

7/10/15 Hello, I got the Bible studies and the Bible! Thank you! It came at a good time! Well a bad time, but a **good time to have a Bible.** I love it! It's amazing. WS

By Samuel J. Fry & Becky St. Clair

For a span of over six years, Judy Mackie and the faithful congregation of the Buffalo, Wyoming Adventist Church have been sending thousands of letters and Andrews Study Bibles to inmates across the U.S.—all from their small church building at the foot of the Big Horn Mountains.

According to Ron Knott, director of the Andrews University Press, thousands of Andrews Study Bibles have been purchased by Mackie for her prison correspondence ministry, Binding Broken Hearts. The ministry is a Wyoming-based 501(c)3 non-profit organization that has spread to 24 states and is currently one of the fastest growing prison ministries in the United States.

The inspiration for Binding Broken Hearts originated while Mackie was visiting and studying with a female inmate at the Johnson County Jail in Buffalo, Wyoming. “This is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen,” gushed the woman Mackie was studying with, as she stroked the leather cover of Mackie’s H.M.S. Richards Bible.

“The comment shook me,” says Mackie. “It was the first time I’d realized that these ladies had never seen, much less owned, a beautiful Bible.”

While Mackie was not initially interested in



The Wyoming Seventh-day Adventist Church is located at the foot of the Big Horn Mountains in Buffalo, Wyoming

prison ministries, that meeting proved to be the catalyst in motivating her to action.

“Once I got acquainted with some of the inmates and realized how totally hopeless most of them feel, it changed my life,” says Mackie. “Now I am passionately interested in letting them know that they are not forgotten ... No matter what they have done, there is hope for them because Jesus will not only forgive them, but change their hearts.”

Since Mackie’s encounter with the woman

in 2009, the Binding Broken Hearts ministry has grown exponentially. When it started, Mackie was corresponding regularly with inmates in Johnson, Sheridan and Platte counties of Wyoming, along with men and women at the Wyoming State Penitentiaries in Rawlins and Lusk, respectively. By 2015, her ministry was exponentially bigger. Just during the months from January to September of this year, Mackie and her colleagues sent out more than 4,700

Andrews Study Bibles, 300 Knowing Jesus lesson books, and 23,000 personal letters to inmates in 185 facilities in 24 states.

Mackie had been one of the first people to order an Andrews Study Bible when it was first released in June 2010, and she saw its immediate value for her ministry. The rich study helps make it the most comprehensive Bible study resource in one volume ever published in the Adventist world. She began buying regular retail editions of the Bible to send out to inmates.

Inmates who request a Bible are placed on a mailing list, and receive a personalized letter with Bible studies every three weeks. Mackie claims that over half of the inmates who receive their letters share them with their cellmates, who eagerly request letters and studies for themselves. Inmates who receive letters may write back requesting an Andrews Study Bible, and most do.

The Bibles that the prisoners receive quickly become their most cherished possessions.

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While Mackie was sending out Bibles from Wyoming, the necessity of a less expensive edition of the Andrews Study Bible designed specifically for use in prison ministries was noted by Dan Preas, the leader of an active group of Adventist prison ministry volunteers who regularly visit the Walla Walla State Penitentiary in Walla Walla, Washington.

“We began to have Bible-based studies ... and attendance grew from one to almost 40 ... and we now have five nightly studies per week with hundreds of inmates attending,” says Preas. “Our greatest need was large print Bibles. As a chaplain, I was given a small stipend. I said, ‘this money is going to buy Bibles.’ At the time I bought directly from Thomas Nelson, purchasing 200–300

Bibles at a time. It became immediately apparent that the inmates could use a study Bible. Some had other study Bibles and I felt impressed that we needed to give them a version that more closely followed the real meaning of Scripture. Hence, the idea for the prison ministries edition of the Andrews Study Bible came about.”

