life. Pastor Jim says, “When the Scriptures were unlocked for me in my thirties, it saved my life. And so to be able to be a part of ministry that gets Bibles into other people’s hands and maybe changes their lives is just an incredible privilege.”

As a 177-year-old church, FPC knows the value of legacy. That’s why they appreciate that American Bible Society has been sharing Bibles



Mary-Floye Federer (third from right) and friends from the First Presbyterian Church of Houston choir present a gift to Palestinian Bible Society General Secretary Nashat Filmon (second from right).

since 1816. “It’s a privilege to partner with an organization that has been at this for 203 years,” says Pastor Jim. “I talk a fair amount to the members of our church about this incredible tradition—177 years of FPC, 203 years of American Bible Society, and 2,000 years of Christian legacy to uphold.”

As FPC has united around a common vision to see Jesus change hearts in their community, in the States, and around the world, the church has embarked on a journey of radical generosity: giving back to God and seeing Him bless it. They’re living out the call to go into all the world and make disciples—all from Main Street America.



Support Bible ministry alongside First Presbyterian Church of Houston! Visit [give.bible](https://give.bible)

# Scripture & Stained Glass

What Mary teaches us about “treasuring all these things” during the Christmas season

BY GARY WILEY

In all the hustle and bustle of this season, how can we soak in this “most wonderful time of the year?” Christmas has great significance for our Christian faith, but it’s easy for us to get caught up in its busyness and miss its message. Over the past several years, I have been learning from one of the central characters of the biblical Christmas story on how to make the Christmas season different.

We are introduced to Mary, the mother of Jesus, in Luke 1:26 when she is visited by the angel Gabriel who announces that she has been chosen by God to be the mother of the Savior. As I follow Mary through the book of Luke, she teaches me to take time to ponder and to

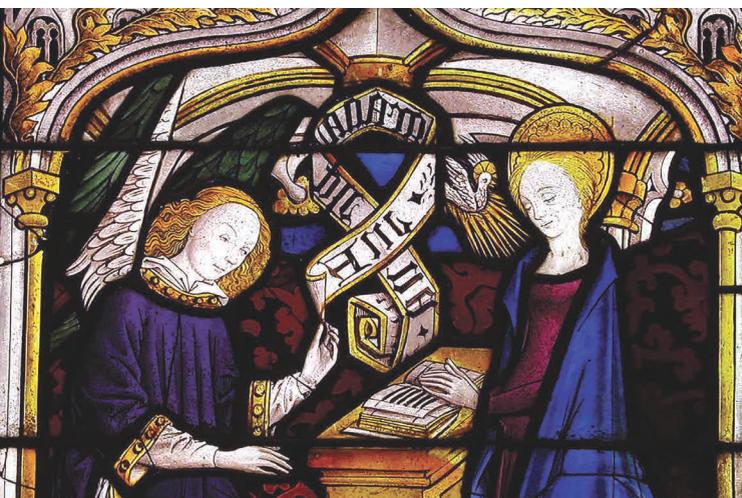
treasure Christmas—to slow down and see the things I might have missed.

Mary stopped and took time to reflect and allow God to teach her what He was doing. How does that compare to how you usually prepare for Christmas?

I would like to suggest two key practices that can make a difference this season: read carefully through chapters 1 and 2 in Luke’s Gospel in your Bible, and find some time to reflect on the Christmas story in a church with stained-glass windows that depict the joyful narratives of Jesus’s early life. Let’s walk through a bit of Mary’s story together and see what she can teach us.

## Mary Accepts God’s Plan: The Annunciation (Luke 1:26–38)

The imagination, let alone a stained-glass window, can’t do justice to an angelic visitation. The angel tells Mary, “Don’t be afraid!” (1:30). How would you have reacted to an angel showing up in your room? Mary is told that she will be the mother of the Son of God; no one else would ever have that honor. Read Luke 1:26–38 slowly. Gaze at the window and imagine what it meant for Mary to say, “May it happen to me as you have said” (1:38).



## Mary Ponders the Miracle of Jesus: The Nativity (Luke 2:1–20)

Mary gives birth to Jesus and lays Him in a manger. Angels announce to the shepherds His birth but begin by saying, “Don’t be afraid!” (2:10). Focus on Mary’s reaction to the visitation of the angels and shepherds in verse 19: “Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them.” What sorts of things do you think Mary treasured and pondered in her heart?



