

Sower.

SUMMER 2021
BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA



It is a busy time of year, moving into summer. Our minds turn to Christmas and family gatherings. Many of us are suddenly making plans for travel after nearly two years with very little in the diary. Here at Bible Society we are getting ready for our November Annual General Meeting.

This year we will present an Impact Report to our members and supporters, and you will find a taste of that within these pages. This replaces our Annual Review, and as the name states, will focus on the spiritual impact of transformed lives through our international and domestic projects.

In this Sower is a brief introduction to the spiritual impact of Bible ministry. Our 2021 Impact Report assesses the gospel impact of different projects, utilising spiritual Impact Indicators, which are based on the Engel Scale. My hope is that you will be greatly encouraged by this form of reporting. Lives are being transformed by God's abiding love every single day thanks to your support.

This year's Summer Appeal reminds us of our responsibility as stewards of the gospel, breathing the truth and beauty of God's word into the following generations. You will find some encouraging stories of God's love in action across the generations. No doubt, you have read powerful stories out of Project Esther in Cameroon in past years. Women and girls who

have experienced deep trauma through sexual violence find hope and healing through this program.

21 year old Erline has been transformed after being biblically equipped to face her trauma. "I took my soul to the foot of the cross. I felt a pain leaving my spirit...I said thank you, Lord Jesus. Today I am free...in fact, I am healed." Wow! Praise God for Erline.

"One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty...They tell of the power of your awesome works...They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness." Psalm 145:4-7 (NIV)

This Christmas season, I pray you too will speak of God's glorious splendour, tell of the hope that is in Christ Jesus and celebrate God's abundant goodness. Amen.

GOD BLESS,
Grant Thomson
CEO, BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA



You will find some encouraging stories of God's love in action across the generations.





**One generation commends
your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.**

Psalm 145:4 NIV

Hope and a future, for all generations

EGYPT & CAMBODIA

Children who are at home on a city street, collecting garbage. A young country girl, abandoned by her parents, desperately scrounging for food to feed herself and her elderly grandparents. In Cambodia, the needs of the people are great, and span the generations.

Illiteracy exposes people to shame and exploitation and keeps them in poverty. A history of devastating war and genocide mean that many adults, as well as youth and children, have not had an opportunity to be educated.

Seom came face to face with the desperate need of children where she lives in Russeykeo, a district in Phnom Penh. Seom is a 31-year-old pastor of the Phnom Penh Christian Church. 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 come to Phnom Penh to work in construction. I have much compassion for these children."

In a similar plight to these children on the streets, twelve-year-old Srey, in Talt village in the Kampong Chhang province, grows vegetables and scavenges for herbs around her grandparents' house to sell and bring in a meagre income. Before COVID-19, when the schools were open, she could not attend regularly because she had to work to feed herself and her grandparents.

In Phnom Penh, Seom realised that when she was the age of these children, she was already in school, studying. Seom longed to reach out to the city children and pass down the blessing she had received. "They should have the same opportunities as me," she says, "but instead they are on the street collecting trash."

Seom began to think about how she could help them. She realised that, not only did she want the children to be educated, but "I also wanted them to hear the gospel."

Despite the difficulties, Seom says that she believed inviting the children to study with her

was "God's plan for me and for these children." She attempted to prepare lessons, teach them, and she shared God's word with them. When Seom heard about the Bible based literacy program offered by Bible Society Cambodia, she applied immediately and was trained to run a literacy class. It was exactly what she and her twelve students needed, and the resources were free to use.

"This class has helped them gain knowledge and transformed them through the word of God. I believe that the children will have a good future."

When Bible Society's literacy class arrived at Srey's village, she couldn't wait to participate, and since the classes only take an hour a day, she still had time to work for food. Surviving is top priority for her family, and Srey is desperate to be able to read and write so she can get a good job and earn a living. Joyfully, through tears, she says, "I do not know what the future holds for me, but I will try my very best to study."

The needs among people in Egypt are different to those of Cambodia, and yet similar enough that through another Bible based literacy course, Bible Society Egypt is giving people of all generations a hope and a future.

