Wycliffe Today
SPRING 2025 / VOL.13 / NO.3 / ISSN 2202-9818

Bible storytelling:
God's Word in action

SPRING
2025

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To receive *Wycliffe Today* electronically, email info@wycliffe.org.au

WYCLIFFE TODAY
Spring 2025, Vol. 13 / No. 3
Published by:
Wycliffe BibleTranslators Australia
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Kangaroo Ground VIC 3097
ABN 22 004 705 953

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Print: Classic Press
Cover image: Josh Bartlett leading a Story the Bible workshop. Photo by Gary McMaster.

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Engaging with God's Word

Paul reminds us that 'all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' – 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV). Yet sometimes it can be difficult to engage with those life-giving words on the page.

How do you interact with the Bible? If you find it difficult to stop and reflect on the written words, you are not alone. The most recent National Church Life Survey (NCLS) found that around 19% of church goers read the Bible daily or most days. The research also showed that 37% hardly ever or rarely read Scripture*. How can we get people excited about God's Word again? Oral Bible storytelling might help.

The stories you are about to read in this edition of *Wycliffe Today* include testimonials of people who have been involved in either teaching or participating in Story the Bible workshops and Gospel Drama events. Discover how Bible storytelling is bringing the good news of the gospel to life in Australia, the Pacific, Asia, Africa and all over the world!

Max Sahl

Bethel Funerals

Bethel Funerals' story began in 1997 as a business that provides Christ-like care to grieving families–while also financially supporting Wycliffe Australia.

Visit bethelfunerals.com.au for more information.

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*ncls.org.au/articles/2021-ncls-first-impressions/

Transformed by the Word:
Beautiful feet

by Lynda Wake

And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, 'How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!'
Romans 10:15 (NLT)

I must admit being drawn to images of good looking feet at the nail salon – complete with pedicured and polished toenails. But in real life, I've encountered some very unattractive feet, my own included.

When I first arrived in the mountains of Papua New Guinea to serve with Wycliffe and SIL, I would scrub my muddied feet each evening … to no avail. Eventually, I grew accustomed to the look of blackened heels and toenails. In fact, mud-stained feet were almost a badge of honour, as each of my family members and colleagues all faced the same dilemma.

Thankfully, as the words of the Apostle Paul and the Prophet Isaiah before him remind us, God sees beyond our muddied feet to gaze upon the posture of our hearts. Isaiah prophesied about the coming of the 'Suffering Servant' who would bring salvation and restoration for God's people. We see that prophecy fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He came not as a mighty warrior or well-dressed king but as a poor and humble servant who stood in our place as a payment for our sins. His feet were disfigured, bloodied, and nail-scarred for our healing. This is the story of God's great love for us – a story that needs to be shared.

Here at Wycliffe Australia, we are privileged to join with hundreds of other people who have made themselves – and their feet – available to God, blisters, callouses, warts and all! How beautiful are the feet of Jesus, and beautiful in his sight are the feet of those willing to follow his footsteps! These are the feet proclaiming the good news that every beloved person, whatever their language, desperately needs and ultimately longs for.

For reflection:
Have a good, honest look at your feet as you think about the posture of your heart. Do you have the 'beautiful feet' the Lord is searching the earth for?

Be transformed by the Word as you engage with:
Isaiah 52 and Romans 10.

Prayer:
Jesus, I want feet like yours … beautiful feet that bring the message of your salvation and peaceful reign wherever you send me to walk out my one life. Amen.

What does it mean to 'Story the Bible'?

Wycliffe Australia is resourcing followers of Christ with skills to craft, learn and share three-minute Bible stories that are simple, accurate and memorable (SAM). Peter O'Loghlin has been leading Story the Bible workshops and says:

> Since January 2010, Wycliffe Australia has run 69 Story the Bible workshops. Altogether, we have had over 1100 registrations. Of the approximately 800 participants, 155 have attended more than once – a few of them as many as 15 times!
>
> In August 2020, we introduced a comprehensive correspondence version of the course, with 86 participants over the past five years, including about 25 from outside Australia.
>
> Over the last 15 years, Wycliffe members and volunteers have trained more than 800 people around the world in the art of crafting, telling, teaching and applying stories and lessons from the Word of God!

MORE

Would you like to run a Story the Bible workshop at your church? Visit wycliffe.org.au/eventtype/story-the-bible-workshop/ or call (03) 9712 2777.