In 2014, Preas asked Andrews University Press to design a one-color edition of the Bible with large print that would be useful to inmates and accepted by prison authorities. While the Press worked on the design suggested by Preas, Preas raised the money and ordered 5,000 copies for volunteers to deliver personally to inmates in their visits for Bible study. Meanwhile, Mackie didn’t know about plans for a prison ministry edition.

“Back in 2010 and 2011, the business manager at Andrews University Press had noticed something unusual,” says Knott. “A woman from Wyoming was purchasing noticeable quantities of the regular retail editions of the Andrews Study Bible. Of course, we were happy about that, but we were surprised that someone could afford to do that—and we wanted to know more. When we learned about her ministry, and that she was sending them out to inmates in prisons, we arranged for her to receive quantity discounts. But we were still amazed that she was able to raise the money to do this. When Dan Preas helped us conceptualize the special large print prison ministry edition, which is much less expensive, we notified Judy, and she was immediately excited. She would be able to get the same study features in the Bible, with the added value of large print, for about half the cost of what she had been paying for the regular retail editions, even with the quantity discount. She ordered 750 to be added to the Walla Walla order. By the time everything got finalized, she received more than 1,300 Bibles.”

“I said ‘yes,’ and stepped out in faith,” says Mackie. “But by the time we received our order in November we already needed more.”

The design of the prison ministry Andrews Study Bible is conducive to overcoming the strict regulations that govern what objects may be admitted inside correctional facilities. The study Bible features a soft-but-sturdy bonded leather cover, with large print. It is alleged that many prisons have poor lighting and vision

Binding Broken Hearts Ministry:

Selected Prison Inmate Comments about the Andrews Study Bible, July 2015

7/6/16 I would love to know if I could please get one of your Andrews Study Bibles. I met a guy in here and he showed me his and I loved it. I would love to study the Bible and learn more of what I should have been learning all this time. I’m tired of making bad choices and know that if I get to know the word of God it will make me a better man. **DW**

7/6/15 This brief letter is simply to inform you that I have received my Andrews Study Bible and cannot thank you enough for such a blessing! It has already begun to provide me with invaluable insight and ease of instruction. God bless you and your organization for all you do! **CL**

7/5/15 Just a quick letter to say thank you from the bottom of my heart for the amazing large print NJKV Holy Bible. **CC**

7/5/15 I came across one of your Bibles in here called the Andrews Study Bible and I really love it, the owner said to write this PO Box # and ask for one and I would receive one. Please help me to obtain one, I am a Christian obviously and I would like to further my faith and change my life and become a better person. **JM**

6/29/15 I have a brother in the Lord named Beau who received a wonderful study Bible from your organization and I was really impressed by the commentaries supplied with it. He said I could write and request one and am thrilled to do so. **SS**

care is often not a high priority in prisons and the large print is much more readable.

It includes almost all the regular features of the retail editions, including more than 12,000 study notes, a linked-reference system highlighting the great teachings of the Christian faith, center column references, maps, a Bible reading plan, an annotated theme index and a concordance. These features—originally designed to help those with limited access to study resources—are well suited to aiding inmates, who often lack basic Bible study tools.

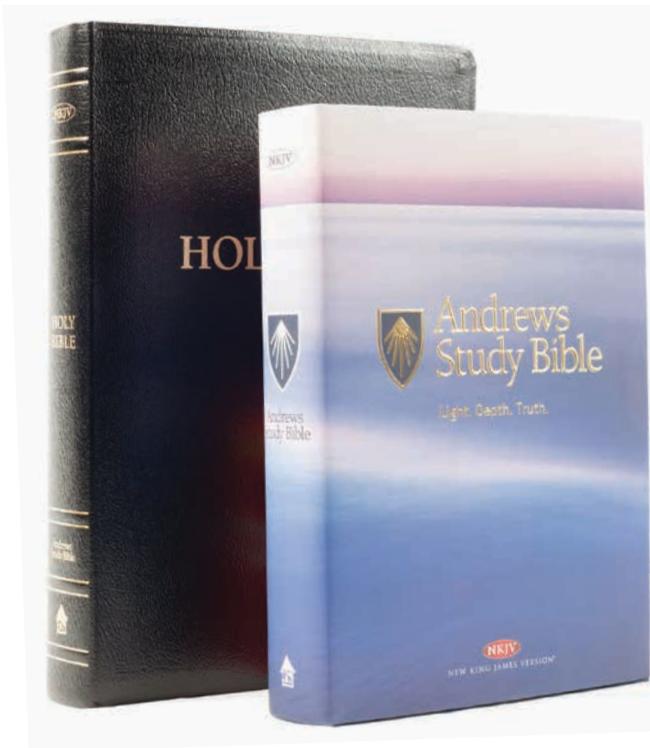
“If you could just see the faces of some of the inmates who have received the Andrews Study Bibles—your heart would melt,” says Preas. “The study notes are so helpful to those who have little Bible knowledge. For many, this is the only gift they have ever received.”

For many inmates, the Andrews Study Bibles are truly life changing. Most of the facilities the inmates are incarcerated in do not offer anything comparable, and their appreciation of the Bibles is evident in the thank-you letters they send Mackie.

While the inmates cherish the Bibles they receive, Mackie’s decision to give out comparatively expensive, bonded leather Bibles has not been without criticism. She maintains that while her ministry could give out several cheap paperback Bibles for the price of a single prison ministry edition of the Andrews Study Bible, there is something intangible in the sense of value these beautiful Bibles instill in the inmates.

“Many people have questioned why we give such an expensive Bible—about \$20 by the time we ship it,” says Mackie. “We believe these Bibles tell the inmate they have value—they are mostly shunned by society and forgotten by their families. We get letter after letter expressing their joy and thankfulness that someone cares. Most of all—they express the thought that maybe God hasn’t forgotten them either.”

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impression. It commands immediate attention. And because of the quality of the paper and the binding, and all the important study features, it makes an important statement about the value of the gift.”

When Mackie and her congregation had quickly exhausted their original stock of 1,300 Bibles, they immediately began planning for their own order of 5,000. Lacking the necessary funds—they turned to prayer. The Wyoming Adventist church held a special group prayer session, and within two hours they procured the remaining \$30,000 necessary to make the minimum \$45,000 down payment.

In May 2016 the shipment of 5,470 Bibles arrived in Wyoming. Members of the Sheridan Adventist church unloaded the Bibles and carried them to the church hall. Within a month, Binding Broken Hearts had

given away nearly a quarter of the Bibles.

Still, Binding Broken Hearts has more than 1,000 inmates on the waiting list as they receive funds to send the Bibles out, a testament to the limits of a purely donation-based ministry. For every Bible sent to inmates, Mackie estimates that at least two requests are received, as inmates realize that all they have to do is ask to receive their own Bible. In spite of Mackie and her congregation’s best efforts, there will always be inmates hungry for the word of God. Mackie estimates that they will give away the remaining Bibles by October or November.

“We are waiting and praying to know what direction God wants us to take,” says Mackie. “Our God is able to provide all these Bibles and more. He seems to be testing our faith and commitment right now. We are determined to continue to move forward. As funds come in we will send out more letters and Bibles.”

Binding Broken Hearts has been receiving outside help, and the organization has been building momentum. A donor offered to match contributions raised in October up to \$5,000, and supporters are sending money from throughout the U.S. Mackie, who has been running Binding Broken Hearts as a ministry in addition to her job, has been overwhelmed with the amount of support she has received.

“God doesn’t lack financial resources,” says Mackie. “He just needs willing hands.”

There are plenty of willing hands, according to Mackie, who contends that her ministry has brought the Buffalo Adventist church closer together.

“Our ministry is entirely donation-based and volunteer powered,” says Mackie. “Every member of the Sheridan church helps with this project. Our youngest helper is age 4, and our oldest is 82. The Gospel hasn’t reached the entire world yet, there are still those in prison who need to be visited ... We are confident that God will continue to provide.”

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