



Bible Access List

Where Bible access is most difficult, and Bible shortage is greatest

Nepal

Bible Restrictions Rank: **39**
CONSIDERABLE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **33**
Bible needs estimate between one hundred and two hundred fifty thousand



An Overview of Bible access in Nepal

Nestled in the heart of the Himalayas, Nepal is home to a small but growing Christian community. Christians make up less than 6% of the country's 31 million people. While believers can access Bibles to some extent, considerable access restrictions make it difficult. As a result, the need remains great—and it is estimated that only a little over half of Nepal's Christians own a Bible, leaving countless Christians without Scripture, especially in rural areas, where most of the population lives.

Bible access in Nepal is entangled in a complex web of legal, social, and economic barriers. While Bibles are not outright banned, laws criminalizing evangelism and conversion make distribution risky, particularly when done outside of church premises. The 2017 anti-conversion law, paired with Article 26 of the 2015 Constitution, prohibits proselytization and creates an atmosphere of fear among believers. Those caught evangelizing can face imprisonment, fines, or deportation if they are foreigners. This legal pressure indirectly restricts Bible access, as many Christians hesitate to own or share Scripture openly.

Nepali believers also face severe social opposition, particularly Hindu converts, who are often ostracized by family and community. Religious nationalism, driven by radical Hindu groups, fuels this hostility, with violence against Christians rising in recent years. Reports of churches being attacked, pastors being beaten, and some being arrested highlight the daily risks many Nepali Christians face. In some areas, possessing a Bible can lead to targeted harassment or even forced to flee their homes.

Beyond persecution, socio-economic factors contribute to the difficulties to access the Bible. Nepal remains one of the poorest nations in South Asia, with widespread poverty making it difficult for many to afford a Bible. Although 90% of the population has electricity, only about half have internet access, limiting access to digital Bibles and online Christian resources. Almost a third of the country is illiterate, meaning that many believers, especially in rural areas, require audio Bibles to engage with Scripture effectively. Furthermore, a large percentage of blind people also make use of audio Bibles.

Without reliable access to God's Word, many Christians struggle to grow in their faith, and evangelism efforts are hindered. Innovative distribution strategies—such as audio Bibles for the illiterate, digital resources for the tech-savvy, and discreet distribution networks for print Bibles—are crucial to bridging this gap.

But first, would you take a moment to pray for Nepal?

How can I pray for Nepal?

- **Protection and Provision.** Pray for the safety of Christians in Nepal, particularly converts who face family rejection, job discrimination, and even physical violence. Ask God to strengthen underground Bible distribution networks and provide innovative ways for believers to access Scripture despite legal and social restrictions.
- **Change in Government and Society.** Pray for the Nepali government to uphold religious freedom and repeal anti-conversion laws that restrict Bible access. Ask for a shift in societal attitudes, that hearts would soften toward Christianity, and that Nepal would embrace the Word of God.
- **Global Support and Partnerships.** Intercede for global Christian organizations working to provide Bibles in Nepal. Pray for resources, funding, and strategic partnerships that will allow for safe and effective Bible distribution. Ask that every believer in Nepal would have the opportunity to engage with God's Word in a format they can understand and access.

After praying for Nepal, continue reading on the next page to learn more.

Bible Access Restrictions



Considerable Access Restrictions



Import restrictions



Print restrictions



Storage restrictions



Ownership restrictions



Distribution restrictions

Other Limiting Factors



Some Other Factors



Very poor



Poor internet access

Bible Shortages Among Believers



Bible ownership is over 50%, **estimated** Bible need is between 100 and 250 thousand

Main religion: Buddhism

Country population: 31,240,000

Christian population:



1,678,000, 5.37% of total population

World Watch List: #54

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN NEPAL?

A Nation Under Growing Pressure

In Nepal, owning and distributing Bibles has become increasingly difficult due to a combination of legal, social, and cultural pressures. While the country is officially secular, its constitution and legal framework have imposed severe restrictions on religious conversions, directly impacting access to Scripture. The 2015 Constitution and the 2017 anti-conversion law criminalize proselytization, meaning that sharing the Bible or evangelizing can lead to imprisonment or deportation for foreign believers.

