

# THE BULLETIN

NEWS FROM BIBLICA EUROPE

June 2023

# Can an AI

# translate the Bible?

*Also inside:*

Gen Z: the open generation  
A Bible study's incredible journey  
After the disaster: update  
Your place in the mission



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## About Biblica

Biblica, The International Bible Society, exists to bring God's Word to people across the globe in a way they can understand so they are transformed by Christ and inspired to join His mission for the World.

## We are Biblica Europe

We are part of the worldwide Biblica family. Biblica Europe's task is to reach people with God's Word throughout Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

## Connect with us

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*Dear friends,*

Thank you for picking up The Bulletin!

Bible translators around the world have seen huge progress over the last 12 months. The number of people able to access the Bible in a way they can understand has increased rapidly, and we have completed more translations in a short space of time than ever before.

One reason for this is harnessing new technology. In many countries around the world, it's much easier to download the Scriptures to your smartphone than to get your hands on a paper copy - so new, innovative apps are quickly taking God's Word to new places, new pockets and new hearts.

Another leap forward has been made with the help of artificial intelligence, which we've now seen can radically speed up translation. You can read more about that on page 6.

We're keen to combine the best of today's technology with the faithfulness of the church. Because we long to end the wait of people who have already waited too long to hear God's Word.

I hope you'll be inspired to take your place in this mission as well. Thank you for reading and God bless you,

*Geof Morin*

President/CEO, Biblica

# *The incredible journey of a simple Bible study*

At Biblica, we're developing and championing the use of smartphone technology to bring God's Word to places that are hard to reach.

One of our partners created a small, simple Bible study app that has been quietly travelling the world.

The Discover app provides key Bible passages that cover the big story of the Bible, and poses four questions:

- What does this story tell me about God?
- What does this story tell me about people (or myself)?
- If this is God's word for my life how will I obey it?
- Who am I going to tell?

The structure is easy to teach, easy to remember and easy to replicate. The app allows anyone, anywhere to run a Bible study, even in places where Bible access is difficult.

We are delighted that the app uses four of Biblica's modern Bible translations: Farsi, Swahili, French, and the New Arabic Version – along with 10 other languages in both text and audio formats.

## **The perfect format to cross cultures**

Ten years ago, Ian and his wife were using the Discovery Bible Study in their own ministries, and Ian, with an IT background, created a website with the first 30 Bible studies on in English and Arabic.

At that point, they had no plans of doing anything more with it. But God did. People involved in cross-cultural mission found this simple format perfect for their needs. Ian started getting requests:

"can we have this in Farsi?", "can we have this in Swahili?", "can we have this on a phone app that doesn't need an internet connection?" As Ian took on the challenges, "Things kind of exploded."

## **"Can we have this in Farsi? Can we have it on a phone app?"**

Today the Discover app is used all around the world, from the USA to Scandinavia, from Africa to the Middle East. There have been 80,000 downloads, but many times more users than that...





If you want to check out the Discover app for yourself, you can search and download it to your phone from Google Play or the App Store.

Who will you share it with?

### How far has it travelled?

Ian shares:

It's amazing to hear where the app has gone. Once I was having breakfast while travelling and got talking to someone from a closed country. We were sharing what we did; I said I was in IT and had developed an app called Discover.

The other person said, "I have that app on my phone! I love it because I can go into a café, sit down with somebody and start talking about faith and if they're interested I can get the app out."

There was one particular country that was really on our hearts. When we got the language added to the app, we had no evidence whatsoever that it was being used.

The app can be shared between phones by Bluetooth – you don't have to download it. That's great for places

without constant internet access, but it means that we don't fully know how many people are using it or where.

### **"We had no evidence whatsoever that it was being used... But we prayed about it"**

I said to my wife one day, "I'd love to just know that it's being used in that country," and she said, "We'll probably never know." But we prayed about it.

The very next morning, I went onto my web stats and found that one person from that country had downloaded the app! Then, later that day we had a call from a friend of ours who had just returned from travelling there and wanted to visit us. At the end of the evening he said, "Oh by the way, a couple of months ago I met these guys and they showed your app to a local Imam who is now running the Discovery Bible Study with 40 men."

