

Sower.

SPRING 2025
BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA



Dear Reader,

Welcome to the Spring edition of Sower magazine!

Whether you're holding this in your hands or reading it on a screen, I hope you'll find a moment to pause — and be encouraged. The stories in this edition of Sower are a powerful reminder of why Bible Society Australia exists: to see lives transformed by the word of God.

Each edition of Sower brings fresh inspiration, and this one is no exception. From trauma healing in Jordan, to Bible translation in Vanuatu, to the quiet faith of a 98-year-old woman in China — these stories reflect the deep and lasting impact of God's word in people's lives.

They also remind us of the challenges many still face: war, displacement, poverty, illiteracy, and even the everyday struggle to make ends meet. Yet in the midst of these hardships, the Bible brings comfort and hope. It reveals God's character and his unwavering love for us.

I'm especially moved by the story of women in Jordan finding healing through Scripture, and by the legacy Elder Jack is building in Vanuatu through Bible translation. And Tang Xiulan's joy at receiving a large-print Bible she can finally

read — at 98 years old — is a great example of how these projects are seeing lives transformed by God's word. I just love that!

At Bible Society Australia, our mission is simple but profound: to share the Bible so that lives can be changed. It's a mission I know you care deeply about too. As you read these stories, I hope you're encouraged to continue partnering with us to bring the Bible where it's needed most.

We know the truth from Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV):

"... because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved."

As we open the Bible with people around the world, it is our prayer that they know this love and salvation too!



GOD BLESS,

Chris Melville

INTERIM CEO
BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA



"How beautiful are
the feet of those who
bring good news!"

— Romans 10:15b (NIV)





Healing Hearts in Jordan: A Journey of Restoration Through God's Word

"I found healing in my Lord Jesus Christ," said one trauma healing participant, her voice steady as she sat with her family in their modest Jordanian home. For Haya, a staff member from the Bible Society of Jordan, this moment was unforgettable. "Just hearing the words, 'my Lord Jesus Christ', from someone who had gone through so much, was deeply moving ... it was the first time I encountered a participant sharing how the healing power of Christ touched their life so profoundly that they wanted to bring it into their family."

The Need for Healing

In Jordan, where an estimated 1.4 million refugees live — many outside formal camps — the emotional and spiritual wounds of war, displacement, and loss run deep. The Bible Society of Jordan, supported by Bible Society Australia, is responding with compassion and purpose. Their trauma healing program is equipping local churches to become safe spaces where people can begin to process their pain and rediscover hope.

"It's not just a program," Haya explains. "It's something that's starting a journey of both

healing and spiritual transformation." Healing groups meet in churches, community centres, homes, and even refugee camps — wherever there is need and a safe space. "There's no formal setting for a healing group ... it can be done in a refugee camp, in the church, in the community center, even in the homes with the families."

Stories of Healing

One mother of six, also a Syrian refugee, shared that this is the first time she's able to tell her story since she came to Jordan six years ago. She shared with Haya, "I was living for my kids and all I cared about was taking care of their wellbeing. But this is the first time for me to get to share my own emotions and my own story."

The healing is not only emotional — it is spiritual. "Trauma ... causes confusion about who God is ... is he the source of the evil that is happening? Is this a punishment? Is this because God is not looking at them, not caring for them?" Haya explains. "It brings them back to the biblical perspective, the truth ... restoring that broken relationship that the pain and the grief and the trauma caused."

"I'VE SEEN HUNDREDS IF NOT THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE COME BACK AFTER THE PROGRAM PRAISING THE LORD ..."

Participants often connect deeply with biblical stories. "In our 'bring your pain to the cross' lesson ... we use the story of the bleeding woman. And they relate to that so much ... it brings back the dignity and the honour to that woman ... they really connect to that story in a way that was fascinating for us to see how much that story in particular just touched them so deeply."

Expanding the Reach

In 2025, the Bible Society of Jordan is expanding its reach. Plans include launching a community counselling school to train 25 church-based therapists. "We've been working on a two and a half year program ... that will enable people that enroll in this program to become therapists in their churches and in their communities," Haya shares. "This is a dream come true ... for Jordan and maybe for the region."

The program has been running for over nine years, with the local Jordanian churches being central to this mission. "The local church was actually what pushed us to bring this program to Jordan ... it was the church that opened our eyes to this need," Haya says. "We view the local church as our strategic partner ... they are the implementing partner. We support materials, we support with resources, but the church's mission is to reach people."

With this support, the program has expanded its reach. "There are churches that have adopted the program as one of their ministries. There have been churches or people who come from churches that took this program and put it in

their community centers. [They] have used this program to make the church a safe place for people to come to," shares Haya.

The impact is rippling outward. "I've seen hundreds if not thousands of people come back after the program praising the Lord ... people crying tears and kneeling down to the floor, next to the cross as they are nailing their pain to the cross," Haya shares.

"You really see how this is only done by the Holy Spirit ... it can't be anything else. It's not science, it's not psychology. It is the Holy Spirit with the help of all of that."

The Importance of Partnership

Thanks to the faithful support of donors in Australia, this ministry is growing. "I have to say I was overjoyed to see that Bible Society of Australia [is] supporting the trauma healing program ... it shows how much the Australian Bible Society really cares deeply about ministering to the people that are vulnerable, that are grieving, that are in need," Haya says.

The support received from Bible Society Australia, Haya explains, "feels like someone is holding your back and helping you to move forward. And this is something we don't take lightly."

