



Dear Friends,

What comes to mind when you think of the work of Bible Society? Perhaps you think about copies of the Bible being given to those who don't have access to one. And you'd be right! Bible distribution is central to Bible Society Australia's mission of ensuring that all people, everywhere, can Open The Bible for themselves.

I've had the privilege of serving in Bible Society Australia's missions team for more than 20 years now, and it's been a true privilege. So many things have changed over the years: new leaders, new technology, new Australian cricket captains! But the one thing that has not changed is the message of hope that God's word has for all people.

Many Christians are living without their own Bible while they're facing tough realities like poverty, violence, and natural disasters which make it almost impossible to access one. Yet they continue to seek the guidance and truth found in God's word.

As you read this Sower magazine, you'll catch a glimpse of how lives can be transformed by the message of God's love through his word. From prisoners in South Africa to families struggling with their child's illness in Nicaragua, from disadvantaged school children in Kenya to Aussie Scripture teachers introducing kids to the Bible ... lives are changed through receiving God's word.

It is a true privilege to Open The Bible with people all around the world. Some of my cherished memories include reading the Bible and praying with a dying mother in the slums of Kenya, witnessing a sister in Christ in China receive her first Bible and seeing an Indigenous sister's excitement at receiving a Bible in her heart language. I hope reading this edition of Sower encourages you to appreciate the privilege of helping people receive and engage with their very own Bible.

The apostle Paul said in Romans "... through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide, we might have hope" (Romans 15:4b NIV). This reminds me that it is only through God's word that we can know true hope to help us face life's challenges.

My prayer is that all people, everywhere will have access to God's word and be transformed by the message of hope found in it.



YOURS IN CHRIST,

Chris Melville

CHIEF MISSIONS OFFICER,
BIBLE SOCIETY AUSTRALIA



“... it is only through
God’s word that we
can know true hope
to help us face life’s
challenges.”





He said to them,
'Go into all the world
and preach the gospel
to all creation.'
— Mark 16:15 (NIV)





THE HOPE OF THE BIBLE: TRANSFORMING LIVES OF PRISONERS

SOUTH AFRICA

“Years ago, in a small Australian outback church, Pastor Willy from South Africa spoke as a guest of Bible Society Australia. He preached from the word of God and spoke about the vital work of distributing Bibles to desperate people in South African prisons, carried out by World Hope Ministries with the support of Bible Society Australia donors.

After he spoke, a South African couple approached Pastor Willy and shared with him that their son was murdered in South Africa, and the perpetrator is still in prison. The couple gave Pastor Willy a letter for their son's murderer, as well as his name. When Pastor Willy returned to South Africa and his ministry, he found the man after a couple of months.

Pastor Willy told the man, “I have a message for you,” and gave him the letter, which he read. The man exclaimed to Pastor Willy, “This is impossible. These people don't even know me.” Pastor Willy said to him, “Yes, but you murdered their son.” He said, “That's right, and I'm living in such regret and such remorse.”

“And then we led him to Jesus,” Pastor Willy remembers.

The man began World Hope Ministries Bible Discipleship course, and, after a time, Pastor Willy wrote to the South African couple living in Australia, and asked, “What did you say in that letter?” Eventually, the couple sent Pastor Willy a copy of the letter. He recalls them expressing to

their son's murderer their feeling that, “We want you to know that we regard you as our son around the table, where the space is empty.”

Pastor Willy recalls vividly the impact of that letter and the forgiveness the family offered. “It was running around the prison, that they, the victims, were able to forgive.” The prisoner received a Bible, and he was forever grateful for the Scriptures.

This kind of transformation is seen regularly by those who minister with World Hope Ministries in South African prisons. South Africa has the twelfth highest number of prisoners globally, with over 164,000 inmates across 235 operational prisons, leading to severe overcrowding.

Pastor Willy says of the inmates, “They are spiritually impoverished. They say, ‘You talk to us about God, but then how do we carry on while we're in here? We're doing years and years of time ... We don't have a Bible.’” He tells them, “The Bible is the voice of God to the soul.” They respond, very clearly, “Give us the voice ... make sure that we can have a copy.”

Pastor Willy reflects on how the Bible brings stability to the prisoners. “You know, the word of God brings stability to their minds, and to their spirits, as they seek the Lord through a relationship, they can have a quiet time. They can share their life with God and live in the hope of what the Bible offers them.”

“Every time I feel down, I just open my Bible and read, and I find all the answers I need ... When I’m lost, I open up my Bible.”