At the local level, Hindu nationalist groups and radical elements actively work to suppress Christian activities, including Bible distribution. These groups, often influenced by similar movements in India, push for Nepal to return to its former status as a Hindu kingdom. Their influence has led to increasing hostility against Christians, especially converts from Hinduism, who face threats, physical violence, and social ostracization for possessing or sharing Scripture.

Daily Risks and Bible Access

Nepali Christians, particularly those from Hindu backgrounds, face daily risks for simply owning a Bible. In many rural areas, believers must hide their faith, as family and community pressure can result in being disowned, physically attacked, or denied inheritance rights. Reports indicate that Christian homes and churches have been vandalized, and at least 232 Christians were forced to flee their homes in the past year alone. In one instance, a church service in Madhesh province was violently disrupted by the radical group Hindu Samrat Sena, with Bibles seized and destroyed.

Legal risks also pose a major threat to Bible access. Christians suspected of evangelizing have been detained or arrested, with at least 19 believers imprisoned in the past year for faith-related reasons. A well-known case involved a pastor, who was sentenced to one year in prison for sharing the gospel. Such legal actions create an atmosphere of fear, discouraging believers from carrying, sharing, or even reading the Bible in public.

Poverty and Practical Barriers

Beyond legal and social threats, economic hardship further restricts access to the Bible in Nepal. With some parts of the country living below the poverty line, purchasing a Bible is an added expense for many. Even when financial barriers are overcome, logistical issues arise. Many Christian materials must be imported, and customs officials—often influenced by Hindu nationalist—impose heavy bureaucratic obstacles, delaying or blocking Bible shipments.

Digital access to the Bible is also limited. While Nepal's internet penetration stands at about 50%, rural areas remain largely disconnected. A recent crisis in May 2024 saw internet services across the country disrupted due to unpaid debts to Indian telecommunications providers, exposing the vulnerability of Nepal's digital infrastructure. Additionally, literacy rates, particularly among women and lower-caste populations, remain a challenge, making printed Bibles inaccessible to many.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Nepal

Nepal	Islamic Oppression	Religious Nationalism	Ethno-religious hostility	Clan oppression	Christian denominational oppression	Communist and post-Communist oppression	Secular intolerance	Dictatorial paranoia	Organized corruption and crime	Reference
Persecution Engines →										<p>The more fully shaded the circle in orange, the stronger the level of persecution. The number of "+" signs indicates the frequency or intensity of the driving factors behind it.</p>
Persecution Drivers ↓	Weak	Strong	Not at all	Strong	Not at all	Weak	Very Weak	Medium	Not at all	
Government officials		++++		+++		+		++++		
Ethnic group leaders		+++		+++						
Non-Christian religious leaders	++									
Christian religious leaders										
Violent religious groups		++++		++++				++		
Normal citizens	++	+++		+++						
Extended family	++	++++		++++						
Political parties		+++				++		+		
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups										
Organized crime										
Multilateral org. & Embassies										

Nepal faces significant persecution pressures that hinder Bible access, primarily in the face of **religious nationalism, clan oppression, and dictatorial paranoia**. The primary drivers of persecution include **government officials, violent religious groups (Hindu), extended family, and some pressure from ethnic group leaders and political parties**. Together, these actors contribute to growing hostility toward Christians, heavily restricting Bible access.

Research from the World Watch List sheds light on the broader context of persecution of Christians. But now we have to ask the question: How does this affect Bible access? Furthermore, where can we pinpoint the problem so we can address the need and demand for Bibles in Laos?

A CLOSER LOOK AT PERSECUTION ENGINES

A persecution engine simply this: the source of persecution in the country. A persecution driver (or actor) is the one “driving” the persecution. For a country like Nepal, understanding these 3 main engines can give us context on how to address Bible access.



Religious nationalism, particularly **Hindu nationalism**, is the dominant force restricting Bible access in Nepal. Radical Hindu groups, with ties to similar movements in India, seek to re-establish Nepal as a Hindu state. These groups attack churches, disrupt Christian gatherings, and physically assault believers, often with impunity.

In 2015, Nepal’s constitution reinforced restrictions on religious conversion, making it illegal to evangelize or encourage someone to change their faith. This law, combined with the 2017 anti-conversion legislation, has led to arrests, imprisonment, and social ostracization for those caught sharing their faith. For example, a pastor was sentenced to a year in prison for evangelism. Another example is when 11 Christians were arrested for evangelizing—a clear picture on how the law is used to suppress Christian activities.

