

Along the Way

The following story has been adapted for this "Table Talks" issue with permission from the Bible Society.

Many years ago, residing within a small stone cottage located in a quiet Welsh countryside, was nine-year-old Mary Jones and her widowed mother. Mary's father, a textile weaver who worked hard to support his family, sadly died when Mary was just a young child.

Every Sunday, Mary would walk about two miles so she could attend the little chapel in their village. The minister there would open a large, black leather-bound Bible. As he read from its pages, Mary marvelled over the wonderful words he spoke and stored them up in her heart. After one of the services, she recalls looking at the impressive Bible with fascination and thinking: "Oh, how I wish I could read this Book for myself, or even have one of my own!"

Then, one Sunday morning, the minister announced that a school was opening in the village. "Now I can learn to read," she said excitedly, "and make sense of those strange marks in the Book at the chapel!" Mary worked extra hard to finish her chores so she could go to her teacher's house and learn to read.

Months had passed until, at last, Mary was asked to read from the chapel Bible one Sunday morning. Afterwards, she rushed up to her mother and cried, "I must have a Bible!" The attentive mother gently placed her hand on Mary's shoulder and reminded the pleading child how expensive Bibles can be to buy. "That's why I am going to save up for one," Mary replied. "And I don't care how long it takes me."

For six long years, Mary saved all she could until there was finally enough money collected to purchase her own Bible. She remembered her teacher speaking about a man named Mr. Charles who lived in a town called Bala. He had several new Bibles available. Mary, by now 15 years of age, told

her mother that she was going to walk to Bala. Her mother exclaimed, "That's nearly 25 miles away!" But there was no changing Mary's mind.

The journey to Bala seemed endless. As her weariness grew, she muttered words of encouragement to herself. "Come on, Mary, not much further now..." she thought. Eventually, as dusk was falling, she came to the top of a hill. While standing there, Mary could see the edge of a town. Her heart pounded with excitement.

When she finally arrived at Mr. Charles' house, Mary eagerly expressed her request: "I've walked 25 miles to get here, and I've saved up for six years to buy a Bible. I've got the money here. You can count it if you like. Please, can I have a Bible?" Mr. Charles was taken aback. "You had better come in and tell me all about it," he replied. "But first, you must have something to eat. You must be famished."

Mr. Charles, having been moved by Mary's story, held out a new Bible and offered it to her. Mary stared at the presented item for a long moment before reaching up with both hands to receive it – all the while, expressing her heartfelt thanks. Afterwards, Mary said goodbye to Mr. Charles and started on her way home. When she arrived at the homestead, her mother, the chapel minister, as well as her schoolteacher, all wanted to see the new Bible. As she happily held up the special Book to show them, she murmured a few quiet words of gratitude: "Thank You, Jesus – and thank you, Mr. Charles."

What would you do if you didn't have access to a Bible?

During the 1700s, there were many families like Mary's that did not have their own published copies of God's Word because each Bible could cost the equivalent of several

weeks' worth of paid wages for a skilled worker. Even today, there are many Christian families in various countries around the world that don't have access to the Scriptures.

In some of these countries, Bibles are considered illegal and, therefore, can be dangerous to own. In other places, Christian families without jobs cannot afford to purchase them. Additionally, there are children in these areas of the world who have never been given the opportunity to learn literacy skills, making it difficult for them to read. Thankfully, Bible apps and audio Bibles are now providing alternative ways for Christians from anywhere around the globe to gain access to God's Word.



Reading Between the Lines

How well did you understand the story? Select answer **a** or **b** for each question:

1. What is the main idea of the story?

- a) Nine-year-old Mary understands that the Bible is worth any cost.
- b) A poor girl from a Welsh village believes leather books are valuable.

2. How far did Mary have to travel to get back home from Mr. Charles' house?

- a) 25 miles
- b) 50 miles

Bonus Question: How many kilometres is that?

3. How many years did Mary save her money so she could afford a Bible?

- a) Three years
- b) Six years

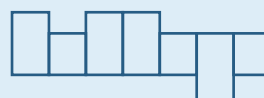
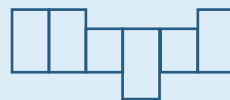


Learning Words

Write each word from the list below in its corresponding word-shaped box:

Bible
Minister
Expensive
Dusk
Cottage
Chapel
Wonderful

B i b l e



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Further Discussion

What would you do if you didn't have access to a Bible?

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