Just hearing that was an amazing answer to prayer.

# Can an AI translate the Bible?

How do you feel about the rise of artificial intelligence? Has ChatGTP helped you write your CV? Or are you worried that you'll be put out of a job by a superintelligent robot?

Perhaps you'd be surprised to learn that this self-learning technology is proving very useful in the world of Bible translation!

Biblica has been trying out an AI translation system with very encouraging results. But don't worry - we aren't giving a computer the final authority on what the Bible says and means. Instead, the AI system generates a first draft of the text in the new language, and it's then worked on by our expert theologians, human translators and native speakers. They go through and carefully check the work, ensuring the meaning has carried through correctly and adding any cultural nuances that will make the scripture easy to understand.

The great advantage is that the AI can generate a first draft very quickly. Our pilot project was translating the Bible into the Malaysian language of Bahasa Malay. Assisted by AI, the first draft took translators only seven months to complete — traditional translation takes five years or more.

One of our Bahasa Malay translators said: **"The first time I looked at the draft, I couldn't believe it. I was reading the Word of God in Bahasa Malay, not in Mandarin. Obviously there were things that weren't perfect, but we could read it."**

It was one of the fastest and most compellingly accurate drafts ever produced.

There are still over 3,000 languages today without a suitable Bible translation. For these people groups, the Gospel feels like something foreign meant for other people.

We want to use every tool we have to break down that barrier. By using AI technology, we can get long-awaited translations finished much sooner, so that in the next ten years, everyone, everywhere will be able to access God's Word for themselves.





# Gen Z: the open generation?



Many people assume that today's teenagers aren't interested in the Bible. But when you actually ask them, that's not what they say.

Last year, we commissioned a huge research study. It was the first global study to find out how Generation Z thinks, feels, and behaves toward the Bible. More than 25,000 teens, ages 13 to 17, were included, with responses gathered from 26 countries in Europe, Africa, the Americas, Oceania and Asia. 1 in 3 teens said they see the Bible as relevant to the world today.

Only 8% of teens could be considered 'Bible engaged' right now... but a huge 62% said that they are open to engage more with God's Word.

So let's respond! Reach4Life is one of the ways we can help these open and interested young people to explore the

Bible for themselves and learn how to apply it to the real issues in their lives. Two million have used it so far.

"Now the youth are reading and understanding God's love. Reach4Life is a big blessing for the Central Asian church. Whatever it takes, I want to fight for those young people who go through life without anyone to show them the way. I know Jesus can do this. He did it in my life."

— Pastor Ruslan, Biblica Partner in Central Asia

Based on the great feedback Reach4Life gets from teenagers and church leaders, we're translating this special discipleship Bible and app into more and more languages so that it's available to curious young people wherever they are in the world.

Help Gen Z to engage with the Bible by donating to our work today:  
[biblicaeurope.com/donate](http://biblicaeurope.com/donate)



# The biggest year yet for Bible access

It might seem like a while ago, but we've just finished totting up the figures from 2022 and wanted to share some of them with you.

17

**17** new Bible translations completed – more than we've done in any year since we began in 1809!

40%

God's Word reached **40% more people** in the least-reached, least-resourced communities compared to the previous year.

50m

**50 million** children and teens in crisis engaged with the Bible through our work.

219.1m

Overall – we helped **219.1 million people** to access the Bible in 2022, compared to 145.9 million in 2021.

"I am very happy, very excited. I have the privilege to translate God's Word. I'm not afraid. I trust that my life is in God's hands."

- Iranian Bible translator

## What else happened?

- We were stunned by the demand for our new contemporary Ukrainian New Testament. God's timing was amazing, with the translation being finished just as the war began and people wanted to engage with God in their own language. In 2022, the paper version and downloadable Bible app were used by over 650,000 people inside Ukraine.
- We provided 100,000 Bibles for new church plants in Africa which were distributed by Harvesters International. The Bibles provided were in English, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Somali, Shona, Chichewa, Swahili, Zulu, Kinyarwanda and Amharic, and reached Christians in some hard-to-access places like Somalia - where Christians meet in secret and it's very difficult to obtain a Bible.
- We started using AI-assisted translation to help us speed up the process of bringing God's Word to everyone, everywhere around the world. Read more about it on page 6





## Radical generosity

Everything achieved in 2022 was powered by the huge generosity of people like you.