The Coptic Orthodox Church has a long tradition of children's Sunday school work. The church is the largest in the country – up to 10,000 children may be involved in a single parish. Ramez, the previous General Secretary of the Bible Society of Egypt says, "The churches have been teaching children to love God's word for a hundred years already. Children's work is going through a harvest time now. The children who were sitting in Sunday school around 30 or 40 years ago are now church leaders, priests, bishops, and monks. So, they're passing on the faith they received when they were children.

"These church leaders love the word of God and are eager to present the Bible's message creatively. The Bible Society of Egypt walks alongside the churches. We produce a wide range of material



for children, young people, and adults. Every year major events are organised for children...they bring Bible stories to life. Work with children is full of vitality and opportunity.”

In the outskirts west of Cairo in Boulaq El Dakrou, lies the St. Mary and St. George Coptic church, where a group of young girls have started attending Bible Society’s Post-Literacy course. This course is designed to help students practice and build on newly acquired literacy skills. They do this by reading the Bible together, and learning how it impacts their lives.

Three girls, Marina, Youstina, and Mariam, were not previously friends. Nine-year-old Marina says, “Before we started attending this class, we barely knew each other, though sometimes we played together at church.”

Yet the literacy course has drawn them together. “Now we are helping each other to perfect our reading and writing skills, and learn from the Bible together.”

Sharing the Bible together has had a big impact. “Our friendship gets deeper,” says Marina, “and we now visit each other through the week.”

Each child is encouraged to choose a favourite story and verse from the Bible. Marina’s favourite verse is 1 Samuel 3:9, “Speak to me Lord, I am listening.” She says, “I like Samuel’s story because it encourages me that the Lord talks to us from the Bible and he listens to our heart’s cries, so he listens to me, that is very awesome.”

Because of the literacy course, Marina says, “Now I have some real friends.”

Abanoub, a 17-year-old former student of an Egyptian Christian school, was gifted with a Bible from Bible Society of Egypt when he was younger. He remembers that getting his first Bible was a very meaningful event. “I have underlined several

Bible passages,” says Abanoub. “At this time the most important Bible verse for me are those words Jesus said: ‘Don’t be afraid.’ These words remind me that Jesus will take me also through difficult times.”

Martha also lives on the outskirts of Cairo. Although she is a middle-aged woman married with four children, she too struggled with illiteracy. Her prayer was that she would be able to learn to read and write. When the Christian radio station she listened to regularly offered free Bibles, she requested one, and Bible Society sent her a large print Bible. Equipped with her Bible, Martha tried joining a public literacy program, which equipped her with basic skills – but she still was unable to read her Bible.

Martha’s determination didn’t let her down. She began attending school, and through her church discovered Bible Society’s Post Literacy program. It was here, finally, that Martha was able to read her Bible with increasing confidence and understanding. Through the help of the radio station (which Martha calls regularly) and Bible Society, Martha has been connected with a Bible Study group where she uses the literacy skills she worked so hard to attain.

Martha says, “The whole environment of my home has changed. I am more actively involved in my children’s lives and study, now that I am able to read and write.”

For all these people, from the children on the streets of Phnom Penh to the mother of four living in Cairo, God’s word is meeting needs for connection, friendship, and education and – most importantly – is showing the way to a future filled with hope.



A gift of healing, hope and new life

THE ESTHER PROJECT

God's word offers many things to those who receive it, and to traumatised young women and girls in Cameroon, the Bible is being offered as a source of healing and hope, and a basis on which to build a new life.

In Cameroon, young girls face more of the dark side of life than anyone ever should, with many of them experiencing physical and sexual violence. More than 55% of women experience physical violence; 30 % of women younger than 15 are victims of sexual violence; 25% of Cameroon's women aged 15-19 were either pregnant or mothers already when surveyed in 2011.

The fear of stigmatisation and reprisals leads these young women to become timid and remain silent. Their trauma usually lasts a lifetime as a result.

With Project Esther, Bible Society Cameroon is passing on hope and healing to these young women, through God's word. Project Esther works to offer support services to young mothers and those who have experienced sexual abuse or exploitation. Through training camps, the young women are offered support to assist them in navigating challenges and achieving a better future for themselves and their children.

