

March/April 2023

From Sangoma to Saint

Witchcraft. Divination. Murder. God takes these very seriously. Under the Mosaic Law, these evil acts are punishable by death. James Mbeue did them all, and more.

James was a Muslim and a witch doctor ('sangoma') in Mozambique. He had five wives, killed pregnant women and children by black magic, and put diseases on people. Death and destruction were his way of life.

But James wasn't just any sangoma. He was the head of sangomas. His black magic power was renowned. He travelled in many southern African countries through magic. Many would come to him. He had power. He had fame. As a sangoma leader, James had his own disciples too, including his own children. But James did not have peace. He failed to educate his children and properly take care of his wives.

When James heard about FEBC's ministry Radio FOT (Fountain of Truth), he wanted to destroy it. He wanted to thwart the visits of the team to listener clubs. (Listener clubs are groups that gather to hear FEBC's broadcasts. There are 14,000 clubs in Mozambique, with around 50 members in each club.) Once, James tried to make the car break down whilst the team was on its way to an outreach. But God is infinitely more powerful. James failed. He then planned to curse the station, so he started to listen to the broadcasts.

But God had different plans.

The more James listened to Radio FOT, the more he felt a strange stirring in his heart to want to know more about salvation. Finally, James contacted the station.

"I don't want you to tell other people, but I want you to tell me more about Jesus Christ because my heart wants to know more," James explained to the team. So



Sangomas or witch doctors in Africa use black magic to curse and to kill.



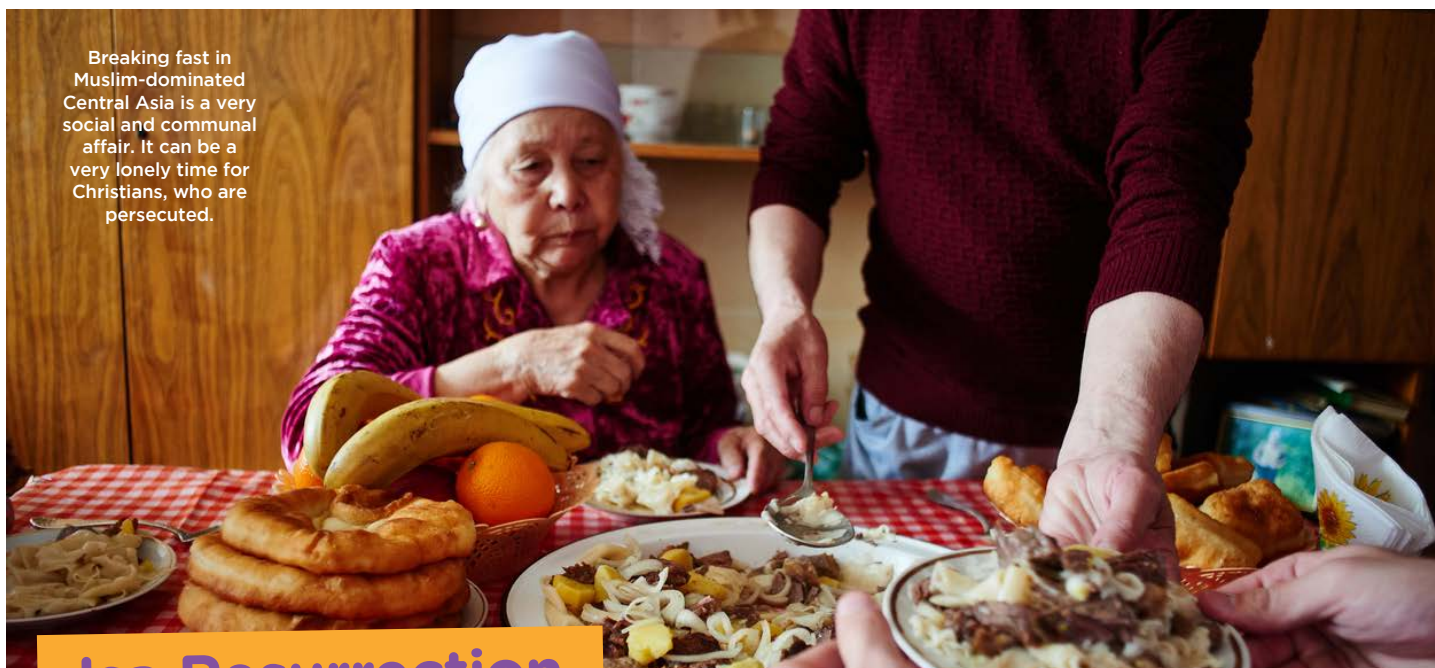
Former sangoma chief James Mbeue receiving a Bible and radio from Bright Sonjera, Director of FEBC's ministry in Mozambique.

