

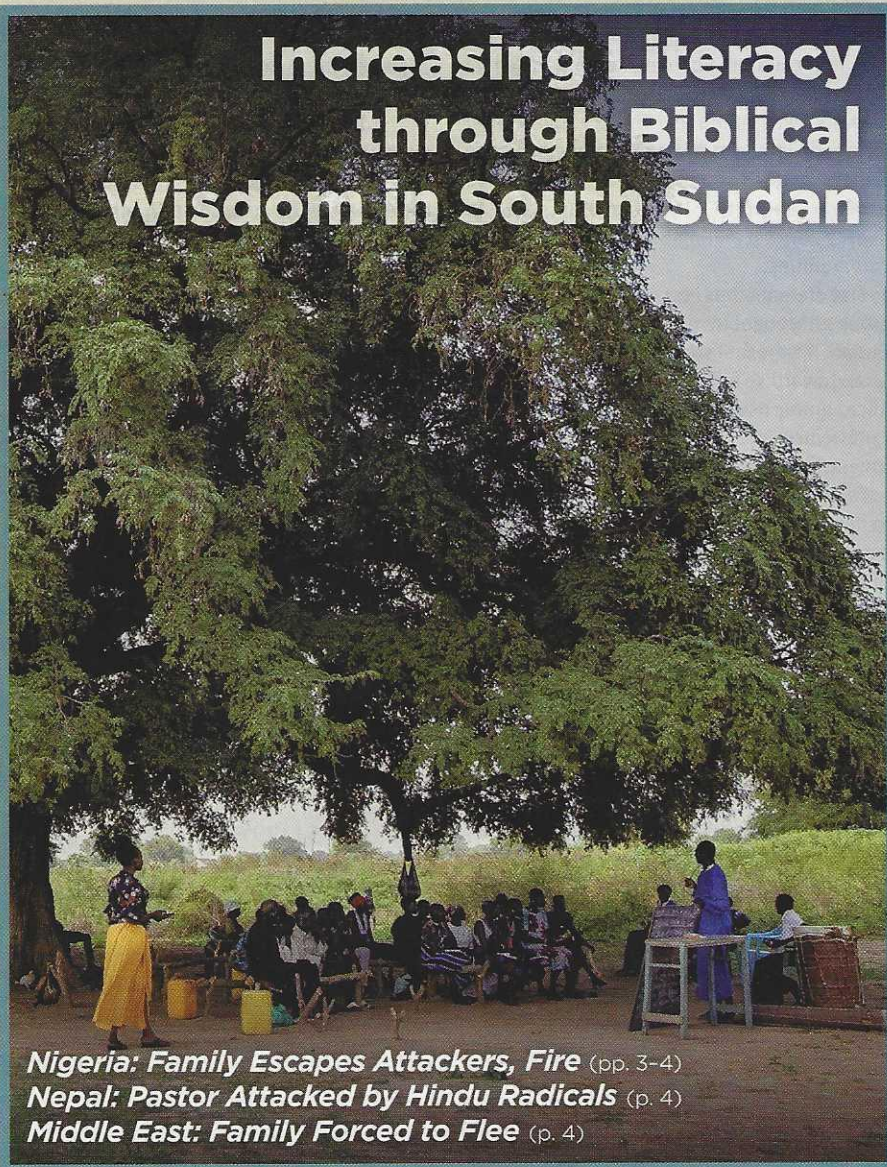
significant news for christians

Some news that's encouraging—some disturbing. Read with discernment. Watch and pray.

THE Church Around the WORLD

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Increasing Literacy through Biblical Wisdom in South Sudan



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Increasing Literacy through Biblical Wisdom in South Sudan ⁽¹⁾

In Juba, the largest city in South Sudan, less than 30 percent of the adult population is considered literate. South Sudan has been in a state of near constant conflict since gaining its independence in 2011—leaving many of its citizens, especially women, traumatized and poor. Women like Elizabeth.

Elizabeth is 28 years old. She's married with four children. She never attended school and couldn't read, write, or understand how to work with numbers. That changed after Elizabeth joined a literacy group hosted by Five Talents, a nonprofit working to eradicate extreme poverty by restoring human dignity and creating strong, sustainable communities.

Five Talents has established 70 literacy groups throughout different parts of South Sudan. It's the first step—and a very important one—toward a fully developed savings and micro enterprise program.

"Literacy is critical to the success of our programs, which rely on each participant being fully able to meaningfully participate in the organization and leadership of their savings group, to negotiate terms of a loan from that group and, eventually, to start and operate her own small business," said a Five Talents representative.

Five Talents partners with local churches to facilitate literacy and trauma recovery trainings.

"Literacy is crucial to the success of our trauma training program, which is facilitated in and by the local church. In fact, our literacy training unlocks the tools of trauma healing." The Five Talents representative explained, "This is because much of the curriculum is based on peer-to-peer pastoral care within the group's Christian community as well as reading and reflecting on God's Word together. Because the members have learned to trust each other through their interactions in the literacy group, they find they can also trust each other with their personal stories of deep wounds—abduction, rape, and murder of loved ones. Sharing these stories in Christian community is a key step on the road to healing."

