

# Sower.

AUTUMN 2022  
BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA



If I asked you, what is your favourite Bible verse, no doubt you would have no trouble answering. The Bible is full of extraordinary wisdom, and different parts of that wisdom speak into the hearts of Christians around the world and rests there for a lifetime.

Why? Because the word of God is alive and active. The stories you will read in this Autumn edition of Sower will gladden your heart, as you read of people who have come to faith because of one Bible verse; who have rested in God's love because of one Bible verse; whose entire purpose in life has been defined because of one Bible verse.

In our Autumn faith story by Naomi Reed, Spring reminds us that no one can stop you from praying. Spring and her brothers and sisters prayed for their parents consistently, that they would come to faith. It was Acts 16:31 that spurred them on: *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household."* (NIV)

BSA's Translation Consultant, Sam Freney, a man immersed in God's word, loves the promise of restoration offered in 1 Peter 5:10 (NIV) *"The God of all grace...after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you..."*

For Nguyen Van Nhung, it was the words in John 3:36. He tells us that Jesus freed him through that one verse.

Many people around the world still only have fragments of God's word translated into the language of their birth. But the life-changing power of the Bible does its work with whatever is available for people at that time.

Mongolian Christians are desperately waiting for a more contemporary translation of their Bible. In the meantime, the Mongolian Bible Society team are using contemporary technology to nurture the souls of these eager Christians. Bible verses are being published on Facebook every day and as a book of the Bible is completed, it is made available on their mobile app. Praise God!

One of my favourite Bible stories is of the faithfulness of Caleb. God recognised Caleb's commitment, and in both Numbers and Joshua, Caleb is specifically named for his 'wholehearted' dedication to God.

How about you? What verses speak into your heart each and every day?

GOD BLESS,

*Grant Thomson*

CEO, BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA



**“The Bible is full of extraordinary wisdom, and different parts of that wisdom speak into the hearts of Christians around the world and rests there for a lifetime.”**









**One verse can  
change a life.**

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# Speaking to hearts, one verse at a time

## VIETNAM & MONGOLIA

*“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”*

**T**hese words from John 3:36 (NIV) define Nguyễn Van Nhung’s\* life. He belongs to an ethnic minority tribe in Vietnam and holds tightly onto this verse. Before trusting in God, Nhung had many bad habits – such as excessive drinking and smoking – but, he says, “Jesus freed me from those bad habits through his word, through this verse.” Now that he has the Bible translated into the language of his own tribe, Nhung can see God’s love for him and that his promises are true. “I want to shout that we are loved by the Almighty God...I can fully understand his word and I feel very close to him.”

Nancy\* is also from a Vietnamese ethnic minority and faced many disappointments early in her life. “I was full of self-pity,” she remembers. “I compared myself to other women and felt so small. I was single and childless, doing manual work on the field, and thinking about that made me bitter.”

When Nancy met a Christian evangelist, she heard the words of God for the first time. “The evangelist witnessed to me, saying that only faith in Jesus could save us. Our ignorance had been causing us to sin against God. I objected, arguing that because I did not kill or steal, I should not be condemned as a sinner. But the evangelist pointed me to Romans 3:23, which reads: ‘For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God’, and I was convicted.”

Nancy returned to her village and put her faith in Jesus. The word of God changed Nancy into a new woman. She shared: “After knowing God, I learnt his Ten Commandments and I knew that being jealous of other women having children was not good. Now I am free of hatred and revenge in my heart. I no longer felt hurt if people made fun of my singleness.”

Devoting most of her time to spreading the good news of the kingdom to others in her tribe, Nancy clings to the word of God and his promises, as she explains what the Scripture says to those around her.





She often prays for a full Bible in her language. “I think that a full Bible written in [this] language is utterly important and useful when witnessing to people in my community. When we need to explain something to them, we can point them to the Bible and if the Scripture is in [our language], they can read for themselves.”

Thrac\*, who also belongs to a Vietnamese ethnic minority, received a Bible in the Vietnamese language which she treasured, but could not understand easily. Instead, she learned how to pray. She prayed, “Lord, you know my need... please show me your word so that I can understand it better.”

In 2006, Thrac was diagnosed with cancer. She continuously prayed to God, and testifies, “He healed me and showed me the verse, ‘Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you don’t know’ (Jeremiah 33:3).” When Thrac went for a check-up with her doctor a year later, he was surprised by her good health and asked what medicine she had taken. Thrac replied, “The Bible is my medicine.”

Thrac still finds the Vietnamese Bible hard to read, and says, “I was so thankful when I heard that our tribe had been favoured by God, as he set up a team to translate the Bible into [our] language. I hope that my people will interact with the word in our own language, and they will come back to God, who is their Saviour.”

These stories of Nhung, Nancy and Thrac demonstrate the amazing power of single Bible verses. These faithful Christians are holding on to whatever part of God’s word they have in their language. The work of Bible translation is vital to them, and is underway in many of these Vietnamese ethnic minority languages. The translators’ efforts are bearing fruit, slowly but surely. Pastor Laily, from one ethnic minority shares, “When the Bible [in our language] was published it was like a shining light for [our] people, helping them to understand the Bible more.”

