

SOWER

SUMMER 2018-19

*“Our language
makes us feel
strong.”*

**Hagar
Nadjamerrek**



Joel's events bring the word to the world

Joel Scanlan was aware of Bible Society from a young age, as he grew up in the church. When the mother of a friend was challenged to find new people to support the work of Bible Society, she chose Joel. The rest is Bible Society folklore.

Joel lives in Hobart, Tasmania, and is what he refers to laughingly as a “DINK” – one half of a “dual income with no kids” couple. In his mid-30s, Joel has been married for 13 years. His wife is a psychologist who runs her own business. Joel teaches hundreds of students each year about network security, in his role as a university lecturer in cyber security. When not teaching, Joel enjoys sport (especially cricket) is a bit of a media addict (consuming movies and books) and gets involved with supporting Bible Society work in

Australia and around the world. Joel's involvement with Bible Society began about 13 years ago when he attended the Bible Society action group in Hobart. One month he missed a meeting, and the next month returned to find that he'd been elected chairman! Although surprising, it was a good appointment, and Joel has been the group's chairman ever since.

During the years Joel has been supporting Bible Society, he and the group have run three to five events in Hobart each year. They have run African-themed dinners (with local African refugees doing the catering), quiz nights, events with the band Sons of Korah, Hymnfests, Bike for Bibles and project launches every year – all in support of the annual *Get The Word Out* project.

At his local church, Joel has



also got the Sunday School behind supporting Bible Society projects. In 2018 they raised funds for sick children in the La Mascota Hospital in Nicaragua.

One of the reasons Joel enjoys working to support Bible Society so much is its value as a parachurch organisation. “I get a bit frustrated when local churches don't have a collaborative approach across denominations,” he says. **“Supporting Bible Society offers a great way to get lots of different churches working together.”**

One event that Joel and others have developed in support of Bible Society is the Word Songwriting Showcases. Joel says, “We were trying to come up with an event idea to catch a different demographic, such as uni students, those in their first job, or in their 30s and 40s.”

“Sarah Gracie – a talented musician – said it would be great for songwriters to show their ability to write godly songs. We were hoping to both support local songwriters, and at the same time capture an audience of people who might not be aware of Bible Society’s work. We wanted to get them on board and become supporters.”

The Showcases now run in Hobart, Launceston and Devonport each year. Ticket prices are kept low, and an offering is taken on the nights for the work of Bible Society.

Joel wants to encourage others to get involved in supporting Bible Society work. He says, “It’s very easy for us in Australia to sit back and not do anything. But getting involved can have such a dramatic impact.”

He reflects, “At the end of an event – even if it doesn’t go quite as well as we hoped or expected – in the end, we have still raised funds for Bible work. **You can see how many Bibles are going to people. And you realise, you’ve made a real difference.**”

“In other countries, one Bible can affect a whole group of people, not just one. In the end, it’s such a little amount of time for me to give up, for such a substantial impact.”

Dear friends,

It is a time of testing for the Christian churches of the Western world, including Australia. With church membership and attendance either sliding or, at best, holding steady, the days of the church having a major influence in society seem to be passing. I’m an incurable optimist, so I say this with some ill-ease.

Of course, tomorrow God could inaugurate a revival and the Holy Spirit could rush across this physically and spiritually drought-stricken land, causing knees to bow and tongues to sing to the risen Lord. I pray for it, and it wouldn’t surprise me in the slightest.

But, looking at the trend, Christians would do well to prepare for times of difficulty. It may be that our complacency is being called out. It may be that the church needs to change. It may be that we need refining by fire. No one but God really knows, but all of these things would be good for our souls.

At Bible Society, we see our role as being a consistent witness

to the power of God’s word when it is available and accessible to all peoples. We are encouraged that the repeated pattern everywhere around the world is that when people receive the word of God, it improves their lives, deepens and clarifies their love, and generates communities with hope

and purpose. You can see plenty of instances of that in this *Sower*.

While we mourn our failings as Christians to live up to the gospel (CPX’s new

documentary provides a sobering perspective on this), we have confidence that God’s word does not go out into the world without achieving its purposes.

This secure faith gives us energy and enthusiasm to continue our work. Thanks for making this ministry possible.



Dr Greg Clarke, CEO
Bible Society Australia



Members of the Gunbalanya community celebrate the launch of the Kunwinjku New Testament.

Welcoming the words of Jesus

As Hagar Nadjamerrek sits with her sister Lois in the cool shade of Emmanuel Church in Gunbalanya, West Arnhem Land, she says: “Our language makes us feel strong.”

The sun outside is blistering, glistening on the waters of the billabong through the windows of the church. The billabong looks serene, but there are warnings not to get too close. Crocodiles also love that water. Away from the water’s edge, people from the church have started to gather

under the mango trees, chatting excitedly in Kunwinjku, the local Aboriginal language.

“Today is a very exciting day,” Hagar tells me, her face beaming. “We’re celebrating the Bible in our own language.”

Lois is solemn as she sits beside her sister. She is clutching a leather-bound Bible with a golden cross and the words “God Nuye Kunwok.” When I ask her how she’s feeling, she looks overwhelmed. “The Bible has come home to us,” she says, with

tears in her eyes.

“I’m thinking of God’s word in my language,” she says. “It’s so special today.”

On August 1, the completed New Testament in Kunwinjku, published by Bible Society Australia, was dedicated in Gunbalanya. Representatives from Bible Society joined more than 100 people, both local and visitors, who packed the little church to celebrate with Lois, Hagar and their community.

The dedication of a new

Bible in an Aboriginal language doesn't happen often. There is only one full Bible completed in an Indigenous language, in Kriol, spoken by about 20,000 Indigenous people across the northern parts of Australia. Central Australia's Pitjantjatjara language has a full New Testament, with work well underway to complete the Old Testament.

The Kunwinjku New Testament contains the full 27 books of the New Testament, as well as Genesis, Exodus and Ruth.

But there is a lot more work to be done. There is something you can do, today, and it's absolutely vital. These communities long for the Bible in their heart languages. You can help translate it, publish it, distribute it and put it into suitable formats such as audio or children's booklets.

