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GET A GRIP



WITH ARTICLES BY:

ROB PARSONS
JASON GARDNER
RUTH VALERIO
PATRICK REGAN
KRISH KANDIAH
& MANY OTHERS



INTRODUCTION

A woman is grinding millet. She looks content, happy even, as she prepares a meal for her family. But as I watch her, my heart aches. I know that those few precious grains have cost her blood, sweat and tears, as she desperately coaxed them out of the scorched dry dust that forms the barren, landlocked country of Burkina Faso. Standing in temperatures of up to 50 degrees Celsius, she mixes the powder with another valuable commodity, water, into a tasteless porridge, which will be the family's only meal of the day. Every day this is the only meal of the day.

The children play in the dust at her feet. They can't afford transport for school at the moment, unless their father can earn something. He has also been standing for hours in the unrelenting sun holding out kitchen utensils in the hope that today, one or two of the two million inhabitants of the bustling city will pull over on their moped to buy a new spoon or fork.

This snapshot of poverty in the world's third poorest country shocked me, as I met family after family with the same story. But I was about to be shocked even more deeply. Firstly by the contentment, respect and generosity of the Burkinabé people: whether street sellers, shantytown dwellers or villagers, I experienced a sense of politeness you could only dream about in many Western nations. The country seemed to live up to

its name: "Land of the Upright". Secondly I was shocked by the hunger of the people – not the obvious physical hunger, but hunger for God's word.

Surely, I thought, the Bible is a luxury in a country like Burkina Faso. Food, aid and infrastructure development screamed out as the most likely primary needs. But both ordinary Christians and leaders of the growing evangelical churches asked me the same question: "Please can you give us Bibles?" I pressed my brothers and sisters a bit harder – 'how will you read the Bible if you are hungry and sick?' Their consistent response: 'When the food and the money are gone, how will we have hope? **The Bible can change our hearts, and bring peace, cooperation and unity, which will transform our country.'**

This hope they talked about was not a desperate grasping at straws, but a definite grasp of the truth of the gospel and the power of the Spirit. They took me to visit Benedict, whose eyes sparkled as he showed how reading the Bible had inspired him to use the church building as a centre for literacy in his village of 5,000, beginning to lift the people out of the cycle of subsistence farming that is already failing due to the devastating effects of global warming. They took me to visit Daniel, a young medical student surrounded by 300 >

children, who, despite being in the midst of the dirt and stinking sewage of the shantytown, were singing songs of praise. And they took me to visit Samuel, who had helped villagers to build a dam. Previously his work with the Burkina Evangelical Alliance movement had seen little effect in this area, but following the cooperation on the dam, seven whole villages turned to Christ.

There are half a million Bissa people in Burkina Faso, speaking two languages: Lebir and Barka, neither of which has the full Bible. The Bible Society of Burkina Faso has translated the New Testament into Lebir and is now working on the Old Testament. **Wycliffe Burkina Faso will soon start work on the New Testament in Barka.** The goal of the Biblefresh translation project is to raise the finance needed to get the Bible into the hands of all of the Bissa people – in their mother tongue.

When we give the Burkinabé people the seed of God's word, we know that they will value it in the same way they value those millet seeds, squeezing every last bit of nourishment from it, ensuring they feed their loved ones and cultivating fruit from the driest of soils. **The Bible clearly feeds personal and social transformation in the church in Burkina Faso - just as it does in the UK.**

This little book is filled with wise and helpful thoughts from a range of Christian writers who believe that the whole Bible is infinitely valuable. Each writer has selected a passage that is either a rarely-read treasure, or one of those passages of terror, which many consider toxic or taboo.

Each passage has a price on it, indicating the approximate cost of translating it into one of the Bissa languages.



I pray that this book will help you understand the Bible better, trust its difficult parts, treasure its beauty - and share it with others. More than this, I pray it will help start a revolution in a country most of us will never visit, in the lives of Christians we will never meet this side of eternity.

By buying this resource, you are contributing towards the joint Bible Society & Wycliffe Bible Translators project, translating the Old Testament into Bissa Lebir and the New Testament into Bissa Barka. If you would like to read more or donate further, please go to **www.biblefresh.com/translation**.




KRISH KANDIAH

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