Roger is one such prisoner. “After I became a child of God, my hope was restored,” he shares, admitting that his life before Jesus was hopeless. “I did not have any direction, and I was filled with guilt, bitterness, anger, hatred and unforgiveness.”

The hope Roger discovered in God’s word has transformed his life completely. He says, “I am no longer walking in darkness. I have been set free from guilt, anger, hatred, bitterness and unforgiveness. My faith as a child of God is growing. I am no longer interested in committing crime but instead want to do the things that please God.”

Roger has started with the Bible Discipleship Course and says, “I am filled with joy because of what I am learning from the course. The course is strengthening my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ... **The Bible means life to me because it contains the Word of God that brings forth eternal life.**”

A THANK YOU NOTE TO THE DONOR OF MY BIBLE & WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS TO ME...?

The bible means life to me because it contains the Word of God that brings forth eternal life.

Pastor Willy emphasises the need for Bibles among the prisoners. “We came across the idea of letting them do our discipleship course first, and then getting a certificate, and qualifying for

a Bible in their own language.” He shares that many ministries provide secondhand Bibles, but “we like to add a little bit of dignity to it, and we like to be able to gift them a new Bible, in their language, and say, ‘this is yours.’”

Once the participants finish the course, they write to World Hope Ministries to receive their certificate and Bible. They use the discipleship booklet during the course, referring to verses without needing a Bible. “They’re hungry by the time they finish,” Pastor Willy explains, “because they look forward to that Bible.”

For Jacob, the Bible he received is now essential to his life. **“Every time I feel down, I just open my Bible and read, and I find all the answers I need ... When I’m lost, I open up my Bible.”**

Jacob’s life has been completely transformed by the word of God. “My life before receiving Jesus Christ was blind, though I thought everything I was doing was right,” he reflects. “It was only for temporary. Money, a good life and fancy cars; they’re only things for this world, and they don’t go with us to heaven.” When Jacob signed up for the 16-week Bible Discipleship course and began studying the Bible, his mind and eyes were opened. “I came to know that I’ve been loved, and all my sins are forgiven. After I became a child of God, I felt happier, because I am a changed man ... Now I know and understand that God sent his only son to die for my sins.”





In South African prisons, the Bible is not simply being handed out; through World Hope Ministries and the Bible Discipleship course, prisoners are encountering the word of God and experiencing the transformation the love and hope of Jesus brings. They are truly receiving the Bible, in their hearts as well as in their hands.

The South African couple living in Australia are supporters of Bible Society Australia work. Pastor Willy says, “they donate wonderfully to Bible Society for the Bibles that inmates get.” Their incredible generosity in forgiving their son’s murderer is extraordinary, Pastor Willy acknowledges. Nevertheless, he says, there is an opportunity for every Australian to be involved in this transformational work of Bible distribution. “There are living people who need an opportunity. We are not overlooking their crimes; we know these men were somebody’s nightmare. But I do say to those who give to this work: you are not asking us to lock them in and throw away the key. You’re saying, “Unlock it and give them the key to life. With your donation, that money is exchanged with the word of God, which is eternal life to those who hear and need it inside the prison.”

Pastor Willy concludes, “The only hope we've got is that people are changed by the power of the word of God.”

If you would like to support this Bible distribution project, visit biblesociety.org.au/sow.

THANK YOU NOTE TO THE DONOR OF MY BIBLE & WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS TO ME...?

IT A BEST FRIEND I EVER HAD AS IT HELPS
HELPS ME TO COME TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF
THE WORD OF GOD. I CAN HEAR GOD THROUGH HIS
WORD AND TO COMMUNICATE WITH HIM ANYTIME



HOPE AND SMILES: BRINGING GOD'S COMFORT TO CHILDREN WITH CANCER

NICARAGUA

In the corridors of La Mascota, Nicaragua's hospital for children with cancer, fear and uncertainty weigh heavily on parents. Many travel long distances, leaving behind homes and families, clinging to hope that their child will receive the care they need. Beyond medical treatment, they need spiritual and emotional support. This is where Bible Society of Nicaragua's project, 'Hope and Smiles for Children with Cancer,' steps in — offering God's word as a source of strength.

"The hospital is currently the only one that serves children with cancer, and families come from

across the country just to receive a diagnosis and treatment," explains Rebeca from Bible Society of Nicaragua. "Usually these families come with nothing ... they face fear and uncertainty. The difficulty for them is not only the fact that they have a sick child that needs desperate attention and care, but it's also that they have left their community."