More books of the Old Testament are being translated into Kunwinjku, with the Book of Psalms finished as a first draft.

Rev. Lois has been the main Bible translator in Gunbalanya for many years, following on from local translators who had been working on the translation for more than 70 years, with the help of missionaries from the Church Missionary Society.

As the work continues, Lois and Hagar say they will also work

to ensure their people learn from the words of Jesus that they now have in their heart language.

“We feel proud to have this Bible in our language,” she says. “It is now important to share it. This is our future. This is what we need our kids to learn and to understand, and to share the good news among our people,” says Hagar.


Lois believes it is God's plan for her to finish translating the Bible in Kunwinjku.

“I thank God that he has a plan for me to finish this work in my own language. It's very important that the word of God is here in my community now. I'm so very happy.”

More than 275 kilometres east of Gunbalanya, Yurranydjil Dhurrkay is a Bible translator from Galiwin'ku on Elcho Island, off the coast of Arnhem Land. She has devoted her life to Bible translation work in Wangurri, a Yolŋu language. But she says with so much work to be done, there is a dire need for more translators.

“We need more translators,” she says. “It would be good that every language group, every clan, has its own Bible.”

Thanks to supporters of Bible Society Australia, a new translation course is starting in 2019 at Nungalinga College,



Lois Nadjamerrek believes it's God's plan for her to finish translating the Bible in Kunwinjku.



Yurranydjil Dhurrkay's life was changed by becoming a Bible translator.

a Christian training college for Indigenous Australians in Darwin.

It has been more than 10 years since Indigenous Christians have been offered the opportunity to learn the inner workings of Bible translation through an accredited course. The new Diploma of Translation is the result of a partnership between Bible Society Australia, Nungalinga College, Wycliffe Bible Translators, CMS, AuSIL and Coordinate.

“The cohort of students who were trained [in Bible translation] years ago are now often very old.

And they're dying,” says Jude Long, the Principal of Nungalinga College. “So we've got an older generation of Bible translators with no young ones coming through. **Without this training, Bible translation projects simply won't be able to succeed.**”

Yurranydjil, who was trained under the old course, says: “When I talk about translation, there's a light in me. **And if the work of translation calls me and has changed my life, then it can change other people's lives too.**”

Kaley Payne

GIVE NOW

\$40 helps to print and distribute Scripture for communities waiting for God's word in their heart languages.

\$80 records more of the Kriol Bible in audio for those who cannot read.

\$120 helps train the next generation of Bible translators so more Indigenous communities can have God's word.

Please call **1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537)**, use the donation form on the back page or visit **biblesociety.org.au/soword**



Devotion



An invitation to the feast

Matthew 22:8-10: *“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.”*

Summer is a great time to pause and reflect on life’s priorities. At this time, many Australians make a new year’s resolution.

I recently heard about a Swedish backpacker visiting Hobart who attended the Anglican cathedral one Sunday.

She heard how the church was about to begin the new Alpha Film Series and along with the congregation that day, was invited to take some postcards to invite friends along. The backpacker wasn’t staying long enough to participate in Alpha, but still took the postcards and handed them out to others staying at her hostel. One young man who received the invitation was a recently arrived university student from Bangladesh. He didn’t know many people in Hobart and thought it would be an interesting night out so he went along and enjoyed the hospitality and conversation. He kept going back. After three weeks, he asked if he could become a Christian!

We forget the power of invitation. In a society where isolation and loneliness are on the rise, Christian hospitality should be a main missional activity. The opportunity to invite people to eat with us, reflect on questions of life, faith and meaning, and discuss these in a friendly non-threatening environment, has more power than we realise. It meets both our spiritual and social longings for connection.

If we all committed to inviting six friends to Alpha, we would potentially have invited every Australian to explore faith in Jesus! Who will you invite to Alpha in 2019?

John Lamerton, National Ministry Director, Alpha Australia

Gift of reading is a gift of life



Bangladeshi women hold the Bengali textbooks that have opened up the word of God.

Dreams of further study with a view to breaking the shackles of illiteracy are what inspired Bangladeshi mother-of-three Jhuma.

Jhuma was only 12 when she married and had to work to support her family. Keeping up with her schooling became problematic. “But I made sure my three children went to school,” she says. “I had a dream to do further study.”

Jhuma has now graduated from a church-run, two-year literacy course and has been given a Bible to read for herself.

Finally, at 35, Jhuma can read.

“I can read the Bible properly and I’m helping my daughter in her study and daily homework,” she says. “I’m seeing my dream through my daughters.”

This transformation has been made possible thanks to your support of Bangladesh Bible Society, which provides the materials and funds to run the Literacy Skill Development programme in many communities.

There is a need for improved reading and writing skills in Bangladesh, where one quarter of the 165 million population is considered illiterate. Most of these people live in rural areas, where

the issue has been exacerbated by poverty and limited state services, leaving many Bangladeshis, particularly women, with little exposure to education.

The Bible Society literacy course integrates people from various denominations to learn together and practise their Christian faith, while overcoming the social handicap of illiteracy.

Classes are run by facilitators from local churches, and involve activities in reading the Bengali Common Language Bible along with newspapers and other materials.

Classes consist of 20-25

students who meet for one hour a day, five days a week. In each class, students interact with the word of God and when they have completed the programme, they can do this for themselves.

Last year 1000 participants from 50 rural churches were part of the programme. About half of these are currently in the secondary stage of their studies.

One of the hundreds of women blessed by the programme is Mina, a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church at Dabor, Joylando, in



Married at 12, Jhuma can read at 35.

the Dinajpur District. “Before attending this class I could not read any book,” she says.

“I wanted to read and write, but I’d forgotten everything that I had learned several years ago. I did not even know Bible stories.

“I was so curious to know about Jesus Christ.”

Mina’s wish came to fruition after attending the literacy class: “I came to know Jesus personally from the stories which are given in books and CDs.”

There are many Christians in Bangladesh who share a desire

to be able to read the Bible to improve in their leadership roles, both at home and within local churches.

