

Bibles for those who have never had one



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Photo: Serious faces among members of a rural community who received Bibles from the Hungarian Bible Society when it made a number of Scripture distributions to people too poor to buy their own Bibles.

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Of several of these distributions, three examples will give a picture of how the Bibles came into the hands of their new owners.

A visit by the Bible Society to the tiny village of Dány, in Pest County, not far from the capital, revealed a small Romani church managing to continue to exist in spite of difficult circumstances.

The love of the people at the church service for the Word of God was clear to see – though scarcely any of them actually owned a copy.

Once the service was over, there came a very special moment, when Bibles were given out to those who could not afford to buy one for themselves. The gratitude in their sincere words of thanks indicated that the new owners will read and treasure their Bibles. They will not certainly not be left on shelves to gather dust.



Hospital treatment

Gagybátor is a village which not many people – even in Hungary itself – have ever heard of. Nevertheless, the people living there showed the depth of their generosity and their desire to help when, at the beginning of June, they and visitors alike gathered to give whatever they could so that a young girl from the village could continue receiving hospital treatment for a serious illness.

The villagers have hardly any money, but, putting another's need first, they gave the girl's family whatever they could.

And these mainly Romani people were then genuinely surprised when they, in turn, were offered something: a Bible of their own. The offer was made on the condition that they would pick it up and read it regularly; that was what the Bible Society worker encouraged the group of villagers to do.

In response, old and young came flocking to him asking in surprise, “Can I get a copy of the Word of God, too...? Really...?!”

In just a few minutes 50 copies had been given out. It was a promising beginning as the people felt genuinely honoured to be able to claim their own copy of the Holy Scriptures to read. We pray that God will speak to them through it.

Not far away, in a town called Hernádszentandrás on another occasion during the summer the Baptist church announced a ‘holiday Bible camp’ for anyone who was interested.

And was anyone interested?

Toxic orange mud

In the event no fewer than 150 people came from far and near, eager for the opportunity of a week of classes where they could learn more about the Bible. Those showing real interest were rewarded with their own copy which they received gladly, an indication, perhaps, of the start of a serious change in their lives. Among those who showed interest were many young Romani children who were each given a Bible and some other books. Many came from difficult backgrounds: they were from broken families, or were in the care of foster parents or of a state institution.

The most notable Bible recipients, however, were people affected by Hungary’s worst environmental disaster, last October, when homes in the west of the country were destroyed by toxic orange mud which poured out from an aluminium factory.

The doors of many houses in Hernádszentandrás still had sandbags piled up outside them – a reminder of the battle householders had fought – and, in many cases, lost – against flooding in the region that continued for weeks on end. We hope and pray that the week of Bible study and the copies of the Bible that they took home with them will have a lasting effect – a different one from the dreadful flooding – and that God will speak to them and shape their lives as they read his Word.

As one of the organisers of the Bible Week said, “Those Bibles travelled a long way to be in the hands of those people. We hope that their journey to become one of God’s children will be a shorter one – although that is the greater miracle!”