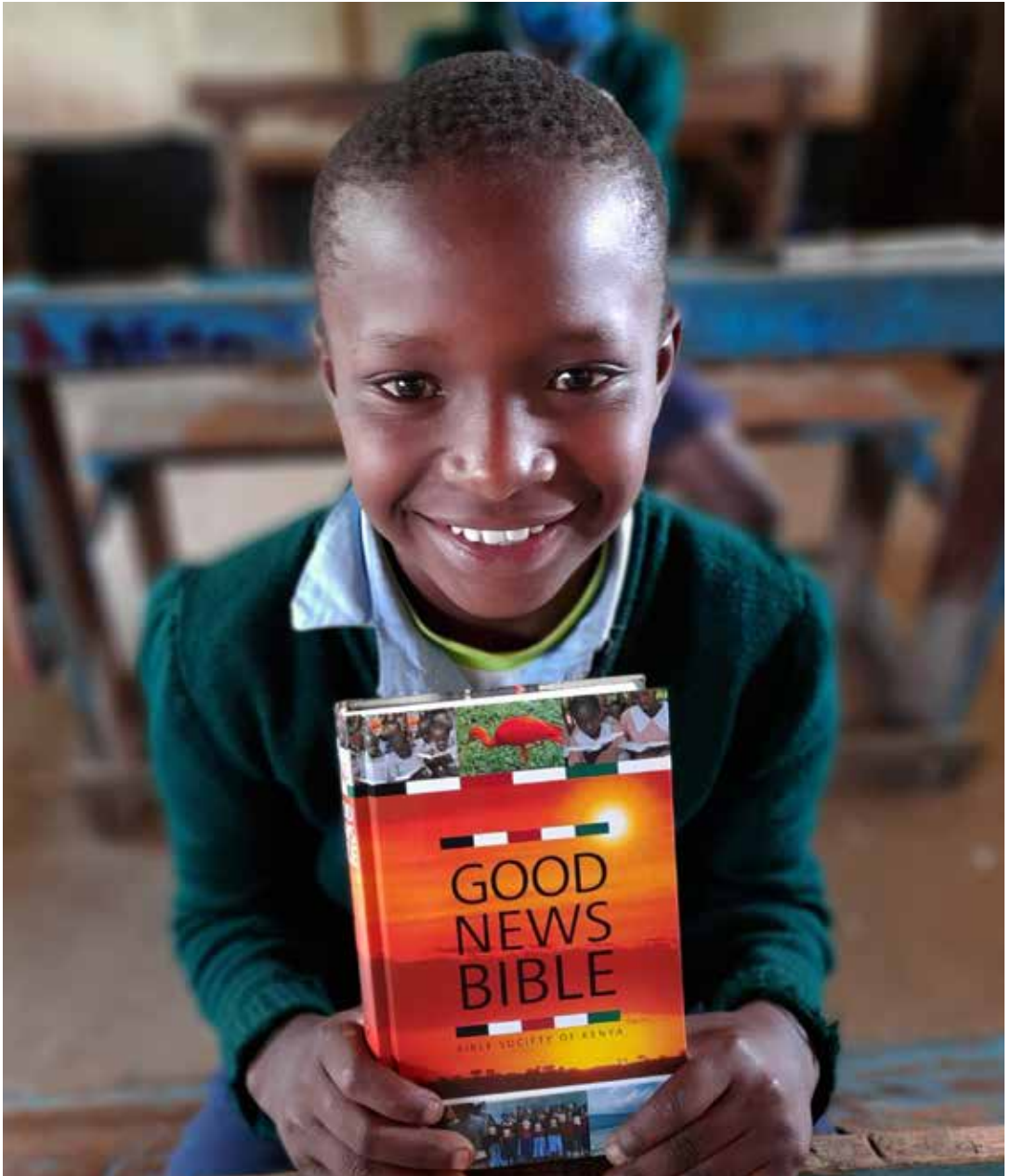


Sower.

AUTUMN 2021
BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA.



Welcome to our new look *Sower*. After listening to your feedback, which was a fantastic mix of positive and not-quite-so about the trial combined magazine of *Sower*, *Eternity* and Koorong, we have decided to return to *Sower* being on its own. The most vocal voices came from our committed *Sower* readers who felt they weren't receiving the depth of content that they have always valued regarding Bible Society's international and Australian projects.

I know you are going to love this magazine. Our hope is that you will treasure each edition. Share it with others. Leave it on your coffee table so you can go back to it and so others can also enjoy the stories.

While this is a dedicated *Sower* magazine - introducing you to new projects, reporting back on those you have financially contributed to, and seeking your prayers for the work of Bible Society here in Australia and internationally - we want to also share the good news of *Eternity*, the writings of CPX and highlights from Koorong's catalogue. No longer a combined magazine, but a few tasters perhaps?

In this edition, our feature article is on an important new project in Rwanda. It will be 30 years in 2024 since the world was shocked by the Rwandan genocide, and not surprisingly there is increasing tension between the Hutus and the Tutsis. This important project seeks to teach important Biblical lessons which will help primary and secondary students learn about forgiveness, reconciliation and healing.

As you know, an important part of our work is translation of the Bible. This has been a key plank of Bible Society's work since it was formed in 1817. However, many of us do not know how complex the translation process is. Look out for the step-by-step guide in *Sower* which explains the different stages to the completion of just one book of the Bible.

I want to take a moment to thank you for your ongoing support of Bible Society. Without you, we could not fund projects in Rwanda, Vietnam, Kenya and the extraordinary work of Arab/Israel capacity building - and much, much more.

"... Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Matthew 6:33-34

God Bless,
Grant Thomson
 CEO, BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA

**“Thank you for your
ongoing support of
Bible Society’s work.”**



To all people. By all means possible.

Translation | Engagement | Advocacy | Distribution



Rwanda

A group of Rwandan children are looking out from a doorway. The children are of various ages, with some in the foreground looking directly at the camera. The background shows a dirt path and some trees, suggesting a rural setting. The lighting is warm, possibly from the setting or rising sun.

Up to 800,000 people were slaughtered during the 100 days that genocide raged across this small African nation, almost three decades ago.

On the evening of 7 April 1994, one day after the Rwandan President's plane was shot down, killing him instantly, repeated radio messages on RTLM - a new station attractive to Rwandan young people - called the Hutu people group to arms. On that night, Celestin, a Catholic Tutsi father of four and his wife, grabbed their children and fled into darkness; Celestin took their sons and his wife their twin daughters. To increase their chances of survival, they split up.

It was a terrifying night. The radio had spent nearly 12 months broadcasting hate speech. The Tutsis, who held most of the white collar positions in the country, were described as 'inyenzi', meaning 'non-human pests' or 'cockroaches', which must be stamped into the ground. Machetes had been stockpiled and were the weapon of choice. Neighbour turned against neighbour. Many families had intermarried, and the Tutsi partner could even be targeted by in-laws.

Celestin shared his story with me in 1997 when I travelled to Rwanda in my role as project officer for an Anglican aid and development agency. We were in partnership with a Rwandan NGO called the Barakabaho ('let them live') Foundation. Established by a local Anglican Bishop, it helped child-headed households.

On that night in 1994, Celestin and his two young sons, in total fear for their lives, and carrying nothing but the clothes on their backs, found a private resting place. Celestin left them there so he could scope out a safe passage,

trying to head towards neighbouring Burundi. He came back to collect his sons and they had vanished. As Celestin shared his story in the car driving to meet beneficiaries of the project we were funding, he told me that was the last time he ever saw them.

He added that he had nothing to even show they had lived. No photos. No clothing. No drawings or toys. Not even any bones.

Up to 800,000 people were slaughtered during the 100 days the genocide raged across this small African nation. At the time, as news started leaking out of this horrific carnage, the evening bulletins showed rivers filled with corpses. Sadly, the international community let this nation down and unsurprisingly, the physical, emotional and mental scars are never far from the surface.

Celestin's wife and daughters survived that night and escaped over the border, eventually fleeing to France as refugees. At the time I met Celestin, his wife was refusing to return to Rwanda as she could not believe that her country of birth could commit such atrocities against its fellows. Celestin could not leave Rwanda because he felt he had a responsibility to help rebuild the tattered nation, to care for its victims and model neighbourly love.

As we met exhausted grandmothers and teenage carers to their younger siblings, Celestin would introduce me. He would explain that I had come from Australia, which amazed everyone I met. That someone from so far away could care

“... That someone from so far away could care about them seemed to be a recurring and very humbling theme.”

about them seemed to be a recurring and very humbling theme of these war-ravaged people. And as he introduced us, he would say to the person, “you are a friend of Barakabaho, yes” and they would agree, and he would turn to me and say “and Penny is a friend of Barakabaho” and I would say “yes” and he would say “Then we are all friends together.” That has stayed with me. They are powerful words.

In 2007, Bible Society Australia started funding a project out of Rwanda in partnership with African Enterprise Rwanda. The three-year program ‘Improved Literacy through Education in Reconciliation’ was implemented in 85 schools in the capital, Kigali and four other cities. The aim of the program was to improve literacy as well as transform lives using Scripture-based reconciliation instruction materials. The program also recognised the members of society that influence children – parents, teachers, pastors and peer leaders. It worked. Scenes of repentance and forgiveness were common in schools, and healing and reconciliation clubs.

A bit like other societal problems however, over time the changes we implement are forgotten and there is a need for renewed efforts to reignite awareness. Emerging wounds, lingering trauma and current crises have exposed the fragility of individual and community relations in Rwanda, a Christian country. Over 90 per

cent of the population are Christian in name, but Christian values may not reflect strongly in their lifestyles. Our partners in Rwanda – African Enterprise Rwanda – are concerned that the lack of sound doctrine is not equipping people to apply Biblical wisdom and humility to live appropriately and address the deep wounds within the community.

That is one part of the complex puzzle. Other pieces relate to those children left behind, now grown up with no parental support and deep wounds. Former prisoners, jailed for crimes committed during the genocide, now released, bring their own narratives of the events. School students are developing their own values, often children of survivors or perpetrators, with this palpating tension of mistrust, pain, vengeance and retribution.

A revival of the 2007-2010 project is much needed. Working in three districts – Kayanza, Gatsibo and Rwamagana – the ‘Improved Literacy through Education in Reconciliation’ program will promote healing and reconciliation based on biblical principles.

In a letter of commendation, Richard Gasana, the Mayor of Gatsibo District, refers to the impact of the previous project and the need for its return: “There was more peace in the community, because all the trained beneficiaries – who included but were not limited to students, teachers, parents, church/religious and youth leaders, and local community leaders – disseminated messages of peace and reconciliation to the people in their sphere of influence.”

“This project is very important as it facilitates peace building and restoration resulting into social cohesion.”

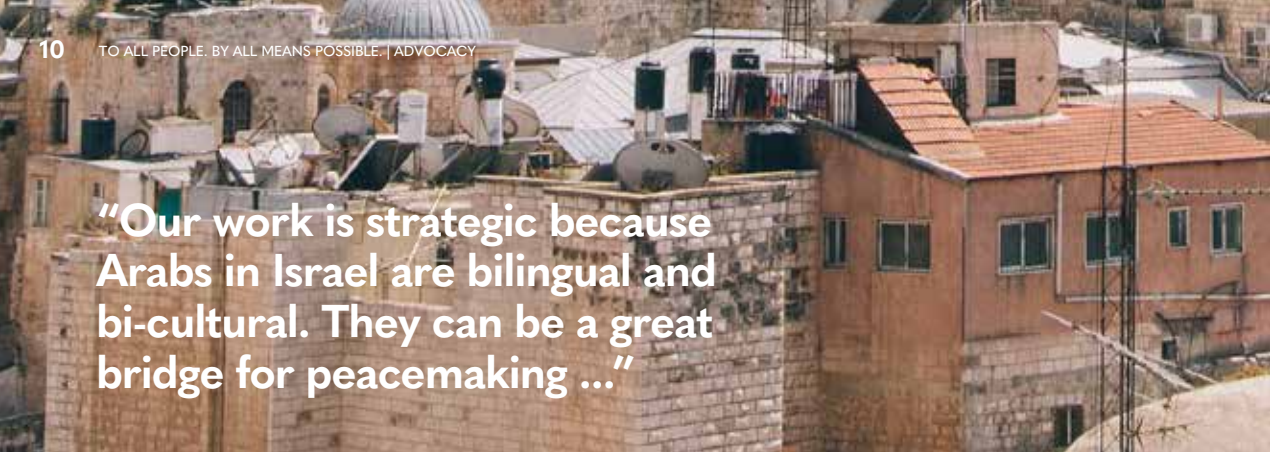
Penny Mulvey

CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
OF BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA.

Arab Israeli

A young girl with dark, curly hair tied in a small bun with two white hair ties. She is wearing a green t-shirt and is sitting outdoors, leaning against a green-painted wooden post. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile and pointing her right index finger towards the viewer. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a path.

In the birthplace of Christianity,
Christians are a minority. But
the local Bible Society keeps
shining the light of Jesus.



“Our work is strategic because Arabs in Israel are bilingual and bi-cultural. They can be a great bridge for peacemaking ...”

Israel is being hailed for its roll out of coronavirus vaccinations. Starting 2021 with the highest rate of COVID jabs in the world, Israel registered significant declines in new infections, severe cases and deaths - within one month of the first vaccinations.

Such positive signs emerged out of Israel's third wave of COVID-19, while it was living in its third national lockdown that had been extended four times. With more than half of Israel's nine million population receiving at least one vaccine dose by February, light appears to be breaking on the pandemic horizon for the birthplace of Christianity.

The Arab Israeli Bible Society continues to shine the eternal light of Christ in a country where more than 5,500 people have died due to COVID-19. But maintaining their presence is a challenge for AIBS in a region plagued by war and division.

“We live in a war zone and our country is tense. Arab citizens of Israel live as second class citizens and are considered as a demographic threat by many,” explains Dina Katanacho, Director of AIBS.

“The political, economical and social challenges have not been changed; actually statistics show that the rate of violence in our community has been increased especially with COVID-19.” Aiming to serve the local church and become an

instrument of peace, security and hope, AIBS focuses upon reaching and supporting Arab Israeli people - Arabs who became citizens of the State of Israel after its establishment in 1948. This is a minority group lost between Jewish Israelis and Arab Palestinians.

Arab Israelis are often ignored in political decisions, and many live below the poverty line, suffering economically in comparison with the standards of the state. Arab Israeli Christians also are a double minority: only 20 per cent of Israelis are Arabs (1.2 million), and only two per cent of Israelis are Christian.

“Our visible presence is important especially as a Christian minority living among a Muslim majority within the state of Israel that has a Jewish majority,” explains Dina about AIBS' vital role in the region.

Serving the relatively small population of Arab-Israeli Christians - most Israeli Christians are Arabs; around 130,000, out of 163,000 - the AIBS is struggling to maintain a core presence of operations. A presence that can offer vital transformation to the volatile region.

“We seek to see that Arab-Israeli women, children, young people and men will have a better understanding of Biblical teaching and we pray this will change the way they think and behave,” says Katanacho about AIBS, which has limited avenues for generating income through



sales of resources and other local fundraisers.

“Our work is strategic because Arabs in Israel are bilingual and bi-cultural. They can be a great bridge for peacemaking and for transforming our war-torn region. The Bible is important in transforming this group of people who has the potential of transforming the region.”

Located in Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth in Galilee - the region famous for where Jesus grew up and exercised much of his public ministry - AIBS’ centre of operations offers Scripture resources and interactive community events focused primarily on women and family issues. The community can visit, ask questions, engage with biblical material and attend events.

Despite the increased strain upon Israeli society during 2020, AIBS succeeded in building relationships with all denominations and has projects serving all of them. The churches in Israel cooperate and partner with AIBS.

“AIBS is growing,” says Katanacho. “I am thankful that our workshops, conferences, and events have doubled. Our friends and contacts have increased.

“We had to modify some of our ministry to be able to serve the communities despite the [COVID-related] closures. We have worked this year with different churches [and] schools reaching families and youth, creating for them

new programs to address the global challenge and other encounters.

“AIBS has also succeeded in advocating a family-oriented perception of the Bible in local churches. They need good contextual biblical tools. AIBS has been strategically providing these tools through its leadership and vision.

“Continuing this approach is important for the future of our community.”

The success AIBS has had with reaching out to the wider Christian community in Israel means Katanacho sees the need for greater communication and leadership development.

She hopes you can help support the AIBS to Open the Bible with Arab Israelis, growing the influence of the light of Jesus Christ in the darkness of conflict and division.

Kenya



I now have my own copy of the Bible - and I am very happy with it. I keep the Bible in my school bag," says 12-year-old Nancy, who goes to a primary school that has views of Mount Kenya, Africa's second highest mountain. Nancy has had her own Bible for just one month - and already it has impacted her whole household.

"After school I take my bag with the Bible home, so also at home I can read from my own Bible. I then read it to my parents and I talk to them about what we read."

Nancy's dad is a peasant and her mum has a small shop at a market. But many of the other students at St Peter's Day Primary School in Kianjokoma have lost one or both parents.

HIV/AIDs is a problem in this rural area where poverty is high and, according to the principal, children may come to school without having had breakfast. "Also some children are abused, because there was nobody to protect them," says Principal Nyaga. "They come to understand what street life is, which is very bad for them."

More than 78 per cent of Kenya's population profess to be Christian. But social issues such as child marriage and female genital mutilation

remain for young Kenyans. And while Christian religious education is allowed in schools, 98 per cent of them do not have Bibles.

With your support, 12,000 children in Kenya's urban poor, and rural, areas will receive their own Bibles this year. Noticeable behaviour change, especially in the children's homes and slum schools, is expected. Such positive changes occurred after Bible knowledge increased among children and youth, thanks to Scripture distribution during 2016-2018.

Providing Bibles to Kenyan children from low income backgrounds also encourages regular Bible reading across the whole family. "As a family, we join the St Joseph Church, which is close to the school," says Nancy, a young woman already being changed through the power of God's word.

"Bible reading helps me to keep busy with good things and to be honest. Also the Bible teaches me that I need to forgive people. I was bullied by other children and found it difficult to forgive. But in the Bible I read that it is important that people forgive each other."

Will you help Open The Bible to all people, by all means possible?

\$34

Can equip one person with literacy skills using the Bible and other resources.

\$85

Can provide Bible-based trauma healing for one person.

\$120

Can help a community record and share Scripture in their heart language.

PLEASE GIVE NOW

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call 1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537) or visit biblesociety.org.au/sow

Bible translation explained



1. English Front Translation

The goal of Bible translation is to communicate the same meaning in the target language, as to the original audience of the biblical texts. In this initial step, our teams working with First Nations peoples produce an English translation from which the Indigenous translators can translate into their local language. The Front Translation keeps both the source language (Hebrew or Greek) and the target language in mind.



3. Second, Third, and Fourth Drafts

A second translator will look over the First Draft and make changes to improve the naturalness and accuracy of the text. Having multiple people engaged in the drafting process ensures that the resulting draft is the culmination of many people's efforts, rather than reflecting the perspective of just one individual. This drafting stage irons out any English 'literalisms', ensuring the Scriptures sound as natural in the target language as possible. It also checks each draft against the Front Translation to make sure the original meaning is being clearly communicated.

One of the most frequently asked questions of Bible Society Australia is: why does it take so long to translate God's word?

Translator and Bible Engagement Coordinator David Barnett works with Australia's First Nations peoples. He breaks down every step of this time-consuming but valuable process.



2. First Draft

Using the Front Translation, the Indigenous translators produce an initial draft in their language. Translators can work independently, in pairs or small groups to undertake this stage. Complex genres, such as the poetry of the Prophets or abstract language and concepts found in Job, often require several translators to discuss the text and forge a draft. Once complete, it will be keyboarded, printed, and have a reading check done.