## Mary Is Amazed by Her Messiah Son: The Presentation in the Temple (Luke 2:22–36)

In the temple, the Holy Family (Jesus, Mary, and Joseph) meets the “good, God-fearing man” Simeon, who was waiting for the Messiah. He speaks words over the little baby. In verse 33 we are told that Joseph and Mary are amazed at what Simeon says about Jesus. Imagine being there. What would amaze you? What was Simeon saying that would impact Mary and Joseph and even you?



## Mary Treasures Jesus’s Identity: Finding Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41–52)

Jesus was 12 years old when His parents took Him to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. A day into their return journey they realized Jesus was missing. “On the third day they found him in the Temple, sitting with the Jewish teachers, listening to them and asking questions” (2:46). Everyone was amazed at the wisdom of this 12-year-old boy! Luke 2:51 says Mary “treasured all these things in her heart.” Imagine Mary’s thoughts in realizing her Son was truly the Savior of the world!



Mary would continue to soak in, to ponder, and to treasure all that was happening in her life—all that was pointing to the true mission of her divine Son. Twenty-one years later it will give her perspective as Jesus would pour out His life for the sins of the whole world.

Do you have your Bible? Have you located the stained-glass windows? Find a seat and allow God to speak to you as you prepare for Christmas this year.



Discover more of God’s promises when you read His Word every day. Start at [abs.bible/bible2019](https://abs.bible/bible2019)

LEFT AND TOP RIGHT PHOTOS: public domain; BOTTOM RIGHT PHOTOS: “Jesus in the Temple stained glass window” and “Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, stained glass window” by Francis Helmiski are licensed under the CC BY-SA 4.0 license <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>



## IN MEMORIAM

in memory of my husband  
**Raymond L. Anderson**  
given by Margaret M. Anderson

in memory of  
**Pauline L. Bittinger & Carroll G. Dewitt  
& Huldah B. Dewitt**  
given by Randall P. Bittinger

in memory of my husband  
**Scott G. Daelhousen**  
given by Brenda B. Daelhousen

in memory of my husband  
**Raymond J. Haas**  
given by Irene M. Haas

in memory of my wife  
**June Handwerker**  
given by Bob Handwerker

in memory of our sister and sister-in-law  
**Alma Fischer Bertsch**  
given by Eloise F. and Elroy A. Kelle

in memory of  
**George H.C. Lawrence**  
given by Stephen M. and Lucia H. Bailey

in memory of my parents  
**Dr. Billy Melvin & Darlene Melvin**  
given by Daniel Melvin

in memory of my parents  
**Dr. Billy Melvin & Darlene Melvin**  
given by Deborah Penwell

in memory of  
**Arnold A. Ohst**  
given by Debra and Philip Lange

in memory of  
**Richard Roper & Merle Roper**  
given by Joan and Walter Kerfoot

in memory of my husband  
**Ken Steege**  
given by Sherie Steege

in memory of  
**My Grandfather**  
given by Jayme S. Swain

in memory of  
**Jennie Volpert**  
given by Kenneth Volpert

in memory of  
**Ted J. Zellmer**  
given by Peggy and Brent Heid



## Why Julie Henricks named American Bible Society in her Will... *and how you can too*

Julie Henricks lives on her grandparents' farm in rural Indiana. She loves gardening and attending her small country church, which has a strong Bible focus. Julie is also passionate about sharing God's Word. One way she's ensuring she leaves a Bible legacy is by naming American Bible Society in her Will.

*"I like to think of who can use my resources when I'm gone, and the Bible Society seems like a natural fit. It goes along with my beliefs and my wish for my money to help people in the future."*

Julie put money in the church collection plate as a child and got serious about generosity in her

late teens. She started giving to American Bible Society nearly 20 years ago and has loved seeing others receive God's Word thanks to her gifts!

*"It's really heartening when I read the stories in Record to know how much the Bible means to people around the world."*

Julie knows American Bible Society will use her gifts to share Bibles with generations to come.