While they wait for completed translations, Christians among the ethnic minorities are already engaging with single verses and Bible

portions. Bible Society Vietnam is helping people engage with whatever parts of God's word have already been translated into their languages. This year, they are developing, printing and distributing books - *Stories of Jesus, The Gospel of Mark*, and Bible study guides - *in the languages of 54 ethnic tribes*. Bible study groups are being formed for both believers and non-believers, giving them the chance to discover the power of even just one verse of the Bible, as it speaks to their hearts.

Elsewhere, a Bible translator working with a different heart language tells this same story, about the power of every verse of the Bible. Tsendee, one of the translation team members in Mongolia, reflects, "As I translated, my aim was to bring the strong messages of the Minor Prophets with their powerful images to the heart of Mongolians so that they will tear their hearts, not their clothes." The Mongolian translation team are working to bring a new translation of the Bible, from the original biblical languages into Mongolian, to their own people.

Mongolian believers have been longing for a Bible which is easier to understand and flows more naturally in their language than the current version, which was translated from English. A representative of the Mongolian Pastors and Elders Association, Mr Tumurkhuyag explained, "The time [came] when we, Mongolian Christians, [took] up the challenge of translating the Bible into our own language and culture." Approximately 65,000 Christians are eagerly waiting for the Mongolian Standard Version Bible since the translation project commenced in 2015. With a projected completion date of 2025, Mongolian Christians are so eager for their Bible translation that they are already holding on to one verse at a time.

Every time a book of the Bible is complete, the Bible Society team load it onto the mobile app - "Bible MSV" - where they can read the advance translation, engaging with God's word

immediately. As well as the app, for the last few years, Christians have been able to read newly translated books of the Old Testament via the website, [www.msv.bible](http://www.msv.bible). As a further source of encouragement, Bible verses with background images are released almost every day for users. In response to a Bible verse posted on Facebook, one user said, "Absolutely love it. Waiting for it to be published...THANK you guys."

"I am so blessed to be a part of this project translating the Bible from its original languages, learning its richness and beauty in the language and also learning about God," Tsendee says.

"I also see how great Yahweh is. He is all-powerful and sovereign over all the nations, yet his love and faithfulness (are) so deep and wide that he cares for his people and always gives a chance to the nations to repent and return to him. I love my work."

\*Names have been changed to protect identities.











# The powerful and active word

## PAKISTAN

In Pakistan, God's word is reaching many hearts, working through different languages, ongoing translation projects and various Bible formats.

In the midst of poverty, hunger and despair, the Bible has been central to recent conversations with Afghan callers to a radio station. One caller, Miss F said, "I follow your radio programs and read a lot from the Bible. Every day my faith grows. I believe that God is at work and that he will save those who believe in him." Another listener, Mr M S said, "When I read [the Bible], my heart fills with joy and peace."

Bible Society Pakistan is reaching people like this by assisting with two Bible translation projects, one in the Saraiki language and another for Afghan Pashto speakers. Pashto is a widely spoken and understood language in two provinces of Pakistan and has many dialects. The people who speak one of these dialects expressed a special interest in the word of God. This project began in 2010. As translation work continues, it will mean that more Afghan Pashto Scripture recordings can be made, which will enable more use of Afghan Pashto Scripture in radio programs, follow-up talk with radio listeners and apps. It will be possible to share Pashto Scriptures via SMS messages, and Facebook and other social media outlets will be able to share God's word in this heart language.



Another radio listener, Mr A said, "I follow your Facebook and website, and I love the video talks. I remember bad experiences as a boy, being forced into religion. It was at university that I first heard about the teaching of Jesus, when our professor said that Jesus taught people to turn the other cheek. That started to change my thinking. I read a little from the New Testament and I loved it. I hope to learn more, follow Jesus and share the Gospel with other people."

"I want to thank you for providing the word of God through your website so people can read," said Mr S, "and through the radio broadcasts that we can listen to."

As well as seekers and new Christians being impacted by God's word in their language, Bible translators in Pakistan are finding their lives changed by their work. A translator working on the Saraiki Bible translation, Baz\* asks rhetorically, "Who does not want God's word in his own language, before him, in his hands?!"

Baz goes on to say, "I have been gaining a lot of blessings through translating into [this] sweet, rich and heart touching language." Saraiki is the largest local language of Pakistan, after the four main regional languages. It is spoken by around 26 million people. Before this project began, there was no Scripture available in this language,



so the need for a Bible translation is great. Saraiki speaking Christians have been anxious to have a Bible in their native language.

The leader of the translation team also feels blessed by his role. He says, “It [is] my great privilege that I am part of this team, which is serving God’s word and his people, who are in the millions.” He believes he was created for this purpose of translating the word of God. “God prepares us in our life for his purpose, for which he created us,” he says. “He leads us through various circumstances and events and prepares us.”

Both men are finding it particularly enriching to immerse themselves in the Saraiki language and culture like never before, as they translate God’s word. The team leader recalls the day he gave a lift to a shepherd on his bike. He couldn’t resist asking him questions about sheep, goats and his work. The shepherd was surprised and asked, “Why are you asking all this?” The team leader says that while learning Greek and studying English Bible translation is important, “The most important part is the chance we get to study our culture and community deeply.”