A spokesman from the Bangladesh Bible Society says the project helps people learn to read the word of God, grow in biblical knowledge, and be equipped with literacy and numeracy skills to use in daily activities.

“It is expected the women who complete the programme will be able to encourage their children and family members in their education and Bible reading,” he says.

Ultimately, participants will be encouraged to live prayerful lives, trusting in the Lord and worshipping him constantly.

Please pray for those who have finished the course, that they may assist others who are still unable to read.

Pray also for the young women of Bangladesh, that they would have access to education and would excel in literacy and numeracy.

Finally, please pray that the heavy monsoon rains will not reduce programme attendance.



GIVE NOW

Please call **1300 BIBLES** (1300 242 537), use the donation form on the back page or visit **biblesociety.org.au/sowhope**



Better and worse than you ever imagined

Some of the documentary team, from left: Allan Dowthwaite, Simon Smart, Brad Conomy, Jo Dutailis, Dave Sheerman and Mark Hadley.

People sometimes say, “Religion is the cause of most wars!” What is it about religion that invites such a criticism?

This is just one of the questions being tackled by thousands of people across Australia, and now the world, as they engage with new resources that dig deeper into the documentary *For the Love of God*.

For the Love of God: How the church is better and worse than you ever imagined was released by the Centre for Public Christianity (CPX) in May this year. Since then, it has been screened in around 150 cinemas nationally, with almost 17,500 tickets sold.

And now the film is being launched worldwide, as digital resources are made available globally, along with new DVDs and licences for community screenings of the documentary.

Among the new resources is a short course, which can be used in small or large gatherings in churches, homes or community groups. The content is designed to be accessible to anyone – ranging from those with a Christian faith to those who are hostile towards it.

Dr John Dickson, one of the documentary presenters, outlines the purpose of this resource:

“The documentary itself does not attempt to explain the gospel message, beyond pointing audiences to the centrality of Christ’s death and the ethic of love that inspires. So it seemed important to design a short course for sceptics and believers alike, which would take people through some highlights of the documentary, while pointing participants to the gospel itself – through discussion of key passages from the gospels and epistles – as the ‘beautiful tune,’ as we describe it, which condemns hate and inspires love.”

For the Love of God: The Course consists of four 90-minute sessions with themed videos on the topics of War + Peace, Rights + Wrongs, Rich + Poor, and Power + Humility. These videos (now available on DVD, from the CPX website, or through iTunes and Google Play) are accompanied by downloadable session outlines, containing discussion questions and relevant Bible passages.

High school students are also being introduced to key issues raised in the documentary through a range of resources produced in collaboration with teachers. Notably, these are not just aimed at Christian Studies classes, but many of the topics are relevant for other subjects,



Teacher Emily Liddell engages her students using the CPX documentary.

including history, English, philosophy and more.

The school resources include a suite of short video segments from the documentary (five to 10 minutes in length) that correspond to themed lesson plans. They are designed to be accessible to students from any faith background and open up conversations about the impact Christianity has had on our world – the good, the bad and the surprising.

This has certainly been the result for Emily Liddell, Christian Studies and Year 7 coordinator at Abbotsleigh, an Anglican school for girls on Sydney’s North Shore.

Liddell has been using the documentary clips in Christian Studies and Studies of Religion

classes. “I really appreciate that they ground the Christian faith in history. That’s really important because it makes it real to our students. It shows that it’s not a fairytale, it’s not a myth. It is grounded in history,” she says.

In particular, she notes the impact on her Year 9 students of a lesson based on a documentary clip about Martin Luther King, exploring the themes of non-violence and loving your enemies.

“Every single student walked out of the classroom and said to me, ‘Thank you so much. That lesson has really made me think about what Jesus actually said and how I need to live.’”

Why not take a guided tour through the episodes at betterandworsefilm.com?

EGYPT



Giving Christmas hope to Egypt's children

Children near one of the many piles of rubbish in "Garbage city," Cairo, Egypt.



Last Christmas 10-year-old Myrna received a special present. It was one of the only Christmas presents she had ever received.

Myrna lives on the fringes of North Cairo in Egypt. Her neighbourhood is crowded with metal factories, which spill polluted fumes over the streets where she plays.

Myrna's father is lucky enough to have a job in one of these factories, while her mother helps boost the family's meagre income by working in a women's sewing project at the local church.

This church, like many throughout Egypt, is struggling to provide Bible resources to local Christians and to the wider community. This is not only a result of poverty. In Egypt, being a Christian can be dangerous.

Egyptian Christians – who make up only 10 per cent of the population in this Muslim-majority country – often face persecution and hostility. Violent attacks against Coptic Christians have killed hundreds of churchgoers over the past few years, and religious celebrations – such as Christmas and Easter – are key times for attacks to take place.

Yet, even in the midst of violence and persecution, the church in Egypt is growing and

there is a genuine hunger for more gospel resources.

And so, when Myrna received a package from Bible Society Egypt last Christmas, it offered a sense of joy and hope to her whole family. Many other children from impoverished communities also received a Christmas package – including a colourful backpack full of Scripture books, games, puzzles, a new towel, hygiene products and a sweet treat.

Myrna describes the importance of this gift to herself and her three younger brothers and sisters: "We really like the book *Let's Search*. This book has made us friends, because we spend lots of time together searching through the pictures. Also we didn't know that the Christmas story contains so many stories, and all of them combined together make the Christmas story. **Even though we have gone through this book several times, it's still our favourite to get out and search through the pictures together.**"

Thanks to supporters from

Bible Society Australia, more than 16,000 Egyptian children will receive a package this Christmas-time. Many of these children live in villages where there is no local church and they are too poor to own a pair of shoes. **Yet through the packages, these children and their families will have the opportunity to experience God's love and to hear about the good news of Jesus Christ.**

Pray that as Egyptian children and families read God's word in these packages, it provides them with a hope and joy that lasts far beyond Christmas.



