

# SOWER

AUTUMN 2020

***God in the  
Outback***



**BIBLE  
SOCIETY**

# Dear friend,

with Bible Society CEO

*Grant Thomson*



**M**y earliest memory of connecting with God, was my grandmother, my only Christian relative, praying for me as a small child while I lay in bed. I know that God used that prayer to nudge open a door into my heart.

Some years later, and a few other intersections with God through Scripture class in primary school and attending Catholic mass with my next-door neighbour, a good friend asked me to come to his church. He had just become a “Jesus person.” It was 12 January 1986. My friend sat me in the front row and when the appeal was given to come forward and give our lives to Jesus, I took that step. I committed my life to the Lord.

I was at Hillsong Church, working as a volunteer leader, when I met my wife Heidi. I am eternally grateful for Heidi’s father, a Navigator, who challenged me one day with the question, “How do you know you are saved?” I stumbled to find a convincing answer. He pointed me to the Bible, and disciplined me, teaching me how to read the Scriptures. Seven minutes a day, seven days a week with Jesus and I began to build a habit for reading God’s word. It has been the foundation, the rock, that I have built my life on since then.

God has redeemed my life as he has redeemed yours. The hope with which we live has been revealed through God’s holy word, the Bible. Thanks

to you, and your desire for all people everywhere to be able to open the Bible, more and more people are finding a personal relationship with the God of the universe.

I am privileged to head up Bible Society Australia, birthed in the very early years of colonial settlement. Thank you for journeying with Bible Society to this point. I look forward to thanking you personally as I travel to events around Australia. However, the race is not yet won. Let us keep going together.

**“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”**

**1 Peter 2:9**



# Need a job done? Ask Barb



**B**arb Mathie is one of those tenacious, quietly spoken, salt-of-the-earth people, who are the lifeblood of the local community. Anyone wants a job done ... ask Barb. Need a secretary for your local committee? Ask Barb.

Barb has been the backbone of the Gerringong, Kiama, Jamberoo Bible Society Action Group (or various derivations of its name) for more than 50 years. If you want to know about stickability, ask Barb.

She also is a spotter of feral animals for Feralscan, a nationwide citizen-led group on the lookout for feral pests such as deer, rabbits, pigs and foxes, which cause so much devastation to Australia's farming land. And she is a member of Landcare, assisting in the planting of trees in her community.

Barb has notebooks, minutes of meetings and letters all carefully filed relating to her different community activities.

However, her involvement in the local Bible Society Action group is particularly impressive. This ecumenical committee, made up of Bible Society

reps from all the denominations in the region, organises three events each year.

Barb hosts a fundraising morning tea in her Foxground home, where you will find 44 fold-up chairs in one of the large purpose-built cupboards. Barb loves to fill her house with people. She will quickly claim she is no cook. Just bring along a plate and Barb will provide fold-up tables, urn, kitchen and a home filled with God's love.

The October 2019 guest speaker at the Bible Society event was Reverend Melissa Lipsett, Bible Society's Chief Operating Officer. Over the years, just about every Bible Society church rep, CEO and state director has made a trip to this very active Bible Society chapter, often enjoying the hospitality of Barb Mathie.

"I always pray for Bible Society," Barb says. "I pray for the staff; I even pray for the people who appoint the staff. I pray for the projects that are set out in *Sower*."

"I had decided to leave an amount in my will to Bible Society, but then I decided, well, it's going to Bible Society anyway, so I might as well give a donation every year."

**“I  
always  
pray  
for Bible  
Society”**

# For faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Romans 10:17

**D**angatanga grew up on Elcho Island, a remote island off the coast of the Northern Territory. A Yolŋu man, he speaks a Yolŋu-Matha language called Dhuwa-Dhangu'mi.

He came to know Jesus during the Christian revival in 1979, whereupon he became utterly convinced of the authority of Jesus. When the elders told him he should speak to the land, the trees and the rocks so the land could speak back to him and guide him, he defended his decision to worship the Creator God and to renounce the spirits of the land.

Dangatanga replied: "You tell me your stories about the trees and the rocks, but I will tell you the story of Jesus and how he changed my life."

He explains: "If you dig beneath the trees and the rocks, you will realise that the Almighty

Creator God made it all. You have to speak to God, and he will guide you, not the spirits in the rocks or the trees."

For many years, this godly man has been an inspiring leader and pastor in the church in Gove, his community in East Arnhem Land.

**Sadly, there are still very few Scripture resources available to the 10,000 Yolŋu people living in East Arnhem Land.**

Two of the languages, Djambarrpuyŋu and Gumatj, have a New Testament translation, while three further languages, including Dangatanga's language, have some portions of the New Testament in written form.

**But many remote Indigenous people find written Scriptures difficult to understand, so they need a more practical means for hearing the gospel.** Two



**Dangatanga with his Grandson**







**Translator Tjulyata Tjilya (with her granddaughter Sandrene) was one of the first to see the new Pitjantjatjara Shorter Bible**

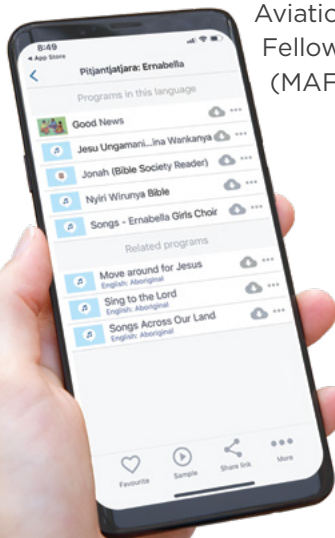
**Jesus  
changes lives  
in outback**



years ago, Global Recordings Network (GRN) went up to Arnhem Land and recorded the Gospel of Mark as it was read aloud in the Dhuwa-Dhangu'mi language. These recordings have allowed many more people to hear the good news in their own language for the first time.

