



**DANDENONG**  
**Bible**  
**E**ducation  
**C**entre

# Newsletter August 2008

## The Olympic games

Are you ready for the Olympic games? Are you looking forward to seeing the world's best athletes compete? Did you know that in the original Olympic games the prize for the winners was a crown plaited from wild

olive branches? Imagine how people would feel these days if they didn't get a gold, silver or bronze medal - just some plants for their heads that would die within a few days! God speaks of our lives as a race, and there

is a prize at the end for those who run the race well. The apostle Paul compares the crown awarded to the winners of the Olympic games with the reward on the day of judgement in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25:

*"Surely you know that many runners take part in a race, but only one of them wins the prize? Run, then, in such a way as to win the prize. Every athlete in training submits to strict discipline, in order to be crowned with a wreath that will not last; but we do it for one that will last for ever."* (GNB)

You can win in this race – even if you aren't an Olympic champion. Read the instruction book, the Bible, to find out how you can be given the prize of eternal life on earth, when Jesus returns.



Photo by Eckhard Pecher (World Athletics Championships 2007 in Osaka)

## New Life Class – Sundays 11.30am – 12.30pm

Come along and hear a Bible-based talk and join in discussion on the following topics. You are welcome to come early for a drink or stay afterwards for lunch with us.

- August 3 Heaven
- August 10 Antichrist
- August 17 Grace
- August 24 Faith
- August 31 Keeping separate from the world
- Sept. 7 Video
- Sept. 14 Sin & repentance
- Sept. 21 Spotlight on the Bible: Hezekiah
- Sept. 28 A visual tour of Israel

### Did you know?

Under the law of Moses, if you bought a Hebrew servant, you had to let him go free after six years. However if he wished to stay with you permanently you had to pierce his ear with an awl. See Exodus 21:2-6.

## Some jokes for the kids!

1. Who was the fastest runner in history?
2. What did Noah do for a living?
3. Did the worms on Noah's ark go in apples?
4. Who was the most popular Old Testament actor?

1. Adam - he was the first in the human race!
2. He was an architect.
3. No. The worms went in pairs.
4. Samson - he brought down the house!

### ANSWERS:

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# Bible Illiteracy

The Bible has long been the English-speaking world's best selling book. Over 900 English translations have been produced, from the dignified prose of the Authorised or King James Version to versions which attempt to render God's Word in colloquial street-slang.

## More Translations

Efforts to make the message accessible to as many as possible are not limited to the production of modern translations. Parents can buy their children Jesus dolls that recite Bible passages, while one enterprising evangelist has developed a Bible-based jukebox that allows one to select and play their favourite Scripture passage. In 2002 the well-known publisher Thomas Nelson began publishing Bible-zines – an amalgamation of the Bible and teenage magazines where Bible extracts mix with lifestyle articles for adolescents.

Many find the more colloquial translations and these commercial gimmicks disrespectful.

There might be some justification for them if they led to more people reading God's Word. There is evidence, however, that this is not the case. In spite of the book's best-seller status, Bible literacy is in decline around the globe.

Many of the largest and most respected publishing houses such as Oxford University Press and Collins produce Bibles in a wide range of versions and styles. In addition to the major publishing houses there are organizations such as the Bible Society and Gideons International that foster the production and distribution of Bibles. In the United States alone more than 20 million new Bibles are sold annually, in spite of the fact that the average American home is estimated to already have at least four copies.

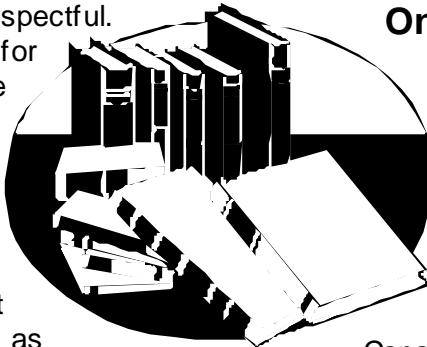
## Understanding God's Word

Despite all the Bibles in America, however, a recent Gallop survey confirmed that the average person has only limited knowledge of what the Bible says. The survey found that:

- Less than half could name the first book of the Bible (Genesis).
- Only one third knew who gave the Sermon on the Mount (Jesus). Billy Graham was a popular alternative!
- One quarter were not aware of the event commemorated by Easter. (the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.)

- Twelve per cent were under the impression that Noah was married to Joan of Arc!
- The survey also found that sixty per cent of respondents were unable to name five of the Ten Commandments.

George Gallup, founder of the polling firm behind the survey and a prominent American evangelical, was dismayed by the results, concluding that it confirmed the United States as 'a nation of biblical illiterates'.



## On the Shelf?

The results of this survey might reflect the stringent measures taken by authorities to keep religion out of American classrooms, but it is doubtful whether the result would be better if the survey were conducted in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia or other English-speaking nations.

Printing, selling and giving away Bibles will ensure an increasing stock of books, but if all those Bibles are left on the shelf they will have no impact on their owners. Dolls, jukeboxes and other paraphernalia are no substitute for regular and committed Bible reading.

The Bible has a vital message for men and women. It offers peace of mind now, forgiveness of sins and life eternal – but its message cannot be imparted unless it is read. We are very privileged to live in an age when Bibles are readily available to almost anyone who wishes to possess one, but reading God's word is what is important.

Bible literacy is not just something that is desirable – it might literally save your life!

**This article was written by Geoff Henstock and is taken from a recent *Glad Tidings* magazine. If you would like to have a free six months' subscription to this magazine, please contact us by phone, email, mail or call into the Bible Education Centre. Our details are on the front of this newsletter.**