Baz has also found that he has a unique opportunity to share the Gospel message with his non-Christian family, friends and colleagues. “Through discussion with close friends on the vocabulary of Saraiki, the courage to share the word has been grown in me [in] imperceptible way(s), which [has never happened before in the] last 25 years. Also, when choosing words from the Saraiki vocabulary, sometimes I need to talk with my wife, children and elders of the family, and discussion turns to sharing the testimony and the [Bible] in moderate ways. And I think, this work of translation is serving as [a] tool of witnessing for me.”

Through his deep study of verses of God’s word, Baz has found that ‘more loving and enriched feelings’ have grown in his heart. His work means he is getting the chance to read and understand the Bible more deeply. “In difficult times [of the working process], there is always time to get help from [the] Holy Spirit in prayer.” Similarly, the team leader says, “I always plead before God’s Holy Spirit, [acknowledging that] it is not our ability, [and asking him to] be with us as [he was] with [David, Moses and Paul].” Baz’s prayer is that God Almighty would be the helper and guide for all of the team.

\*Names have been changed to protect identities.





# Translating the Good Story with Indigenous Australians

**Interview with BSA Translation Consultant, Sam Freney**

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“Translating into these languages is really hard. Translation and language revitalisation are difficult in a language that doesn’t have abstract concepts anymore. Sure, we remember the word for dingo or eucalyptus tree, but forgiveness...?”

**S**am Freney is a translation consultant with Bible Society Australia. He has studied hard, and for a long time to work in this role: “I think this is my 17th year of tertiary studies, because I’m still doing some.” Yet, as he speaks about the translation work he is involved in across Australia, he is very clear about



whose work it is: “All these projects are initiated by the communities themselves and have their passion behind them. They’re the ones translating – the people who would like the Scriptures in their own language. We are the helpers.”

Sam has seen local translators brought to tears as they hear God’s word in their heart languages. One project he was recently working on was a Christmas book, for which they were translating seven verses from Luke chapter 2 in as many Australian languages as possible. For some of these languages, this book would be the first known Scripture translated. “One woman was working away,” Sam recalls. “It was really difficult. There’s not much written in the language, except a very technical dictionary.”

In the end, another helper told the woman, “read the story a few times and then just tell it to me in your language”. This helper got a phone out and recorded the woman as she spoke. This woman – who was in her 60s or 70s - had been a Christian all her life. And even though it was her recording, when the other helper played it back, it was the first time she had ever heard Scripture in her language. Sam recalls, “She just started crying. So that’s the ‘why’ of Bible translation. That’s what our brothers and sisters are after.”

Sam reflects on the work of Bible translation, especially the challenges, and says, “In Bible translation work, an awful lot of it is slow and uninteresting, punctuated by really neat, cool moments.”

A life verse for Sam, a Bible verse he holds onto in his work of Bible translation, is 1 Peter 5:10: “The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” (NIV)

Sam says, “I love that beautiful hope of restoration, peace, being with God. And just this throw-away line, ‘after you’ve suffered a little while’, which could be eighty years. But in comparison to what is to come, it is just a little while. In the context of translations that take decades, with setbacks – like, because of COVID, basically every remote community is closed. You can’t go. You can’t leave. A whole lot of projects are in limbo. But that’s just a little while. In the context of what we hope for it’s pretty fleeting really.”

## Will you give the gift of Scripture?

Every

**\$45**

Can help translate a portion of Scripture into a new language

Every

**\$70**

Goes towards ensuring a community has a completed translation of the Bible

Every

**\$120**

Can help a community record and share Scripture in their words for the very first time

## PLEASE GIVE NOW

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



# Pray with us



**P**lease join us in praying through Scripture for Bible Society translation projects we are supporting around the world. The various translation teams have chosen key Scripture verses to hold up as they work on Bible versions in their heart languages.

Let us pray, together, that God's word would be a light to their path and that they would be fully clothed with the armour of God. Let us thank God for his word, which fully equips us as his people, which revives our souls, and which makes us wise. Most of all, let us praise him for his Eternal Word, Jesus, by whom and in whom we are saved, and for whom we make disciples of all nations.

DOWNLOAD OUR MONTHLY PRAYER GUIDE:  
[BIBLESOCIETY.ORG.AU/PRAY](http://BIBLESOCIETY.ORG.AU/PRAY)

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## AUSLAN

Thank God for the Bible Society's translation of the Pentateuch, Gospels, Acts and some of Paul's epistles into Australian Sign Language. Please pray for the creation of Bible Engagement resources for Christmas and the translation of Jonah into AUSLAN. Pray that the lives of Australians who cannot hear God's word will be transformed by it through this project.

## South Pacific Bible Translation Headquarters

Thank God for exciting new possibilities as Bible Society South Pacific headquarters are built in Vanuatu. Please pray that teams would unite, overcoming the strain of costs, distance and isolation to provide Bible translations in 16 major languages. Pray that people in the South Pacific might know the God-breathed Holy Scriptures from infancy, being made wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15-16).

## Australian Remote Indigenous Ministries

Please pray for translation of the Old Testament and a Daily Prayer Book for the Pitjantjatjara people of Central Australia. Pray that posters of John 10:10 provided as part of the 'Jesus. All About Life' campaign will be a blessing. Pray that translators will persist in doing good and reap a great harvest among Indigenous communities (Galatians 6:9).