the team excitedly went to visit James and his wives.

At the visit, James blurted out, "If I accepted Jesus Christ, what will be the benefit for me? Will my life be like others?" The team suggested they pray together first and then discuss. So they prayed and had a lengthy discussion. The entire family came to Christ then and there and James asked for a Bible.

But God didn't just stop there. James started sharing his testimony on the radio, even on a secular BBC radio service! Through James, 12 of his sangoma trainees have become disciples of Jesus Christ! They are all planted in churches. Radio FOT provided them with sewing machines and training for them to start their own small businesses. Today, the sangoma club they formed no longer pronounce curses. Instead, they actively bring other sangomas to life in Jesus. Their powerful testimonies on FEBC Mozambique's 'Testimony Hour' are now reaching other sangomas.

Breaking fast in Muslim-dominated Central Asia is a very social and communal affair. It can be a very lonely time for Christians, who are persecuted.



Isa Resurrection

Each year in March or April, homes around Central Asia are abuzz with activity. It's Ramadan, the holy month in the Islamic calendar, where Muslims fast in the day. Families gather to break fast in the evening. It's common for families to visit one another to do so together. In Central Asia, where Islam has been the dominant religion for centuries, this has become part of the social fabric of society. For Christians, who are the minority and persecuted, it can be a very lonely time.

For Muhammadali, it wasn't just expulsion from the family. When Muhammadali renounced Islam for Jesus Christ, his brother was so enraged he nearly beat Muhammadali to death. One of the blows was on the head with a glass bottle. Muhammadali has had to have several surgeries on his eyes in the following years to lessen the pain caused by his broken bones. Hence, he must wear sunglasses

most of the day now, even whilst indoors.

But like Jesus who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2a), the persecution has only strengthened Muhammadali's resolve to share the Good News of Isa (Jesus). He is doing so as a program host in Kyrgyzstan within FEBC Eurasia's visionary Isa Resurrection project.

The Isa Resurrection project reaches out to Muslims across Central Asia, including entirely unreached people groups such as the Karakalpak people. As it is illegal to publicly invite people to receive Jesus in many Central Asian countries, content shared by the team is factual. Video testimonies, Biblical history, or Bible stories are shared on social media, online, and on app, in addition to radio broadcasts on daily living. On average, each testimony video on 'Jol Şyndyq Ömir' channel ('The Way, the Truth, the Life') gets more than 50,000 views.

Listener Elvira was one who was impacted. "My husband is a radical Muslim," said Elvira when she called the hosts of one of FEBC Kyrgyzstan's programs. "He is extremely jealous, never letting me out of the house and constantly checking my phone."

Many women in Kyrgyzstan find themselves in similar difficult situations. They feel trapped and have nowhere to turn. But God wants to be their refuge.

Elvira became a regular listener of FEBC Kyrgyzstan, talking with the hosts of the program often. When they shared the Gospel with her, Elvira became a believer in Jesus. "I wish I could come meet you, but my husband won't let me go to the city," she told them.

Though circumstances have not changed and Elvira is unable to tell her husband she has become a Christian, she now knows she is not alone. Once fearful and in despair, she is now alive in Christ!



Program Host Muhammadali has to wear sunglasses most of the time because of injuries sustained when he was beaten by his brother for following Jesus.

