



## Scripture and Literacy

### Overview

Bible Society Australia is supporting the United Bible Societies China Partnership (UBSCP) in providing literacy classes for rural Chinese Christians, a high percentage of whom are non-literate or semi-literate. As Christians acquire literacy skills, they can read and understand God's word.



### The Need

According to the Census in 2020, there are over 37.75 million non-literate people above 15-years-old in China. Of this number, about 75% are women, due to cultural and traditional practices that deprioritise female education.

Most Chinese Christians are non-literate and are too poor to receive any form of education. In particular, many elderly Christians living in poor rural areas are non-literate or semi-literate and are too poor to have received any form of education, though they deeply desire to read God's word in their final years. The need for literacy classes is significant, especially among these elderly Christians. Improved literacy also helps to address the church's concern over the widespread infiltration of cults, found mainly in rural areas. Biblical literacy will help Christians discern between true and false teachings and prevent believers from being swayed by heresies.

# 37.75m

non-literate adults in China

# 97.44%

literacy rate (as of 2020 census)

# 90%

of Mandarin speakers who are non-literate or semi-literate are elderly.

# 80%

of Mandarin speakers who are non-literate or semi-literate are women.

**"In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power"**

Acts 19:20, NIV

# Goals

In 2024, UBSCP will collaborate with Provincial Christian Councils (PCCs) to develop and support literacy programs tailored to the needs of Christians in provinces where doors are opened. The goal is to reach 6,100 non-literate Mandarin-speaking Christians and 450 mother-tongue speaking Christians from 9 ethnic minority groups who have the Bible or New Testament in their mother tongue: West Lisu, East Lisu, Bai Yi, Miao (Big Flowery Miao), Wa, Gan Yi, Black Yi, Zaiwa and Lahu.

The specific goals of the project are to raise the literacy level of these rural Christians and to continue to develop a new literacy primer (for print and online) to use in the 'Improving Literacy phase' of the course. The draft primer for the Chinese language was produced in 2023 and tested from October-December. Another goal for 2024 is to improve the literacy assessment system, introduce it to church partners, and get their support to implement the system as 2024 begins.

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# Impact

Improved literacy improves quality of life. When they can read and write, people are better informed of developments in their communities, especially matters of benefit to them, and can respond with understanding.

The Scripture literacy program motivates these Christians to learn basic literacy skills, enabling them to better understand the Bible. Ultimately, they come to a deeper understanding of God's love. With improved literacy, spiritual growth can be expected for all believers as they are also better able to understand sermons and Bible teaching.

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# Testimonies

"Scripture literacy classes not only teach us how to read and write, but more importantly, they also teach us about God's truth. And God's truth protects us from the lies of the evil one." — Yingli, literacy student

"My Grandma is 64 years old. When she was young, her family was very poor and she didn't have a chance to read or write, so when she knew that the church is starting a literacy class, she signed up immediately! I have been attending the scripture literacy lessons with my grandmother since the first lesson and I have never missed a single lesson. The instructor would teach the class how to read and write new words and sentences from the Bible." — Zhao, granddaughter of literacy student

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# Prayer Needs

- Pray for the Provincial Christian Council as they work with the local churches to run the Scripture literacy classes.
- Pray for the favour and approval from the authorities.
- Pray for the teachers to be motivated and persevering.
- Pray for the participants - that they may be able to learn quickly and well.
- Pray for God's guidance in rolling out the new primer for the Chinese Language, from testing it at selected literacy classes, setting up assessment system and making the finalised version available in China.