## Myanmar, Anu-Khongso people

Praise God that 90% of the Anu-Khongso people are Christians and that they are eager for a Bible in their language. Thank him that the New Testament is almost complete. Pray that as the people endure a civil war, their souls will be revived by God's perfect law and that they would be made wise by his decrees (Psalm 19:7).

## Papua New Guinea, Tok Pisin speakers

Thank God that a revision of the Tok Pisin Bible is almost complete. Pray for support from local churches and the government, and for funds to provide electricity. Praise God that his word spreads throughout the world to many different languages, all rich with meaning (1 Corinthians 14:10).

## Sri Lanka, the deaf community

Please pray for the Ceylon Bible Society (CBS), as they translate parables of Jesus into sign language for the deaf community of Sri Lanka. Pray that churches will be equipped to work more closely with the deaf community. Praise God for his love and grace to the downtrodden and thank him that CBS have answered the call to "defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 31:8-9).

# One verse can change a life.

Your donation could translate the Scripture that connects with someone's life – bringing assurance of God's love now and into the future.

Donate today at  
**[biblesociety.org.au/sow](https://biblesociety.org.au/sow)**







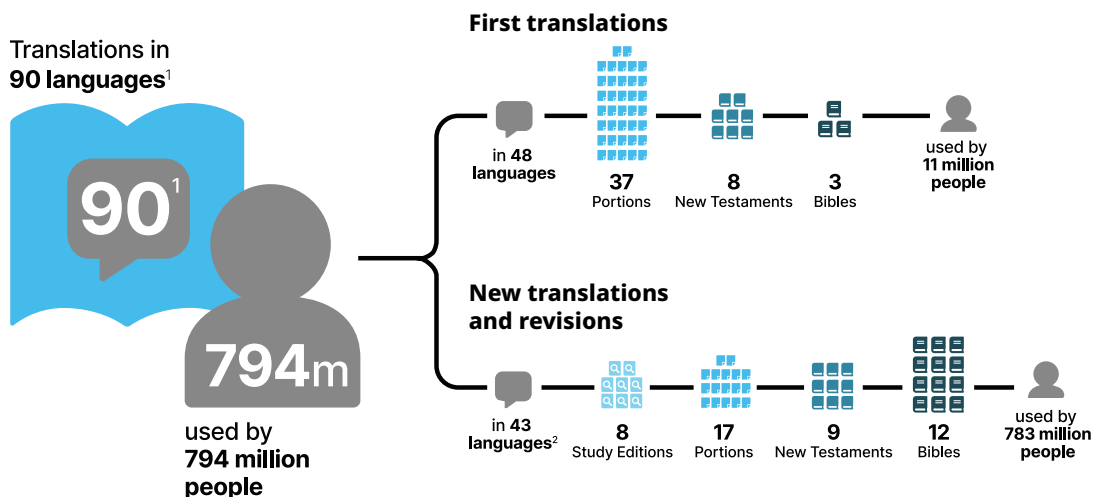
THE WORD OF GOD IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE

# Scripture translations in 90<sup>1</sup> languages completed in 2021.

In 2021, despite a second year of disruption caused by COVID-19, Bible Societies across the world completed Scripture translations in 90<sup>1</sup> languages used by 794 million people – just over 10% of the world's population.

From Mexico to Myanmar, 48 language groups – a total of 11 million people – received first Scripture translations, meaning that they were not previously available in those languages.

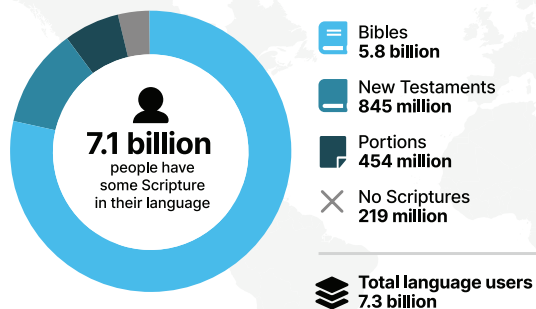
## TRANSLATIONS COMPLETED BY BIBLE SOCIETIES IN 2021



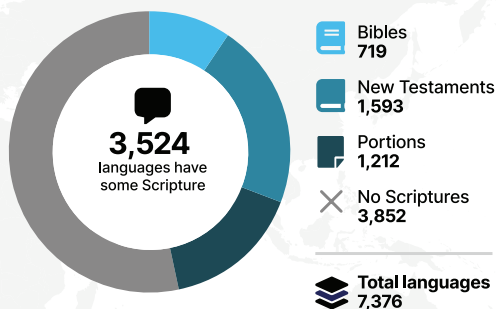
1. The total number of languages (90) is lower than the total of first translations and new translations and revisions (91) because one language has a first Old Testament portion and a revised New Testament. 2. The number of languages with new translations and revisions (43) is lower than the total number of Bibles, New Testaments, Portions and Study Editions (46) because three languages each received translations in two of these categories.