GIVE NOW

Please call **1300 BIBLES** (1300 242 537), use the donation form on the back page or visit **biblesociety.org.au/sowchristmas**



How your support is changing lives

Hope from literacy classes for women in Africa

When a boy or a girl is between 10 and 17 years old in the Yao culture of Malawi, it is time for the rite of passage into adulthood. After completing a four-week camp, they are told they are now adults, says Wilfrid Ngalawa, Projects Coordinator in the Bible Society of Malawi.

Young girls begin to search for a provider and often end up as wives for older men. Many girls get HIV from their husband. Marriage usually interrupts attendance at school. Young girls, who have become pregnant while they are too young, are in danger of dying in childbirth.

Boys have similar problems. Despite having completed the rite of passage, they are not mature enough to start a family and provide for it, even though this is expected of them. Many are driven to sell or use drugs. Some become psychologically ill. Often young husbands escape by going to South Africa to look for work.

The wife is then left alone with children in Malawi.

The boy usually sends money to his family for a while but will then instead stay in South Africa and forget about the family left behind in Malawi. He then starts a new family in the neighbouring country.

Sometimes the young wife returns with her children to her own parents. The situation is not easy, because her mother also has to manage providing for the family. There may be other siblings in the childhood home as well. When the girl returns there with her children, the burden for the older woman is only increased. Even though we often think of man as the head of the family, it is the woman, who is the head of and provider for the family in these villages.

Economic challenges may force women into prostitution to get money to provide for their family, Ngalawa explains sadly.

In the midst of many problems, Bible Society's literacy classes are bringing hope. Literacy is, for many, a chance to improve



A very young mother with her baby in a literate community where many girls attending school is interrupted

their life situation – helping them find a job, obtain a micro loan or establish a business.

Your support for this appeal is helping to provide literacy skills to 20,000 women from 16 minority



Kariti Saareila

Hope and Smiles for Children with Cancer, Nicaragua

Sister Bertha Vargas attends La Mascota Children's Hospital in Managua, Nicaragua, every week to provide spiritual and moral support to children with cancer and their parents. It's a gesture of love and gratitude to God, who rescued her from death.

At every opportunity, Sister Bertha shares her testimony of how God healed her of lupus disease. After struggling with lupus for five years, she reached the terminal stage. Doctors informed her family that they should prepare for her death. Her family bought a coffin and made funeral arrangements and waited for the final moment. However, in those moments God restored her health in slow steps and for the past ten years she has been completely healed.

The project Hope and Smiles for Children with Cancer, which the

Bible Society has developed at La Mascota, is an opportunity for her to serve God and share her testimony. Through the project, Sister Bertha has encouraged these children so that they know there is a God of love and power, for whom nothing is impossible.

"Doctors say that lupus has no cure, but for God there is nothing impossible," she says.

"I am a witness that God is healing cancer in the hospital – healing and changing hearts with his word."

Thank you for your support of this valuable project which over three years is training 330 pastors and 750 volunteers in hospital pastoral care for children. In all, 24,683 Bibles have been given away to children hospitalised with cancer and their families.



literacy class for women in rural Malawi. For women who are not having children.

communities in Malawi, Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania. The aim is to achieve this by 2020. In the process, Bible Society and donors are helping to build women of faith, confidence and influence.



Thank You

Creating a legacy that lasts

As the experience of Bible Society supporter Joel Scanlan shows (see p. 2), you're never too young to start creating a legacy that will last into eternity. Bible Society's Bequests Manager, David Martin, has had opportunity to reflect on this as he runs "Thank you" events across the country for Bible Society supporters.

A Thank you event is Bible Society's way of honouring those who are faithful givers to the work and legacy of BSA and the family of Bible Societies around the globe. Bibles are being translated into the heart languages of different people groups; millions of people are coming to faith; lives are being changed because of

individual Christians' commitment to financially and prayerfully supporting BSA.

As David thanks people for their support of the work of BSA, he can't help but turn to the concept of legacy.

"Whatever we do in life creates a legacy through our choices, our actions, our behaviour," he says.

"When I talk to people, I try to help them think about what legacy they will leave. 'We automatically create legacies. What kind do you want to leave on top of what you've already created?

"Do we want to leave a legacy that continues to expand the kingdom of God after we've gone?"

David believes this message is relevant, no matter what stage of life someone is at.

"Once we are an adult, we need to think about what happens when we are gone - what legacy do we want to leave?"

David talks to BSA supporters and friends about the power of bequests.

"I tell them that Leaving a bequest allows you to give a fairly significant gift that you might not be able to give in life."

David cited the case of a recent bequest of nearly \$300,000, saying the donor had only been able to give less than \$1000 over many years during their life.

"I see so much of the widow's mite through people who give to

the Bible Society, according to their means; it's not the volume of the gift, it's the heart behind it. They have created a legacy, and left a legacy in their passing."

If you have never been to a Thank you event, you are missing a wonderful uplifting and encouraging occasion.

BSA supporters gather over food (of course) to learn about their impact on individual projects. Stories are told. Cups of tea are enjoyed. And as the big stories of change are shared, so too are the small ones. Of faithful people gathering in small towns to raise money for Bibles in China; or literacy programmes in Poland or Bible translations in Vietnam. People who have been part of the BSA family for generations. People who have been missionaries in some of these far-flung places, who want to keep supporting God's work by promoting BSA.

Their and your legacy is of prayerful, financial and vocational responses to God's calling on individual lives. These are what BSA celebrates at Thank you events.

For David and the team, it is a joy and privilege to gather and listen to such stories of sacrifice and stewardship.

For example, David met a man



Sue Brown, left, with Ivy and Merv Dionysius at the Toowoomba Thank you event on their 65th wedding anniversary.

at a recent Thank you event who told him that supporting Bible Society was a family tradition that started with his grandparents. He hopes to pass this legacy on to his children and grandchildren. A legacy of sacrifice and giving for the spread of the gospel. What a powerful story is that?

Another story David shared was a couple at a Toowoomba Thank you event who came to the event even though it was their 65th wedding anniversary. Ivy and Merv's support of Bible Society extended beyond those 65 years. Their love for the work of the

Bible Society was demonstrated by their presence and it was entirely appropriate that they won the day's Book Prize.