If you would like to give to Bible Society of Jordan's trauma healing program, visit biblesociety.org.au/sow.



Testimonies from Healing Group Participants

"When I first joined the healing group, I was in a very dark place. I had so much anger, bitterness, and resentment inside me. The pain from my past was overwhelming, and I felt trapped by it. I remember sharing in the group during our first session that I could never forgive the people who had hurt me. It felt impossible — like a weight I could never lift off my heart. As the weeks went by, something began to shift. With each session, I started to open up more and trust the process. I listened to others share their experiences, and for the first time, I didn't feel alone in my pain. I started to see that healing was possible — not just for others, but for me too. The group provided a space where I could confront my anger and bitterness without fear of judgment. Now, six weeks later, I find myself in a completely different place. The anger that once consumed me has started to subside. I can't say that everything is healed yet, but I've made a step forward. I am learning to let go of the grudges that have held me hostage for so long. The process isn't easy, but I've started to forgive, not for the sake of the people who hurt me, but for my own peace and freedom. I feel lighter, and though the journey continues, I know I am no longer stuck in the pain of my past. I can now look forward, with hope and healing in my heart." — **Amal***

"When we reached the part where we were invited to bring our pain to the cross, I couldn't hold back my tears. It felt like years of silence and heaviness were finally being acknowledged. I had never cried like that in front of others, but in that moment, I knew I was safe." — **Salim***

"For years, I carried this pain alone. But when I wrote it down and nailed it to the cross, something shifted inside me. I broke down, but for the first time, I felt peace. It was like I could breathe again ... This space gave me something I didn't know I needed!" — **Lina***

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*



Directon in the Darkness: Finding the Bible, Finding Her Way

At 98 years old, Tang Xiulan's* life is a testament to resilience, faith, and the transformative power of God's word. Living in rural Guangxi, China, she has endured decades of hardship — from the backbreaking labour of the Cultural Revolution to the quiet loneliness of old age.

"There was no rest," Tang remembered. "We worked because if we didn't, we would have nothing to eat." Yet, the hardest part wasn't the physical labour. "The hardest part was not knowing Jesus," she confides.

Then, in her late sixties, someone shared the gospel with her. That simple act of personal evangelism opened a new chapter in Tang's life. "I heard the gospel and believed," she said. Since then, through it all, her faith has remained steadfast.

"I used to have a Bible," Tang shared, "but the print was too small. I could barely see the words." Despite her failing eyesight and limited

education, she clung to her faith, praying and listening to God's word whenever she could. But without a Bible she could read, her spiritual nourishment was limited — like a hungry soul without food.

Receiving the Gift of God's Word

In July 2024, everything changed. Through the support of her local church, the Guangxi Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (CC&TSPM), and the United Bible Societies China Partnership (UBSCP), Tang received a large-print Bible — a Bible she could read on her own.

"I thank God!" she said joyfully. "Back then, I never thought anyone would give me a new Bible. I was so grateful and happy."

Tang is one of the many beneficiaries of the "Bibles for Millions" project, supported by Bible

Society Australia. This initiative aims to meet the immense demand for Bibles in China, where an estimated 100 million Christians live — many in rural areas and with limited means. In 2025 alone, the project will provide Bible paper for 1.3 million Bibles and distribute 70,000 free Bibles to those who find it challenging to afford one.

For Tang Xiulan, this Bible became more than a book — it became her daily bread. “To me, the Bible is the bread of life. Without it, I would starve,” she said. “Having this Bible now is like having a weapon in my hands. Whenever I am weak, God’s word gives me strength.”

A Life Transformed



When Tang came to faith in Christ in her late sixties, her faith grew even though she had very little formal education at first. “After I believed in Jesus, I slowly learned to recognise many words,” she shared. She began praying regularly and absorbing God’s word through the teaching of her local church. Over time, driven by her desire to know God more deeply, she learnt to read more Chinese characters and deepened her understanding of Scripture.

“In the past, I believed in repaying evil with evil,” Tang admitted. “But the Bible teaches me to be more forgiving and patient.”

Tang’s heart has softened, her temper calmed, and her life now reflects the peace and wisdom found in God’s word. Now, she reads her Bible daily, prays more often, and feels closer to God than ever before. “With this Bible, I can read God’s word more often, pray more, and draw closer to him,” she said. “In everything I do, God’s word reminds me not to follow my own will, but to follow his.”