## BIBLE TRANSLATION LANDSCAPE - 1 JANUARY, 2022

### How many **people** have Scripture in their language?



### How many **languages** have Scripture?



1.5 billion people do not have the full Bible in their language

Source: ProgressBible™ (January 2022). Figures for the number of language users are based on the best available data, which when rounded total 7.3 billion - less than the world population of over 7.9 billion people. The total number of languages includes 241 sign languages without recognised language codes.

New or revised translations were completed in another 43 languages used by 783 million people. These provide Scripture access to language communities whose needs are no longer met by previous translations.

As of January 2022, through these efforts by Bible Societies and other Bible translation agencies around the world, the **full Bible is now available in 719 languages spoken by 5.8 billion people** – with around 70% of these Bible translations translated by the United Bible Societies Fellowship. In addition, another 1,593 languages have the New Testament, and 1,212 have portions of Scripture which altogether means **7.1 billion people have some Scripture in their mother tongue**.



### PROGRESS DASHBOARD

JANUARY 2022

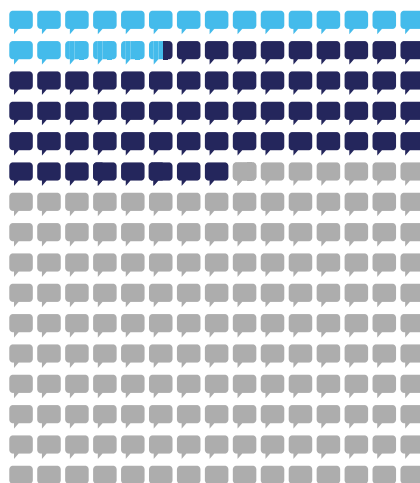
**1,200**  
Translations

**103**  
completed

**312**  
in progress

**785**  
remaining

■ = 5 languages

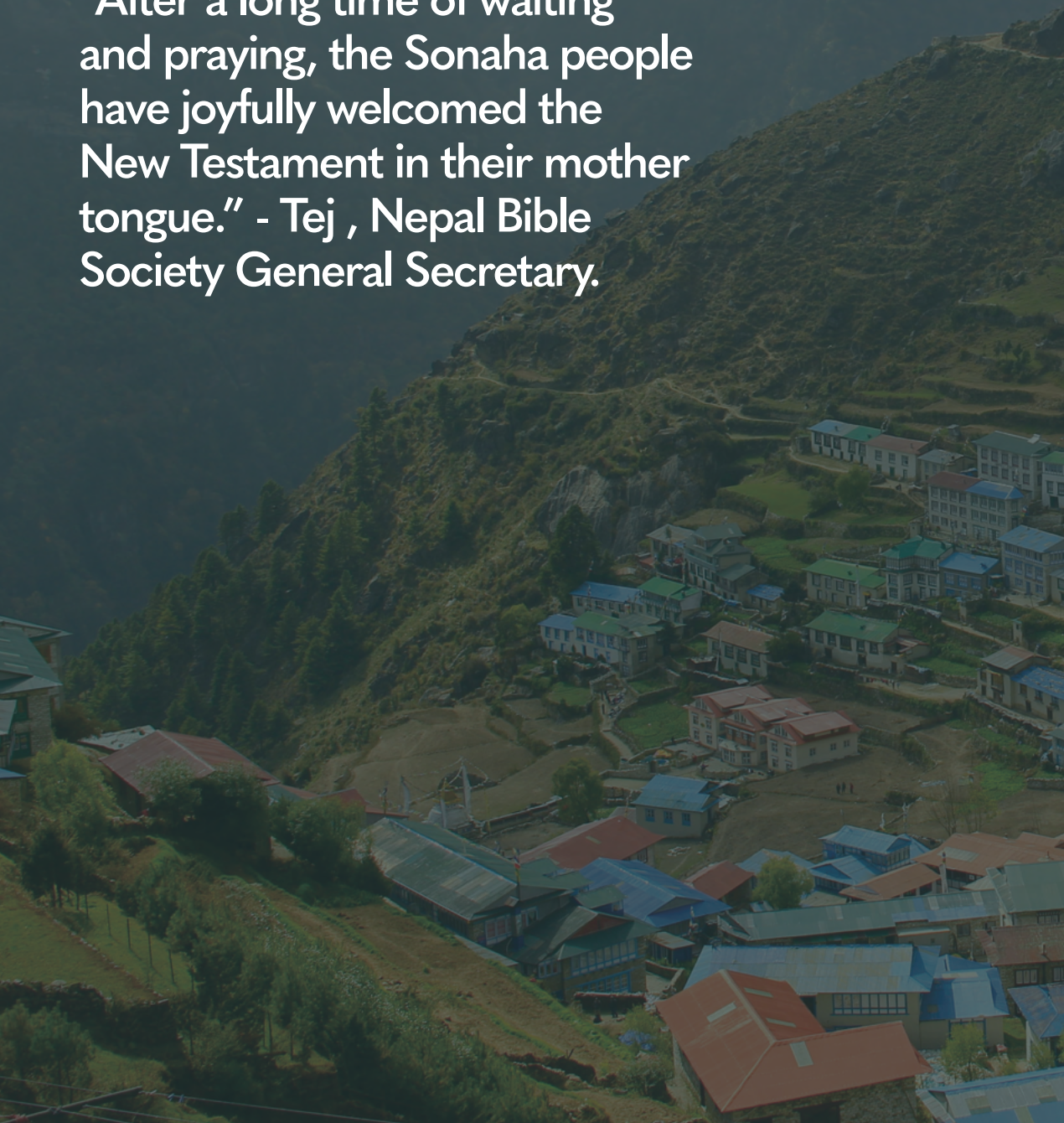


UBS' goal is to complete 1,200 translations by 2038, which will make Scripture accessible to 600 million people.