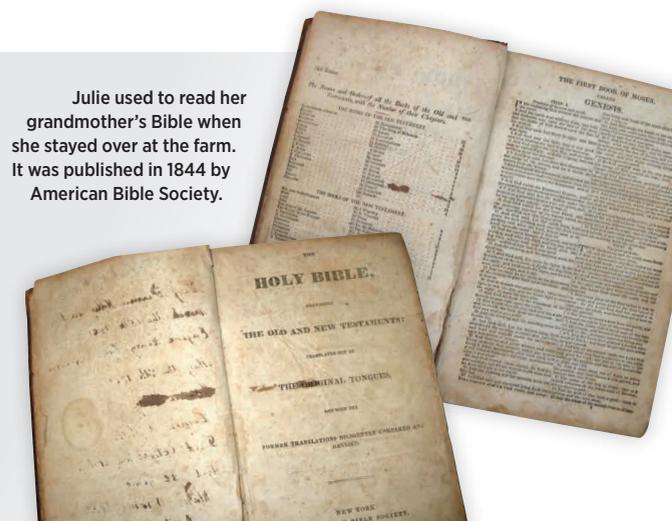
*"If you believe that the Bible is valuable, then American Bible Society is an organization worth contributing to."*

Will you join people like Julie in sharing God's Word?

**3 easy ways** to get more information on Will planning:

-  **Mail** us the prepaid envelope inside the back cover
-  **Call** 800-549-3328
-  **Email** GiftPlanner@AmericanBible.org

Julie used to read her grandmother's Bible when she stayed over at the farm. It was published in 1844 by American Bible Society.



RIGHT PHOTOS COURTESY: JULIE HENRICKS

Honor the memory of a loved one by providing Bibles to people who don't yet have them. Memorials of \$500 or more for one individual or family unit will be published in *Record*. For further details about the memorial process, please contact our Partner Care team at: 866-895-4448

[ABSDonor@AmericanBible.org](mailto:ABSDonor@AmericanBible.org)

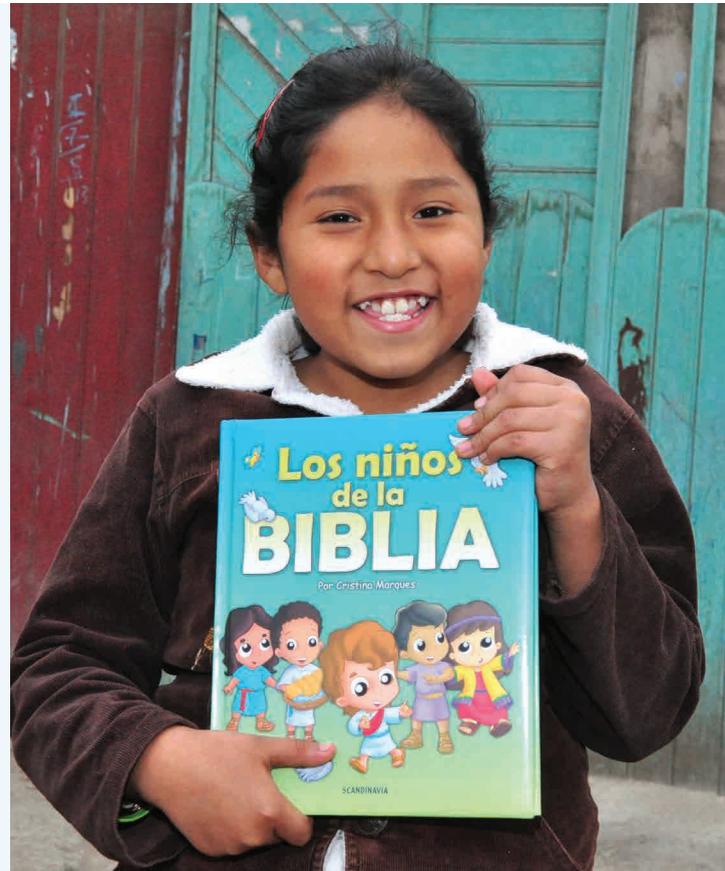
American Bible Society | 101 North Independence Mall East FL8 | Philadelphia, PA 19106-2155

## Did **YOU** name American Bible Society in your Will?

Your Will has the power to bring God's Word to waiting people around the world. In fact, every year, gifts in Wills help us reach thousands more people with God's Word. Over the past 203 years, hundreds of millions of people have received their First Bibles thanks to partners like you!

**Because of people just like YOU, every day kids like Tatiana receive their First Bibles.**

*Thank you!*



## Thank you for sharing God's Word!

**3 easy ways** to let us know you named  
American Bible Society in your Will:

 **Mail** us the prepaid envelope inside the back cover

 **Call** 800-549-3328 (toll-free)

 **Email** [GiftPlanner@AmericanBible.org](mailto:GiftPlanner@AmericanBible.org)

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS