WELL USED...

Posted on April 10, 2012 by Eddie

Categories: Africa, Bible & Mission, Bible Translation

In 1974, my brother Phil gave me a Bible. It was the first Bible I'd ever owned and having just become a Christian, I was thrilled with it. Forty years ago, Bibles were real Bibles, this was a large, dark-blue, hardback, King James Version with cross references and the words of Jesus in red. Looking back, it probably wasn't the most practical Bible to give to a teenage boy; it was too big and not flexible enough to stuff into a rucksack without suffering some sort of damage. But that Bible saw good service. When I came to replace it with an NIV four or five years later, there were passages underlined and lots of notes scribbled in the margins and the pages were held together by parcel tape and sticky backed plastic. Even today, when I quote Scripture from memory I tend to quote the King James Version and it all goes back to that sixteenth birthday present.

I was reminded of my old Bible when I read Sue's report of the Kouya New Testament dedication:

> *Â In a number of ways this wasnâ€™t a typical dedication. It was taking place a full 10 years after the New Testament was published: it had not been possible to hold a celebration because just as the New Testaments arrived in the port of Abidjan in 2002, civil war was breaking out in the country, and the dividing line between north and south split the Kouya area in two. Many of our Kouya friends suffered greatly during the fighting and during the political instability which followed. Although the New Testament was only now being officially dedicated, many Kouya Christians have been reading Godâ€™s word in their own language during the last 10 years, and* ***I certainly saw quite a number of New Testaments which did indeed look well used*** *(emphasis mine).*

To my mind, that one phrase was the most encouraging and the most important insight which emerged from Sue's trip to Ivory Coast. Kouya people are reading the New Testament! We didn't simply translate a book which was left on a shelf to gather dust; we did translate a book, but people are reading it and encountering the living Christ in its pages!

Another confirmation that people are using the New Testaments came from the news that two women, who had not learned to read at school, took part in the dedication ceremony, reading in Kouya. The school system had failed them, but they had become literate as adults in their mother tongue. Brilliant!