4. Group Check

Once the original translator is happy with the draft, a team of translators will conduct a final group check. Anywhere between three and 10 translators will read through the final draft together and make sure the text 'flows' and sounds coherent. Any remaining spelling errors or syntactical idiosyncrasies are usually picked up and fixed at this stage.

Next steps



5. Back Translation

The final draft is translated back into English as literally as possible. This step is ideally performed by someone not involved in the drafting process. The goal is to represent in English as accurately as possible what the final draft of the target language is saying.



7. Community Check

In this step, the clarity and naturalness of the translation are checked by Indigenous community members. Men and women from the community who have not been previously involved in the translation project are given the translated Scripture to read. The translation is read, and then the reader is asked detailed open-ended questions about what they have just read. This ensures the translation can be clearly understood by the majority of the community.



6. Consultant Check



A Translation Consultant ensures the final draft conveys accurately the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek Bible. In this check, the Translation Consultant, an accredited expert in the original biblical languages, asks pertinent questions to the translators to ensure the translation is exegetically sound. Word usage issues may also be raised in this step, as well as questions about lexical choices (correct words).

8. Preparation for Publication

The final layout and format of the text is prepared for publication. A final spell-check of the text is conducted. Book introductions, outlines, chapter headings, footnotes, maps, and illustrations are added at this stage. The book is then typeset, and decisions about the colour, dimensions and specifications of the book are decided by the translation team.

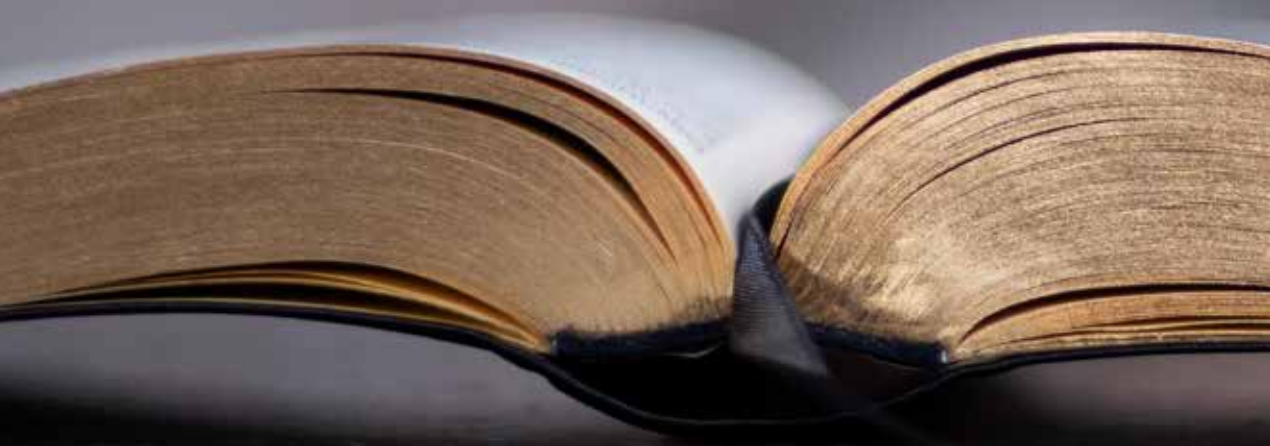
9. Publication and Dedication

The Bible is published, launched, and made available to the community at an official dedication ceremony. This final event celebrates the many years of hard work that have gone into translating the Scriptures, the partnership between the Indigenous translators and communities and supporting organisations, and is a thanks-giving service to God for his faithfulness and kindness in providing his Word to the local people.

Prayer Needs

Please join with us in thanks and praise as we reflect on the amazing things God is doing. Praise God that people are receiving their first copies of the Bible, and for some, the first Bible in their heart language. Let us unite in heartfelt thanks for the people whose lives are being transformed by God's love as they engage with his word.

As we hold up the Bible as the source of truth, beauty and goodness, let us praise our wonderful God, and bring before him all the work which is being done to Open The Bible with all people, through all means possible.



Pray for Arab-Israelis

Praise God that the Arab Israeli Bible Society is growing. Ask that God would use the AIBS to support the local church in Galilee and become an instrument of peace, security and hope in the war-torn region.

Pray for Rwanda

Pray for reconciliation between the Hutu and Tutsi people groups. Pray that through Bible-based literacy classes and teaching from the Bible, participants would seek a restored relationship with God and their communities.

Pray for Vietnam

Praise God that Vietnam's first Christian library has opened in Ho Chi Minh City and ask that he would use the library to strengthen the church in Vietnam, through equipping ministers and lay people with Bible resources.

Pray for China

Thank God for Bible college students and pastors in China, where the need for church leaders is so great, and their resources are so few. Pray that students and pastors would be provided with and encouraged by Bible resources they could not otherwise afford.

Pray for Pakistan

Thank God for the more than 5,000 women who have graduated from literacy classes. Praise God that thousands of Bibles and literacy resources have been distributed and ask that he transforms the lives of those who read them.

Pray for Kenya

Pray for the provision of 12,000 Bibles to youth and children in urban poor and rural communities - and that these young people might be transformed by Scripture.