Bible Society Australia recently had the opportunity to visit Yolŋu speakers in Gove, for a recording workshop held in partnership with GRN, the Uniting Church, Mission

Aviation  
Fellowship  
(MAF),



and the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL).

**As a result, a project is now under way to make two more recordings – the Gospel of Mark in Dhuwaya, and the Gospel of Luke in Gumatj.** The written translations have been available for some time, but the benefits of audio recordings are now better understood.

While in Gove, Paul Kube, Bible Society's Northern Territory Engagement Representative, installed the 5Fish app on Dangatanga's phone. This app from GRN contains the story of Jesus spoken in 5500 languages and dialects.

"It was a beautiful event to witness Dangatanga hear the Scripture in his own tongue for the first time. We saw his face light up as the gospel began to play out loud. He had requested to hear his favourite story, the Parable of the Sower and the Seed. Dangatanga was so happy to hear this in his native Dhuwa-Dhangu'mi

and there was a special touch as he realised it was his nephew who had spoken the words, now playing from his phone."

Dangatanga's dearest desire is for young people to hear the gospel in Dhuwa-Dhangu'mi, so they too will have the chance to follow Jesus as he has throughout his life.

**A project to make these audio recordings readily available is one of the many valuable Indigenous projects we are asking you to support this autumn to help Indigenous Christians share the Bible with others in their communities.**

The plan is to distribute hundreds of audio-playing devices loaded with Scripture recordings in multiple Yolŋu languages to the many homelands and communities of Arnhem Land. Bible Society Australia is partnering with MAF to make this possible. **Will you consider giving so that more Indigenous people can hear the Scriptures in their language for the first time,**

so the next generation can hear the gospel, as they too become leaders for their people like Dangatanga?

## **A revised Bible**

**Pitjantjatjara translators were very excited at the publication of the revised edition of the Pitjantjatjara Shorter Bible, Tjukurpa Palya, which was made possible by your support.**

This new edition includes several recently translated Old Testament books such as Daniel and substantial sections of 1 Samuel and incorporates revisions made during Pitjantjatjara New Testament audio recording workshops in 2017 and 2018.

Bible Society's Chief Operations Officer, Reverend Melissa Lipsett (right), was excited to notice several boxes with the words "Bible Society Australia – Pitjantjatjara Bible" while she was visiting Amity Press in China. Of course, Melissa opened one of the boxes and cradled a "hot off the press"

Bible.

When an advance copy of the new edition arrived at Koorong in Adelaide, many of the translators clamoured to have a look. One of the first people to see it was Pitjantjatjara translator Tjulyata Tjilya who was soon on the phone to all her family and friends. Tjulyata also took to Facebook to share her message far and wide.

Here is a translation of Tjulyata's post "This is the new Bible, you can see the front cover, it's dark brown and it also contains the story of Daniel. We translated the Pitjantjatjara from English, and it's great. But the other Pitjantjatjara Bibles are on the ship coming from China to Australia, to Adelaide, and then from there to the APY Lands, so good!"

This Bible is widely used and loved across the APY Lands in the north of South Australia, in communities in Western Australia

and Northern Territory as well as by Pitjantjatjara speakers living in Adelaide. **With your help, Bible Society is now preparing more to meet the demand.**

## **Eager to learn**

Bible Society Australia is partnering with Nungalinya College in Darwin in developing and running a Diploma in Translation, which began with the first intensive last March.

The first cohort of 17 eager students had previously completed a Certificate III in Theology, a prerequisite of entry. Many of these students had been working for years as Bible



**Reverend Melissa Lipsett** holds a Pitjantjatjara Shorter Bible in China



# PLEASE GIVE NOW

Will you help our Indigenous brothers and sisters open God's word to others in their communities?

**\$40** goes towards printing and distributing Scripture for Indigenous communities.

**\$80** helps train a Bible translation student at Nungalinga College.

**\$120** helps a community to record and share Scripture in their heart language.

Use the donation form on the back page, call **1300 BIBLES** (1300 242 537) or visit [biblesociety.org.au/opensow](http://biblesociety.org.au/opensow)

translators and church/community leaders and they represented nine language groups: Burarra, Tiwi, Kriol, Gupapyunju, Djambarpuyŋu, Wangurri, Warramirri, Maung and Dhaŋu'mi.

All the new students were determined to learn as much as they could. "While most of the students in other courses finished their classes at 2.30pm, the Bible Translating students continued to work through to 3 or 3.30pm just to ensure they got all the course work completed – they were that keen," said Translation Consultant Mally McLellan.

This project has been developed in response to requests from churches, Bible Society mission partners and Indigenous translators to provide an updated

training service to ensure the continued existence of skilled and qualified Bible Translators for various language groups.

Nungalinga College Principal Ben van Gelderen says: **"Beginning the Diploma of Translating has been an absolute blessing and joy for the college.** Communities have been aspiring for an accredited translation course for many years, both to support and re-energise Bible translation ministries but also to discover new possibilities of working with digital technologies and methods."