Through these non-fundraising events, Bible Society staff have been able to keep supporters up-to-date on the impact of their giving to international projects.

Nic Capp, National Manager Donor Care, was able to report on youth literacy classes for Syrian and Iraqi youth in Lebanon.

Scott Walters, Head of Strategic Partnerships, gave behind-the-scenes insights and revealed the personal impact of seeing a women's literacy project in Egypt.

"I feel that the Thank you stories inspire, encourage and uplift, leaving people with the sense that their investment in Bible Society is a good one. We get so many comments and feedback about the good news stories we share."

If you are interested in attending one of these events, please contact David (pictured right) on david.martin@biblesociety.org.au





**‘In our own language,
God becomes one of us’**

Speakers of minority languages in Vietnam are looking forward to reading the Bible in their heart language.

When he was a migrant worker in Malaysia, 30-year-old Tony* came to know Jesus Christ. He attended a church and had a real experience of God's love. Then he returned to his home, among the mountainous slopes of North Central Vietnam, which he loves. He found many Muong people, just like him. But he also found that very few were Christians.

Tony realised he had never seen books or films in his own Muong language; most Muong use the Vietnamese language for daily interaction, with their own language used for internal communication. Tony also found that when he spoke to his family, relatives and neighbours about Jesus, their first response was, "Oh, this is the religion of the foreigners, not us!" So Tony was inspired to begin translating God's word into Muong.

He says, "After I had translated parts of the Bible, I read it to them and their views changed. They said: 'It sounds very intriguing and seems similar to some of the Muong stories.' This is why translation is so important to me. I want them to know that God is for everyone and they

deserve to experience his love."

Vietnam Bible Society, formerly know as United Bible Societies Vietnam Partnership, has been working to coordinate the planning, translating, typesetting and publishing of the Bible into minority languages, including Muong. The desire is that these translations will have a spiritual impact on these ethnic minorities by making the Bible available in their native languages.

"We need a Bible in our own language because when we share the gospel using Vietnamese words, God feels very far away, like from another tribe. But in our own language, God becomes one of us," says Tony.

Ha Thi Chi* is a living testimony of how God can use an older woman to work with people of a younger generation in a Bible translation project.

"One of the happiest memories I have was being able to work with the Muong drafts. We no longer need to use the Vietnamese version. I am so thankful to the Lord for helping us preserve our

language. **We believers here are longing for the completion of the Muong New Testament. This is our hope."**

The translation of the Bible into these minority languages has been progressing well since it began in 2017, thanks to supporters of Bible Society Australia. The Tay and Nung New Testament translations have been completed ahead of schedule, and the translation and checking of the Muong New Testament is nearing completion, with publication scheduled.

As most people in these ethnic groups are not literate in their language, it will be necessary to also make audio recordings to test the translations, which began in 2018. **Literacy classes will be set up in the future to enable people to read the Scriptures for themselves.**

It's expected that once complete in 2020, these Bible translation projects will provide the New Testament in the heart languages of well over 3.5 million people in Vietnam.

** Names changed to protect their identity.*



WILL YOU HELP?

Please call **1300 Bibles (1300 242 537)** or visit **biblesociety.org.au/sowknowledge**

Prayer points

Dec 2018 – April 2019

December 2-8

Australia: Pray for the children this Christmas who will be receiving a copy of *The Really Good News of Christmas – For Me!* through churches. Pray that the message of Jesus will be shared with many more children through this little book.

Indonesia: Continue to pray for those affected by the earthquake and tsunami that has devastated parts of Sulawesi. Pray also for the Bible Society as they seek to minister among the heartache this natural disaster has caused.

December 9-15

Venezuela: Pray for an end to the political and economic crisis in Venezuela, which has spiralled out of control. Pray that the work of the Bible Society will bring hope and light to this troubled nation.

Australia – Donor Support: Please pray for BSA's donor support team, Nicole, Maria H, Maria G, Andre and Jo, for good health, strength and perseverance as they head into one of the busiest periods of the year.

December 16-22

Australia – Centre for Public Christianity: Please pray that CPX's Executive Director Simon Smart will have a relaxing and refreshing time as he takes long service leave from November to January. Please also pray that CPX will be able to have an impact in the mainstream media over the Christmas period. Praise God for the success of the documentary *For the Love of God*, and pray for its

continued impact in 2019, particularly in schools. **Portugal:** Please pray as Bible Society Portugal seeks to reach one million children aged between 4 and 14. Thank God for the 200,000 Bible comic brochures produced last year, and for the 540 teachers who were trained to engage children with the Bible and in *The Action Bible* kids' games.

December 23-29

Egypt: Please pray for a better understanding of Scriptures for those taking place in the literacy programme. Pray that God would bless the new strategy to double the current number of participants.

Iran (in diaspora): Pray for the Bible Society team who are committed to distributing Persian Bibles to Iranians wherever they may be. Pray that Scripture will reach new believers and the Trauma Healing and Bible Revision programmes will be blessed.

December 30-January 5

Bangladesh: Pray for Scripture distribution work in Bangladesh, which is sometimes risky as the majority of people are from other faiths. Pray for those who have received the Scriptures, that God may reveal himself through his word.

Nicaragua: Pray for the Hope and Smiles for Children with Cancer project. Pray that each child will come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Give thanks to God that this project is able to continue in the midst of political and social turmoil.

January 6-12

Bible Translation: Praise God for the many translation projects that are happening around the world. Pray for those who work in secret to avoid persecution, that they may be encouraged by the knowledge that their work will bring many to Christ.

Philippines: Pray for the trauma healing project that helps women in the Philippines to find peace, hope and healing through Jesus. Pray for all participants who feel alone and afraid, that their pain and grief may be healed in Jesus' name.

January 13-19

Australia - Remote and Indigenous Ministry

Support: Pray that God will make clear his purposes as the RIMS team discusses plans for translation work in the Top End with key organisations involved in translation work.

Lebanon: Give thanks to God for the ministry to Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Lebanese refugee camps. Pray for families to find security in God's word when everything around them feels unstable.