Jesus told us:

“Freely you have received; freely give.”

We want to keep sharing our Bible translations freely around the world, so that everyone can know the love of Christ that we freely received.

And that’s made possible by the gifts, both small and big, of Christians who believe and invest in this mission. God is on the move worldwide.

Thank you for joining in.





## *After the disaster*

This Easter, our thoughts were with the thousands of people affected by the huge earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

We highlighted the disaster response materials used around the world to help adults and children move forwards with God after a terrible experience like this. Your generosity at Easter enabled us to provide more copies of publications like *When Your Whole World Changes* – a 30-day devotional for adults – and *The Survivors* – our Bible-based workbook for children who have fled a war or been through a disaster.

These small booklets and apps can have a big impact, giving people the tools needed to process what happened so they can begin to heal.

### **What's happened since Easter?**

Working with the Trauma Healing Resource Centre in the Middle East, we've now completed the Syrian Arabic translation of *When Your Whole World Changes*. We've also been working together to develop a much-needed trauma healing programme for the region.

"I am thankful because I had been thinking, 'Am I alone in this drama?'"

- Cyclone survivor using *When Your Whole World Changes*, Mozambique

As for the children caught up in disasters and war, we explained at Easter that we're working with child trauma experts Arise to update *The Survivors* and to create a new workbook and course called *The Victors*, aimed at longer-term healing. Since then, the team has field-tested the new *Survivors* content with about 20 international staff from the OneChild charity as they met for training in Kenya.

We still have to finish all the typesetting and illustrations for the new workbooks, but we're nearly there - *The Survivors* book should be complete in about two months' time, and *The Victors* in about five! We can't wait to see God restoring more children's hope, confidence and future. Thanks for all your donations and prayers.

You can still donate to this appeal at: [biblicaeurope.com/disaster](https://biblicaeurope.com/disaster)

# Your place in the mission

If you share our passion to bring God's Word to everyone, everywhere, there are lots of ways you can help make it happen!



## Keep informed

Each month we share a short story by email about the impact of Biblica's work around the world. We'd love you to be included.

Email [europa@biblica.com](mailto:europa@biblica.com), sign up on our website, or send back the enclosed form, and we'll make sure you receive the latest news.

You can also follow and share our updates on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram – find us [@biblicaeurope](https://www.instagram.com/biblicaeurope).



## Pray

Praying for this work makes you a partner in everything God's doing to reach and speak to people through His Word.

Please pray for our translation teams, and for the Frontline Church as they help people to access and use new Bible materials. Pray that many people every day will be set free and transformed by Jesus Christ as they meet him in the Scriptures.

Visit [www.biblicaeurope.com/praying](http://www.biblicaeurope.com/praying) to see where we need prayer more widely.

Thank you so much  
for joining in...

*So all will know.*



## Give a gift

We can't do anything without funding, so giving a gift is a great way to invest in this mission. Your gift could help us take the Bible to hard-to-reach places – whether that's through Bible translation, digital innovation or resourcing the Frontline Church.

If you'd like to help, please fill in the enclosed form and send it back to us, or give a gift online at [www.biblicaeurope.com/donate](http://www.biblicaeurope.com/donate).



## Help to break new ground with a regular gift

To really invest in the mission, you can set up a regular gift. Reliable monthly income allows us to plan new innovations and translations. Even just £15 per month would make a big difference.

You can set up a standing order easily through your own internet banking – our account details are:

- Biblica Europe Ministries Trust
- Danske Bank
- Sort code: 95-01-21
- Account no: 80552763.

Choose the amount and frequency that suits you.

Please call us on +44 (0)28 9073 5875 to let us know you've done this.



*“We have some people leading churches without Bibles. Without a Bible, how can they lead?”*

*What Biblica is doing to bring Bibles here is a great blessing! God has answered my prayer.”*

— Pastor Andela, Church Planter in Mozambique



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The Bulletin for your church  
or group, please get in touch

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