# Nepal

“After a long time of waiting and praying, the Sonaha people have joyfully welcomed the New Testament in their mother tongue.” - Tej , Nepal Bible Society General Secretary.







Sonaha is one of the marginalised ethnic groups living close to the Nepali/Indian border in south western Nepal. The first-ever Sonaha New Testament translation was completed and launched in 2021.

Most of Nepal's approximately 20,000 Sonaha-speakers live in the south-west of the country. They are a poor and marginalised group whose language only received official recognition in 2011. Although most of them can speak Nepali, their own language is a key part of their identity, and they use it daily – at home, in the market, and when they practise their religion.

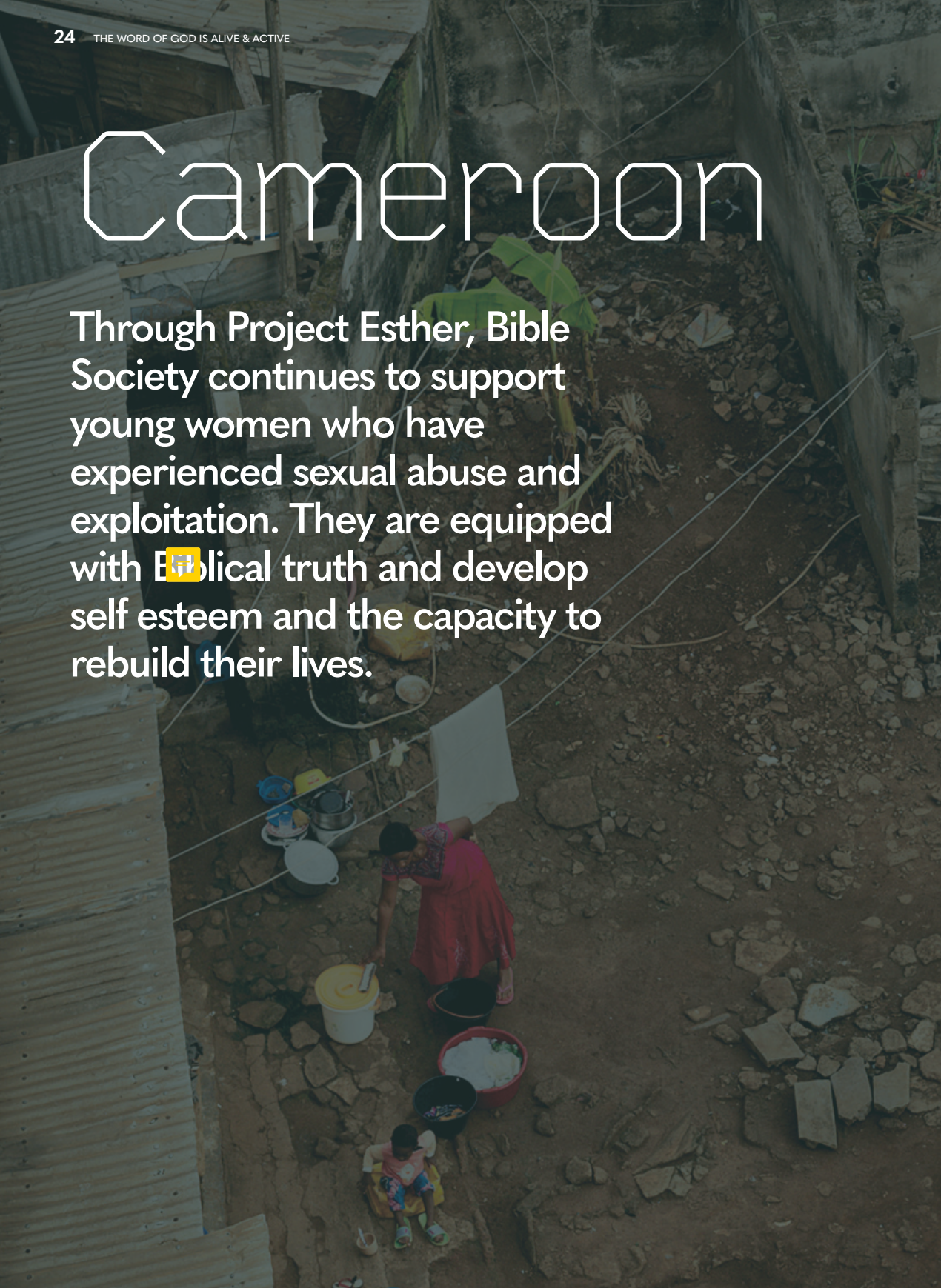
Although COVID-19 added extra complications to the final stages of the translation project, with the final checking by consultants conducted through online meetings, the New Testament was completed ahead of schedule. This meant that copies of the new Scripture were available to Sonaha Christians just ahead of the surge of COVID-19 cases in April and May 2021, which put the country into a two-month lockdown.