STORY THE BIBLE PARTICIPANTS ACTING OUT A BIBLE STORY

STORY THE BIBLE PARTICIPANTS AND LEADERS IN ARMIDALE

PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY MARGARET LOVE

Sharing the gospel in three minutes:

Bible storytelling in Tonga

by Ian Hutchinson

I had a special experience this June when I headed to Tonga with fellow Wycliffe Australia representative, Margaret Love.

Two local Tongans joined us to train people in how to share their faith by simply asking, 'Would you like to hear a three-minute Bible story?'

I was impressed with their boldness. Trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, they went out to the streets and markets on Saturday afternoon to share their faith, using the newly learnt tool of Bible storytelling. I suspect that many of them had not previously known how to share their faith. It was a privilege to be there as they learnt to trust in God to overcome their fears as they witnessed to people outside the Church.

IAN AND MARGARET (CENTRE) WITH THE TONGAN BIBLE STORYTELLING TRAINERS

I went to the market with an older man named Peter who asked several groups if they would like to hear a story. They gave him their full attention as he shared with authority and conviction, and they thanked him at the end.

During our time on the island of 'Eua, I came across a group of young rugby players, waiting for their game to begin. They agreed to listen to a Bible story and I told them about how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This was one of the stories we had trained the workshop group to share. They don't have too many white men telling them a Bible story before a rugby game, so I'm sure they will remember that story!

Participants in the workshops said to us after their course, 'We want to train more people for this! It's exactly what Christians need!' Jesus never taught without telling a story. We can't get a better example to follow than his!

Margaret Love joined Ian as a trainer for the workshop. She shares:

> My husband, Robert, and I have been involved in facilitating Story the Bible workshops in NSW on a regular basis. We have also run workshops in the Solomon Islands (2012), Fiji (2012 and 2013) and in Tonga (2013 and 2025).
>
> A lot of people think that Bible stories are just for children but they are for everyone. We all start out as oral-preference learners and then are taught literacy skills at school. After participating in Story the Bible workshops, I discovered that I still learn better orally. When you can hear, see, and experience something in community, the Bible is no longer dry and tedious to read.
>
> I have discovered so much more about God's Word from learning Bible stories. I listen to the Bible each morning as I do my devotional readings. I use stories at my Scripture classes, and when sharing at our little outreach church in one of the suburbs of Tamworth.

Suliana is a local Tongan who has participated in previous Story the Bible events. She helped lead workshops with Ian and Margaret and says:

> It was good to see my people, on my island, knowing more about God's Word. It helps me remember Bible stories, deepen my faith, and my journey with God, especially as my family is growing.

Reverend Sitaleki also joined the workshop as a participant. He says:

> I came to the workshop because I wanted to know more of God's Word. I am excited to know how the workshop would help us with our ministry here on 'Eua Island.

IAN HUTCHINSON AND MARGARET LOVE, FIRST ROW (LEFT) WITH THE GRADUATES

PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY IANTHE VAN DER WALT

Bringing the book of Acts *to life in India*

by Ianthe van der Walt

All the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had … They worshipped together at the temple each day, met in homes … and shared their meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God.
—Acts 2:44, 46–47a (NLT)

Travelling to India with a small team to train local leaders in the art of Bible storytelling felt like stepping back into the book of Acts. The church that hosted us, founded by a humble, godly pastor now in his later years, is more than a building – it's a living community.

IANTHE PRAYING WITH WOMEN IN THE STORY THE BIBLE COURSE

People came from all over southern India, sleeping on mats, sharing simple meals cooked in massive pots, and spending hours each day in prayer and fellowship. Church here isn't a weekly event – it is a way of life.

Over two days, we trained 20 pastors and leaders from three language groups in crafting and telling Bible stories – stories that are simple, accurate, memorable, and powerful enough to teach the Word in places where Bibles are scarce.

Then the baton was passed. Seventy others came to learn from these newly trained leaders. For four days, they worked in language groups, learning to craft, revise, tell and teach stories, and lead story-based Bible studies.

The relational and discovery-based approach was quickly embraced, and many commented on how deeply it connected them to both Scripture and each other.

One group was especially remarkable. This small, nomadic, oral people group has no written language and no Bible of their own. Yet they have learned to read the Hindi Bible – despite being unable to read other Hindi texts. It is extraordinary. Their settlement of 4,000 people includes a simple church with Revelation's foundation stones painted on the pillars and a prayer 'Upper Room' built on a platform.

Their passion for Christ, Scripture, and sharing their faith shines brightly. The local leaders, many trained theologians, were initially surprised by the simplicity of storytelling – but soon saw its power. As our Story the Bible handbook says:

> Jesus got people's attention using stories. He sent them home with a message wrapped in a story they enjoyed – a story simple enough to tell the family over the evening meal. And that's where his stories made the greatest impact.