**Around Australia, we're equipping our Indigenous brothers and sisters to open God's word to others in their communities. Will you join us?**







## Devotion

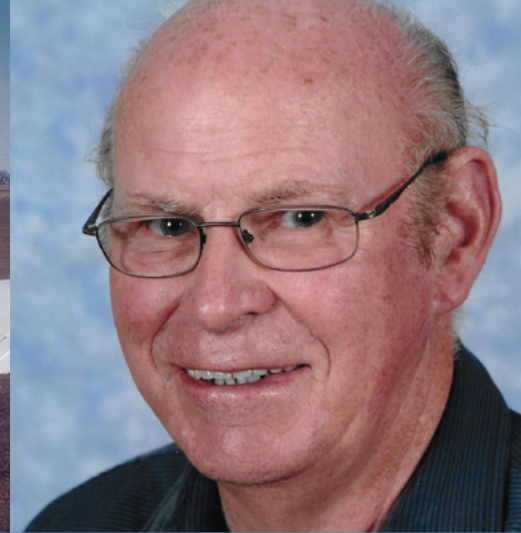
# Always there

Spirit,  
God,  
Christ,

You are always with us,  
Whether we perceive it or not.  
You are always working for our good,  
Whether we know it or not.  
You are always there for comfort and help,  
Whether we call on it or not.  
You are always calling us onward in hope,  
Whether we listen or not.  
You are always the giver of compassion and comfort,  
Whether we accept it or not.  
You are not the cause of our troubles or sufferings,  
Whether we believe it or not.  
In all things and at all times your hand is on our lives,  
Whether we feel it or not.  
You are God,  
Leading us to our better selves and working to  
redeem all people and all things,  
Whether we have faith or not.  
This simply is, and so shall it always be.  
Amen.

In the wake of the catastrophic bushfires this summer, Jon Humphries, Chaplain and Religious Education teacher at Ravenswood School in Sydney, offers this prayer.





# Remembering the Flying Bible Man

**T**revor Booth, who began the Flying Bible Man ministry for Bible Society, passed away in July 2018. His widow, Connie Booth, has written this tribute to his valuable work.

Trevor grew up on a farm in the wheat belt of Western Australia at Yearling, near Corrigin. During the war years, he would see up to 40 Tiger Moths fly over the farm on regular training runs, which inspired his fascination with aircraft and flying. He wasn't to know then that he would fly over the farm

himself in the years to come.

Trevor served with the Presbyterian Church in his early years of ministry. In 1958, he joined Bible Society as a Field Officer, spending the next 10 years visiting churches and community groups in WA, generating prayerful and financial support for the ministry at home and overseas.

Early in 1966, John Ridden, WA State Secretary for Bible Society, asked Trevor if he would consider serving as the North

West Representative. After prayerful consideration and family discussion, he agreed, strongly recommending the use of a light aircraft rather than a road vehicle as a means of travel over the vast areas involved.

After two years of research, including experimental runs to numerous stations, questions were answered including: "how will the typical traditionally non-religious outback Australian respond to having a Bible salesman land on his airstrip?"





Despite fears of rejection, in almost every case Trevor was warmly welcomed and invited to call again.

Therefore, in 1968 Trevor and the family moved 900km north of Perth to Carnarvon, to start “The Flying Bible Man” ministry. Trevor’s passion was to share the word of God to people in the Outback of WA and he visited hundreds of communities.

The first aircraft was a Beechcraft A23 Musketeer, which served the work for the first seven years. Due to its lack of performance in the hot conditions and often short station airstrips, it was replaced with a Cessna 182 Skylane. This aircraft proved to be ideal for the type of conditions.

As time passed, it was realised that the area of service needed to take in the Northern Territory and North Queensland, with subsequent regular visits to Darwin, Alice Springs and the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve in the Northern Territory. Trevor worked in close co-operation with churches, often taking the local minister on visits to station

properties in their parish.

Bibles and other Christian literature were distributed to thousands of people in remote areas of Australia, including Fettleers camps on the Trans Australian Railway, with many opportunities to tell by word of mouth the wonderful gospel story. He regularly visited more than 500 cattle and sheep stations. As a result of using an aircraft, he could visit four or five stations a day.

He also visited major towns and mining towns in WA as the mining boom was then in full swing. He would take church services or meetings where he would screen films and set up a book display. He also spoke at schools, Sunday schools, women’s groups and service clubs.

In 1972, the fifth year of operation, it was realised the borders of the work needed enlarging again. Though based in Carnarvon, it extended from Esperance on the southeast coast of WA to Mabuiag Island in the Torres Strait. The area covered about three million square kilometres. One important

feature was the establishment of local honorary representatives in churches, which helped stimulate a deeper interest in the work and mission of the Bible Society.

Bible translation into various Aboriginal languages had been happening for many years. To assist these folks, Trevor would pick up Bible Society’s Translation Consultant for Australia from Darwin and transport him to various communities where he worked as adviser/consultant and encourager to these linguists.

Over the 48 years of the Flying Bible Man program, Trevor faced several hazards that could have proved to be life threatening, but the prayers of faithful supporters were valued, and all incidents ended well.

Looking back, Trevor was encouraged to know that there were those who came to the Lord as a result of this ministry. After more than a decade of outback flying, promoting and distributing the world’s greatest book, he returned to Perth to serve as Bible Society State Director for 18 years until he retired in 1996.



# Jesus loves the children of the world



**D**on't you love reading bedtime stories to children? The way children gradually move from pointing at the pictures, to rote learning the words, to identifying individual words, to reading more and more complex books. Their delight in words. The way it gives them confidence. Opens up their world.

Our dreams are for our children to go to university, to hold down a responsible job and contribute to the wellbeing of society. And it all starts with a bedtime story.

This is why Bible Society has such a strong commitment to telling children stories from the Bible in a format and language they can understand. And the difference it makes in the lives of participants is truly extraordinary.

Ten-year-old Youstina is one of 20,000 students who have

benefited from Bible Society Egypt's Bible-based Literacy project. Youstina acknowledged that she was a bit of a bully at church because, unlike the other girls, she could not read or write.

"I saw the girls around me reading, but when I looked at the pages I could not read. So I bothered them," Youstina explained.