Additionally, violent Hindu groups such as the Hindu Samrat Sena (HSS) actively target Christian gatherings. One example of this happened in June 2024. They stormed a church service, attacked the pastor, and destroyed Bibles. These groups are emboldened by political instability and the government's failure to prosecute offenders.



Clan oppression is deeply intertwined with religious nationalism, as many Nepali Christians come from Hindu backgrounds. Converts are viewed as betraying their family heritage, and they face severe pressure from their families, extended relatives, and community members. This includes expulsion from homes, denial of inheritance, and forced participation in Hindu rituals.

In rural regions, Christians are sometimes denied access to community resources such as water, employment, and burial grounds. A striking example occurred in Lamjung, where Christians were barred from using the communal water supply, forcing them to dig separate wells. Similarly, Christian burials are routinely obstructed, with families forced to travel to India to bury their loved ones.

Christian children also experience religious coercion in schools, where Hindu prayers and customs are mandatory. Even in a supposedly secular state, the overwhelming presence of Hindu culture in education forces Christian families to compromise their beliefs or face discrimination.



Although Nepal does not have an authoritarian government, state officials at the local level enforce strict restrictions on Christian activities. Authorities monitor churches, interrogate pastors, and impose bureaucratic barriers on Christian organizations. Churches cannot register legally, forcing them to operate under private ownership or as NGOs, which leaves them vulnerable to government crackdowns.

Christian organizations face additional restrictions, with local authorities requiring them to remove any biblical references from documents before registration. One example of this happened in March 2024, where Christian NGOs were harassed and denied registration renewal, further limiting their ability to distribute Bibles and support believers.

Additionally, political parties with Hindu nationalist agendas are working to reverse Nepal's secular status. In April 2024, thousands marched on Parliament, demanding Nepal be reinstated as a Hindu state, fueling fears of further restrictions on Christian activities, including Bible distribution.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN NEPAL

Against the growing religious nationalism, legal restrictions, and economic hardship, Bible access in Nepal remains low. With Christian population exceeding 1.6 million, the need for Scripture is more urgent than ever—particularly among Protestants and independent evangelical groups. Further research estimates there are **nearly 250,000 believers** that are currently without a Bible but would like to have a personal copy. Additionally, there is a significant need to make Bibles available for seekers.

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

Despite mounting opposition, **Nepal's church is experiencing growth during the last five years.** Many of these new believers come from Hindu backgrounds and face intense persecution, family rejection, and even legal repercussions for their faith. Yet, as the Christian community expands, so does the demand for Bibles.

This begs the questions: How do we get the Bible to them?

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

Given the widespread economic challenges and rural demographics, printed Bibles remain the top priority. Many Christians lack the financial resources to purchase one, and digital access is unreliable due to limited internet penetration (only around 50% of the population has internet access). However, Bible apps remain the second priority, particularly for urban Christians with mobile access.

Lastly, audio Bibles are essential for believers in remote areas and for those with low literacy levels or the blind, ensuring they can still engage with God's Word despite these barriers.

The Challenge of Bible Translations

Nepal's vast linguistic diversity presents a significant challenge to Bible access. The country is home to over 100 spoken languages. There are known communities of believers among 77 of these languages. However, as we examine availability of Bible translations for these, it remains limited:

- **30** languages have a full Bible translation
- **23** languages have only the New Testament
- **6** languages have only portions of Scripture
- **18 languages have no Bible translation at all**

This gap means that entire communities remain without access to God's Word in their heart language. The need for translation efforts is urgent to ensure that every Nepali believer can engage with Scripture in a language they understand.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Nepal

THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in Nepal is urgent—not just a logistical challenge, but a call to stand with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Across denominations and backgrounds, believers long for God’s Word, yet many remain without it. It is our responsibility to change that.

By providing **printed Bibles, digital resources, and audio formats**, and advancing **Bible translation efforts**, we can ensure that every believer and seeker in Nepal has access to Scripture. The time to act is now—**together, we can put God’s Word into their hands.**



6.1%
Annual Church
Growth



Bibles needed for both
**Believers
& Seekers**



100-250k
Bible needs estimate



**Printed
Bible**
Preferred Format