

LATEST NEWS # 381, December 1, 2006

The following news concerns Lebanon.

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Bible Society in Lebanon perseveres in witness – in spite of exhaustion and political tension

LEBANON — Despite heightened political tension in the wake of the assassination of government minister Pierre Gemayel last week, the Bible Society in Lebanon is continuing its 'Relief and Scriptures' program for refugees returning to their homes in South Lebanon after last summer's conflict between Israel and Hezbollah.

"The country continues to boil with internal conflicts," said Mike Bassous, the Society's General Secretary. "But we have focused our efforts on the new opportunities of working with the displaced families – and that is exactly what we are doing."

The program has been in operation for several months and thousands of needy and displaced families in Lebanon and the Bekaa valley have now received the Society's relief packages – the first time for many that they have received the Scriptures.

The packages now being distributed in the second phase of the program contain household items that help sustain the families as they re-occupy their damaged homes: a battery-powered fluorescent light, a large quilt, school stationery, insect repellent, an Illustrated Bible, New Testament, and other Scripture Portions.

The 'Relief and Scriptures' program is co-ordinated by the Bible Society Relief Team. In addition to their day jobs, this small team of Bible Society staff, aided by other staff members and some volunteers, is responsible for obtaining the items, and seeing them assembled into packages and then distributed.

The distribution around the towns and villages of south Lebanon is performed thanks to the Society's contacts with local clergy and church leaders. They submit lists of names of needy families and the Bible Society team visits them to distribute the packages – either from an agreed location, or by visiting them in their homes.

Arze Hasrouni, the Society's accountant who is doubling as a Relief Team member, described a recent distribution visit to a village called Yaroun, on Lebanon's southern border.



“When the local parish priest said, ‘Ali, come and take your package,’ I was thinking, ‘Why should we be helping non-Christians?’” she said. “These were people that I believed were partially responsible for the war! Then I got the answer. Ali replied: ‘Thank you very much. You are always like this, supporting and giving us help May God bless you all.’

“It was a real shock! There I was, pretending to proclaim the Word of God without trying to live it. Now I have real love for those we are serving and helping, the love only found in God’s Word.”

The shooting of Mr Gemayel, Lebanon’s minister of industry and a leading Christian politician, took place a few hundred yards away from the Bible Society Center on November 21 as his convoy drove through the Christian neighbourhood of Jdeideh, on the northern edge of Beirut. Mr Bassous said the deed had shocked the fragile nation.

“There are threats of more tension, civil upheavals, and unrest,” he added. “Please continue to pray for calmness and stability in this part of the world. We are persevering in our witness regardless of physical and mental exhaustion ... but we would like to enjoy peace one day!” (503 words – LEBANON.1.12.06)

Photos (Bible Society of Lebanon):

LEB06DJ-44: A man receiving a ‘Relief and Scriptures’ package from Amine Bassil, Bible Society in Lebanon Distribution Promoter and Relief Team member, in Baalbak in November 2006.

LEB06DJ-45: A typical Bekaa valley farmer who received a ‘Relief and Scriptures’ package from the Bible Society in Lebanon in November 2006.

LEB06DJ-46: A needy family in Quzah welcomes a Bible Society in Lebanon team bringing a ‘Relief and Scriptures’ package in November 2006.

LEB06DJ-47: A mother finds the Illustrated Bible from the ‘Relief and Scriptures’ package supplied by the Bible Society in Lebanon in November 2006 and shows its contents to her daughter.

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