"But now that I have taken this class, I am so happy I can read all the words, even the long ones.

"I like the stories when Jesus met people like me, like the Samaritan women, even the kid who brought the five loaves of bread and two fishes, because I feel that Jesus is meeting me too."

Mariam, also 10, attends the same literacy class with Youstina. Mariam wants to be a kind person, like Jesus.

"I live in this crowded area and we are not kind at all towards each other, even the street cats and dogs. But Jesus was so kind to the people surrounding him.

**"I am learning now to be more kind to my friends in the church and at school, even those who are annoying."**

Twelve-year-old Urial is mature beyond his years. Given a Bible by the Nicaraguan Bible Society as part of their Project Hope and Smile for Children with Cancer when he was four, Urial was healed of cancer two years later. He attributes his healing to God. Eight years later, he still reads his Bible and his favourite Bible verse is John 15:5, for "without God we can do nothing" he says.

Even here in Australia, where literacy is not such a big issue, **children's ability**





**Marina and Youstina  
attending literacy classes**

**to engage with God's word  
is important and needs to be  
made easy.**

Gail, a school Scripture teacher, wrote to Bible Society on receiving her order of Bibles through our Scripture Grants program, "I cannot begin to express the excitement and happiness I felt when I arrived at school last week and all the Bibles were sitting there in boxes.

"I am delighted to be able to teach these little children how to find their way around the Bible, how to read it and grow using the word of God and I pray that this is the beginning of their long life walking with the Lord! Exciting stuff!"

Nyoongar woman Ros Khan believes God has sent her youngest daughter Brianna to her to teach her how to love. Both Ros and Brianna are learning to speak Nyoongar, a language near extinction but slowly being recovered by the work of Bible translators and others in Western Australia.

"I feel as though Brianna's from God and teaching me. What was taken from us years ago (the Nyoongar language), and to have that (the Gospel of Luke) in Nyoongar language, it's amazing what God has given us."

These stories of lives changed by the healing power of God's grace are what makes our hearts beat faster. We live for these stories.

**That is why  
we want  
children**

**everywhere, children such as Youstina, Urial, Mariam, Brianna and 11-year-old Bishoy, to know, without a shadow of a doubt, that Jesus loves them.**

"Even though I was struggling and could barely read and write, I pretended that I was literate," Bishoy told us.

"But now I am free from pretending! I really know how to read and write. I do not need to lie anymore. My favorite Bible story is when Jesus meets Zacchaeus. I think Jesus came to Jericho to meet him, just as I meet Jesus every time I come to church. 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'

"This is my favourite verse and I know it by heart, from Luke 19:10. Thank you for helping me. I am not pretending anymore."

## **GIVE NOW**

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use the donation  
form on the back page  
or visit  
[biblesociety.org.au/  
sowchild](http://biblesociety.org.au/sowchild)**



# Bible Society at home



## Bibles for Bubs

Two-year-old Zoe Buchanan loves the Toddler Bible she received through Bible Society's Bibles for Bubs program. "My husband and I read a Bible story every night with Zoe and pray with her," says mother Jane, who has lost count of the times she has read through the Bible with Zoe. "Her favourite story is the Noah's ark story and she loves to act out the pounding and sawing ... Our nightly routine is to read a Bible story and then she holds hands with her father and me as we pray together. This is such a relaxing, calming experience she's even fallen asleep several times while we pray." On April 20 we will launch the 2020 program so that babies born in 2019 can receive gifts and birthday cards for their first five years of life.



## Bike for Bibles

The Tasmanian 2020 summer Bike for Bibles ride in north-east Tasmania was a modest local ride of 432 kms over four days – a larger fortnight-long ride is being planned for interstate and local riders for 2021. Every year the cyclists depend on the hospitality of local Christians and churches to generously provide meals and billets, which keeps costs down. This year, the BFB team were treated to great country hospitality, food and fellowship in Scottsdale and St Helens. Despite cool conditions, the team enjoyed four days of fellowship and fundraising for Scripture-based literacy work for Pakistani women. The Bike for Bibles event in Victoria, from March 28-29 – a 240km ride around Port Phillip Bay – will raise funds for Bible paper in China.



## International Bibles

People in one in five households in Australia now speak a language other than English, according to a study this year by McCrindle Research. At Koorong and Bible Society Australia, we believe the Bible should be opened to our entire community. We know that people want to read God's word in their own heart language, whether it be Chinese, Samoan, Hindi, Tagalog, or any of the languages spoken in Australian homes. So Koorong is promoting a selected range of international Bibles with a 30 per cent discount until April 5. Every order of an international Bible will also receive a free copy of *Meet Jesus* by Mike Raiter. This short new book in easy English helps migrants and overseas visitors get to know Jesus.



# Bible Societies around the world



## Leaving a legacy

Emmanuel Zhuwao, above, agreed to do translation work on the Chikunda Bible because he would get to learn the Bible very deeply. “I also have a real passion to help my community,” he says. The Chikunda Bible, in a minority language of Zimbabwe, is due for completion in 2023. Emmanuel is excited to think of the legacy he will leave. “I have a young grandson and it makes me happy to think of him reading the Chikunda Bible as he grows up.”



## Breaking barriers

In November 2019 work began on recording an audio version of the New Testament in Chorote, a language of Argentina. Chorote speakers are eager to listen to the Scriptures in their language and break down the barriers that are preventing them from knowing God’s word. Sisters Sabina and Clara, above, are happy but nervous about taking part in the recording, so they’ve been practising reading the gospels out loud together every afternoon.