Carla*, whose seven-year-old son, Gerardo*, was diagnosed with leukaemia, describes this difficulty. "We arrived at the hospital with only the clothes we were wearing, scared because we didn't know what was ahead. After tests,

the doctors told me my child had leukaemia, a disease I had never heard of. They said he needed immediate treatment, and the hospital would become our home.”

“We spent nights unable to find comfort, feeling desperate,” she recalls. “Then one Monday, some brothers from the Bible Society passed by praying. I sought them out and asked for prayer. Since that moment, I have felt the embrace of God in our lives.”

The Gift of God's Word

At the heart of the Hope and Smiles for Children with Cancer project is the simple yet powerful gift of the Bible. Volunteers and Bible Society staff distribute age-appropriate Bibles to children and their families, offering comfort, guidance, and the assurance of God’s presence and love.

“This project aims to create a safe space where they can find emotional and spiritual refuge during these very trying times, and to find refuge in God,” Rebeca explains.

Operating for over 15 years, this project has been meeting these parents at their greatest time of need with the spiritual care from God’s word. Coming alongside Bible Society of Nicaragua staff are over a hundred project volunteers consisting of pastors and church members who offer prayers and Bible studies to the patients during their free time. “People are generally receptive, and they really, really enjoy interacting with the Bible,” assures Rebeca.

For parents like Carla, this initiative has strengthened her faith, for which she is grateful:

“I THANK GOD THAT THE BIBLE IS IN THE HOSPITAL, A PLACE WHERE ONLY GOD CAN HELP US AMID PAIN AND DESPAIR.”

“Now that I have learned to pray, I ask God to bless you and touch hearts so that you always send free Bibles to sick children and their families.”

Healing More Than the Body

Bible Society of Nicaragua works closely with La Mascota Hospital, ensuring that spiritual care aligns with the hospital’s commitment to holistic healing. “We comply with hospital standards, and the hospital recognises that what we do is part of the treatment,” Rebeca shares. “They acknowledge that spiritual support is a supplement to the medical care children receive.”

This affirmation highlights that healing extends beyond medicine — to the heart and soul. As children endure rigorous treatments, and as parents stand by their bedsides, the Bible Society team reminds them they are not alone.



Finding Refuge in God

For single mother, Lourdes*, who accompanies her six-year-old daughter, Lucía*, through chemotherapy, coming to the hospital has always been difficult. Every day, she sees new children diagnosed with cancer, and it's heartbreaking. "But in the midst of sad news, we receive this spiritual food ... the Bible," she says.

"The Bible has been a new experience for me," Lourdes continues. "Until now, I had [never] received a Bible. In it, I have unburdened my heart to God. I have sung and prayed with joy when I see the beautiful eyes of my little girl [reading] her Bible with me. Today we rejoice that even though we must be in the hospital, we feel that God accompanies us and loves us."

Parents arrive in despair but leave with renewed faith. Children, despite suffering, embrace the love of Jesus. Volunteers witness lives being changed — not just through medicine, but through God's eternal promises.

"That's the success of this project," Rebeca says. "It gives children the opportunity to not only learn about God but also seek refuge and healing in him. Yes, there is fear, but we find a way to channel that fear into feelings of safety and hope by finding refuge in God."

A Message of Gratitude

"Thank you, friends from Australian Bible Society, for praying for the children in Nicaragua," Rebeca shares. "Thank you for supporting this amazing project where God is touching hearts through the Bible. It is a shining light, strengthening faith and spiritually uplifting families. We encourage you to keep helping children and families in the hospital."

If you would like to support this Bible distribution project, bringing hope and smiles to children with cancer in Nicaragua, visit biblesociety.org.au/sow.

*Names changed to protect privacy.



**YOU CAN SHINE A LIGHT IN
THE DARKNESS FOR MANY
SEARCHING FOR REDEMPTION
OR SIMPLY HOPE FOR
TOMORROW.**



EVERY \$50

can bring hope to refugee children in Lebanon as we distribute the Arabic Peace & Justice Bible.



EVERY \$100

could place a Bible in the hands of children in urban and rural Kenya, transforming lives through God's word.



EVERY \$150

could supply Bibles to prisoners and guards in South African prisons, equipping World Hope Ministries in their Prison Ministry.