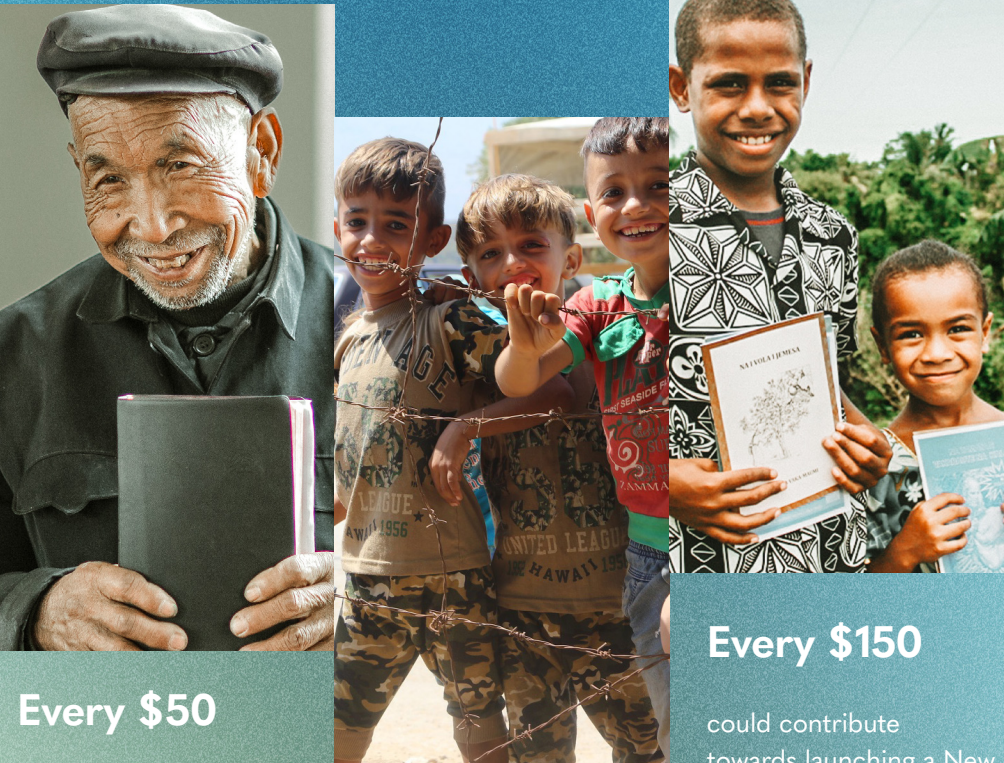
The Ongoing Need

Tang’s story is just one among millions. In a country where Christians are a minority, and many live in poor remote areas, the need for Bibles remains urgent. As Tang puts it, “Without the Bible, it would feel like walking in darkness with no direction. But with the Bible, I have found my way.”

Your support can help more people like Tang Xiulan receive the life-giving gift of God’s word. By partnering with Bible Society Australia, you can help provide Bibles to those who need them most — bringing light, hope, and strength to hearts across China. Visit biblesociety.org.au/sow to learn more and donate today.

**Name has been changed to protect privacy.*

Would You Bring God's Word Where It's Needed Most?



Every \$50

could help distribute copies of Bibles in large print for elderly Christians in China.

Every \$100

could help assist in facilitating a Bible-based trauma healing workshop for refugees in Jordan.

Every \$150

could contribute towards launching a New Testament translation in a heart language in Vanuatu.



Donate today at biblesociety.org.au/sow or call 1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537).

God's Word in Every Tongue: Bible Translation in Vanuatu

In Vanuatu, language is more than communication — it's a vital expression of identity and culture. With 130 languages spoken by over 300,000 people, it's the most linguistically dense nation on Earth. It is within this rich linguistic heritage that church elders like Jack Reuben feel a profound responsibility to translate the Bible into the heart languages of their communities.

"I hope this Bible translation can be made available for our people to speak in their own mother tongue. Many lives will be transformed," says Elder Jack, who is helping translate the Bible in his language, Ahamb. Elder Jack is from Malekula — an island of around 25,000 people, but one where over 30 distinct indigenous languages are spoken. "A lot of work is still here to be done ... we hope more and more people will get involved," he shares.

These translation efforts are part of a broader initiative by the Bible Society of the South Pacific to produce four New Testament translations,

revise two existing Bible translations, and digitise them all for the new generation. For those languages already with a translated Bible — translated by missionaries in the late 1800's and early 1900's — many passages are outdated and need revision.

Supporting this project is Bible Society Australia's Translation Consultant, Dr Sam Freney, who was recently in Efate, Vanuatu, where he visited four of the Bible translation projects that these church elders are translating — Futuna, Lelepa, Nguna and Ahamb.

Translation Progress

For the Futuna translation project, the translators have done an internal check on Matthew's Gospel, with the community also checking the first nine chapters. The first two chapters have also been consultant checked by the translation consultants, with "the pastor and elders in the team providing an excellent back-translation into English as we worked," shares Sam.

The Lelepa translation team meets at a Presbyterian Church, and their work is advancing well. Mark's Gospel is complete, and ready to be launched. The team has also finished the first draft of James and Philippians, which were fully translated by one team member. During Sam's visit, they reviewed James 1:1-15, combining internal and consultant checks in a single session — a testament to their efficiency and teamwork.

The Nguna translation has seen thoughtful updates, including new section headings and book introductions. The team is modernising older terms and refining formatting, such as marking Jesus' words in red and adding quotation marks. "We checked through the introduction to Matthew, and the headings for Matthew 1-16. We also updated some of the language for 'mustard seed' and 'yeast' to make it more understandable," shares Sam.

Progress also continues in Elder Jack's language, Ahamb. He shares with quiet joy, "I am pleased to say that we are working on the full four Gospels

for the New Testament. We've done Mark, we're now doing the review of the Gospel of John." John 16-21 was recently checked by Sam, with an excellent back translation provided by translator Whiteley Jack, as they worked.

Impacting Communities

The end goal is clear: to see communities across Vanuatu reading, teaching, and living out God's word in their own languages. This work doesn't just preserve linguistic heritage — it strengthens churches, deepens discipleship, and inspires future generations.

As Elder Jack puts it, "Before my time comes, I want to leave a legacy for our people in Malekula ... with a lot of dedication, and the supporters from Bible Society, [we can] achieve this great purpose ... We thank you, Bible Society Australia, for supporting us for this great mission work."

