



Albert Makhanya, 54, lives in fear because of his inherited condition - albinism.



Photo © Layton Thompson

I love this time of year when the leaves begin to burst with colour. It's also the time of year we're gearing up for two big celebrations here at Bible Society - Bible Sunday and Christmas! To help you celebrate, we've launched a host of new resources. You can check them out overleaf.



In this edition, I've included a moving account from my colleague Claire about her trip to Swaziland early this summer, and the amazing story of Bible bookshops in Egypt.

Thank you as always for your steadfast support. You make all this possible.



John Ranford
Bible a Month
Co-ordinator

Can you imagine what it would be like to live in constant fear for your life, because people want your *body parts*? That's the unthinkable reality for Albert Makhanya, who lives in southern Africa with a condition called albinism.

I met Albert and his family on a trip to Swaziland. Here, traditional healers believe the body parts of people with albinism can bring wealth and cure disease. There have been a series of barbaric killings and mutilations – and Albert is afraid the so-called 'albino hunters' will come for him.

'It scares me,' he told me as we sat outside his mud and wood house, with smoke from the fire drifting across us. 'Where we live is like a wilderness, so anything could happen.' His wife, Bonakele, added, 'I fear for him, but when I go into town it comforts me that no one will know he's here alone.'

Chillingly, Bonakele also told me stories about wives taking payment to arrange the murder of their husbands with albinism. She told me she prays that God will help her to be strong.

Albinism is an inherited condition which causes a lack of pigment in the body. So Albert has white skin, blond hair and blue eyes. He also has poor eyesight, which is common with the condition. In addition, Albert has skin cancer – a result, he thinks, of years of bricklaying under the hot sun.

I felt a deep sadness for Albert. It may have been the sun dropping behind the mountain, or the fresh coldness in the wind, but his home suddenly seemed a very bleak place.

Then I asked Albert about the large-print Bible he received earlier this year, thanks to your regular giving through *Bible a Month*, and he visibly brightened. His eight-year-old daughter, the youngest of three, came out of the house and leant up

In focus

Celebrate Bible Sunday with us

Bible Sunday is a regular part of the calendar here at Bible Society. We love encouraging everyone to celebrate all that the Bible means to them. So this year we are asking churches all around the country to celebrate with us on Sunday 29 October 2017.

You can hold a special service at your church, get the children involved, host an afternoon tea to recall the value of the Bible, or gather a group of friends to chat about their experiences of the Bible.

We've put together a set of inspiring resources for you and your church to help you celebrate. These resources include:

- Sermon notes on Nehemiah 8
- Prayers
- Children's worksheets
- Activities for all age worship
- Video by our own Dai Woolridge, all about the Bible
- Donation slip for your gifts
- Poster & invitation
- Presentation about our work across the globe

Through these, you'll hear stories from people in China, Africa, the Middle East and here at home sharing how the Bible is essential to them in the challenges they face.

So this Bible Sunday, get some inspiration to pick up your Bible afresh, let the words sink deep and consider ways that you can help others to do the same through your prayers and gifts.

Visit biblesociety.org.uk/biblesunday to find out more.



against her father – and Albert told me about his favourite passage.

'I like the story of the three boys in the fire, when everyone expected them to burn,' he said, referring to Daniel chapter 3. 'But there was a fourth man in there... Jesus. And the boys were unharmed. This tells me that even if I am in trouble, God is always by my side.'

He added, 'Jesus is in my heart and in my mind. Our home is entirely covered by God's grace. I live because the Lord is with me, and when I read this Bible, my soul is revived.'

As we bounced along dirt roads on the long drive back to our offices, I learnt that we have been one of the only organisations in Swaziland to condemn the ritual killings of people with albinism. The team here have run a conference to raise awareness of the issue, and have appeared in national media. Last year, thanks to your support, they distributed 450 Bibles to people with albinism and their families. In 2017 they've already handed out 200 Bibles, as well as



Albert is the father of three girls, pictured here with his youngest daughter Sakhile, age 8, and his wife, Bonakele.

suncream, hats and sunglasses to help protect their skin.

This is what your *Bible a Month* gift is doing – bringing hope and comfort even in the most desperate situations. The fact that you are supporting Albert means so much to him, and he asked me to pass on a message to you. He said, 'I want to thank you very much. May God give you strength and courage for the work, and grant you blessings in abundance, so you can help others in Swaziland and beyond.'

Spreading God's word in Egypt

Our CEO, Paul Williams, recently visited Bible Society in Egypt. He told us about their nationwide network of Bible bookstores placed across the country.

'The remarkable thing about the Bible bookstores is that people come in who shouldn't really be there,' he said.

'People come in off the street, and they have questions about the Bible. They often don't know why they're in there. They often seem a bit confused, or feel like a voice told them to come in. Sometimes they're Muslim.'

These bookstores are making God's word available and affordable to all in Egypt and are functioning as a draw to people from non-Christian backgrounds. They are enabling people to access the Bible in a tangible and face-to-face way.

And you are helping these bookshops to grow. Your support means more people, both Christians and non-believers, are being reached with the word of God.

In one bookshop, an 18-year-old young woman walked in asking for a book that explains life after death. The Bible Society staff member asked why she was concerned and she told him that she had tried to commit suicide three times.

She felt worthless. She had a bad situation at home and didn't want to continue living.