Dear friends,

In Australia we love stories where the underdog wins. I too like an unexpected twist when all seems lost but was not. So it is that I love the 'But God ...' moments. Looking back, I can now see and praise God for many such moments, moments in my life when things were desperate and all seemed lost, 'but God ...' What 'But God ...' moments do you have where God stepped in and gave His peace or reassurance even amidst trials and struggles?

May I propose the biggest 'But God ...' moment for all humanity happened at Easter. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)," (Ephesians 2:4-5 NASB).

Christ died for us when we were still sinners. We should have been the ones crucified, but God took our place. But it did not end there. Everything seemed lost, after they took the body of Christ and laid Him in a tomb, "but God raised Him from the dead" (Acts 13:30). We are not left gazing in despair into the agonising suffering. Instead, we are made alive together with Christ! It is the empty tomb that the angel of God invites us to "come see" (Matthew 28:6). We are invited into an eternal hope in a living Christ!

And now, together, we invite the unreached to come hear and see, that they may also know the love of God, that they may also experience the victory of the cross, that they may also have a



'but God ...' revelation. May I invite you, too, to "come see" in this issue of Skywaves. Come see the many 'but God ...' moments – of miracles, of lives freed and of lives transformed.

I pray that these will encourage you to look beyond the suffering to the victory of the cross. I pray that these will gladden your hearts, knowing that whatever situation you are facing, there will surely be a 'but God ...' moment. This is how we stand together also with our partners around the world amid their great struggles.

Happy Easter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Keegan".

Kevin Keegan

National Director/CEO

Easter Greetings

Click here
watch Easter
greetings from
other FEBC
leaders.

Free Wills Week

Continue your impact on missions beyond your lifetime by leaving a bequest. We have partnered with Safewill to make the sign up process easy and support you and your family with the necessary tools. It is FREE if you sign up between 20-26 March, 2023.

Click here
to find out
more and
sign up.

“But Jesus Healed Me Completely!”

The Siddhis of a southern Indian state are a unique community. Descended from Bantu peoples in Southeast Africa, they were brought to the Indian subcontinent as slaves. When slavery was abolished, many fled into the jungles, where most work as farmers today. Though assimilated into the Indian culture, they are often seen as outsiders and alienated.

A Siddhi girl.
The Siddhi ethnic
group in India
originate from
Southeast Africa.



But God has not forgotten the Siddhis.

Since December 1999, God has opened doors for FEBA to share the Good News with this community. Now the Gospel is heard through speaker boxers in 20 villages in the Kannada

language. (Speaker boxes do not receive terrestrial broadcasts. Content is played from programmed SD cards.) A team conducts regular visits and works with a local pastor for follow-ups.

And God has been setting the captives free. Alcoholics have been set free from their



A Siddhi community with their speaker boxes.
Photo blurred for security reasons.

addiction. People have experienced physical healing. Many families have been transformed.

*Ratnama is one who has been impacted. Whilst carrying two pots of water on her head, Ratnama slipped and fell. She sustained a serious injury to her leg and hip. For months, she was unable to walk or even get up from bed. She was in terrible pain and needed assistance daily for even the most basic tasks. She sought treatment from different doctors, but none could help. Her emotional and mental health began to deteriorate rapidly. The situation seemed impossible to her, but not to God.

The FEBA team and the local pastor went to Ratnama's house. They prayed for her and gave her the speaker box. Ratnama began to listen to the messages from the box. The Word of God began to work in her body and life. She began to regain strength in her legs. Every day she experienced the healing touch of God.

When the team visited Ratnama again, they found her completely healed! She exuberantly exclaimed, "I can dance, I can jump, and I can do all my work! Jesus healed me completely!" God turned Ratnama's wailing into dancing; He removed her sackcloth and clothed her with joy (Psalm 30:11 NASB).

** Name changed for security reasons.*

Silenced No More

Not knowing a single letter of the alphabet. Not understanding any sign language. This was V* when FEBC Vietnam found him. He was 21.

But V's situation isn't uncommon. The deaf in Vietnam are intentionally hidden. Most Vietnamese think deafness is a curse. Parents are ashamed of their deaf children. In order to hide them, they are not sent to schools. Each family communicates to their deaf child in their own ways, so the children do not learn standard sign language. These children grow up rejected and isolated, their silent world deafeningly devoid of love. Without education, they are unable to get jobs and integrate into society as adults. Dreams and hopes for the future are brutally silenced.