We went to teach – but we came home deeply changed. These modern-day believers, living in community, enduring hardship, and loving Jesus with all their hearts, gave us a glimpse of what the early church might have been like. It was unforgettable.

IANTHE WITH THE TRAINERS AND RECENT STORY THE BIBLE GRADUATES

United in sharing the Good News: *Gospel Dramas in Alice Springs*

by Ming Fang Strickland

I had a prayer: 'Lord, I want to share the gospel with more and more people.' When I encountered the Matthew Drama in 2022, and started to translate it into Chinese, I thought that it was a great tool for doing outreach in Australia.

I discovered that Wycliffe Australia had a team to facilitate these performances and invited them to Alice Springs in September 2025.

When I heard their stories and the commitment they had made to this project, I was deeply touched. God also opened the door for me to contact local church leaders and led 14 people from five different churches to join The Luke Drama cast. A total of 10 churches worked together to make this performance happen.

Those involved in the drama were also strongly impacted by encountering God's Word in a fresh way. Many of the cast members went on to perform portions of The Luke Drama at the 'Alice Alive' festival. In July, the John Drama was also performed in Darwin and two of our young people went up to support the performance.

THE CAST OF THE JOHN DRAMA IN DARWIN

This was a team effort. A big thank you to the directing team from Wycliffe Australia, to the catering team for providing meals, and to the teams praying for the event. Through street engagement, many people heard about the performance.

I think this combined event brought unity to churches in this town. I would like to see the Gospel Dramas being presented in more cities and towns in Australia, and throughout the world. The Chinese version of Matthew Drama has now been prepared, so I am praying that this can also be performed very soon, in God's timing.

Please pray:

- for follow-up activities planned for churches involved in the Drama
- that those who were impacted by the gospel during the performances will continue in discipleship and find a church home
- for more churches and individuals to get involved in Gospel Dramas.

THE CAST PERFORMING THE JOHN DRAMA IN DARWIN

Teens sharing 'The greatest story ever told'

by Keith Benn

Story the Bible Facilitator

A few months ago, my 16-year-old grandson phoned me and said, 'Grandpa, me and my mates want to do street evangelism. Can you teach us?'

I replied, 'No…but I can teach you how to craft and tell Bible stories, and if you can tell Bible stories, you can share the gospel with anybody.'

Over the next few weeks, my grandson recruited 13 of his peers for a Bible storytelling workshop at a church in outer eastern Melbourne.

My grandson and two of his mates spent a day together with me learning how to facilitate the teaching sessions, and then those three teenagers led a number of the sessions during a three-day workshop. On the third day, we went to the shopping centre next-door.

The first 2-3 hours were spent outside KFC, retelling the stories we had learned back at the church, and learning the principles of creating a Bible panorama. Then we wandered through the shopping centre, meeting strangers and sharing Bible stories. The teenagers shared how God had opened the way for most of the group to share Bible stories with strangers.

Then a school friend named Elijah stopped by, so we told him about the story of his namesake in the Bible who demonstrated the power of God when he called down fire from heaven on the soldiers sent by the king to arrest him. We also discussed how to create a safe environment for non-Christians, so that they could join in a Bible study and express their real thoughts and feelings without feelings of condemnation.

Before going home, we told a panorama of 17 stories from Creation in Genesis 1, to Adam and Eve, The Fall, The Flood, three Abraham stories, and Isaiah's prediction of the birth of Jesus, which led to nine stories from the birth to resurrection of Jesus.

The teens were so excited to bravely go out into the world with the ability to tell 'The greatest story ever told', to strangers.

My grandson shared:

> Thank you so much for coming to teach us how to craft and tell Bible stories. I will begin working to get more and more groups to come and learn this, because this skill is so valuable.

Now he wants me to come back to Melbourne to do it again!

JOIN US!

For more than 30 years, Tree Tops Lodge in Cairns has been a haven for ministry workers serving in remote locations throughout Australia and the Pacific. Some guests stay at Tree Tops during the birth of children. Others appreciate staying while recovering from serious injury or illness, while many others come to enjoy a much-needed rest.

Tree Tops is an important ministry, but we are in desperate need of more volunteers to keep it running smoothly. We are looking for physically fit people with skills in administration and/or maintenance who are willing to work with a team. Experience in hospitality is helpful, but a heart to serve others is more important.

MORE

See wycliffe.org.au/positions/tree-tops-lodge/ for more information, and to express your interest.