January 20-26

Australia - Publishing and Digital: With some exciting manuscripts coming up, pray that we can select the right ones, and publish work that encourages Christians to follow Christ.

Rwanda: Pray for those who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Pray that the medicine needed would be available and that healing and belonging would be found in God.

January 27-February 2

Australia - Executive Team: Give thanks for the godly and competent senior leadership team that God has provided for this season of Bible Society Australia's work. Pray that they will seek God's guidance in all their endeavours.

North Korea: Please pray that the word of God may reach where the gospel is forbidden, and that churches may take root and be revived through his word. Pray for the softening of the hearts of leaders and government towards Christianity.

February 3-9

Australia - Fundraising: Please pray for the Bike for Bibles event on February 8-22 from Marrawah to Launceston in Tasmania. Pray the event will be well supported and for safety on the roads.

Greece: Pray for this country, which is considered the neediest mission field in Europe, with fewer than 20,000 believers. Pray for Bible work in Greece, and for people hearing about Jesus to be drawn into relationship with him.

February 10-16

The Gulf: Please pray for the Scripture distribution programmes targeting migrant workers and for the literacy programme. Pray for storytelling training, for Bible distribution to young people and children, and for the International Book Fair in Bahrain.

Suriname: Praise the Lord for the completion of the full Bible translation into Suriname Javanese. Pray for the translation projects into Aukan, Saramaccan, French Guiana Creole, Wapishana and Patamuna.

February 17-23

Ukraine: Pray for a great movement towards God in Ukraine through the reading of the Bible. Ask God to move in the hearts of individuals but also in the heart of the nation, drawing many to himself.

Vietnam: Thank God for the publication of the New Testament in some minority languages, such as Muong, even with limited freedom. Please pray for the continued safety of our staff and translators, as well as for the government to allow us to carry out our work.

February 24-March 2

Zimbabwe: Please pray for the completion, on time, of the Shona Study Bible and the Chikunda Old Testament in 2018, as well as for them to have a

huge impact on the target audience in Zimbabwe.

Thailand: Please pray for the publication of the Study Notes on the Psalms and Song of Songs, and for the translation of Acts into Thai Sign Language scheduled to finish in 2019.

March 3-9

Myanmar: Pray for the 19 translation projects in progress, the renovation of the Bible House, for freedom to print and import Bibles, and for peace across the nation.

Peru: Please pray that we can continue to benefit destitute children by offering them full assistance. Pray also for the efforts to reduce family violence and child abuse. And pray for our work in prisons that aims at the social reintegration of prisoners by studying God's word.

March 10-16

South Sudan: Praise God for the release of Scriptures that had been held in port since 2014, after which Christians from different denominations gathered to thank God.

Lithuania: Please pray that the Ecumenical Bible translation is fluent to read, clear to understand and accurate. Pray that the Bible in Sign Language makes the word accessible to the deaf community for the first time in their language.

March 17-23

Haiti: Pray that God will help us continue the work of spreading the Bible message across the country. Pray for the translation of the Study Bible into Haitian Creole. Pray for safety and development in Haiti. Pray also for our different projects: literacy, fighting domestic violence and trauma healing.

Austria: Please pray for our ministry "Bibles for Refugees and Prisoners," for the Bible Centre in

Vienna, which engages children, young people and adults with the Bible; and for completion of the New Testament in our Handwritten Bible project and for continuing work on the Handwritten Old Testament.

March 24-30

Sierra Leone: Thank God for the faithful work of Bible translators and local church volunteers, who make his word available to the Kono people. Translation of the Old Testament into the Kono language began in 2011. Eighteen books have been translated so far; the goal is to make the complete Bible available to the Kono people by 2020.

Brazil: Thank God for 70 years of Bible Society in Brazil in June 2018, and for the opportunities to carry out its mission in such a complex and needy country. Thank God for the completion of the revision Almeida Revised and Updated translation, known as the New Almeida Updated, and ask that this translation can be an instrument to spread the teaching of the Bible, especially among new generations.

March 31-April 6

South Korea: Since 2012, we have been working on the project of a new Bible translation. Please pray that this translation may serve people in their time of worship, education and living. Pray also that the project may progress well, so that our next generation of Bible readers may understand it better.

Laos: Please pray for our literacy projects, for which text has been approved for use by the Ministry of Education. Pray that we can develop our bookstore in order to make it the main distribution centre in our capital. Pray also for the training of our local staff to carry out literacy, translation, distribution and publication projects.

BSA updates



Really Good News for kids

This Christmas we're partnering with thousands of churches and organisations to distribute more than 300,000 copies of a little book about Christmas across Australia. *The Really Good News of Christmas - For Me!* is about more than donkeys and shepherds – it tells the gospel story from the creation of the world to Jesus' resurrection. We've also included a pull-out Christmas card for children to share the good news of Christmas with their friends. Please pray that each child who receives this book will read and understand the message of Jesus. Pray also that they may be bold in sharing this message with their friends.



Doco goes global

As this edition of *Sower* went to print, the Centre for Public Christianity (CPX) was busy preparing to launch their documentary *For the Love of God: How the church is better and worse than you ever imagined* internationally, with two invitation-only premiere screenings in the UK. The screenings were held on Monday November 5 at the London Institute of Contemporary Arts, and on Tuesday November 6 at Magdalen College in Oxford. Both screenings included a Q&A session with one of the documentary's presenters, Dr John Dickson. Among the attendees were several of the scholars interviewed for the documentary.

These premiere screenings, which are being followed by a series of public screenings across the UK in December, have come off the back of over 150 successful screenings across Australia since May, attended by more than 17,500 people.



Peace with God

By Melissa Lipsett



Names of Jesus

By Karen Mudge



Why Christmas?