One young lady said, with an openness in her face and warmth in her eyes, "I am very happy

to be here (at this Project Esther camp). I have been going through all kind of difficulties. Lack of love, lack of understanding. I feel like people around me do not love me, do not understand me. I am very happy that I came here to this project. I came with so many worries, but I am going back with so much joy and happiness and I am very grateful."

The project aims to biblically equip young women to develop self-esteem, confidence, and the capacity to build their lives on positive values while overcoming past experiences. Erline, 21 years old, attended a Project Esther camp in 2021. Erline admits, "Before coming to Project Esther, I was someone who liked being alone, someone who is reserved. I had a lot of anger in me, a hard bitterness. I was depressed and my thinking was just negative all the time."

"I discovered forgiveness. It's good to forgive. We were taught how to let go and how to put our problems in front of God," she says. "I took my soul to the foot of the cross. I felt a pain leaving my spirit, I felt relief, detachment. The hurt was burned into ashes, I saw my problems, my anger, my hatred, being burnt into the air, and I said, 'thank you, Lord Jesus. Today I am free, I am stress-free, heartbreak free, I am emotionally free – in fact, I am healed!'"

The camps offer counselling, spiritual retreats and spaces to share experiences and read the



Bible together. Biblical values are recognised as a foundation for a restored and flourishing life.

Erline reflects that what she found in the program isn't seen every day. She says, "For once I felt real love and true love from the mothers who were cooking food and showing us how to earn money. I found what I was really searching for.

"(I learnt) entrepreneurship. We learned how to make hand sanitiser, how to sew, how to make yoghurt, how to make sheets – all these things to show that women are talented enough and there are things we can do to set up our own enterprise."

In schools and churches, Project Esther also runs an Adolescent awareness campaign on the prevalence of sexual abuse. One attendee said, "I thank the Lord who permitted me to attend the program... I have learned how to make good choices, to stop mocking other people and to love myself just as I am, for God created me unique and special. I would like to change my behaviour, make good choices of my friendships, take care of my body and positively influence my relatives by showing them the importance of making good choices."

Another resolved, "I would like to change my way of talking to my parents, put limitations on my body and positively influence my friends."

"This programme on adolescents is very important and I believe many young people need to attend it," said another attendee. "We were instructed and challenged about our studies, the Bible, social layers and on day-to-day life issues. At the end of the program, I decided that I would allow my parents (to) talk more while I would listen to them more. I will accept who I am, think twice before making a decision that can influence my whole life."

Thirteen-year-old Mirabelle, said, "I decided to choose the right path of life, take care of my body... to stop despising others, because God created us all at his own image. So, falling in(to) the temptation of (looking down on) others is not good, for we are all special."

Project Esther is reaching these girls and young women where they are, passing on God's word to them, and making a difference. Erline concludes, "My emotional trauma has been healed thanks to Project Esther."



Passing on a love for God's Word

Interview with BSA Donor, Grandparent Cathryn

The Bible has always held a central place in Cathryn's life. "I can't remember a time when I didn't believe in God, though I do remember making a specific commitment when I was 7 or 8. Apart from a few wobbles at teachers' college, by the time I began teaching, I was firm in what I believed."

"As a child I was taught the importance of reading the Bible every day. My mother would check in with me: 'Have you read the Bible today?' It's something I start the day with, every day. I can't imagine not having a Bible to read. I love learning more about the Bible."

As an adult, Cathryn and her husband, John, took their love for God and his word with them to Pakistan, where they lived with their three young children in the late 1970s and early 1980s and worked as missionaries. John was involved in theological teaching, radio programming and cassette ministries for illiterate tribal people, while Cathryn was involved in Sunday school ministry, hospitality, teaching missionary kids and teaching music and English. Their youngest child was 18 months old when they arrived, and they returned to Australia when their eldest was eighteen.

During their time in Pakistan, Cathryn and John were also involved with the ministry of Bible Society Pakistan, supporting a local worker and helping with Bible distribution. Back in Australia, as a part of her work teaching and coordinating Anglicare’s English classes in Sydney, Cathryn partnered with Bible Society in distributing Bibles to students learning English. “In each class that graduated, students were able to receive these lovely CEV Bibles to have as farewell gifts. Bible Society supplied both English Bibles and Bibles in other languages.” Cathryn recalls what a blessing it was to hand out Bibles through the English classes.