"The Sonaha people told us that they don't have any other printed materials in their mother tongue, so they are very excited to see the living word of God in their own heart language. It will really help the community to be empowered and develop good biblical knowledge," says Tej.



# Cameroon

Through Project Esther, Bible Society continues to support young women who have experienced sexual abuse and exploitation. They are equipped with Biblical truth and develop self esteem and the capacity to rebuild their lives.







Throughout 2021, training camps offered opportunities for spiritual retreats, with counselling and space to share, as well imparting practical support in how to generate an income and gain financial independence.

During the camps, the girls learnt a lot about the Bible, entrepreneurship, hygiene, the rights of mother and child, and how to deal with trauma. Girls learnt practical skills to make products they could sell.

As well as the Project Esther training camps, events were run for adolescents, in which young people were shown how to live according to the Bible's principles and values. They became aware of what bad choices looked like. They committed to making good decisions, to having personal limits, and to relating better with their parents. "The teens discovered their true identity, God's love for them, and discovered deliverance and healing. They all left happy," said a course facilitator.



**3** training sessions were run for a total of **77** participants, who were trained to work with adolescents



**4** training camps were held for **138** teenage mothers and victims of sexual exploitation.



**4** events for adolescents were held across the year, with **670** adolescents reached and **670** New Testaments and Scripture portions distributed

# Culture

By Justine Toh

CPX



**"...the most urgent missionary task for the next few decades is the mission to 'modernity'."**

After 40 years in India as a missionary, Lesslie Newbiggin experienced grave culture shock upon re-entry to his home country. His estrangement from Britain over that time had given him fresh eyes to see it – and the ways that it had been co-opted by values and attitudes that were in opposition to the Christian story.

Newbiggin's profound insight was that the whole world was a mission field. Foreign lands where people didn't know the name of Christ should not only be a priority for the mission-minded. The secular West should be as well – even if speaking of the things of God would seem strange, out of date, and out of touch with a public unsure about the existence of God and sceptical of the church.

At CPX, we're engaged in translating the Christian story to people who think it has nothing to offer them, and who seem largely disinterested in finding out for sure. It's a task that requires a close understanding of the audience we want to reach: their hopes and dreams, but also their deep disappointments. In some cases, their hostility to the church – and the reasons for that distrust.

Such an approach means that we're always thinking of those we want to connect with and exploring what opportunities might gently challenge their take on the world. We do this while speaking about faith in a language that everyone can understand, regardless of what they believe. We start conversations with people wherever they're at, using as a springboard the books people are reading, the cultural waters we're swimming in, or the stories that make the news headlines.

We want to disturb people's imaginations. Even if people think they're done with God, we want them to know that God hasn't abandoned them – or this world. People just need to hear the old story of Christianity anew.



Some examples of our work that offer a glimpse of what that looks like:

After a drunk driver killed three of their children in Sydney's west in 2020, Danny and Leila Abdallah made the shocking decision to forgive Samuel Richardson, the driver. In this extraordinary conversation on CPX's podcast *Life & Faith*, the bereaved couple speak about the power of forgiveness and how it is rooted in their Maronite faith.

"I don't ever want my kids to say the day I lost my siblings, I lost my parents. We're trying to give a home with as much normality; playing games with them, sitting with them, you know, talking to them, let them dream again because the last two years it's been very heavy - our hearts have been heavy, their hearts have been heavy. You can't change what happened, but we can change where we're heading. That's for sure."  
Danny Abdallah

In this article published in *The Guardian*, Justine Toh reflects on how "each Christmas I find myself haunted by the ghosts of presents past." If the things we own evoke the presence of the people we love, what does it look like to experience the whole world, and existence itself, as a gift?

"...gifts evoke gift-givers. Perhaps contrary to their reputation, the religious among us are following the logic: they believe that everywhere and in everything we are haunted by the God who made and gave us all things."

Christianity has often featured as a conversation partner with the Tasmanian festival Dark Mofo. In this article originally published in *ABC Religion & Ethics*, CPX's Natasha Moore explores the event's religious symbolism and the way it taps into the surprising hopefulness of Christianity.

"...perhaps the way secular and sacred seem to have converged in Dark Mofo shouldn't be that surprising. At a time when we might be more aware than usual of how strong is the darkness of prejudice, sickness, death, and fear, the potency of the cross as a symbol of darkness defeated, burdens lifted, and life triumphant is magnified."

[Find out more about CPX by following us on social media or signing up to our newsletter.](#)



# Faith Stories

Spring's story is part of  
Eternity's Faith Stories series,  
compiled by Naomi Reed.



## 6,570 prayers and the tender heart of God

*Eternity*

"My father was born in China. When he was small, he was carried by his father to the South of China and sold. It was because of the famine. My mother was also sold as a child in Malaysia, and she became a street child. Later, they met and married and had ten children. I was the fifth. They were Buddhist Taoists by background.

In the late 1960s, my eldest brother came to the Lord. He heard the good news about Jesus and then he told my next brother, who told my next sibling, and it went on like that until eventually, we all came to faith. I was in secondary school at the time. My parents were very angry at the news. The first thing they did was lock up our bicycles, so we couldn't go to church. Then they burnt our Bibles and stopped all communication with Christians.