"It's a lifetime of baggage," FEBC Vietnam's Director Tri Dang shared. "Many start off very angry, because of years of hurt and suppressed emotions. It is not the kind of ministry you want to start if you want quick results."



FEBC Vietnam engages deaf volunteers to produce 3-D animation to share Bible stories visually from their own perspective.

But God isn't interested in quick superficial fixes or growth in ministry numbers just for the sake of growth. His focus is on each person. Whether deaf, blind, lame or leprous, Jesus reached out to each and all. And He specialised in those shunned by society. So, it is the ministry that FEBC Vietnam has chosen to take on.

The ministry also reaches out to ethnic groups through Bible translations, broadcasts on radio and speaker boxes, and partnering with churches to raise up leaders. "Leaders who can face persecution," Tri adds. Communist Vietnam ranks as the 25th most dangerous country in the world in which to be a Christian.



FEBC Vietnam provides vocational and sign language training for the deaf, who would otherwise not get an education and a chance at a better life.



For the deaf, FEBC Vietnam produces visual Biblical content to share on TV boxes and mobile apps. The team also conducts sign language classes and vocational training to help the deaf get work and integrate into society. Some learn to make furniture or sew. Others learn 3-D animation, which is used to tell Bible stories for the deaf. This unconditional love and the concept of grace is something very foreign to newcomers.

That was what S* experienced when he first came to FEBC Vietnam. He had been selling lottery tickets on the streets and barely surviving. Self-preservation in a tough world was all S* knew. But the love of God through His people slowly broke down S*'s wall. Still, he took two to three years to receive Jesus. Today, S* is a regular in church and a volunteer leader in 3-D animation with FEBC Vietnam. His heart is no longer silenced but shouts of hope and is cradled in love.

* Abbreviated for security reasons.

In the Heart Languages

Tell someone that "Jesus loves you! He is alive!" in their heart language!

Portuguese *Jesus te ama! Ele está vivo!* (official language in Mozambique)

Kyrgyz Иса сени сүйөт! Ал тирүү! (*İsa seni süyöt! Al tirüü!*)

Kazakh Иса сени жақсы көреді! Ол тірі! (*İsa seni jaqsı köredi! Ol tiri!*)

Kannada ಯೇಸು ನಮ್‌ಮನ್‌ನು ಪರೇತಿಸುತಾನೇ! ಅವನು ಜೀವಿಸುತ್ತಾನೆ! (*Yēsu nim'mannu prītisuttāre! Avanu jīvisutāne!*)

Vietnamese *Jesus yêu bạn! Anh ấy còn sống!*

Heart-to-Heart

Erin Betteridge has been raising funds for missions for over twenty years. The veteran fundraiser does so using her musical gift, which she has dedicated to the Lord. She composes, plays, rearranges and records songs of worship and timeless hymns and Gospel songs or re-creates classic hymns and sells the CDs to fundraise, and she loves it!

Born in India to parents who supported missionaries, Erin's awareness for missions was fostered at a young age. She would later spend two years in Papua New Guinea as a support missionary.

To date, Erin has released two vocal albums and four volumes of 'Gospel Keys' instrumental music. 'Music for Missions', the ministry Erin has set



Erin with Cherylyn when the latter popped by for a visit on her road trip.

up, has developed and grown. Erin counts as a privilege to support FEBC, a ministry she grew up with.

"We are called to use our talents and not to bury them," Erin shares.

Ways to partner with FEBC



PRAY

febc.org.au/prayer-guide-sign-up/



GIVE

febc.org.au/2303-n-dm/



TELL

facebook.com/febcaustralia

We need your help to tell others about FEBC, so more can join in on the mission to let the unreached hear.

Ways to Tell



Click here to book us in for a speaking engagement.



Use these widgets found on each of our webpages to share the pages or articles.

Click here for direct links

Share, repost, tag or comment on our social posts