To support this translation project, visit biblesociety.org.au/sow.

—— Elder Jack

Pray With Us



Loving Father,

We are so grateful for the power of your word to transform lives. Thank you that your word lights up our paths, and that when we hear your word, our faith is strengthened. Thank you that your word is alive and does not return void, and it accomplishes what it says it will do.

Thank you for the mission you've given us to spread your word to those who need it most. Thank you for our Bible Society partners around the world who work in the mission field, whether it is in translating the Bible, distributing Scripture, or making it accessible for others.

Lord, we ask that you bless the Bible Society of Jordan and the churches of Jordan who are running the trauma healing sessions for those who are wounded by war and tragic events. We lift up the individuals undergoing trauma healing sessions. As they are introduced to you, the God who heals them, and the truth of your word, may they begin to heal, learn to forgive, and be set free. As they find their identities in Christ and become your children, may they also be peacemakers, sharing the good news with others.

We thank you, Lord, for the faithful translation teams in Vanuatu, working tirelessly to bring the Bible into the many

heart languages of their people. Bless their dedication, preserve their unique languages, and let your word take deep root in every community. Lord wherever there is lack in resources, we trust that you will provide and make a way for these projects to be completed, bringing honour to you.

Lord, we lift up your children in China, especially the elderly like Tang Xiulan, who treasure your word as their daily bread. May every Bible distributed bring strength to the weary and light to those seeking direction. Thank you for using UBS China Partnership in this mission. Continue to move through your people, that every nation, language, and heart may be reached with the good news of Jesus Christ.

And Father, thank you for the generous supporters who are making these ministries possible. May your Spirit continue to bring light into the darkest places, and may lives be renewed by the power of your word.

Blessed are you Lord, our God, who reigns forever!

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

DOWNLOAD OUR MONTHLY PRAYER GUIDE

biblesociety.org.au/pray



Where Needed Most



Donate today at biblesociety.org.au/sow
or call 1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537)

This Spring, would you give to Where Needed Most?

Your generosity to support Bible projects most in need will enable a fast, flexible response to emergency appeals that involve benevolent relief work in times of crisis.

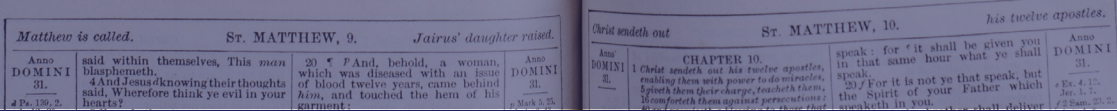
Your support will help translate the Bible into the world's languages, encourage Bible engagement, advocate for God's word and distribute Bibles to those who need them most.

Join us in our mission to Open The Bible to all people everywhere, transforming lives through God's word.

2024 Bible Translation Statistics

For the first time in history, over 6.1 billion people have access to the full Bible in their heart language. This remarkable achievement marks a milestone in the global Bible translation movement and United Bible Societies' mission to make Scripture available to all.

In 2024, the United Bible Societies (UBS) — a global network of 150 Bible Societies, including Bible Society Australia — completed Scripture translations in 105 languages, benefitting more than 580 million people.



Progress in Bible Translation

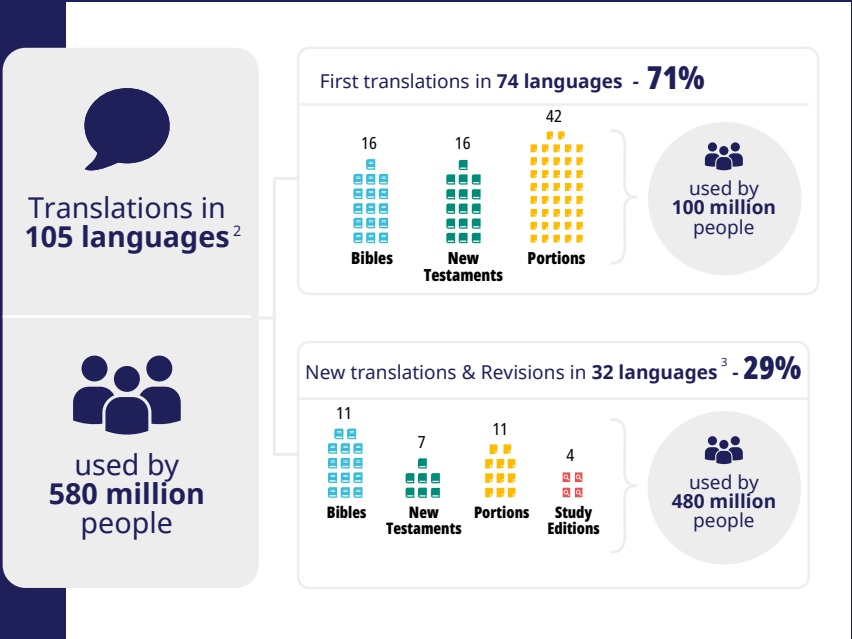
United Bible Societies

Translations published by Bible Societies in 2024¹

1. Bible Societies often partner with other translation agencies in completing these translations.

2. The total number of languages (105) is lower than the total number of first translations and new translations/revisions (106) because one language, Urak Lawoi', has both first and revised portions.

3. The total number of new translations and revisions (32) is lower than the total in this section (33) because one language, Malay, has a new translation and a Study edition.



