

AIDS in Africa

Touching the untouchables

"South Africa remains the world's worst affected region [for AIDS]," according to a recent United Nations report. This report states that 21.5 % of the population (ages 15-49) is HIV positive.

There is much to be hopeless about in Africa. Everyone has lost friends and families to the dreaded disease. It would be easy to give up and consider Africa a "lost cause". But God tells us to share His love and the truth found in His Word – to offer hope.



Timothy, a hospice worker, has figured out how to do that. He works where many AIDS patients come to die. As a Christian, he wanted to help both the patients who were facing an eternity without God and their caregivers. Project Philip, Bible League's model for evangelism and discipleship through Bible study, is providing a way. Now he regularly holds Project Philip Bible studies at the hospice.

Impact on Hospice workers

Regular Bible study has also had an impact on volunteers who were relying on their own strength to help those who were dying.

Marion, a hospice volunteer recalls, "I knew about God and the Bible but I thought I was to keep that to myself," she said "After going through Project Philip training, I realised that I was responsible to share my faith through God's Word so I decided to help people die with dignity – physically, emotionally and spiritually." Project Philip has helped prepare her. "Now I can share about Jesus and the Bible with the patients and their families."

Johannes, another hospice volunteer, was overcome by the death she faced daily. "Project Philip came to my rescue. Now I am spiritually ready to help the patients see their need for God."

Anna, who also volunteered in the hospice, wasn't a Christian before she began the Project Philip Bible study. But with her new faith, she was prepared when she lost a nine-year-old patient. Instead of becoming depressed, she gathered the other volunteers together for prayer. She realised that God, through His Word, would supply the strength she needed to face the terrible loss of this little boy.

"When people are facing death, they ask us to pray for them," says Anna. "Before the Bible study, I didn't know how to pray. Now I can pray for them and with them."

Africa transformed

"Africa will be transformed as individual believers demonstrate their faith by living holy lives that are filled with compassion," says Bible League's Director of Africa Ministries.

The director of the hospice is very thankful for Timothy's influence. "Now it is not unusual for volunteers to stay beyond their regular shifts. None of them miss Friday mornings. When the Project Philip group meets, they're always here. The study has changed each person here."

Timothy's willingness to work with those who the world has already considered "lost" has made a difference. By bringing Project Philip Bible studies to this lonely building in South Africa where people come to die, he has helped those who are dying, their families and those who work with them. Timothy, through the power of God and His Word, has changed his world.

African believers need God's Word right now. Please prayerfully consider how you will respond. Please click here to send your gift today. Every \$7.00 places one Bible and changes lives.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for . . . correction"

Timofei—The prodigal son

Timofei considers Luke 15:24 his life verse, "For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost



and is found.” Timofei considered himself a prodigal son.

Born into a Christian family, Timofei rejected the teachings of his Christian parents and chose a life that

wasn't pleasing to them – or to God.

“I resented that they pushed me to go to church. I wanted to live in the world and to do my own thing. I did not want to live by ‘religious restrictions.’”

As a teenager, Timofei became chained to a life of alcohol and drugs. Throughout Russia, alcohol is introduced early and subtly takes control of lives and families.

“My friends were not believers and I followed them into drinking, drugs, foul language and aggressive behaviour. My attitude was very bad and I started fights regularly – both verbally and physically. I needed money, so I began stealing and cheating people. When I was 16, I was sent to prison for two years.”

An angry young man

Timofei left prison a bitter and angry young man. He had even grown to resent God for the way his life was going. “I did not seek God or want His forgiveness,” remembers Timofei.

When Timofei was 19, he married and had a son. When his little boy was only five months old, Timofei was again sent to prison – this time for two years.

“I felt no remorse. In prison people were told to avoid me. I was described as cruel and dangerous.”

Before he was incarcerated, Timofei had been abusive to his wife. While he was in prison, she divorced him.

Timofei lost everything – everything but praying parents and a God who continued to love him.

Timofei married again and had another child. He tried to cut back on his drinking but he wasn't successful. After a night of drinking and drugs, his wife convinced him that they needed to move to another city, to make a new start.

“One day I went to visit my parents whom I had not seen for seven years,” remembers Timofei. “My father gave me a Bible. While I accepted his gift, I determined that I would never read it.”

The weight of a sinful life

Timofei's next few months were spent under harsh conviction from the Holy Spirit. He occasionally visited a local church. He even opened his father's Bible. As he read the Bible, he slowly began to understand the unfailing love of his parents.

“Over the next seven months I often thought of repenting. But my addictions were so strong. I felt too weak to even ask forgiveness.”

This changed when Timofei visited a Project Philip Bible study group. “The weight of my sinful life became so heavy that I couldn't be still any longer. I fell on my knees and cried out to God to forgive me.

“Jesus came into my life; I was no longer a prisoner of my sin. God the righteous judge had forgiven me. I became a free man because of what Jesus did on the cross. My hostility was washed from me, along with my anger.”

Through the Bible study Timofei grew in his new faith. One year after he came to Christ Timofei's wife also decided to become a Christian.

Timofei now leads a Project Philip Bible study where 15 people come every week to learn more about Jesus and His Word.

The Bible softens hearts like rain on sun-baked soil

He is also involved with area youth who are, like he was, bound by alcohol and drugs. “With no employment and a pervading sense of hopelessness, young people see drugs as their answer. When I tell them the story of God's work in my life, it has a powerful effect. I find much joy when a troubled young person attends the Bible study and accepts Christ.”

“I have found that I can spend weeks or months trying to bring a person to a place of repentance. Often, it does not happen. But when I use a Bible and ask the person to read the Gospel of John, their heart is often softened. From my own experience, I had a hard heart. The reading of the Bible softened it like rain on sun-baked soil.”

If you would like to help bring God's Word to change lives like Timofei in Russia, click here to make your donation. Every \$7 places God's Word and changes lives. Thank you for sharing God's Word.