Reflections on the Luke Drama

by Jonathan Finch,
Producer of the Luke Drama in Gawler, South Australia

The Luke Drama was an unforgettable experience. It involved 18 amateur actors and two Gospel Drama directors from Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia.

There were six different church fellowships represented and we formed a cohesive team over six days to present the Good News of Jesus Christ to the town of Gawler, South Australia.

To see the characters from stories come alive was eye-opening and uplifting. Some characters literally came to life, like the dead son at Nain, springing up from the ground when Jesus spoke to him. Other characters were given a new lease on life, like the demon-possessed man, and the crippled woman who was raised up by Jesus in the synagogue.

Our audiences witnessed Zaccheus being set free from the grip of money and guilt in his own home. We saw the disciple Peter being restored from a place of failure to being a leader in the early church. The culmination was the unjust arrest and horrific crucifixion of Jesus, followed by the resurrection. It was an incredible experience for the cast to connect as brothers and sisters in Christ and to confidently share God's life-giving Word with others.

To see our young people (and old) grow in confidence and allow God's words to flow through us was nothing but the Holy Spirit working through each and every one of us.

Thank you to everyone who was part of the Drama – from organising food to setting up locations for rehearsals and the performances, producing the artwork and printing for flyers, posters and programs, providing accommodation and transport for the directors, playing a role or directing the Drama, or being in the audience. It made all the late nights, long days, repetition of lines (and anxiety over forgetting everything) worthwhile.

We know that there were people in the audience who were confronted with what Jesus had done for them and some of these engaged in spiritual conversations afterwards. We pray that God's Word will take root in their lives and produce fruit in due course. Now that the Drama is finished, we are glad to declare with the angels, 'Glory to God in the highest!' (Luke 2:14).

Immersed in the Gospels

Wycliffe Australia has been hosting Gospel Dramas that are evangelical performances covering the entire content of the Gospel of either Matthew, Luke or John. The 90-minute immersive experiences are done as 'theatre-in-the-round', with the stage located in the centre of the audience.

Malcolm Barker (Gospel Drama Training Director) says that each Drama is an 'exercise in discipleship':

First of all, as the actors study John's Gospel and prepare to act it out, they are filling their minds with God's Word. The play involves 15 actors (eight men, seven women). These are all committed Christians who believe that performing the Drama is an excellent way to share the truth of Jesus.

IMAGE: A PERFORMANCE OF THE JOHN DRAMA IN DARWIN

Ministry Resourcing

SPRING 2025 / ISSN 2202-9818

Wycliffe Bible Translators

PHOTO BY ROLAND REITMAIER

What is Wycliffe Ministry Resourcing?

Wycliffe Australia's Ministry Resourcing department seeks to support the work of our members and organisational partners on the field. We are committed to building strong relationships, with an emphasis on mutual respect, trust, collaboration and prayer.

Our three main objectives are to:

- work closely with national Bible translation organisations
- support strategic partnerships with SIL Global
- support Australian members on the field with their project needs.

Future leaders

Wycliffe Australia recognises the importance of training the next generation of local community leaders, teachers and translation consultants to ensure that language projects flourish well into the future. The following projects in this edition of *Ministry Resourcing* feature key training initiatives in Australia, Africa, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Philippines. Be encouraged by these local people leading local training programs in their local languages!

Kristen Hoglund,

Wycliffe Australia Projects Manager

Community Growth in the Philippines

Project 8853

The Tagbanua are an indigenous people group of the Palawan region in the Philippines. Their island location is isolated but industries such as mining, logging and tourism have threatened the Tagbanua's way of life. Ongoing displacement has impacted their culture, identity, language, and livelihoods.

WRDF is committed to assisting Wycliffe Philippines in a project geared towards improving the literacy and socio-economic condition of the Tagbanua. The project aims to provide adult education in literacy and numeracy as well as training workshops in entrepreneurship, sustainable agricultural techniques, harvesting and storage of crops, processing of produce and financial management.

This project also aims to help the Tagbanua establish a business that sells a harvest of honey and ginger to local markets. The Western Philippines University (WPU), and its Food Technology and Processing Unit, is partnering with the project to help develop and produce Palawan honey and citron tea. The goal is to support future generations so they can become self-sufficient and no longer have to live in poverty.