Cathryn and her husband have ten grandchildren. Cathryn says, “I’m thrilled that all our children are following the Lord and love the Bible. Our prayers every day are for our grandchildren, that they will follow the Lord.” Cathryn says that passing God’s word down through the generations of her family is “the most important thing I can think of!”

As a supporter of Bible Society, Cathryn has always received Bible Society material and kept abreast of what is happening. She says, “I always read through the Bible Society magazine... I usually read the parts about Pakistan first!” In 2019, Cathryn read an article about Bible Society’s Youth Masterclasses, which seeks to inspire, challenge and equip students to think deeply about the Christian faith in today’s world. When she read about Masterclass, and how it was informing young people about what the Bible has to say about issues in our world, she thought of her granddaughter, Abigail, and called her. Abigail thought, “Oh, that sounds cool!” and immediately signed up to attend the Masterclass which was held in Orange, NSW that year. She found it to be enormously encouraging.

Will you help Christians of all ages, in every generation, tell the wonders and word of God?

\$44

Gives four people a Bible of their own.

\$68

Teaches two children to read and to learn about Jesus

\$120

Helps pastors and volunteers share God’s word and loving presence

PLEASE GIVE NOW

Use the DONATION FORM on page 33, call 1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537) or visit biblesociety.org.au/sow

Pray with us

Please join us in praying for the people being reached by our programs: those who are facing illness or caring for those with disabilities; those who are struggling to survive day-to-day and move beyond poverty and illiteracy. Let us praise and thank God for the difference his word is making in their lives and pray that others may receive the same peace and hope for the future.

DOWNLOAD OUR MONTHLY PRAYER GUIDE:
BIBLESOCIETY.ORG.AU/PRAY

Pray with us

Pray for Fabiola in Nicaragua

Please pray for 14-year-old Fabiola as she faces leukaemia, and thank God for the encouragement she has in reading the Bible. She says, "I have decided to give my heart to Christ, and I have learned to trust in God's promises. My mother and I believe that during all this process we have found refuge in God. I have learned that God has been with me and has helped me to go ahead with my life."

Pray for a 12-year-old boy in Lebanon

Praise God for the renewed faith and hope of this boy, who blamed God when his parents couldn't afford an education for him. This year, he enrolled in Bible Society's biblical literacy program. "I cried a lot when I started the first session. Now I am not only learning Arabic, I am also learning more about the word of God. I know that he loves me, and I shouldn't have blamed him in the first place. God has answered my prayers."

Pray for Eman in Laos

Thank God for Eman, who loves attending literacy classes and studied intently at home when classes were suspended. "I am very happy that I am now learning to read the Bible," she says. "I want my community to grow spiritually in Christ Jesus." Thank God that Eman came to know Jesus and loves reading his word.

Pray for Amy in Cameroon

Thank God for Amy, one of the young women to benefit from Project Esther in Cameroon, which supports victims of abuse. Amy says, "I can now care for myself and my children...I am now successful and recognised in my community, and above all, I am a woman of faith. I have also learnt to forgive and forget the past and to think of a brighter future."

Pray for Mrs Musiyambiri in Zimbabwe

Thank God for this mother of a disabled child, who was overwhelmed by the recognition and assistance extended to her family by Bible Society and their partners. Thank God for the encouragement she has received. Pray with her that "it will not end with me but go on and touch other families in the same situation as us."

Pray for Vestine in Rwanda

Praise God for teachers like Vestine, who are teaching literacy and reconciliation, using the Bible. She says, "During the training I learnt that the human heart above other things needs love, respect and peace...peace has been restored in my heart. I will...live positively so as not to fall back. I will also help others...to speak out, break the isolation and stigma hence getting healed of their wounds."

Pray for Srey in Cambodia

Lift up this 12-year-old Cambodian girl to our loving Heavenly Father. Srey has been eagerly attending Bible Society's literacy course, because she wants to read and write to be able to earn a living. In tears, she told Bible Society staff, "I do not know what the future holds for me, but I will try my very best to study." Pray that Srey and others like her would achieve their goals and discover God's love through his word.

Pray for Gladys in Kenya

Pray that God's word would always encourage this young lady. Thank God for the Bible she recently received. She says, "This Bible will help me in in C.R.E (Christian Religious Studies) and when I feel like giving up in life, I can look up to the Word for encouragement."

Pray for Poppy in South Africa

Thank God for Poppy, a retired deputy headmaster who still teaches Grade 2 and has worked tirelessly to distribute Bible Society's 'If you can read, you can learn' resources to at least seven schools. "I asked if we could get the books because I wanted our learners to be able to read and write. I loved the books also, because they were talking about Christianity, and I am a preacher."

Pray for Martha in Egypt

Thank God for Martha and her determined pursuit of knowing God through his word. Thank God that she is now able to read her Bible with confidence and understanding. Thank God that she is exploring his word in a Bible Study group, and through calls to her local Christian radio station.

His Word For Every Generation

Your gift will help to distribute Bibles and Scripture portions, run life-changing literacy classes, and transform lives through trauma support courses.

biblesociety.org.au/sow

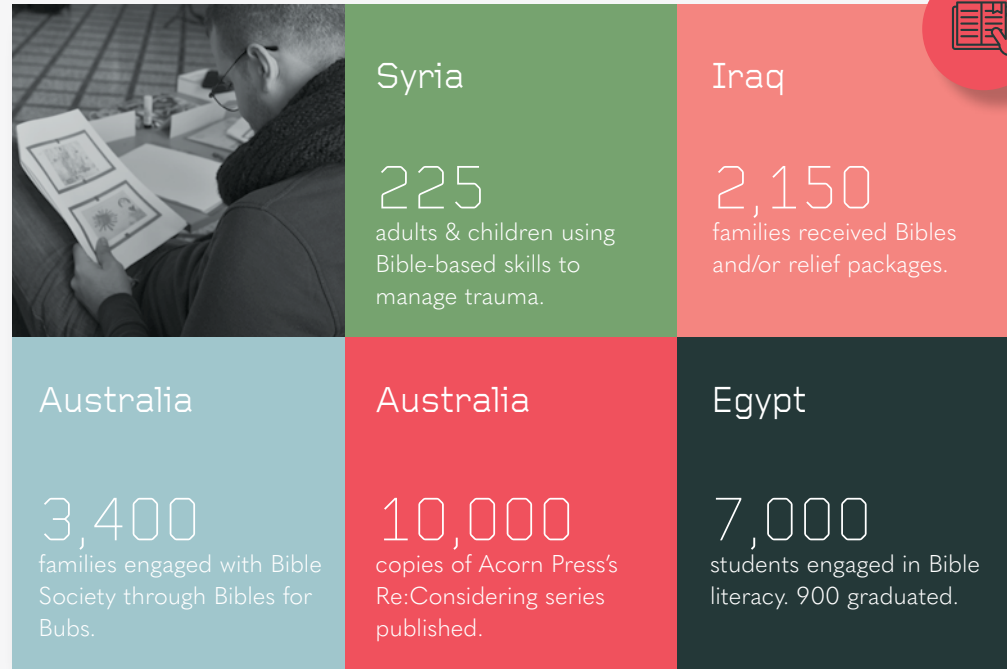


Focusing on Spiritual Impact 2021

Language/Translation



Engagement



With your generous support of Bible Society work, over the past year (from July 2020 – June 2021), much was accomplished. We're measuring the impact of the work by looking at indicators of Willingness, Understanding and Action, a methodology developed by Dr Engel. The Engel Scale charts the journey of people with no knowledge of God as they progress into spiritually mature Christian believers. We hope that your heart will sing as you look at these statistics and stories.

Read our full FY21 Impact Report at biblesociety.org.au/2021



Iraq

Scriptures and Relief Packages



By distributing Scriptures and relief packages, Bible Society hopes to encourage a dwindling Christian population in Iraq to persevere in their faith. The need is huge and increasing because of the COVID situation and the lockdown which has affected hundreds of families.

Statistics over the year 2020/2021:

1,850

families received packages which contain food, hygiene items, Bibles, and Scriptures for children

300

families received Family Bibles

2,000

children received Christmas gifts (pyjamas) and a Family Bible each in December 2020

Impact Story

One woman (a refugee from Mosul) who received a relief package was crying and she told our volunteers: "My baby has not been drinking any milk for two days, and today I didn't have any kind of food to feed my family, so this distribution increased my faith in God, as He will not let down anyone. Thank you."