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



SCRIPTURE TEACHERS: SHARING GOD'S WORD IN SCHOOLS

AUSTRALIA

Public school students across Australia are exploring the Bible and growing in faith, thanks to the dedication of Scripture teachers and the generous support of Bible Society Australia (BSA) donors. This is a vital ministry in Australia, as many children may never encounter the Bible elsewhere. By introducing young people to God's word, Scripture teachers and instructors are laying a foundation of faith that can guide these students throughout their lives.

BSA is committed to Opening The Bible in schools through our Bibles in Schools Grant, which equips volunteer Special Religious Education (SRE) teachers and Christian Religious Instruction (CRI) instructors with classroom Bibles (and 'borrow' Bibles for SRE).

These tools enable these volunteers to share the life-affirming truths of Scripture with students across the nation.

The First Time Holding a Bible

The impact of this ministry is far-reaching and deep. CRI instructor, Carmen*, shares, "I was almost brought to tears when one child in my class looked up at me, clutching the Bible to her chest, saying,

"MRS. [CARMEN] THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER HELD A BIBLE!"

Many students across Carmen's classes echoed that this was their first encounter with God's word. They eagerly learned to navigate the pages, discovering treasures like Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (NIV). The excitement and curiosity were tangible as students discovered the treasures in the Bible.

Fiona*, another CRI instructor expressed her gratitude, saying, "The students were so excited to look up the Bible verses we were using in our Scripture lesson. Thank you for providing these Bibles at no cost."

Encouragement and Growth

Providing Bibles for schools allows SRE teachers like Jen* to make Scripture available for Scripture classes to encourage students and their families.

"Thank you so much for our Bibles. The day after they arrived, they were put in the hands of my Year 4 class ... We were able to read Isaiah 61 and then the part in the gospels where Jesus reads the same passage and declares that this has come true!" Jen shares.

Having taught the same cohort two years ago, Jen reflects on how far the students have come in their ability to navigate the Bible. "It was wonderful to see some who had struggled to read before, going ahead to find the passages in the Bible. I am currently covering the Bibles in clear contact to make them last the distance!"

Your Generosity and Prayer

This ministry is made possible by your generosity. Carmen reflects, "The students were blown away that someone they didn't know cared enough to donate Bibles so they could have their own in class." Your support provides these Bibles, reaching Australia's youth with God's word. To continue supporting this ministry, providing these life-changing resources to bless Australia's youth, visit biblesociety.org.au/sow.

As we celebrate this ministry, let us thank God we can provide Bibles, equipping teachers and instructors as they go into schools and Open The Bible with the next generation.

"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6 NIV).

*Names changed to protect privacy.



Pray With Us



Please pray for those around the world who are longing for a copy of the Bible to strengthen them in the face of life's challenges.

Just as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, pray that God's word may go out and not return to him empty, but will accomplish what he desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it.

Pray that as God's word is distributed to prisoners in South Africa, families facing childhood cancer in Nicaragua and millions of rural poor in China, the unfolding of God's words would give light and impart understanding; that those who receive the Bible would seek to live not by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Pray too for Bible Society supporters, staff, volunteers and partners around the globe. Praise God for the role we all are blessed to play in planting and watering the seed of God's word; pray that all may trust in God, who takes the seed and makes it grow.

Pray for those who receive Bibles through these projects, that as they receive and hear God's word, it may fall on good soil; pray that God would guard hearts from the worries of this life and any other challenge that may make his word unfruitful in their heart and lives. Pray they would hear and understand and produce an abundant crop for the Lord.

DOWNLOAD OUR MONTHLY PRAYER GUIDE

BIBLESOCIETY.ORG.AU/PRAY



The Bible

FOR ALL
PEOPLE
EVERYWHERE

Everywhere around the world, many are suffering from crisis and despair. But we know that it's in turning to God's word that people find hope, healing, and learn of God's redeeming love.

Will you join our mission to distribute Bibles for all people, everywhere? Your giving today will help place Bibles in the hands of refugee families in Jordan, prisoners in South Africa, children battling cancer in Nicaragua and more.



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







BIBLES FOR ALL

Bible Society Australia's mission is to equip all people everywhere with the Bible.

We know that all around the world, many long for God's word but face barriers like poverty, displacement, and crisis. Many Christians are striving to live their faith without a Bible to strengthen them.

What are we doing to ensure all people, everywhere, have a Bible?

Through strategic distribution projects, Bible Society Australia and our partners are placing Bibles in the hands of those who need them most — offering God's message of hope, healing, and love.