The staff member then showed her a New Testament and began explaining to her about the new life which Jesus offers in relationship with him.

Two days later she came back a changed woman, saying that she had read all the books she had taken and needed others. She said that as she read words from the Bible she felt a healing power pour into her soul. She felt hope instead of despair.

These amazing encounters with God, through his word, are possible because of generous donations from supporters like you. Thank you so much. Please pray protection over our staff in Egypt and that God would open the door for even more Bible distribution.



Inside the Minia bookshop in Upper Egypt.

Swaziland

October 2017

Swaziland is a small, landlocked country in southern Africa. It has a population of 1.2 million people, of whom around 85% are Christian. The official language used by the authorities is English, but despite this, the majority of the population speak in SiSwati. Although most people speak English, many do not, and there is a great need for Scriptures in SiSwati.

The Bible was translated into SiSwati 20 years ago. But many people in Swaziland struggle to understand God's word because of the lack of study materials. There are lots of study aids available in English, but nearly half of the Christian population are SiSwati speakers, and are left without study materials in their language.

Our team are committed to reaching people on the edge of society in Swaziland, whether it's those with albinism, orphans who need to know God's love for them, or Christians without Bible study materials in their own language.

Thanks to your gifts, we are producing the first ever SiSwati Study Bible. It will help pastors and church leaders to deepen their theological training, and it will help more people across Swaziland dig deeply into God's word and discover its riches. Thank you for your support.



Members of a SiSwati Study Bible group.

Prayer pointers

- Pray that the new SiSwati Study Bible will help more Christians grow their relationship with God as they delve deeper into his word.
- Give thanks that our team in Swaziland are committed to reaching the people on the edge of society; people who are overlooked and ignored. Pray for wisdom, energy and compassion in their work.
- Pray for God's protection over Albert, his wife and their three daughters. Pray that Albert receives the medical treatment he needs and pray the family will find hope and encouragement in God's word.
- Pray for an end to the barbaric killings of people with albinism. Pray against the prevailing myths and misconceptions about the condition, and ask God to be with our staff who seek to shine a light on the issue.

Costa Rica

November 2017

Kevin is an inmate at La Reforma prison in Costa Rica. He used to work in the online gambling industry, travelling back and forth often between Costa Rica and the United States. His English is impeccable, but not his past. In fact, it was his involvement in the online betting industry that led his life down a road that would land him in prison.

Prison has not been the end of the road for Kevin however. As with many inmates, Kevin found himself with time to read. He started reading the Bible, and became one of many inmates at La Reforma prison to come to faith in Jesus through reading the Scriptures. He said that God used his word to change his heart.

Our team in Costa Rica recently donated enough Bibles for each inmate at the prison. Kevin told us how on his block the Bibles were being read and making a difference. There has been a decline in aggressive behaviour thanks to the spiritual programs being run in the prison. Kevin is now studying theology.

This is a powerful example of how just a single Bible can change lives and hearts, even in prison. Thank you for helping lives to change for good through what you so generously give each month.



Kevin (right) pictured with Nicholas, a member of the Costa Rica Bible Society team.

Prayer pointers

- Give thanks for the changed lives and hearts in La Reforma prison in Costa Rica, because of the power of God's word.
- Pray that more inmates in the prison would want to read the Bible, and as a result that it would change their lives for good. Pray for a changed atmosphere within the prison.
- Pray that Kevin would grow closer to Jesus through the Bible and his studies, and be a shining light for those around him.
- Pray that the Bible Society team in Costa Rica would continue to be creative in reaching the secular world with God's word.

Swaziland

'We have not stopped praying for you since the first day we heard about you. In fact, we always pray that God will show you everything he wants you to do and that you may have all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives.'

Colossians 1.9 (CEV)

Factfile



Area – 17,364 sq km, approx. 7% of UK

Population – 1.5 million, approx. 2% of UK

Literacy rate – 87.5%

Languages – English (official, used for government business), SiSwati (official)

Club Corner

Journey into Christmas

This Christmas, join us in celebrating and sharing the journey that changed the world.

The Nativity story is full of journeys, from Mary and Joseph travelling to Bethlehem to the wise men following a star. But the greatest journey of all was Jesus arriving on earth from heaven. His message of hope, peace and joy opened up a brand new story for everyone.

To help celebrate this journey, we've produced a host of resources that will help you and your church bring the Christmas story to life:

Go on a Christmas adventure with our brand new **children's story booklet**.

Sing your way to Christmas with our **Journey to Bethlehem** carol sheet – great for carolling or outdoor services.

And share the real Christmas story on your cards and gifts with our **Christmas stickers**.



Get involved by visiting biblesociety.org.uk/christmas. Together we can do something amazing: bring the Christmas story to life for everyone.

Costa Rica

'Eternal life is to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, the one you sent.'

John 17.3 (CEV)

Factfile



Area – 51,100 sq km, approx. 21% of UK

Population – 4.9 million, approx. 8% of UK

Literacy rate – 97.8%

Languages – Spanish (official), English

Look out for your next *Bible a Month* prayer letter which will feature reports from **Iraq** and **Chile**.

Thank you so much for your support which is bringing the Bible to life at home and around the world.

Remember that if your circumstances change you can alter your gift at any time. To increase or decrease your regular donation call us on 01793 418222.

If you're paying by direct debit you can fill in the form below and post it to us at Bible Society, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon SN5 7DG.

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