Pakistan

A Beacon of Light in the Darkness of Illiteracy



The Bible-based literacy classes in the Beacon of Light Project teach Pakistani women the skills to read, write and understand the Bible, leading to spiritual growth and development for themselves and their whole family.

Statistics over the year 2020/2021:

620 classes

11,961 students

5,006 graduates at the end of 2020

288 teachers in 2021

Impact Story

Marriam grew up in a small village where there were no schools for girls. As an adult, Marriam took a job as a helper in a local beauty parlour, but she says, "It was very difficult for me because all the tools were labelled in English, and I did not know how to read. I tried to learn but it was too hard."

In January 2020, the priest at Marriam's church announced that they would be starting literacy classes for women. Marriam signed up, just as the beauty parlour temporarily closed due to COVID restrictions. But the literacy classes were able to continue, with safety measures in place. "I had so much time to learn and revise. I am glad that I was able to finish my syllabus and have started to read the Bible by myself. I am also glad that I can remember the names of the tools that I use in the parlour. Now the number of customers has also increased. My husband and I read the Bible every night before we go to bed."

Listen Now

Life & Faith



CPX

CPX's *Life & Faith* Podcast is a weekly conversation about the beauty and complexity of belief in the 21st century. Join the CPX team as they uncover the surprising ways Christian faith interrogates and illuminates the world we live in.

Episode Highlight:

Mere Christianity

It's been 80 years since C. S. Lewis fronted up to a microphone at Broadcasting House in London, in the middle of the Second World War, and gave the first of a series of talks that would become one of the most influential books on the Christian faith ever written.

In this episode of *Life & Faith*, a disparate group of people tell their stories of how *Mere Christianity* changed their lives - from the late Chuck Colson, who was Nixon's "hatchet man," to three young Aussies who are living proof that its appeal has yet to diminish.

"Mature, intelligent people hold this to be true, not just because they want it to be but because they're actually convinced that it is."
Iris, Masters graduate in Applied Linguistics.

"A young man who wishes to remain a sound atheist cannot be too careful of his reading. So yeah, I wasn't very careful...and this happened, thank God." *Matt, business owner in country NSW.*

Listen now:



More episodes at:
publicchristianity.org/podcast

Faith Stories

Louise's story about faithfully sowing the seeds of the gospel is part of an *Eternity* series of testimonies, compiled by Naomi Reed.



"I grew up in a housing commission place in western Sydney. It was pretty rough. My dad worked night shift, so we didn't see him very much, but we were all close to my mother.

"After school, I started a degree in literature, which I enjoyed very much. But at the beginning of my second year, I was visiting a friend, and I got a call from a paramedic. He said my mother had died. It was sudden and horrific. She'd had an asthmatic attack at home. My father, and brother (who was 15) and sister (who was 12) were there when it

happened. They tried to revive her before the ambulance came. They watched her pass away.

"It was an incredibly difficult time. I quit my Uni degree. We couldn't even pay for my mum's funeral. I got a full-time job, and I became responsible for everything in the home – cooking, cleaning, shopping, paying bills, supervising homework, driving my younger brother and sister around.

"I was barely an adult myself. My dad wasn't coping at all. He would come home from work and stare at the walls. There was nobody to talk to. My friends at the time didn't understand the load I was carrying. So I learned to hold it in and keep going.

"After 12 months I was in a really bad place. I remember waking up and thinking, 'If God isn't real, I'm not sure there's any purpose to this, or any hope at all.'

"Some years earlier, we'd had Christian neighbours. Our house was semi-detached and there was a small brick fence out the front. Our neighbours would often be out the front when we were coming in or going out. Their mum would deliberately connect with us and share her faith in Jesus. She'd even taken us to her church a couple of times. But they moved out just after mum died and I didn't know where they were. I wanted to talk to her, but I had no way of getting in contact.

"So I decided to give her old church a call. I explained over the phone that my mum had died and I was very depressed. I said, 'I think I need Jesus.'