But it didn't work. Somehow my parents realised we were still believing in Jesus. So they tried the softer method, which was even harder for us. My father called a family meeting and he said, "How could you do this to us?" and "Have we not been good parents?" and "Why would you give your loyalty to a foreign God?" It was very hard. The conversation went on for a long time, and we tried to explain to them that we had found a pearl, a great treasure and that it brought us great joy. But they didn't listen.

Then, my brother had an idea. He said we would all take Acts 16:31 (NIV) as our family verse.

**"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household."**

We decided to pray twice a day for our parents. By then, there were nine of us believing in Jesus, so it was 6,570 prayers a year.

The prayers changed me. With that kind of background, all you can do is talk to God. All you can do is pray, as if he's sitting right next to you, all the time. And he is. Nobody can stop you from doing that. They can stop you from going to church, they can lock your bicycles away and they can burn your Bibles...but they can't stop you from praying.

I finished high school and I went to Kuala Lumpur to study. It was the first time I was free to go to Christian meetings, and I went! At one of the meetings, it was as if the Lord was sitting right next to me. He told me that he wanted me to serve him cross-culturally. But I ignored him. I told him I would only go if my mother and father came to faith. Two years later, I graduated from university, and both my parents came to know the Lord!

I went and served the Lord cross-culturally. At first, I went to the jungle of Papua New Guinea, to work in a refugee camp. It was 1979, and there I was, without water and electricity, trying to run the project. That's when I learnt that as human beings, we have inner resources, more than we can ever imagine. After that, in 1986, I went to Pakistan and Afghanistan. I spent eight years there, working with Afghan refugees – in public health, with the women and with the blind. It was a war zone. I can't describe it to you. It was so dry there was nothing to eat. There was injustice everywhere. There were so many people maimed on the streets. I would go home and weep. I would kneel on my prayer mat and weep until the mat was drenched with my tears. Sometimes I would express my anger to God. How can he allow this? What will he do?

But I have learnt that the Lord's heart is broken, too. He weeps too...and he's with us in the weeping. There's so much I don't understand about the world, about human choices, and suffering and evil...even my own brokenness and how I have grieved the Lord. But every day, God is with us. And one day we will see and understand. In the meantime, the Lord says, keep going, keep trusting in him, keep crying out to him...because no one can stop us from praying."

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# Daily

## Abiding with God

Life brings great heartache and deep joy for all of us. We can find God in all of life as we embrace his love, his word, and his Spirit.

*Mark Mudri works with Bible Society Australia in South Australia as a Church and Community Relations representative. He is a compassionate evangelist, a connector of people and an avid life learner.*

### Day 1 - Beauty

*He has made everything beautiful in its time.  
He has also set eternity in the human heart;  
yet no one can fathom what God has done from  
beginning to end. (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV)*

How many times has a situation seemed hopeless, yet with prayer and time has worked out astonishingly well? My view is limited. By time, place, experience, capacities, and much more. Dare I believe that our Heavenly Father can make the world's brokenness beautiful? May we take the time to enjoy the beauty our Heavenly Father has created, and to search especially for beauty in others, seeing them as unfinished masterpieces.

**Eternal God, may I have an eternal perspective in my heart and unearth it in others. Amen.**

### Day 2 - God of All Comfort

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV)*

Many of us struggle to picture the Father of compassion, the God of all comfort. Yet these attributes are true. As we draw on God's comfort, we become a comfort to those around us. We learn to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. As an example, Dr Nick Hawkes, a regular Daily Bible contributor, provides huge comfort to others through his Daily Bible offerings on his own cancer journey. It is my prayer that, like Nick, you and all people will know the God of all comfort.

**Heavenly Father, I come before you now and ask that you would be my comfort and would use me to comfort those around me. Amen.**

### Day 3 - Do Not Give Up

*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9 NIV)*

It seems that the enemy tries to push us so that the need of others escalates and our capacity diminishes, until duty replaces love and our hearts become weary. You might be reading this with a weary heart. You might know others

# Bible

burdened by life. Could you reach out, listen, encourage and pray?

Paul promises here that we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. This is accomplished corporately: together we do good to all people.

**Heavenly Father, you know my heart. Show me when I need a brother or sister's help as well as when you are calling me to do good to another. Amen.**

## Day 4 - Alive in Christ

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgression – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7 NIV)*

Our elevation is not from earth to heaven, but from the depths of hell to the heights of heaven. Heaven is a place of intimacy with our Father; of unconditional love where he lavishes the riches of his grace upon us. This is one of the most beautiful descriptions of our Heavenly Father, redeeming humanity, elevating us as

sons and daughters so that he might display the incomparable riches of his grace for you and me!

**“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Amen.**

## Day 5 - Working for the Lord

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23-24 NIV)*

Much of the drudgery in our work comes from the mistaken belief that we work only for others, for money or for survival; that our work and our ministry are separate. If we only believe that we are working for God, our work becomes holy, redeemed and noble. It becomes worship.

**Glorious God, help me to work with all my heart, knowing that each minute of the day I serve my Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.**

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