Following the translation, publication and printing, Bibles are transported to local Bible Society partners on the ground and then distributed to those in need.

From hospitals in Nicaragua, to prisons in South Africa, refugee camps in Jordan and families in Australia, we are reaching all people, everywhere, making sure people can read or listen to the Bible and meaningfully engage with God's word.

In 2025, Bible Society Australia is supporting nine Bible distribution projects around the world:

South Africa: Hope for prisoners

Nicaragua: God's word for kids with cancer

Ukraine: Hope Amidst Fear

Jordan: Bibles and Bread

Africa: Audio Bibles for Africans

India: Audio Bibles for India

South Africa: Scripture for Future Leaders

China: Bibles for Millions

Kenya: Bibles for the Young



In Australia, Bible Society is working to distribute Scriptures through:

- Supporting remote and Indigenous ministries with Scriptures
- 'Bibles for Bubs' program
- 'Bibles in Schools' Scripture Grants
- Equipping Chaplains and parachurch ministries with Scriptures
- Scriptures for the Australian Defence Forces

Each of these projects is specially designed to reach people who are in desperate need for God's word. Many are longing for a Bible of their own, others are at a crossroads of life and need God's words of hope, love and wisdom.

One of our BSA staff, Allison, was blessed to visit our Bible Distribution project with the Bible Society of Kenya in 2024, where she witnessed firsthand the distribution of Bibles for the young. These Bibles equip students to succeed in their studies of Christian Religious Education at school, and also impact their hearts and their lives. In Kenya, 98% of schools do not have Bibles to supply to their students.

"I learnt that these schools and the students in Kenya face many challenges," Allison shares. Some Grade 6 students were asked to come and share how their Bibles they received in 2022 have helped them. Allison recalls, **"They found their Bibles quickly, and came out holding them; I could see that they were well used. The children all shared their testimonies in their own words, how the Bible had impacted their lives."**

In 2024, 7,597 children in Kenya received a full Bible. One student hopes "to get Godly instructions from this Bible as well as help my parents know God and understand his word", and another shared her trust that "this Bible will guide me in how to simply respect God and also my elders."

To learn more, visit biblesociety.org.au/our-work.

BIBLE TRANSLATION PROGRESS IN VANUATU



In the closing months of 2024, the Bible Society of the South Pacific (BSSP) continued its mission of translating the Bible in several of Vanuatu's languages. Despite the devastating impact of two powerful earthquakes in December — measuring 7.3 and 5.5 in magnitude — thankfully, all BSSP translation teams have not been affected, and they remain steadfast in their work.

From November 20-28, 2024, BSSP translation staff visited Vanuatu to assess the progress of six Bible translation projects and have highlighted the following progress:

- The **Erromango New Testament Revised Gospel of Matthew** is set to be completed and printed by the end of 2025.
- Book introductions and section headings were successfully inserted for the **Nguna Togo Bible Revision**.
- The **Ahamb (Axamb) New Testament Gospel of John** and the **Futuna New Testament Gospel of Matthew** are now in the typesetting stages (the Futuna Translation Team is photographed above).
- The launch of the **Mele New Testament Gospel of Matthew** will be during the Missionary Celebration in May 2025.

Bible Society thanks all those who continue to pray and support this mission, reaching the people of Vanuatu with God's word in their heart languages.

JESUS. ALL ABOUT LIFE SEES THOUSANDS COME TO FAITH IN MONGOLIA





After months of planning and collaboration with Mongolian churches, the *Jesus. All About Life* (JAAL) evangelism campaign had a remarkable run in late 2024, producing astonishing results! Led by Bible Society Australia's partners, Agriculture Innovations Development (AID) in collaboration with the Mongolian Evangelical Association and Ulaanbaatar city pastors, the campaign united 146 churches and Christian organisations, reaching approximately **17,000 people** — a significant impact given Mongolia's small Christian population.

The JAAL event featured the *Heaven's Gates Hell's Flames* drama at Ulaanbaatar Palace, drawing an overwhelming response:

- 8,129 people attended, including 6,119 unbelievers
- 4,776 people accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour
- 5,113 filled out Decision Cards
- an additional 6,215 provided contact details through invitations and churches

This response is extraordinary, considering Mongolia's 2020 Census reported only 2.2% of its 3.3 million people (about 72,600) identify as Christian.