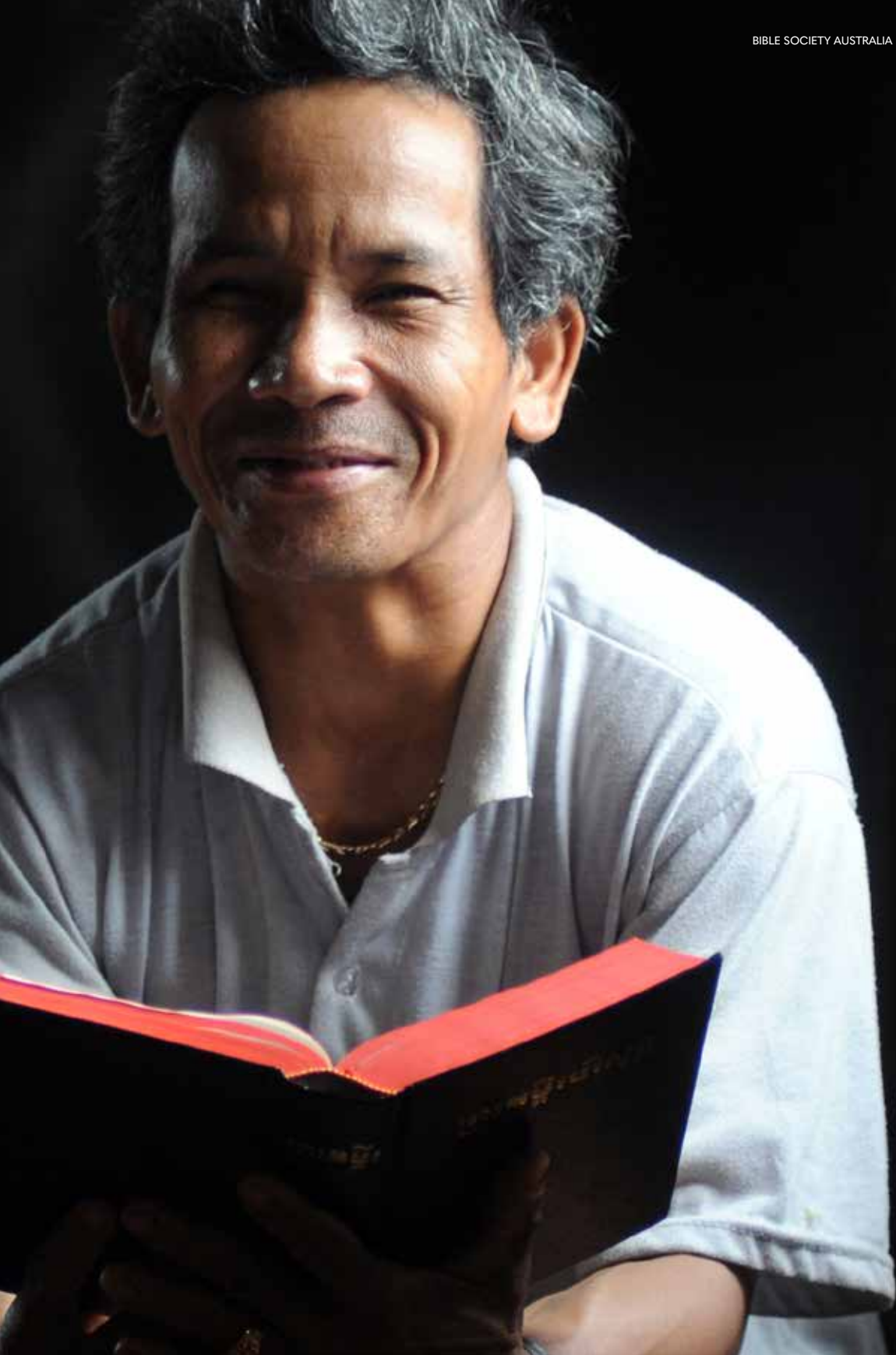


Help open God's word and transform lives through literacy

Every \$34 helps equip
one person with literacy skills
using the Bible and other resources.

biblesociety.org.au/literacy





Vietnam

The first Christian public library has opened in Vietnam. Imagine the difference it will make to the faithful.



“We hope it will be a symbol of Christian unity and Christian learning in Vietnam,” says Vu Le, executive director of Bible Society Vietnam, which established the library with local Protestant business people. “For the Vietnamese Protestants, this is the first time they pooled collective efforts in order to establish a proper [public] library in Vietnam.”

Quietly spoken Le is enthusiastic about the library in the CBD of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam’s biggest city. Since opening in July 2020, it is already stocked with around 5000 titles, including Vietnamese texts and resources in biblical studies, theology, ministry, translations and history. It also has a room full of English-language books, such as commentaries, as well as humanities disciplines, including philosophy, sociology and languages.

The main religion in Vietnam is Buddhism. Christians account for about 10 per cent of the population of around 97 million. Catholics make up most of that number.

Le hopes the library can help the faith of all sorts of Christians in Vietnam, from students and church workers, to “thoughtful lay people who would like to know more of the Bible and Christian theology.”