Target: A$56,000 for 2025/26

MORE *Visit wrdf.org.au/asia/southeast-asia/philippines-community-growth/*

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation Projects

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation is a separate company owned by Wycliffe Australia, which works through local partners to improve the practical aspects of life in marginalised communities. We aim to demonstrate Christian compassion and provide practical assistance in literacy and education, disaster relief, medical and basic health support. Donations to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

For WRDF projects, visit the WRDF website wycliffefoundation.org.au

Wycliffe Field Support Projects

Wycliffe Australia is committed to helping our field teams and the organisations they work with to thrive and serve effectively in their communities. Ministry Resourcing can help with providing funding for computers, village housing, travel costs, delivery of training, consultants and other services.

See more projects at wycliffe.org.au/projects/

Training for African Consultants

Project 8810

WYCLIFFE FIELD SUPPORT PROJECT

Wycliffe Australia is supporting local organisations throughout Africa to equip national Bible translation consultants through a specialised linguistic workshop. This provides a rare opportunity for nine consultants-in-training (CiTs) to receive practical, face-to-face training from some of SIL's most experienced African-language linguists. As CiTs and then as consultants, they will have the tools to guide Bible translators in ensuring that the translated Scriptures are natural and readable.

During a series of workshops, a team of language consultants or advisors learn a methodology for improving how narrative-based Scripture passages are translated into the target language. This includes:

- describing the linguistic features of narrative texts in a language with which they are familiar
- analysing Scripture passages and addressing discourse-related issues relevant to translation by revising the passages
- assisting others to translate narrative material into their own languages accurately, naturally and clearly.

A participant from previous workshops shares: 'With this strategy, there is every reason for us to hope for effective and credible translations in our communities'.

Target: A$20,778

MORE *Visit wycliffe.org.au/projects/training-african-cits/*

Capacity Building in the Pacific

Project 8861

WYCLIFFE FIELD SUPPORT PROJECT

There is an urgent need for more local leaders on translation projects throughout the Pacific region, particularly in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. Capacity Building in the Pacific is a project designed to increase leadership and management skills of local translators, and to create sustainable funding options for ongoing language projects.

The fundraising component of this project will focus on raising funds by building connections with churches in the Pacific, potential funders in the language and education sectors, corporations who fund through corporate social responsibility and Christian business people. It is hoped that the project will become self-sufficient within the next five years. In the meantime, can you help us to get this project off the ground?

Target: A$22,222

MORE *Visit wrdf.org.au/asia/southeast-asia/se-asia-3-literacy/*

PHOTO BY MARC EWELL

Translation Training for Papua New Guinean Nationals

Project 8835

PNG is the most linguistically-diverse country in the world so there is a great need for mother-tongue translators who can lead Bible translation projects.

The Pacific Institute of Languages, Arts and Translation (PILAT) is a training organisation dedicated to preparing Papua New Guineans for Bible translation, literacy and other language development work. PILAT trains over 400 students each year, representing over 100 different language groups.

Some students have never had the opportunity to continue their schooling yet their time at PILAT allows them to learn basic reading comprehension skills. After they become more proficient with language, they learn study skills, a background to the Bible, and translation principles. They then have the opportunity to develop computer skills and to learn how to use language software programs. Classes are interactive and specifically tailored to Melanesian culture.

The National Translators Education Fund (NTEF) project subsidises training in translation and language development activities for national translators. The goal is to equip PNG translators to produce quality vernacular translations of Scripture. NTEF scholarships are available to applicants who are working in an SIL or PNG Bible Translation Association (BTA) language program. Donations to this project will go towards the running costs associated with training, including food, accommodation, travel and supplies..

Target: A$33,333

MORE *Visit wycliffe.org.au/projects/pilat-png-training/*

Nungalinya Indigenous Translation Cert II

Project 8331

WYCLIFFE FIELD SUPPORT PROJECT

Nungalinya College is the premier training organisation in the Northern Territory for Indigenous Australian Christians. It offers courses in Bible translation, literacy/numeracy, ministry and theology, and applied fields of art, family wellbeing and media/music.

Nungalinya has identified a growing need to provide training in basic Bible translation practices to the new generation of younger and less experienced translators. The Certificate II in Indigenous Translation was established to meet this need, funded collaboratively by Wycliffe Australia, AuSIL, CMS, Bible Society, and Coordinate Uniting Church NT.

This entry-level training is important for the continuation and renewal of translation work in Indigenous Australian languages, particularly those of the Northern Territory. It is intended that many of the students achieving the Certificate II in Indigenous Translation will be equipped and encouraged to complete further translation courses and to eventually work as Bible translators.

Target: A$27,778

MORE *Visit wycliffe.org.au/projects/training-indigenous-translators-nt-australia/*

Wycliffe Bible Translators

If you would like to discuss any of the Ministry Resourcing projects, please contact:

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Or call (03) 9712 2777