Bible Translation Landscape - January 1, 2025¹

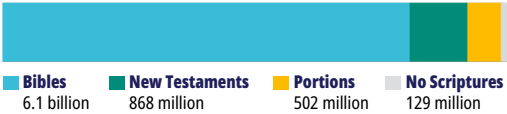
1. Source: ProgressBibleTM (January 2025).

2. Figures for the number of language users are based on the best available data, which when rounded totals 7.6 billion - less than the world population of over 8 billion people.



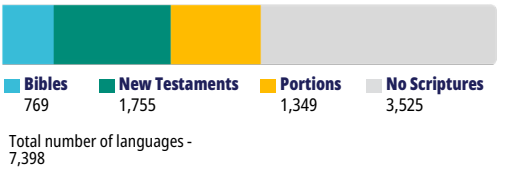
How many **people** have Scripture in their language?

7.5 billion people have some Scripture in their language



3,872 languages have some Scripture

How many **languages** have Scripture?



“The global Bible translation movement led by Bible Societies, which began over 220 years ago, celebrates a significant milestone in 2024 — providing Scripture in the heart language of over 6.1 billion people. This means that 6 out of every

eight people worldwide have the opportunity to read the complete Bible in a language they know and understand best.” — Rev. Dirk Gevers, UBS Secretary General

Digital Bible Access

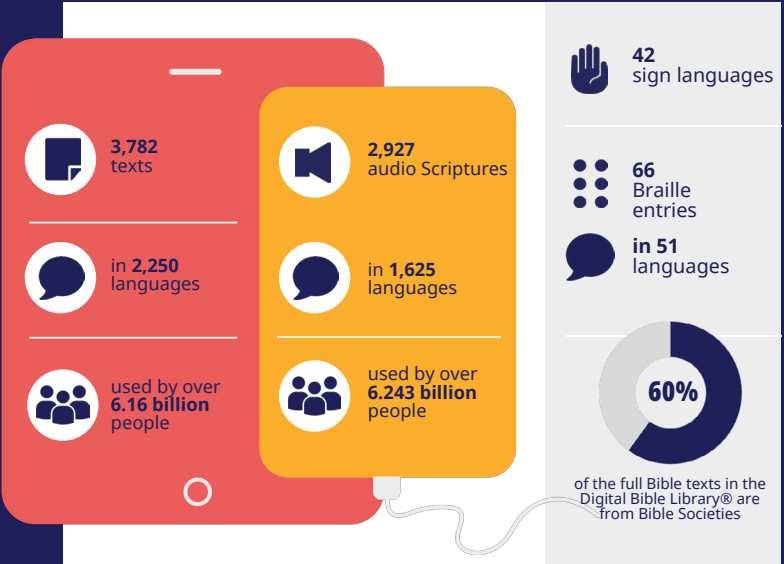
In 2024, UBS also expanded digital access to Scripture through UBS's Digital Bible Library®, which now holds **Scripture translations in 2,250 languages**, strengthening the digital

accessibility of God's word. Making Bible translations online is crucial for accessibility and language preservation as 97% of languages lack a strong digital presence.



Digital Bible Library - January 1, 2025

To read more, visit biblesociety.org.au/blog.



Rwanda

Rwanda Literacy Project



In Rwanda, the Bright Future Through Improved Literacy Project is transforming young lives by nurturing a love for reading and writing. Supported by Bible Society Australia and implemented by African Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE) Rwanda, the literacy project reached more than 38,000 students in 2024, improving early-grade learners' (P1-P3) literacy education.

One dedicated literacy teacher shared that after weeks of gentle encouragement and tailored support, her student eventually became an advanced reader. "When initially tested on oral reading fluency, Joshua could only read 8 words per minute at 47% accuracy. By the end of the school year, he read 57 words per minute at 95% accuracy!"

Thankful for the program and her son's teacher, one mother shared how her son "became excited about books for the first time in his life. He brought books home from his classroom to read, and he looked for things to read in our house."

Even school libraries are being revived: "I love the Bright Future Through Improved Literacy Project," shares a Librarian. "It literally brought back life and genuine value into our school library and reignited a sense of purpose to me personally."

Thanks to the dedication of educators and partners, the project continues to empower primary school children, building not only literacy but lifelong confidence and opportunity.

To read more, visit biblesociety.org.au/blog.



Supporter Update

Avoca Beach Theatre Fundraising Screenings



In April and May this year, the historic Avoca Beach Theatre on NSW's Central Coast became a beacon for Bible mission. Faithful theatre owners, Beth and Norman Hunter, opened the doors to fundraise for Bible Society Australia (BSA), hosting two special screenings of *The Chosen* – Season 5, drawing nearly 430 attendees in total.

Each evening began with a short video sharing Bible Society Australia's vision — to see lives transformed through the Bible, particularly among Australian Indigenous communities. Audiences responded with generosity, donating to BSA via the QR code on screen.

All proceeds supported Indigenous Bible translation projects like the Pitjantjatjara Old Testament and the Noongar Gospel of Matthew — initiatives that preserve language and offer Indigenous communities the opportunity to encounter God's word in their mother tongue.

This event is a powerful example of how creativity and community spirit can advance Bible mission. Whether through film nights, sporting events like Bike for Bibles, or local partnerships, supporters like the Hunters are showing that everyone can play a part to advance this Bible mission.

To read more, visit biblesociety.org.au/blog.