AID shared that one technician at Ulaanbaatar Palace who saw the *Heaven's Gates Hell's Flames* drama was initially sceptical, but was moved after the final performance, saying: "We need to go to church, and we need to bring our children as well."

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



For a Christian, asking 'why pray?' makes no sense

29 November 2024, Barney Zwartz

CPX

Barney Zwartz is a Senior Fellow of the Centre for Public Christianity. This article was first published in The Age.

As a young Christian, long before the Internet, let alone Internet memes, I saw a slogan that tickled me: “why pray when you can worry?” It’s a satirical version of what the Apostle Paul tells the Christians in Philippi: don’t be anxious but take every circumstance to God in prayer.

If God remotely matches the Judeo-Christian concept of all-good, all-knowing – and I believe he does, as we have this conception only through his self-revelation – then why does he tell us to pray? He doesn’t need his self-esteem boosted by human praise, he already knows our needs before we can think to ask, and we are not trying to

change his mind as though he were undecided or uncertain.

He is not, as some have charged, a capricious God who needs to be appeased. Nor is he some cosmic vending machine: request in, desired response out.

In an almost infinitely complex world, how do we even know how to pray for others? How do we avoid platitudes?

This complexity is highlighted when prayers can conflict with each other, as in this amusing quatrain: The Duke of Rutland urged The Times to pray/For rain: the rain came down the following day./The pious marvelled: the sceptics murmured: “Fluke!”/And farmers, late with hay, said: “Damn that Duke!”

The answer, of course, is that we pray not for God’s benefit but for our own. For a Christian, at the most basic level asking “why pray?” makes no sense: it is as natural an impulse as to converse with a spouse.

Prayer brings all sorts of benefits, physical, psychological and spiritual. It can calm anxiety and lower blood pressure, provide stillness and reflection, and lift one’s focus beyond oneself.

Prayer brings one closer to God, closer to the people for whom one prays – it is much harder to hate people if you pray for them – brings more awareness of the needs in the world and builds better relationships. It builds faith and trust.

That said, prayer is not merely a therapeutic exercise – to make it such would be self-defeating. And despite what I say above, there is a mysterious sense in which God does indeed respond to our prayers.

We do indeed empty our hearts to God, yet knowing that our understanding is tiny – and understanding that “no” is also an answer.

The absolute model for prayer – simple, beautiful and profound – is the one Jesus taught his followers: the Lord’s Prayer. It sets out our priorities and needs in a context of hope, our ultimate redemption and God’s glory. For, as Paul reminds us, God is “able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think”.

Faith Stories

Glenyce's story

The gift of a son and a whole new life



He could have chosen anyone to be his mum, but he chose me!

“When I was 14, my dad came home from work and said, ‘How would you like to live in Zambia?’ It was 1968. We’d never heard of Zambia! We got out an atlas and found it in Africa. Dad had been given an opportunity to work with the Ministry of Education. We went! I did my O levels there and we made so many friends. It was a high-pressure situation, so we bonded quickly and deeply... and God put a passion in my heart for Africa. It never went away!

I came back to Australia when I was 16 and it was never the same. I went to business college and finally ended up as protocol officer for the NSW and Commonwealth governments. I found myself walking through the corridors of power in Macquarie Street, accompanying the Governor of

NSW. I organised state visits for royalty and heads of government, and then I got headhunted to work for APEC in 2007.

Then, in 2012, my mum died. My sisters and I decided to go back to Zambia to see where we’d lived. It was just amazing – going across the border and seeing the Zambian flag. It really impacted me. I was quite emotional. I had only lived there for two years, but it was a crucial time in my life. A Zambian pastor hosted us. It turned out he’d been in Sunday school when my sisters and I were teaching Sunday school! He took us to our church and to my old school and our old house. Our house was the same colour inside as it had been 42 years earlier!

Afterwards, I just knew I wanted to be in Africa. I took on a role that involved supporting rural African pastors. Through that work, I met David, who was our link person in Uganda. He was 36, married to Sarah, with four children of their own and 2 fostered children. They had a ministry to orphaned and vulnerable children. They were both from complicated families. David's alcoholic mother had died from cancer and his father was not part of his life. When I met him, he'd recently returned to school, going on to get his Bachelor and then his Masters of Law.

For me, I had never married. I always thought I would, and have children, but it never happened. For a long time, it was painful. All my friends married and had children. I often prayed that God would take the pain away. Of course, God gave me an incredible job and I threw myself into it. But all that time, the ache was present.