“We also want Vietnamese Christian business people to engage and collaborate more with the Christian ministries, and for the Bible Society to continue to promote the work of Bible engagement in Vietnam.”

China

Demand for large-print Bibles has increased, with more funding made available to ensure free distribution.



Jia's eyesight is not great and this older lady struggles with the small print in her Bible. "Reading the Bible has been difficult. Because of this, I constantly pray that my vision will be good."

Through a free Bible distribution program in China where 102,500 Bibles were handed out in 2020, Jia received an unexpected but welcomed answer to prayer.

"Amazingly the Lord provided a large-print Bible for me and I no longer read the Bible with difficulty as before. I like it and all glory to God." Jia's large-print Bible is one of 5,000 copies delivered to almost 50 churches in Gansu province, most of which are in rural areas.

Church requests for large-print Bibles have increased, so more focus and funding has been allocated to distributing them for free. Last year, 40,500 copies were distributed in China.

Also in 2020, thousands of Christians in various provinces were affected by severe floods along the Yangtze River. Many had their Bibles destroyed. To provide comfort to believers and seekers through God's word, about 13,200 Bibles were provided in late 2020.



Watch now
'The Custodian' on YouTube



John Harris is a national treasure when it comes to Bible translation. His love for Indigenous peoples and his love for the Bible shine out in this wonderful video that you can watch right now. *Judging the Macquaries*, the latest book by Dr Harris, comes out in mid-2021.

Faith Stories

May's story of loss, rescue and Jesus' love is part of an *Eternity* series of powerful testimonies, compiled by Naomi Reed.



“My mum told us a fib. She said she let us go. But we were actually part of the stolen generation. There were four of us girls and six boys ... and we were a lot to feed, so Mum let the boys go to live with family members, and then they came for us girls. They took us to a place in Bomaderry [New South Wales].”

“They said it was run by four different churches, but it was more or less run

Eternity

by the government. As kids, you can't discern which is which. Back then, I thought that if this is Christianity, I don't want anything to do with it. A lot of hard things happened there, to a lot of people.

"But a year later, my Mum came and got us. She followed the Protection Board and she found us ... and we did a runner over the border to Victoria, which is where my Mum comes from. It's her country. And we stopped at a little place called Club Terrace. It's in the bush. It has four or five saw mills and one shop. It used to be a gold field, so we used to play in the mine holes.

"Not long after that, some Christians came to our community, showing Christian movies. We were out in the paddock, watching a film on a big screen. It was called *Left Behind*. I gave my heart to Jesus, on the spot. I didn't want to be left behind!

"We stayed there in Club Terrace for a couple of years and then we moved back to NSW and we started at a big school. There was a lot of racism and bullying. But God allowed us to be there. He knows what happened. He has a plan in everything ... and it might not go our way, but he's still God. And he's always with us. We also started going to a church there, run by my uncle. For me, personally, the things I saw as a young adult, in the name of Christianity, weren't always good. But it made me think. Jesus said that we can seek him. We can ask, seek and knock ... and he will always be found by us (Luke 11:9).

"When I left high school, I couldn't read or write – only three-letter words. But then, God told me to read the Bible. We had a King James Version and I thought, 'I can't read that!' But I read it. I started in the New Testament and

every time I came to a word I didn't understand, I looked it up in the dictionary and I figured it out. God taught me to read. He gave me confidence ... because he is my confidence!

"One day, when I was in my early 30s, we had a young fella staying with us. He was from China and he couldn't speak English, so I opened up the King James Bible and I told him about John 3:16. - 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' I used my hands to illustrate it. Then the young fella read it in his own language and he started crying. I asked him if he wanted to accept Jesus into his heart and he said, 'Yes, yes, yes!'

"I've come to see that God wants me to share the love of Jesus. Jesus has changed my life and he's healed me. He's still healing me! And now he brings other people into my life who need healing. It started after my brother committed suicide. I covered a surfboard in shells and I gave it to the local business that helped us.

"I called it 'Broken lives matter.' And nowadays, I run workshops under that name – usually three a year, for people who need healing. The house is always full. And all the time I want to share about Jesus. I want people to know Jesus.

"It's not about me, it's about Jesus in me. If I'm being his light, he'll draw people to himself. And he does! God just blows me away. And if he wasn't in my life, I wouldn't be here! So I'm blessed to be able to share his love!"

READ MORE FAITH STORIES:
ETERNITYNEWS.COM.AU/FAITH-STORIES

Daily

He is with you in the struggles

Sometimes the challenges of life can overwhelm us and leave us feeling lonely and defeated. God's Word has so much wisdom and encouragement to endure challenging seasons and lift our eyes to focus on him.

Yvette Cherry is the National Director of Australian Baptist Women.

Day 1

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. (Hebrews 6:19-20)

Dr Brene Brown says, "Hope is not an emotion, it's a cognitive thinking approach. It's how we think. And it is 100 per cent teachable." Hope is trusting that we can stand firm during times of trouble and distress rather than be swept away by them. When a ship drops a heavy anchor, the captain knows the anchor will hold the ship in place while the storm rages.