## 700 completed Bibles

As Sower went to press, the United Bible Societies was expected to announce that the total number of languages with completed Scripture was set to reach 700. Unfortunately, although there are more than 3000 languages with some portions of the Bible, there are still another 3000 languages that are without even a single translated verse. That means one in five people don’t have a Bible in the language they understand best.



**BIBLE  
SOCIETY**

**GPO BOX 9874 in your capital city P: 1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537) ISSN 1839-7425**  
**W: [biblesociety.org.au](http://biblesociety.org.au) E: [sower@biblesociety.org.au](mailto:sower@biblesociety.org.au) ACN 148 058 306**

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 and territories. 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.

# Bibles & roses

**J**ohn Parer was walking along his local beach last October trying to get inspiration for a sermon he was giving the next day.

John, who is pastor of OneLife Church in Taree on the mid-north coast of NSW, walked north for 40 minutes, asking God for a message, then turned around and headed back.

“It was a perfect day – nice waves, warm water and blue sky. As I walked, I saw what looked like rubbish on the beach,” he recalls.

To John’s amazement he discovered that this item was a perfect rose. After staring, stunned, at its beauty, he noticed there were two more roses.

“How did they get there? I am not sure, but I believe God simply

wanted to tell all the people in OneLife, Taree, the Manning Valley, NSW, Australia and the world that he loves them,” he says.

**The strange combination of roses and the ocean reminded John of a vision that God gave Salvation Army founder William Booth more than 100 years ago.**

The ocean symbolised humanity and all the people in the ocean were drowning. Jesus was in the ocean and calling to those he’d rescued to help him rescue those who were drowning. Sadly, many who had been rescued were too preoccupied with work, fun, sports and family to respond to Jesus’ call.

The next day, John told his congregation about this vision

and its challenge to jump into the ocean to help Jesus save people who are drowning.

“I followed this challenging message with the story about how I found the three roses on Old Bar Beach. God sent me three red roses from the ocean to remind me how much he loves us.”

When bushfires hit the NSW mid-north coast in November, John and his church offered practical assistance to the community such as donating money and delivering water.

He also coordinated the line-up for a huge community carols night, which attracted about 7000 people. A Sydney NRL team made an appearance while singers Shannon Noll and Travis Collins





came to perform and support the community.

Early that morning, John drove for four hours from Taree to Flemington Markets in Sydney, where he bought 2,500 red roses. He then drove to Bible Society Australia's warehouse to load up with Christmas books, Bibles, New Testaments as well as The Deadly News, a Gospel of Mark for the Aboriginal community. **That night, during the carol service, the church handed out the roses and Scriptures to share about God's love for the community.**

The mid-north coast bushfires were followed early in the new year by the devastating bushfire crisis on the NSW south coast and Victoria, and there is still a

lot of recovery work to be done. Churches are working together to follow up people affected, some of whom have lost everything.

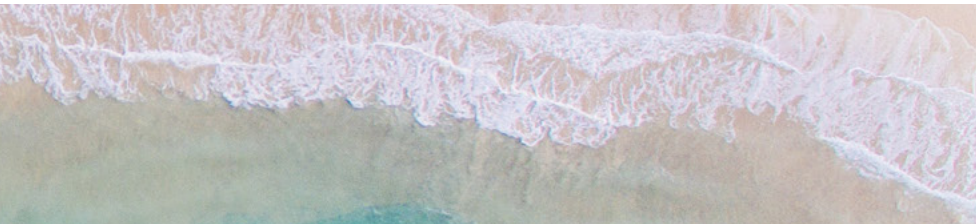
Along with giving away Bibles to replace those lost in the fires, Bible Society is also supporting the provision of water to families who used what they had, which their livestock also need, to fight the fires. **We're praying for all the communities affected by the bushfires and are working with our local partners to supply Bibles alongside other emergency needs.** Please pray with us, and if you are in or are serving bushfire-affected communities, then please get in touch with us here:

**[biblesociety.org.au/relief](http://biblesociety.org.au/relief)**

# CAN YOU HELP?

**Would you be willing to help Bible Society replace Bibles and assist in supplying ministry resources to churches and people in bushfire-affected communities?**

**Please donate at [biblesociety.org.au/sowaid](http://biblesociety.org.au/sowaid), call 1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537) or use the donation form on the back page.**



# Prayer points

## March – June

### March 22-28

**Nicaragua:** Please pray that children suffering from cancer in Nicaragua would know God's love through his word. May they feel God's love and place their trust in him, because he is the best doctor and healer.

**Australia:** For Easter this year, please pray as Bible Society distributes an Easter-themed outreach booklet that many young lives will be blessed.

### March 29–April 4

**Iraq:** Pray for Bible Society's work in encouraging Christian communities in Iraq through addressing their physical needs for food, medicines and supplies as well as their spiritual needs.

**Australia:** Please pray for unity among all the arms of Bible Society Australia, including Koorong, Centre for Public Christianity and *Eternity*. Thank God that we can work together to help people open the Bible.

### April 5-11

**Pakistan:** Thank God that Christian women in Pakistan are learning to read and write so they are equipped to lead their households better and understand the Bible.

**Australia:** Pray that Bible Society would be able to assist churches, chaplains and other local partners working in bushfire-affected communities by providing Bibles and Scripture alongside emergency needs.

### April 12-18

**Ghana:** Please pray for the Literacy for Life project run by Bible Society in Ghana. Please pray that the project would be effective in teaching of new learners in the Komba language. Pray that the students would be

empowered to read and understand Scripture as well as other essential areas of life.

**Australia:** Thank God for Bible Society's Daily Bible devotion series (available by daily email and through *bible.com.au*). Pray that people would be blessed in pursuing Bible reading as a spiritual discipline this year.