In 2018, David and I were on a mission trip together. We spent a lot of time working on projects and we just bonded. Afterwards, he told me he went back home and said to Sarah, 'I think I've found our grandma!' The next year, he said to me, 'I want to adopt you.'

It was amazing! I was 64! And God was giving me a son. It took my breath away. David is a leader in his community. He knows so many people, even internationally. He could have chosen any number of people to be his mum, but he chose me! In 2019, we had a lovely

adoption celebration in Uganda. Over 100 people came, and we had a feast of goat. All of their children spoke, except the youngest who was 8. All the pastors prayed for us, as a new family.

I went back to Australia, still working, but I talked with my new family every single day. Then, in 2022, I moved to Uganda permanently! I sold my house in Australia and everything I owned. David and I bought a hospital in Jinja! It was 9 years old and needed complete revitalising but now we are providing desperately needed health care to the wider Eastern Region of Uganda.

These days, I'm not walking down the corridors of power in Macquarie Street! I'm clambering in and out of wooden boats visiting medical camps, praying over new babies and walking through our emergency department in Jinja. But looking back, I can see God's hand in everything. He knows our pain, even when we're too scared to ask him, or admit it. He sees and hears and knows everything. He weaves his answers into our lives, over time. My favourite Bible passage is from Isaiah 55:8-9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.' That's true! It's been amazing!"

Glenyce's story is part of the Faith Stories series, compiled by Naomi Reed. To read more Faith Stories visit facebook.com/faithstories.naomireed.

Daily Bib

Day 1

John 1:1-3a (NIV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made.

The Apostle John tells us that The Word was the beginning of all things. The Word was with God and The Word was God. There is something inherently powerful in The Word. God's Word who became flesh (John 1:14) is an absolute that exists without the support of anything else. We read in Genesis Chapter 1 that God spoke creation into being. He didn't snap his fingers, wave his arms or blink an eye. He spoke The Word and the progression of that Word has impacted human history and individual lives ever since.

Regardless of the circumstances that surround us or the darkness of our personal experiences, God's Word brings us light and life. God's Word is an absolute that we can rely on. God's Word never fails.

Prayer:

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for your Word to me. Thank you that your Word was the beginning of all things and is my beginning. Help me to hear your Word through the clutter of my everyday life. Amen.

Day 2

John 1:4-5 (NIV)

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

One of the privileges and joys I have in my role as Executive Director at Mission Educate, is to visit the Literacy for Life Project groups in Mozambique. With the support of Bible Society Australia, we have 19 groups in three of Mozambique's 10 provinces providing literacy skills to over 500 illiterate adults. I am constantly amazed at the sense of hope and joy that is expressed by people who are living in the darkest of circumstances.

John tells us that in Jesus was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. Whilst mankind has had some crowning achievements, the history of colonisation in Africa is dominated by mankind's darkest moments. Yet, in our Literacy groups we find individuals who have experienced the darkest of experiences, unable to feed their families, expressing joy. Joy, they have discovered in their relationship with Jesus.

Whatever darkness you face, there is a Light that shines through that darkness.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for bringing light to my life. Thank you for your light that shines through the darkness that cannot be extinguished. Help me to walk in that light. Amen.



What's in a Word?

We will be Opening The Bible with Dr Terry King, Executive Director of Mission Educate, which is an Australian charity developing educational initiatives in Mozambique. Bible Society Australia partners with Mission Educate in providing literacy skills for non-literate Mozambican adults in the Literacy for Life Project.

Day 3

John 1:9-10 (NIV)

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him.

Light is universal. Whilst people today argue about whether absolutes still exist in vocabulary, in words, there is no argument about the absolute of light. Either you have light, sometimes in varying degrees, or you don't! I find it interesting in the way John writes retrospectively, positioning himself at the beginning of time and foretelling the coming of light, as an expression of the Word. He tells us that the true light that gives light to everyone has come, and that some do not recognise it.

There is a promise for us here, that even in the midst of our darkness, light is present. We just need to recognise Him.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you are the Light of the World. Help me to recognise your light in those around me and help me to be a light to those who have lost their way. Amen.