"The person said, 'Come down here right now.' So I did. I met with a youth leader who was fantastic. She sat me down and listened to me. I was able to talk for the first time. Within a few weeks, I decided to become a Christian.

It was mostly because I realised that God was there in the midst of it. He had a plan and a purpose even when it didn't feel like it. God was at work through everything.

"I went home and told my family. I said the Gospel made sense to me. I said that my faith in Jesus had made a big difference to me, and I encouraged them to come to church. My dad and brother also became Christians within the year. It wasn't magical or overnight, but things definitely changed for us. Life was still hard but there was meaning and purpose. My dad became a changed person, after being quite angry and aggressive before.

"To me, it speaks about fruitfulness. Our neighbours witnessed to us for years, and they didn't see any fruit. But when it came crunch time for me, I called the church. It reminds me that we're called to sow the seeds, or water the seeds, but God brings the fruit, in his time.

"I want to say to people, if you're sharing Jesus with your neighbours, or the people you love, and it doesn't feel like you're getting anywhere, don't give up.

"Amazingly, just last year, our neighbour made contact with me again, 25 years later. I told her what had happened – that I'd come to faith, and that now I have three theological degrees, and I lecture at Mary Andrews College in Sydney. I told her that she'd been part of my story. She was amazed.

"But it's the same for all of us. We never know when our words will make a difference for someone...maybe God will use them today."

'I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.' (1 Corinthians 3:6 NIV)

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

Daily Bible

Psalms of Ascent: Journey Songs

Journey through these psalms and find the peace, hope, and comfort that only the gospel brings.

Angus Gibb is one of the pastors at Orange Presbyterian Church.

Day 1 - Secure

I lift my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1-2 NIV)

This Psalm opens with a resounding claim that our help is from the Lord. What a staggering thought! The God who brought this universe into existence with a word is the one you can turn to for help. When you are in trouble - from the deep, significant trials in your life, to the seemingly small moments - God is your help. We can so often find ourselves looking for help in fleeting, finite things. Yet why run there, when you can run to the God of the universe? Through Jesus, you have been brought into the loving arms of your heavenly Father. He will never give up on you. He will always be your help.

How do these verses comfort you?

Day 2 - Safe

The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming

and going both now and forevermore. (Psalm 121:5-8 NIV)

As a parent, one of my biggest concerns is that my kids will be safe. I want them to know they are loved and protected. But I know that I cannot control their world, or always shield them from harm. That is because I am finite. But God is eternal. He is your shield. He is your protector. Therefore, we can know that he will keep his children safe forever. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the people of God are kept in his arms for all eternity. This hope gives us the strength for each step along our journey.

What does it mean for you to be safe?

Day 3 - Harvest

Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them. (Psalm 126:5-6 NIV)

Sowing seeds of the gospel is hard work. It can be discouraging and heart-breaking. But your labour is not in vain. Why? Because God will reap a harvest. He does and will continue to save people. He will continue to use you to

share the good news of Jesus with those around you. So don't despair if you feel like you are sowing in tears. God will bring a harvest. Don't be discouraged. Keep on sowing the seeds of the gospel.

How can you share the good news of Jesus today?

Day 4 - Blessing

Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them... (Psalm 127:3-5a NIV)

Children are a gift from God. It is such a privilege to care for, nurture, protect and teach them. I don't mean to say that it is easy! From hours of pacing in the early morning, to dealing with the heartache of falling out with your teenager and every moment in between - parenting is hard. But it is a privilege and a blessing. What is the biggest gift I can give them? That they would know and love Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. For all of us with children we love, that is our prayer.

How can you encourage the children in your life to know and love Jesus?

Day 5 - Together

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. (Psalm 133:1-2 NIV)

As followers of Jesus, we are called into a life together, where we love and support one another. When we see this happening, it is a beautiful thing. It is infectious. It is powerful. It overflows into the lives of all those around them. Sadly, our church communities can be places of dis-unity. A place where we focus on our differences rather than on the gospel that unites us. But if our gatherings are to reflect the eternal gathering of God's people - from every tongue, tribe and nation, united around the throne in worship - then that should have a deep impact on the way we pursue unity with each other.

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commends your works
to another; they tell of
your mighty acts."

Psalms 145:4 (NIV)

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