When we trust in Jesus, we will still feel the pain and sorrow of suffering, but will not be thrown into despair. Believing that Jesus has secured our relationship with God helps reframe our thinking.

What can you do today that will cultivate a greater sense of hope in your heart?

Day 2

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to

show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. (2 Corinthians 4:7-9)

My red, puffy, tired eyes stared back at me in the mirror. I was on day five of a particularly nasty head cold and I wasn't getting any better. A mild sense of panic was setting in - in just over a week, I had to host a Christian conference I'd spent many months preparing.

In my distress, God reminded me of these verses. I read them over and over. I could identify with feeling struck down.

Paul might have been talking about oppression from an external enemy rather than from the common cold, but the essence of what he had to say applied: It is not about you. It's about God's power in you.

When God does mighty things in and through you, no one's going to mistakenly give you the credit. All the glory goes to him!

Think about a time when you felt weak, but God came through with his mighty power.

Bible

Day 3

Perfume and incense brings joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice. (Proverbs 27:9)

The story of friendship between David and King Saul's son Jonathan is told in 1 Samuel. Jonathan protects, comforts and risks his life for David because "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." (1 Samuel 18:1, ESV)

A true friend is one who you can go to when you're hurting, who will comfort and counsel you through difficult times. True friends listen with patience, show grace for your struggles and lovingly speak truth where you need it.

Praise God for friendship. May we be like Jonathan to those God has knitted our hearts to.

What do you bring to friendships that make you and your friends feel safe and loved?

Day 4

So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honour. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. (1 Peter 5:6-7)

I applied for a really good job. In my mind, I was well suited to the position, and I could see it was a way I could use my gifts for God. But the role was given to someone else. I felt disappointed and a little lost. "What now?" I asked God, as I stared at the ceiling at 3am.

Answers would not come, and nor would sleep, so I got up to read my Bible. Turning to the bookmarked page, I read the verses above. A great peace washed over me. At the right time, God will lift me up in honour.

God had spoken. It wasn't the right time. His instructions were clear. Be content with who you are, don't put on airs! As I climbed back into bed, I imagined the strong hand of God resting on my back. I whispered, "Thank you, God!"

What can you surrender to God today?

Day 5

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3)

My brother-in-law Glenn, a missionary serving in Northern Thailand, fell from a ladder, crashed through the lid of a septic tank and landed metres below in some very dirty water. He cut his ankle in the fall.

They say "time heals all wounds" but a week passed and the cut on Glenn's ankle began to ooze fluorescent yellow. My sister knew to get him antibiotics and clean bandages.

Time is part of the healing process, but often we need intervention as well. And this includes intervention for the unseen wounds in our heart. Shame, guilt, anger, sadness and despair - with time, but no attention, these wounds often fester.

Psalm 147 imagines God as the great physician who attends to the wounds in our hearts. When we open up to God and allow him to minister to our wounds, true healing begins.

Are you nursing some wounds that need God's loving attention?

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We are the Bible Society Family.

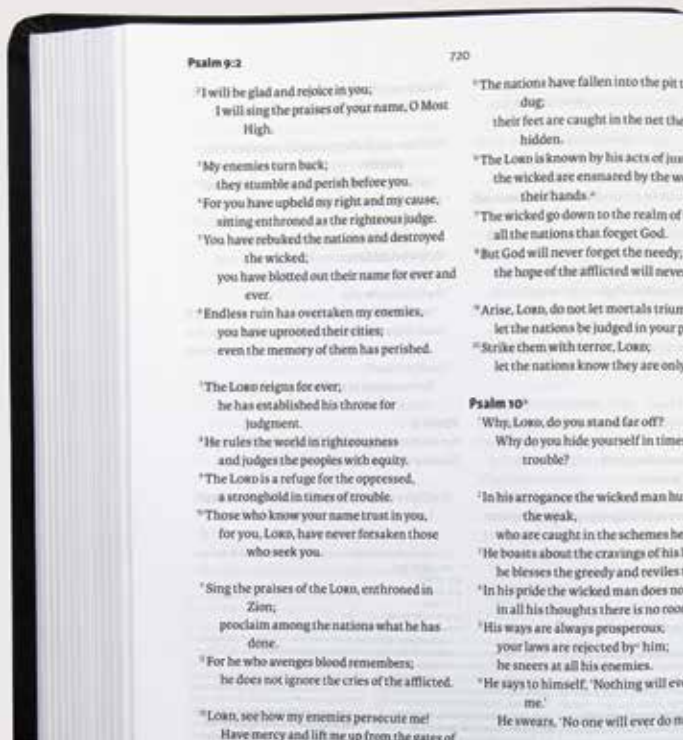
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We encompass the Bible Society, engaging, translating, advocating and distributing the Bible here in Australia and overseas; Centre for Public Christianity (CPX), advocating in the public square for the gospel; Eternity, bringing the good news of Christianity to all who seek it; Koorong, equipping churches and individuals with Christian resources; and Acorn Press, publishing Australian Christian voices. Together we Open The Bible to all people by all means possible.

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