Day 4

John 1:11-12 (NIV)

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Jesus came into the world to those he knew would reject him and gave, to those who received him, the right to become children of God. There is provision and security experienced by children who know that they are supported by a family. I have two children and two granddaughters. When my daughter and her daughters arrive at my home, they freely take charge of all I own. Nothing is sacred, not even the chocolate hidden in the pantry. They know that Grandad (and Grandma) love them and want the best for them. So it is with our Heavenly Father. We have the right to be the children of God. To experience all that God has for us. This does not mean that challenges will not arise in our lives. It does mean that we can go to our Heavenly Father and seek comfort, provision, direction, assurance, wisdom and peace.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I thank you that I can be called a child of God. Thank you that you care for me and have a plan and purpose for my life. Help me to recognise your hand at work in my life and to trust you through the challenges I face. Amen.

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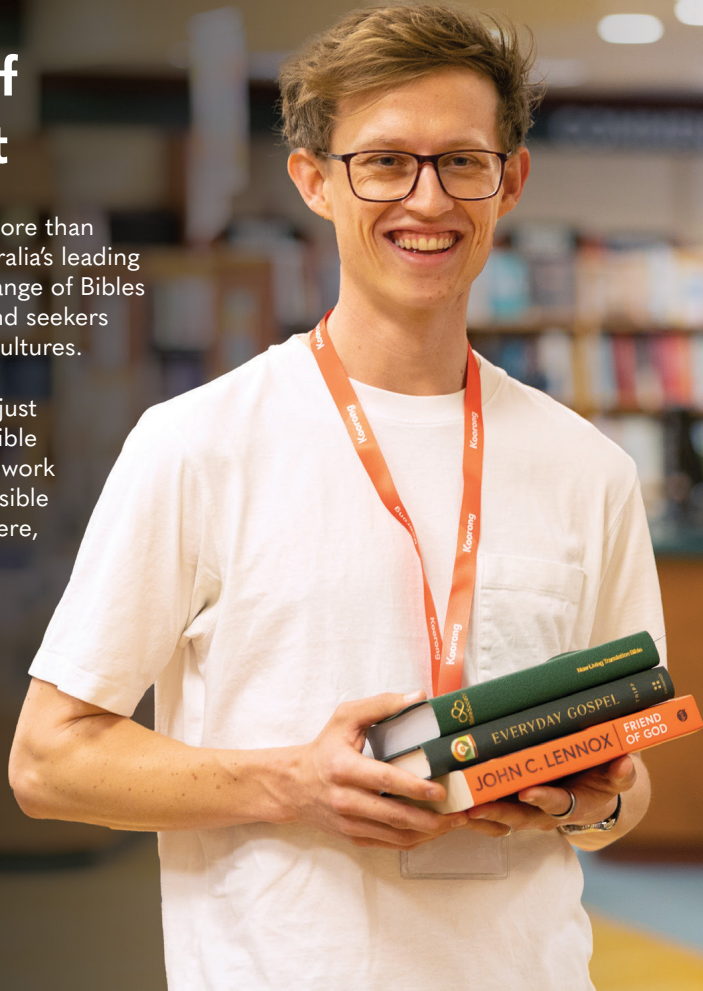
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*"We have fewer limits than ever,
and yet we remain anxious,
grumpy and divided."*



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What is 'The Freedom Trap' about?

What does a viral dancing trend, a study on jam selection and a Tim Tam slam have to do with you? More than you'd think. Our freedom-charged lives offer more choice, better technology and limitless possibilities. And yet, happiness and well-being remain elusive. What if freedom is a trap? And if it is, what can we do to free ourselves from it? The Freedom Trap explores these questions and offers lifehacks for how we can reimagine and reclaim true freedom in everyday life.

Why did you write this book?

The more I looked, I began to see interesting patterns. People have more choice and fewer

constraints, but we're increasingly stressed, exhausted and unsatisfied. I wanted to make sense of these patterns—and to offer a short, accessible and interesting journey through what modern freedom is, how we can misunderstand it, and how we can apply some timeless ancient wisdom to modern life.

What have you learned through writing 'The Freedom Trap'?

I learned a lot about how powerfully the Christian vision of human psychology lines up with modern science and research on decision-making, happiness and well-being. The Christian idea of freedom is an urgent and beautiful one, and diving deep into that was a lot of fun.

The book brings together aspects of psychology, philosophy, behavioural economics and theology. It reminded me of the cultural, practical and intellectual horsepower at the heart of the Christian message.

What do you hope readers will take away from the book?

My hope is that readers would find the book entertaining, easy to read and relevant. We rarely step back to think more deeply about the fine-print of modern "freedom". I'd love for readers to see how the timeless Christian vision of freedom can speak meaningfully to modern life. People are busy and tired. I hope this book can lighten their load a little.

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