Why religious architecture has the power to inspire even the most sceptical

CPX

Barney Swartz

Barney Swartz is a senior fellow of the Centre for Public Christianity. This article was first published in The Age.

The principle of Gothic architecture, wrote 19th-century poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, is infinity made imaginable.

There is something almost inexpressibly inspiring about a 1000-year-old cathedral which lifts us into something much bigger than ourselves, reminds us of our finitude and inspires us to look beyond our daily lives.

Europe has many buildings of ancient lineage that are beautiful and grand, with every proportion designed to impress and delight – historic palaces or opera houses, for example. But only places of worship explicitly connect us to the numinous.

Cathedrals, soaring upwards, are designed to point worshippers to God, to the eternal, through their airy space, majestic proportions and

wonderful decorations. I love entering a historic Gothic cathedral (or small stone church) and knowing that I am standing, sitting or kneeling where untold thousands have done the same, worshipping the same God, and doubtless praying very similar prayers for themselves, their families and their communities.

I love that I stand in this vast continuity, connected with the past and the future.

I love the faith and commitment of the master architects and masons who often laboured for decades, knowing the work would never be finished in their lifetime. Cologne Cathedral, the longest, took 632 years to complete.

People sometimes look at the ambitious size and scope of churches, even in small towns and villages, and wonder why their communities went to such lengths. One of the reasons was that centuries ago most parishioners could not dream of personal riches but, together, the community could – and did – take pride and pleasure in the result.

Of course, it is not only believers who seek a connection with what they hold sacred. Many find it in God's magnificent creation, which leads them to reflect on how small a mark our lives make on the universe, or in man-made

achievements such as music or art. I, too, am moved by all of these.

Perhaps the world's most famous atheist, Richard Dawkins, has written that he is a cultural Christian in this way, that he loves the visible cultural expression of faith – the architecture, the music – while conceding nothing of its inspiration.

Even sceptics, I think, are impressed by the spiritual sanctity of these marvellous buildings. In their hushed environs no one shouts or runs or talks loudly on a mobile phone. They, too, are awed and stilled by the hint of the infinite.

Augustine, the great African theologian who wrote 1600 years ago – the one who as a young convert famously prayed “Lord make me chaste, but not yet!” – perhaps put it better than anyone when he observed that “our hearts are restless, Lord, until they rest in you”.

Find out more about CPX at:
publicchristianity.org

Faith Stories

Paul's story



'For 55 years, I had a hatred of God and the church... Now I even serve communion at church!'

My parents told me I was a mistake. They said I should have ended up in a bucket. When I was 6 years old, I was molested at Sunday School. I told my parents, and they didn't believe me. They said never speak of it again. After that, I had a hatred of God and the church for 55 years.

In 2017, I was living on my property at Uarbry, country NSW. I was a very angry man. I used to hunt and kill things, especially foxes. I'd been on and off with psychologists for years, but it hadn't helped. I was an alcoholic.

Then the bushfire happened. It picked up and headed towards Uarbry. I had everything set up to fight it. But the bore stopped working. It hadn't entered my head that the electricity was

cut. The landline also wasn't working, and we had no mobile service. Next minute, the local police officer turned up, and said, "What are you doing here?!"

I threw the dogs in the car and the fire chased me down the lane. We got to the oval in Coolah, and I was a mess. I'd lost everything – my house, the sheds, the cars, and all my optical equipment. All I had left was my singlet and the stubbies I was wearing, and my hat. I didn't even have my wallet. I didn't have insurance.

The year before, I'd met Rose at the op shop in town. She sold me some books. When I got to the evacuation centre, there she was again. She was earmarked to look after me ... and she told me

I had to eat, or I'd die. She fed me coffee and we talked. Then she gave me a pair of boots and some undies and socks. The next day, my brother came and gave me a tent. I put it up the back of my property, away from the asbestos. There was an old dunny on the next block, so I used that.

In the meantime, I got to know Rose a bit more. She told me she played the organ at her church in Coolah. After a while, I said I'd drive her to church, but I would never come inside. I sat in the car outside the church, and I listened to her play. Then, after a while, I got closer. I walked towards the church, and I stood in the alcove, and I listened to her play. Then, I came inside the door, and I sat next to her at the organ, up the back.

There was a bloke at church by the name of Sid who greeted me when I came in ... like I was a long-lost friend. He was a diamond. Then after a while, I started talking to the minister. We had many and varied conversations. I started to realise if we don't have a concept for 'bad', then we have no concept for 'good'.

One time I was driving to church, talking out loud, using expletives to God about the fire, and I heard something in reply. At the time, I thought it was God, so I talked back to him. As I talked to him, I actually felt really good! That was surprising – that I felt good talking to God!

Then I started reading the Bible. It made no sense to me at first, so I rang the minister and

said, "I don't understand any of this!" Rose also fed me books from the op shop. I started to realise that mere mortals don't have the capacity to understand everything about God and his grand plan. I found myself becoming happier, letting go of some of my anger. I could see that God was looking after me. I started to trust God for my life. By then, I was fixing up the tent, and I'd go into town and the exact things I needed would turn up at the op shop – screwdrivers, hammers, carpet tiles, an oven, corrugated iron. God was providing for me.