### April 19-25

**Syria:** Please pray for the Trauma Healing project, which trains facilitators in Bible based trauma-healing seminars as well as creating trauma healing centres in local churches. Thank God for the leaders trained in 2019 and the hundreds of people who received healing through the groups.

**Australia:** Please pray for chaplains and gospel workers in hospitals, prisons, the armed forces, outreach centres and schools. Pray that they may build relationships and be present in people's lives with God's word at the right time, guided by God's wisdom.

### April 26-May 2

**Slovenia:** Please pray for the Bible Helps to Heal Wounds and Trauma project, which helps women suffering from trauma to break free of their past through biblical trauma healing. Thank God for the 16 new facilitators last year and that God would strengthen them with his love and peace.

**Australia:** Thank God for all the ways he is working among the Indigenous communities in our country. Pray that Bible Society would be effective in supporting Indigenous Bible translation, pastoral work and supplying Scriptures for those who need them.

### May 3-9

**Mongolia:** Please pray for the work of Bible Society in Mongolia, where they are seeking to meet the need for a Bible translation from the original languages that is



easier to understand for both readers and listeners and that has more natural Mongolian.

**Australia:** Thank God for the Bike for Bibles fundraising initiative, which has been running since 1984. Praise God for the more than \$13 million that Bike for Bibles has raised for Bible Society projects worldwide since it began.

## May 10-16

**Vietnam:** Pray that illiterate Christians who want to read God's word would be able to participate in the Learning through Listening classes run in Vietnam through church networks.

**Australia:** Please pray that Bible Society's publishing work would connect people to the love of Jesus, through stories that invite and inspire, that build and encourage faith. Please also pray for fruitful partnerships with churches, schools and Christian organisations to publish special edition Bibles.

## May 17-23

**South Africa:** Please pray for Bible work in South Africa, where Bible Society aims to support the rehabilitative care of prisoners by providing Bible texts and other materials to prisoners, free of charge. Pray that the Bible, as a book that brings hope, would have a reformative impact on prisoners.

**Australia:** Please continue to pray for *Eternity News*, as the team seeks to reach people around our country with news stories from a Christian perspective. Pray for wisdom, creativity and energy for the whole team.

## May 24-30

**Zimbabwe:** Pray for the work of Bible Society Zimbabwe, as the organisation is burdened by the uncertainty and instability in the country. Pray too for the launch of a project to bring help and hope to families caring for disabled children.

**Australia:** Please pray for the work of the Centre for Public Christianity, as it continues to engage the public with a clear, measured and respectful picture of the Christian faith and the way it can impact all of life for the good.

## May 31-June 6

**Suriname:** Please pray for Bible Society in Suriname, as they seek to reach children living in orphanages and those who have faced abuse. Pray that their visits and special days of celebration with praise and worship, dance, and drama would help the children learn about the special love God has for them.

**Australia:** Please pray for Koorong stores around Australia, especially for the staff who work hard to provide a wide range of Christian resources to help people in their walk with Jesus Christ.

## June 7-13

**Cameroon:** Thank God that hundreds of girls who have been victims of sexual exploitation have found healing and hope through Project Esther, which is based on biblical principles.

**Australia:** Please pray for chaplains who work with young people, and for the Bible Society annual Masterclass youth events around the country and the chance to put Scriptures in the hands of teenagers.

## June 14-20

**Cambodia:** Please pray that the 600 literacy classes in Khmer will help and empower illiterate people, young and old, especially in rural Cambodia, and that they would be able to read the Scriptures.

**Australia:** Please pray for the board and senior leadership of Bible Society Australia. Pray that God would grant them wisdom as they prayerfully set the direction and vision for our work, and see it through to implementation.

# Reclaim lost futures

**A**bu Mazen, father of three, left his country in the Middle East because of war. When the family first arrived in Lebanon, he removed his eldest son Mazen from school so that the nine-year-old could help with the family's daily work.

After hearing about the Bible Society's Bible-based literacy courses, Abu Mazen changed his mind and decided to enrol his son. His hope was that his family might return to their country soon and he recognised that this program would help his son in the transition back to normal school.

**As instability in the Middle East continues unchecked, the number of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Lebanon has now passed the two-million mark,**

**with more than half of them aged 17 or younger.**

An estimated 200,000 refugee children are out of school for a host of reasons, including difficulty following the curriculum in a foreign language, lack of available places in school or a belief that work is more rewarding, according to the UNHCR. The UN Refugee Agency also reports that the educational attainment of Syrian refugees is generally low. Three-quarters have primary education or below and only three per cent have obtained university education.

Lack of education can reverberate for generations. Many of these refugee children will not be equipped to meet the demands of reconstructing their

countries when the time comes to leave Lebanon.

**Bible Society Lebanon was inspired to start Bible literacy courses for refugees and underprivileged children** after

it was approached by a pastor of a Baptist Church who was concerned for the future of displaced Syrian children living in the camps near Zahle, Lebanon's biggest city.

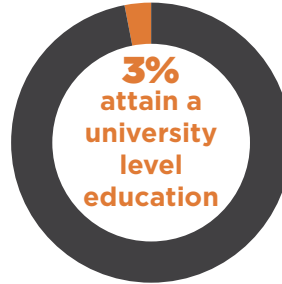
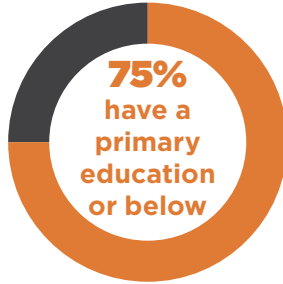
Bible Society joined forces with a school affiliated with that church to train teachers to begin three-month literacy programs of two to three sessions a week, including reading and listening to Bible stories on CD in a safe and positive atmosphere.