By Nicky Gumbel



Summer of Love

By Greg Clarke



Alive & Active

By Katie Haldane

Week One

NOV 18 - NOV 24

SU 18 Jn 1:1-5
MO 19 Lk 2:8-12
TU 20 Lk 2:29-32
WE 21 1 Cor 14:33, 2 Th 3:16
TH 22 Is 9:6
FR 23 Rom 8:1, 38-39
SA 24 Jn 14:27

Week Three

DEC 2 - DEC 8

SU 2 Rev 22:12-13
MO 3 Jn 1:29
TU 4 Jn 8:12
WE 5 Lk 2:11, Jn 4:42
TH 6 Jn 1:1, 1 Jn 1:1-2
FR 7 Is 7:14, Mt 1:22-23
SA 8 Is 9:6-7

Week Five

DEC 16 - DEC 22

SU 16 Mt 1:20-12
MO 17 Lk 1:11-16
TU 18 Lk 1:76-79
WE 19 Lk 1:26-27, 31-33
TH 20 Lk 1:39-45
FR 21 Lk 1:46-56
SA 22 Mk 1:18-19, 24-25

Week Seven

DEC 30 - JAN 5

SU 30 Gen 1:26-28
MO 31 Exod 34:1-7
TU 1 Deut 6:1-9
WE 2 Deut 7:7-11
TH 3 1 Kings 3:1-3
FR 4 Ps 25:1-7
SA 5 Prov 12:1

Week Nine

JAN 13 - JAN 19

SU 13 Jn 21:25
MO 14 Jn 20:4
TU 15 Eph 4:22
WE 16 Gen 17:3-6
TH 17 Eph 1:3-5
FR 18 Mt 5:17
SA 19 Jn 1:14

Week Two

NOV 25 - DEC 1

SU 25 Phil 4:6-7
MO 26 Col 3:15, Gal 5:22
TU 27 Is 54:10
WE 28 Jn 16:33
TH 29 Is 55:12
FR 30 Jn 14:27
SA 1 Rom 15:13, 2 Th 3:16

Week Four

DEC 9 - DEC 15

SU 9 Jn 10:10-11
MO 10 Mk 8:27-30
TU 11 Lk 1:34-35
WE 12 Mt 12:15-18
TH 13 Mt 20:29-34
FR 14 Jn 15:14-15
SA 15 Mk 1:20-21, Lk 2:21

Week Six

DEC 23 - DEC 29

SU 23 Lk 2:1-7
MO 24 Lk 2:8-11
TU 25 Mk 2:1-2, 10-11
WE 26 Lk 2:22, 34-35
TH 27 Mt 2:13-15
FR 28 Mt 2:19-23
SA 29 Lk 2:41-42, 46-47, 49

Week Eight

JAN 6 - JAN 12

SU 6 Prov 20:13
MO 7 Ecc 5:8-10
TU 8 Song 8:6-7
WE 9 Isa 43:1-4
TH 10 Lam 3:19-24
FR 11 Hos 3:1-3
SA 12 Mic 6:6-8

Week Ten

JAN 20 - JAN 26

SU 20 Eph 6:13
MO 21 Lk 19:32-34
TU 22 2 Tim 4:7
WE 23 Prov 4:6-7
TH 24 1 Kings 13:33
FR 25 Jonah 4:2-3
SA 26 Heb 4:12

Peace is much sought after in our broken world. In this series, Melissa Lipsett explores the most important aspect of peace – the peace that we have with God.

Melissa is Chief Operating Officer for Bible Society Australia.

As Christmas approaches, how can we prepare our hearts for all that the season offers? In this series, we read and reflect from the Bible on 14 names of Jesus – various titles he is given and ways he is described. Be encouraged by reflecting on who Jesus is – the marvellous complexity and depth of his purpose and his character.

Karen is an editor and writer for Bible Society Australia.

Nicky Gumbel shares with us his thoughts on Christmas as we lead up to this important moment in the annual calendar. He looks to answer the question Why Christmas? and to bring new meaning for both the believer and sceptic alike.

Nicky is the pioneer of Alpha, Vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton in London and a best-selling author.

The greatest way is love, the Bible tells us. But love can be complicated. Greg Clarke takes us on a tour through the Bible's unfolding love story, focused here on the Old Testament.

Greg is Chief Executive Officer of Bible Society Australia.

In this series, Katie Haldane sets out to help your Bible reading time to become alive and be active again. She seeks to show you things that will make you laugh, make you cry, and the stories to follow and learn from.

Katie Haldane is the creator of a website called Trash Your Bible, which is all about loving, living in and wearing out your Bible so much that you have "trashed" it!



The Lion Roars

By Kamal Weerakoon



Poetic Justice

By Dr Kate Harrison Brennan



Precious in his Sight

By Anna Grummitt



God in Daily Life

By Samantha Freestone



Who is God?

By Monique Hayes

Week Eleven

JAN 27 – FEB 2

- SU 27** Amos 1:9-10
- MO 28** Amos 2:4-5
- TU 29** Amos 2:6-7a
- WE 30** Amos 2:9-10
- TH 31** Amos 2:11-12
- FR 1** Amos 3:1-2
- SA 2** Amos 3:7-8

Week Thirteen

FEB 10 – FEB 16

- SU 10** Is 58:1
- MO 11** Is 58:2
- TU 12** Is 58:3
- WE 13** Is 58:4
- TH 14** Is 58:5
- FR 15** Is 58:6
- SA 16** Is 58:7

Week Fifteen

FEB 24 – MAR 2

- SU 24** Gen 1:26-27
- MO 25** Ps 139:13-14
- TU 26** Rom 3:10-12
- WE 27** Rom 5:6-8
- TH 28** Is 43:1,4
- FR 1** Eph 1:3-6
- SA 2** 1 Peter 1:18-19

Week Seventeen

MAR 10 – MAR 16

- SU 10** Job 33:14 NLT
- MO 11** 1 Pet 5:10 NLT
- TU 12** Rom 10:1 ESV
- WE 13** 1 Jn 3:1 MSG
- TH 14** Lk 18:9-14 NLT
- FR 15** Eph 1:7-8 ESV
- SA 16** Ps 51:2 NASB

Week Nineteen

MAR 24 – MAR 30

- SU 24** 1 Tim 6:15b-16
- MO 25** 1 Jn 1:1-3
- TU 26** 2 Tim 3:16-17
- WE 27** Is 45:5-6
- TH 28** Jn 1:1-2,14
- FR 29** Acts 17:24-25
- SA 30** Ps 102:25-27