But I still wouldn't take communion. Every time, it triggered me. I'd feel insanely angry, and walk out of church. But things changed slowly. I knew that God was helping me, and I could trust him. I married Rose. We've been joyously happy! And I kept talking to God all the time. One Sunday, I was in church in Mudgee. Our granddaughters were walking up the front to take communion and they asked me to come with them. I did. I knelt down, put out my hands and said, "Yep, for me too." Rose started crying. So did a lot of the others. That's what God has done in my life, and a lot of other things as well. Now, I even serve communion at church!

Paul's story is part of the Faith Stories series, compiled by Naomi Reed.

To read more Faith Stories, visit biblesociety.org.au/faith-stories.

Daily Bible

Day 1

Luke 12: 16b-17, 20 (NIV)
The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops ...' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

This parable hits home for many of us. We often equate success with financial security and believe that accumulating wealth will bring us peace and happiness. However, Jesus warns us that life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. True security and contentment come from a rich relationship with God, not from material wealth. Jesus addresses the underlying fear and greed in our hearts, reminding us to trust in God's provision and to be generous with the blessings we receive.

Are you living for physical pleasures alone, and how is that affecting your sense of fulfillment? How can you seek true joy by living a life that is rich toward God, and embracing his purpose for your life instead?

Prayer:
Lord, help us to see beyond the allure of material wealth and to trust in your provision. Teach us to address our fears with faith, to seek comfort in your presence, and to find true joy in a life dedicated to your will. May we be rich in love, generosity, and faith, sharing your blessings with those around us. Amen.

Day 2

Luke 6:47-48 (NIV)
As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.

In Isaiah 28:14-18, a similar imagery is used to depict the importance of a strong foundation. The people of God, facing the threat of Assyria, made a pact with Egypt, described metaphorically as a covenant with death. Isaiah contrasts this flawed foundation with a future cornerstone, a precious and tested stone, symbolising truth and justice. Jesus presents himself as this cornerstone, the solid rock upon which a life of faith and obedience should be built.

This parable reminds us that merely hearing Jesus' words without action leads to inevitable destruction. However, those who hear and act are building their lives on a secure foundation, resilient against the storms of life.

In what areas of your life do you need to take action to actively apply Jesus' teachings?

Prayer:
Lord, thank you for your word and the wisdom it brings. Help us not only to hear your teachings but to act on them. Strengthen our faith and make our lives a reflection of your truth. May we build on the solid rock of your love and guidance, standing firm in every storm. Amen.

Abundant Grace

We are reading the Bible with Munther, General Secretary of the Bible Society of Jordan. In this series, we delve into the profound teachings of Jesus by exploring a series of powerful and thought-provoking parables, revealing their relevance to modern-day Christians and inspiring us to apply their lessons to our own lives.

Day 3

Luke 19:13 (NIV)
So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'

Have you ever wondered what it truly means for Jesus to be King? Or what is expected of us during his absence? The Parable of the Minas offers profound insights into these questions. The nobleman in the story, who represents Jesus, entrusts his servants with minas — a form of currency. He instructs them to "put this money to work" until he returns. This isn't just about financial investment; it's a call to invest our lives, talents, and resources in ways that honour God. The servants' responses reveal their hearts. Some eagerly put the minas to work, multiplying their master's investment and earning his trust and greater responsibility. Others, out of fear or apathy, bury their mina, squandering the opportunity and facing the consequences of their inaction.

What are the "minas" — the unique gifts and talents — that God has entrusted to you? How can you utilise them to further his kingdom?

Prayer:
Lord, thank you for entrusting me with the precious gifts you have given me. Help me to be a faithful steward of these gifts, investing them wisely and boldly for your glory. Give me the courage to overcome any fears or doubts that may hinder me from fully participating in your work. May my life bring honour to your name. Amen.

Day 4

Luke 13:18-19 (NIV)
Then Jesus asked, 'What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches.'

This parable reminds me that God's kingdom is not always about grand displays or spectacular events. It often starts with a whisper, a seed of faith planted in the heart. It's about individuals encountering Jesus, experiencing transformation, and then sharing their faith with others, leading to a ripple effect that can impact entire communities and even nations. The parable also challenges me to consider the potential within myself and others. We may feel small and insignificant, but God sees the potential for growth and impact within each of us. When we surrender our lives to God, allow his Spirit to work in us, and actively participate in his kingdom, we can become part of something far greater than ourselves.

Prayer:
Lord, thank you for the power of your kingdom, which often starts with the smallest of seeds. Help me to see the potential within myself and others, and to actively participate in your work. May my life be a testament to the transformative power of your love and grace. Amen.