After positive feedback, the program was expanded last





# 2 million+ Syrian/Iraqi refugees



year. In the first half of 2019, 40 teachers were trained and 40 new classes were started in collaboration with 13 churches or organisations from various Christian denominations.

A total of 1000 Syrian and Iraqi refugee children, aged mainly between 6 and 12, attended the classes with the vast majority graduating from level 1.

In the second half of the year, successful students were invited to move up to level 2, for which 28 new teachers were trained. Both levels continued through the year

in partnership with 25 Christian organisations.

An additional 1000 Iraqi and Syrian refugee children took level 1 and the vast majority either started or completed level 2. **In all, thanks to support from donors like you, 3875 children benefited from the Bible literacy program in 2019.**

The hope is that these courses will give displaced children the confidence and encouragement to return to the formal education system.

As they read the Bible, they will

also meet Jesus and discover the hope that he holds out to them in a situation that seems hopeless.

***Will you give so that these children may develop a love of learning and be enabled to go back to school? And that they would one day be able to return to their home countries and play their part in rebuilding their communities.***

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





READ



THINK



PRAY

# Our unity, God's favour & prayer:

## Our passport to God

with Bible Society CEO

*Grant Thomson*



## New ways to open your Bible

Unsurprisingly, we at Bible Society are all about the Bible. We want people to open their Bible, engage in God's word – to be refreshed, inspired, renewed by the gift of grace given to us and revealed in the Bible.

As a *Sower* reader, you are already an advocate for Bible Society and the Bible, and we are grateful.

So we want to share with you the exciting news that you can now read our daily devotions online via our new web-based Bible app:

**bible.com.au**

Already there are more than 50 fortnightly devotions on a range of topics. If you are not a subscriber to our Daily Bible, which is sent each day via email, our new-look Bible reading pages in *Sower* will give you a taste of these devotions.

Grant Thomson, Bible Society's new CEO, has written his first Daily Bible series for Bible Society on unity and prayer. We invite people to sign up to Daily Bible via email or jump online and read the Bible with Bible Society for a year.

For more information, go to our website:

**bible.com.au/plans/#daily-bible**



## Devotion One



***For God is not a God of disorder but of peace – as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.***

1 Cor 14:33



No doubt you have seen that toxic condition that invades all groups when we drop our guard. What is it called? It has many names – gossip, rumour, entitlement, narcissism, dogma, hurt, jealousy, selfishness.

We see it in church congregations, in parent bodies, on community and corporate boards, in voluntary associations and in the workplace. It is the destroyer of unity and it brings something ungodly – it brings disorder!

How do we build or rebuild unity?

God tells us that everything starts with the heart. Who is responsible for the condition of your heart? You are. Ultimately, each of us is responsible for the breakdown of unity. And when we start talking to people outside of the group about the problem, you know you have a problem. And you/I/we are perpetrating the disorder by gossiping and not working from within!

Think about the choices you make when you start sowing the seeds of disunity. Our choices either help restore unity or pull it down. Where do you sit?



Lord Jesus, forgive me when I contribute to disunity. Help me to be ready to seek forgiveness and contribute to the repair. For you, God, are the God of peace. Help me to always work for peace. Amen.

## Devotion Two



***How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.***

Psalms 133



What a beautiful image this psalm creates. Bearded or not, we can all feel the luscious oil cascading down our heads, dripping through our hair, over our ears. The word-picture captures the magnificence and blessing of unity.

King David, the Psalmist, tells us that God’s blessing rests on a unified church, a unified family, a unified team. How good and pleasant it is! Unity enables God to use us more than when we are fighting and contending with each other. Unity grows through a common cause.

Note, too, that there is nothing static in this psalm. The oil runs down, as does the dew. A united people have momentum and this momentum is needed in every area of life. Think about your inner life, family, friendships, colleagues. What helps nurture unity? Look what we are promised when we live in unity – “for there the Lord bestows his blessing.”



Lord God, I want to know your blessing on all parts of my life. May your Spirit give me insights into my heart and fill me with the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control so that I contribute to unity. Amen.

## Devotion Three



***Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

Philippians 4:6-7



In my role as CEO of Bible Society, I am calling on all staff, board members and supporters to prayer, individually and as the body of Christ in Bible Society.

I believe this isn't a good thing or a small thing – it's something that is weighty and important.

Paul makes clear that we are to be a people of prayer and a team of prayer.

My desire is that prayer would saturate our lives.

This passage is powerful. Anxiety is one of the biggest challenges people face. But Paul urges us not to be anxious but instead to go to God in prayer in every situation!

Theologian John Piper writes: “God has established prayer as the means by which we receive his supernatural help. And without supernatural help, we cannot live a life worthy of the gospel.”



God, help me to find your peace. Give me the courage to surrender my fears and fully embrace your love. I seek your peace which cannot be explained for that is the only peace that can conquer fear. In the name of Christ, I pray, Amen.

## Devotion Four



***Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.***

James 5:13-15



James is leaving us in no doubt – pray, pray and pray. When we face difficulties, come to God in prayer. When our hearts are bubbling over with joy, let's praise God. When we can't hear God and wonder whether he is there, pray.

There is absolutely nothing we cannot pray about. God is listening. He is listening when we are broken. When we are confused. Even when we can no longer speak and have no words. God's love is so great that he wants us with him no matter what is going on and how sinful we might feel. His love is without end.

Note, too, the communal nature of prayer. When we gather in Christ's name, he is in our midst.

It is a presumptive Jesus follower who doesn't pray. Do you have a lifestyle of prayer? What are some practical steps you could take to a good prayer life and discover what difference prayer makes in our lives?