Week Twelve

FEB 3 – FEB 9

- SU 3** Amos 3:9-10
- MO 4** Amos 4:1-2
- TU 5** Amos 4:13
- WE 6** Amos 5:10-11
- TH 7** Amos 5:21-24
- FR 8** Amos 8:11-12
- SA 9** Amos 9:13-15

Week Fourteen

FEB 17 – FEB 23

- SU 17** Is 58:8
- MO 18** Is 58:9a
- TU 19** Is 58:9b-10
- WE 20** Is 58:11
- TH 21** Is 58:12
- FR 22** Is 58:13-14a
- SA 23** Is 58:14

Week Sixteen

MAR 3 – MAR 9

- SU 3** Gal 3:26-29
- MO 4** James 3:9-10
- TU 5** Col 3:12-14
- WE 6** Mt 6:25-26
- TH 7** 1 Peter 1:9-12
- FR 8** Rom 8:28-32
- SA 9** 2 Cor 3:17-18

Week Eighteen

MAR 17 – MAR 23

- SU 17** Heb 12:1-3 NLT
- MO 18** Rom 12:2 NLT
- TU 19** Ps 94:19 NLV
- WE 20** 2 Pet 1:3-8 NLT
- TH 21** Jn 15:1-4 NLT
- FR 22** Ps 143:10 MSG
- SA 23** 2 Cor 4:16-18 NLV

Week Twenty

MAR 31 – APR 6

- SU 31** Ps 90:2-4
- MO 1** Rom 11:33
- TU 2** Ps 115:3, Eph 1:11
- WE 3** Is 6:1-5
- TH 4** Rom 3:25-26
- FR 5** Deut 6:13-15
- SA 6** Rom 5:8

Read through the book of Amos, which highlights the faithlessness, stubbornness and oppressiveness of God's chosen people. In the end, take encouragement from God's promise of future restoration for his people.

Kamal was born in Sri Lanka and migrated to Australia as a teenager with his family. He is a Presbyterian Church minister and Moderator of the NSW Presbyterian Church for 2018-19.

What does it look like to build justice in ways that reflect our Lord's love and compassion? Isaiah 58 offers us a stunning and poetic guide for responding to the brokenness around us with the good news of God's grace.

Kate is the CEO of Anglican Deaconess Ministries. She studied international development at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar and was an adviser to former prime minister Julia Gillard.

The Bible tells us that all human beings are made in God's image. This series explores the value God has given us, and the wide-ranging implications this has.

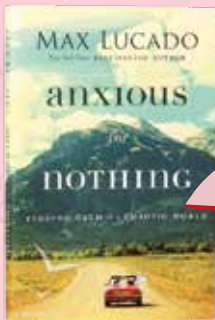
Anna is Youth Editor at the Centre for Public Christianity.

How many times have you wondered: "Where is God?" Sharing anecdotes from her own life, Samantha discovers the great news: that God reveals himself in our ordinary, everyday lives. We are just very good at missing him.

Samantha has a podcast called SomeAnswers, with interviews with Christians from around Australia and worldwide.

Who is God? What is he like? How can we know him? The Bible gives us many descriptions of God's character, from his eternal nature, his sovereignty and power, to the way he reveals himself to us. Be encouraged and challenged by these passages on the nature and character of God.

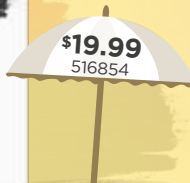
Monique is a nurse, a graduate of Moore Theological College in Sydney and a new mother.



Anxious for Nothing

By Max Lucado

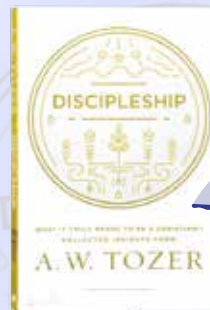
Anxiety is at an all-time high, but there's a prescription for dealing with it. Bestselling author Max Lucado invites readers into an exploration of Philippians 4:6-7 ("be anxious for nothing") and helps readers to view bad news through the lens of God's sovereignty, and find God's peace.



Letters to the Church

By Francis Chan

If God had it his way, what would our churches look like? In his most powerful book yet, Pastor Francis Chan digs deep into biblical truths, reflections on his own failures and dreams, and stories of ordinary people God is using to change the world.



Discipleship: What it truly means to be a Christian

By AW Tozer

As many around him were trying to make the path to Jesus seem as undemanding as possible, AW Tozer remained resolute - Christ calls his followers to carry their cross, and there is nothing easy about true discipleship. Tozer's timeless message is as needed today as it was then - the genuine Christian must believe in and obey God. Jesus must be both Saviour and Lord.

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B Bible Societies around the world



Scrounging for food

Venezuela's humanitarian crisis is spiralling out of control, with 80 per cent of people living in severe poverty, and food insecurity at a staggering 90 per cent. The economic collapse has left the Bible Society in Venezuela in a desperate situation. Bible Society Australia has contributed to an emergency project to support the staff, allowing them to continue to provide the word of God.



Good news for Eritrea

"Glory to God!" says Minasse Haileab, General Secretary of Bible Society of Eritrea as he announced the launch of the New Testament in the mother tongue of the Blin people, who number between 90,000 and 100,000. A celebration was held in September at the city of Keren, attended by government representatives, church elders and leaders, as well as the Blin community.



China milestone

The English Standard Version (ESV) Chinese Study Bible, launched earlier this year, is considered a historic achievement for the Chinese Church. Created in a partnership between the Chinese Church, Crossway and UBS over five years, the Study Bible with its explanatory notes and graphics will help readers gain a deeper understanding of Scripture.



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Bible Society Australia is a not-for-profit interdenominational organisation. It's a member of the United Bible Societies, a fellowship of 154 organisations working in more than 200 countries. Our mission is to achieve the widest possible effective and meaningful distribution of the Bible; also to help people interact with it and to have their hearts lightened by the Bible's message of unconditional love in Jesus Christ.