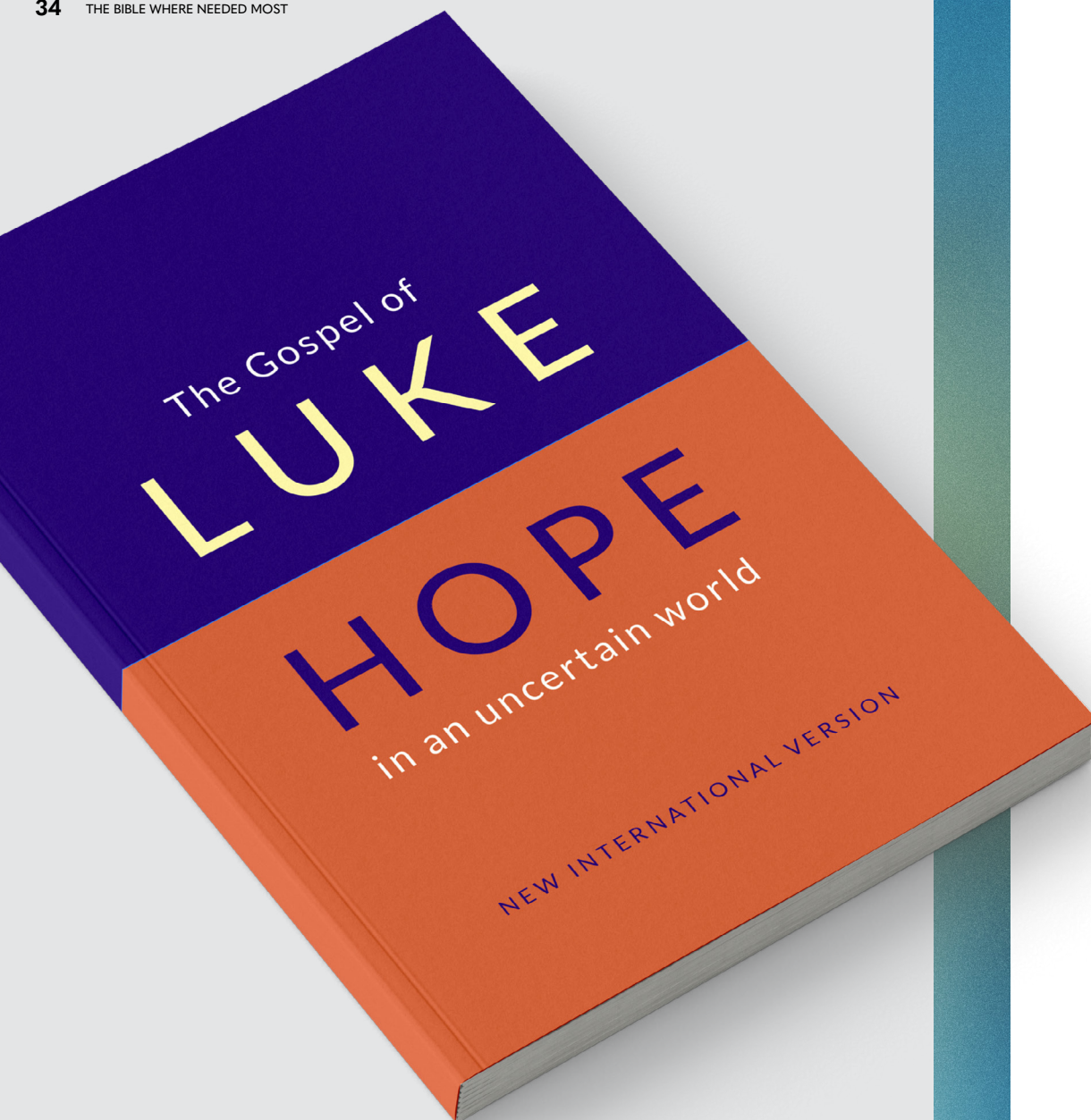


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Creativity in ministry fueled by one small custom Gospel

This year, Anglican churches across Australia united in a common focus of Hope25, evangelism from Easter to Pentecost Sunday. Bible Society Australia (BSA) supported this beautiful vision by publishing an engaging and cost-effective custom Gospel of Luke for churches to give to new believers. We spoke to The Right Rev. Dr Richard Condie, Anglican Bishop of Tasmania about the Hope25 project and custom gospel.

What was the vision behind the Hope25 project?

“Our vision was for a season of parish-based evangelism in the Anglican Church of Australia between Easter Day and Pentecost Sunday in 2025. We pursued the theme of “Hope in an uncertain world” tapping into the Gospel’s answer to the world’s uncertainty. We encouraged every parish in every diocese to do at least one thing to proclaim the hope we had in Jesus during this period.”

How does the Hope25 Gospel of Luke help to serve that vision?

“Our plan was to allow each parish to develop their own response, so that they could do something that was authentic for them. We provided lots of resources; training, evangelism ideas, and materials to use at: hope25.com.au

The planning team thought that one of the best ways to communicate gospel hope was to put a copy of a gospel in the hands of people who might be interested in Jesus. We believe that if people read about Jesus, they will be drawn to him, and the hope that he offers. We approached Bible Society Australia to produce a Gospel that connected with our theme, that could be provided to Parishes across the country as part of the program. They were designed to be attractive, to fit to the theme, and be easily given away.”

What feedback have you received so far from churches and individuals about Hope25 project and the Gospel of Luke?

“We distributed 53,000 copies of the gospel through our Anglican networks. Anecdotally we know that many of these were given away at events, church services and in churches during the Hope25 season. One Diocese gave a copy to all Anglican high school students. We have received a huge amount of positive feedback, with some churches running out and asking for more.

Lots of creativity has flowed. Many different proclamation events have taken place, and people are reporting positive results. Some parishes have attempted evangelism for the first time, or the first time in a long time.”

How do you hope this gospel (and project) will contribute to long-term vision of the Anglican Church?

“We hope that churches will have seen the positive impact of doing evangelism generally and giving away the scriptures specifically, and that this will become part of the normal and expected life of every Anglican Church. We long for more spiritual vitality and evangelistic effectiveness through Anglican churches in Australia.”

Get in touch with Bible Society to talk about designing a custom Gospel or Bible for your ministry or school. Email: custombibles@biblesociety.org.au





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