Gracious God, I come before you with a contrite heart, my spirit talking with your spirit. Please forgive me for my failure to pray. Help me to keep coming before you in prayer. You are my beloved father who sent your son to die for me. Thank you for your gift of grace. Amen



## Devotion Five



***But my brethren, who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholly followed the Lord my God. And Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.'***

Joshua 14:8-9



Previously, in Judges, we've seen the good and honest report Caleb gave Moses. Fast forward 45 years and, as we can see in this last chapter of Joshua, God's promise to Caleb has come true. Now as an old man, Caleb is as focused on God as ever – he is ready to go to war for God.

Note the word-picture: for me I imagine God's deep footprints embedded in the snow, and Caleb is treading behind, each of his steps literally in the footprints made by God, for Caleb "wholly" follows his Creator. There is nothing casual or complacent about Caleb's actions.

What might it look like to be as faithful as Caleb?

Caleb really knew God. There are only two ways anyone can know God: through reading his word and through a disciplined prayer life.

Tomorrow we will examine how we benefit through a personal culture of prayer.



Heavenly Father, help me to have the kind of faith that wholly follows you. Caleb's passion for his Holy Father had not dimmed in the passing years. Help me to be a prayer warrior. Forgive me my complacency, for I am loved by the Creator of the universe. Amen

## Devotion Six



***Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.***

Proverbs 4:23



Over this week we have considered some simple guidelines for prayer, the discipline of prayer and a culture of prayer. Today, our last in this seven day series on prayer we will look at six things that prayer impacts:

1. *Prayer keeps us close to the Holy Spirit.* To become like Caleb, we want to become utterly dependent on the Holy Spirit, as we can't do God's work without him.
2. *Prayer is the primary way that Christ is formed in us.* Galatians 4.19 "until Christ is formed in you".
3. *Prayer reorients towards the Light.* We live in a complex world with many distractions and strident voices. How do we guard our heart and keep focused on God's Light? By constantly realigning our lives to God through prayer.
4. *Prayer is spiritually potent.* James 5.17 "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours and he prayed fervently..."
5. *Prayer breaks chains.* Chains of regret, pain, sin, addiction, brokenness. Prayer keeps God in the right perspective. We don't get to a clear perspective on life and the world by trying to reposition God in our worldview.

Prayer is something as people of the Risen Lord, we just have to keep practising! Just do it!



Father God, I want to be oriented towards the Light. I do not want to be crushed by chains of past sins and hurt. Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Heal me of my sins. Let me come to you each day, ready to live for you and in you. Amen.



# FOR THE LOVE OF GOD: THE INTERVIEWS

When CPX made its documentary *For the Love of God* they spoke to more than 50 experts from around the world, but only a fraction of those interviews made it into the final production. Now, they're making it all available in 100s of bite-sized videos.

Whether you want to learn about the invention of hypocrisy or why non-violent resistance works – whether you want to hear about the most important phrase ever coined or how Christians could torture people – it's all there!

CPX has launched this collection with 120 clips ranging from one to six minutes long, but they'll be adding hundreds more over coming months.

From Pulitzer-Prize-winning author Marilynne Robinson on the beauty of religion to Oxford professor Alister McGrath on how science led him to faith, there's a gold-mine of wisdom and clarity available to search, download and share with friends at the CPX website.



[publicchristianity.org/interviews](https://publicchristianity.org/interviews)

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# Thanks to you ...

## Cambodia literacy

Seom Rany, 31, is a pastor who lives in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. She has been a Literacy Class Facilitator for children in a project you have supported through Bible Society.

She said: “I noticed that there were some children living on the street and collecting trash, so they have no chance to go to school. Many of them are children of migrant workers from other provinces who had come to Phnom Penh to work in construction. I have much compassion for these children. At their age, they should be in school. When I was about their age, I was already at school studying. **They should have the same opportunities as me, but instead they are on the street collecting trash.** I began thinking about how I could help them.

“When I saw them in this situation, not only did I want them to be educated, I also wanted them to hear the gospel. I invited them to study with me, even though I had little knowledge since I did not have any formal education in teaching. I took some of my time to help them to the best of my abilities.”

## Syria trauma healing

Hanna from a village near Damascus is a trained psychological counsellor who has joined the Syrian Bible Society's Trauma Healing Program to help people. “I know our great God wants me here for

a purpose,” she says. Hanna spent a year and ten months in captivity after a military group occupied her village in December 2014.

“My mum and I were the only Christians among 120 women and children. I didn't know what had happened to my father and my brothers. No food, no medicines. We were beaten many times; in our room a woman died for lack of medicine. We could hear suffering voices all around. I was losing hope ... I was hiding a small Bible and trying to read daily. I had to be strong to stand by my mother. There was a voice inside me that I heard telling me: ‘it is not the end. I am with you. Don't be afraid!’”

When a real war broke out in the neighbourhood, with rockets falling from the sky, the armed group abandoned them and fled. After a couple of sleepless nights, “our men came and helped us to leave this area,” she recalls.

**Although she wanted to leave Syria, she kept hearing a voice saying, “God is with me.”**

“It became so clear to me that I wanted to help people receive healing from their traumas.

“Now I am working with children in Damascus. To me it has been a great opportunity to attend the initial Trauma Healing Training. A great opportunity to understand what had happened to me. The trauma healing program helped me to understand how God introduced himself to me.”

# YES! I want the Bible to be available

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You can also donate online at **www.biblesociety.org.au** or by phone on **1300 BIBLES** or (1300 242 537).  
If these appeals are oversubscribed or a project changes due to unforeseen reasons, we will reallocate remaining funds to similar projects.  
\*Receipts for tax-deductible donations of \$2 or more will be issued by the trustee for Bible Society Foundation. ABN 41 725 839 724