Literacy accreditation was awarded to 412 individuals in a 2023 graduation ceremony hosted by the local church. The participants, 87 percent of whom were women, came from displaced communities or camps near Juba. They all received trauma-healing training to address significant trauma and promote trust and peace building within their communities—all using a Bible-based curriculum.

Now these participants will be joining a savings group to learn together, practice loaning each other money, and gain business

PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED

Recommended Scripture:

Exodus 10:1–12:13 | Matthew 20:1–28 | Psalm 25:1–15 | Proverbs 6:6–11

Phiarune and Lai, a young Laotian couple, chose to follow Christ. When police surveyed their village to document Christians, Phiarune's father struck his son and daughter-in-law off his family registration booklet, leaving the couple without passports and unable to obtain work, education, or social services. In society's eyes, they were disgraced.

Lord, strengthen all my persecuted Christian family members who are shamed and rejected by their friends and family because of their commitment to you. Lift their spirits. Amen.

More prayer prompts are available in *The One Year Pray for the Persecuted Bible*.



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skills to develop their income-generating strategies and provide for their families. Similar trainings are happening in other parts of South Sudan.

In Renk, less than 10 percent of the adult population is literate. Five Talents hosted a literacy group with 411 participants in Renk. At the beginning of the training, only 11 percent of those taking the training said they could read. After the training, 98 percent said they could read their mother tongue, and 84 percent said they could write.

The literacy group in Terekeka had 200 participants, with less than 3 percent saying they could read. After completing the training, an incredible 60 percent of participants could read and 88 percent could count and recognize numbers.

“God has moved through the literacy training in South Sudan to engage and strengthen the faith of individual believers as well as strengthen the institution of the church,” a Five Talents representative said. “As people have gained access to literacy and numeracy, so too have they gained access to and been empowered in their leadership capacities. Notably in Terekeka, two church leaders have been ordained to the diaconate after earning accreditation in literacy and numeracy. These graduates are now able to lead church services deep in the rural areas of Terekeka in two parishes that have never had an ordained church leader.”

For Elizabeth, the training she received from Five Talents in Juba was life- and soul-changing.

“Now I know what is going on in the world. Before, I did not understand. Now my eyes are open,” Elizabeth said. “I understand local events and also my rights as a woman and a community member.”

Elizabeth has gone on to become a valued member in her local church, leading its Young Families program—which supports young mothers and fathers so they can lead well in their homes and community.

“Even though I had been going to church my whole life, I never really understood what was being said. That was until I could read the Bible for myself,” Elizabeth said. “I am proud that I can now read in church, especially for others in the community who are still illiterate.”

She plans to continue working toward fulfilling her dream of supporting the disadvantaged and marginalized people in her community. She says, “I don’t want women to be laughed at or put to shame. To be told they have no value. Women are strong. Together, we can build a future for South Sudan.”

Five Talents (fivetalents.org) received a grant from Tyndale House Foundation, a grantmaking organization that partners with Christian ministries around the world. To learn more, visit tyndale.foundation.

Nigeria: Family Escapes Attackers, Fire (2)

Sade, who has been nearly blind most of her life, heard screams as attackers raided her village, so she ran with her three daughters

in search of safety. Militant Fulani Muslims had attacked her village before, so Sade knew their lives were in danger. She, her children, and several others took shelter in her brother's apartment. When militants found them and couldn't break in, they set the building on fire. The apartment filled with smoke, but the group feared leaving. To help her children breathe, Sade dampened her skirt and wrapped it around their faces, but soon the heat became unbearable, and they had to evacuate the building. Fortunately, the militants had left by then. Sade watched as the building burned to the ground and later learned that her husband had been fatally shot as he tried to flee. Sade and her children lived in a camp for internally displaced people until VOM helped them.

Pray for comfort for Sade and her family as they grieve for their lost loved one and rebuild their lives following the attack.



Nepal: Pastor Attacked by Hindu Radicals (3)

Pastor Bhim Tamang, 63, was visiting a new believer in Christ and sharing the Word of God with him when a group of Hindu radicals burst into the home. They hit Bhim, broke his hearing aid, burned his Bible, and warned him to stop preaching. Police officers arrived to protect Bhim and his colleagues, but the

radicals pushed through and smeared black paint on Bhim's face. The police believed that, due to the aggressiveness of the radicals, Bhim and his colleagues would not be safe at the local station, so they took the Christians to district headquarters. Pastor Bhim's son reported that the Hindu radicals were well organized and ready to escalate the attack if any other Christians had stepped in. Pastor Bhim, who has been imprisoned for his Christian faith in the past, said he was glad about the incident because he becomes more courageous during seasons of persecution.

Pray that Pastor Bhim's bold witness will lead his persecutors to repent and place their trust in Christ.



Middle East: Family Forced to Flee (4)

Pastor Maged was planting a church in a rural part of Egypt when his family came under severe persecution. Repeatedly they fled, and repeatedly they were pressured. Eventually, they were forced to live underground, where raw sewage seeped into their basement living quarters. After some time, they relocated to a neighboring country where Pastor Maged is active in church leadership.

Pray that Pastor Maged's ministry will bear much spiritual fruit. Pray for his family to thrive in their new location.