

Celebrate Bible Sunday



This **Bible Sunday** embrace the Bible's message of love and raise funds for the 'Big Mission'. Because we believe every child has the right to encounter the Bible.

Download your FREE resources from biblesunday.org from July

WORD *IN* ACTION

WE OFFER THE BIBLE TO THE WORLD

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PASS IT ON - With the Bible Bedtime app





There's nothing we can experience on this earth that the Bible hasn't got to first. Themes of forgiveness and redemption crop up in our soap operas. Secular universities look at issues of meaning and identity. Video clips showing extraordinary kindnesses notch up millions of facebook shares.

In all these things, the Bible got there first.

That's why all of us here at Bible Society, are passionate about our new campaign, *The Big Mission*. Unless society embraces the Bible as part of our story and identity, it risks getting lost. It would be a tragedy for children to miss out on the stories – and story – that tell us so much about who we are and where we're heading. This is not just a matter of charity, but justice: children have a right to encounter the Bible.

So, however challenging it is, however hard we have to fight to overcome the things that keep the Bible a closed book, we'll do it. Because our heart is to share the Bible. And we'd love you to be part of it too.

James Catford

James Catford
Group Chief Executive
Bible Society

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in the news ...

Book launch to mark World War One

We are marking the anniversary of the start of World War One with an illustrated collection of psalms, poems and personal stories.

Produced in conjunction with the Royal British Legion, *Hear My Cry* also contains hymns, prayers and testimonies which tell how soldiers turned to the Bible in extreme, often extraordinary, situations. We hope it will be used at Remembrance Sunday services across the country in November.

There are also accompanying resources for schools to help children understand the significance of World War One.

For your copy visit
biblesociety.org.uk/hearmycry-wia

Beached whale

A giant inflatable whale we hoped to use to tell the story of Jonah has been banned from the Royal Parks because managers deemed a planned event 'too religious'.

Our application to hold an event for children at either Hyde Park or Greenwich Park, in London, was refused because it could be classed as an act of 'religious observance'.

James Catford, Group Chief Executive of Bible Society, said 'telling the story of Jonah to children, inside a giant inflatable whale, is intended to be a free, fun event over the summer.

'The Bible is packed full with some of the greatest stories ever told. We believe that every child is entitled to encounter the Bible.'

Read the Bible... at East Midlands Airport

Thanks to your generosity, we've been able to send Bibles and New Testaments to the chaplaincy team at the East Midlands Airport, Derby.

Senior chaplain, the Revd Roy Monks said, 'We are thrilled to have them. People can now sit for a few minutes before a flight or come in during their lunch break and read the Bible.'

Some 4.5 million people pass through the airport near Derby every year, and hundreds spend time in the prayer room.

Mr Monks said people who visited the prayer room were struggling with everything from broken relationships and bereavement, to being scared of flying.

Within days of their arrival one of the Bibles was given to a Polish woman who works at the airport.

Bible Society at Spring Harvest

Bible Society was the main sponsor for this year's Spring Harvest, and thousands of people attended the festival. Launching our new campaign, *The Big Mission*, hundreds signed up to help children all over the world encounter the Bible.

Booking for Spring Harvest 2015 is now open. Bible teachings, seminars and celebrations, based on Ephesians 3.20 will inspire guests to explore the potential of a God of 'immeasurably more'. Visit springharvest.org to book online. We look forward to seeing you there!

Photo: Bible Society/Clare Kendall



Bombardier George Hever Vinall dodged three bullets. Read his story at biblesociety.org.uk/ww1-wia

THE BIBLE WAS A 'DEFINING INFLUENCE' DURING WORLD WAR ONE

You can't understand World War One without the Bible. That's the view of the University of Birmingham's Dr Michael Snape, speaking about this year's centenary of the conflict that saw 5.7 million British men mobilised.

'It is hard to understand British society at the time of World War One if you subtract the Bible from it,' said Dr Snape, Reader in Religion, War and Society. The Bible was a 'defining influence' on working class culture, he says. Ninety per cent of children went to Sunday school. Around a quarter of the population were weekly churchgoers. From public school to Sunday school, from art and music to political debate, the Bible was in the blood of British people.

When war broke out on 4 August 1914, every member of the British Armed Forces received a New Testament as

a standard part of his kit. Bible Society distributed some nine million Bibles, in 80 different languages between 1914 and 1918, to combatants and prisoners of war on all sides.

This summer, to mark the centenary of the outbreak of war, we're uncovering just what those Bibles meant to young soldiers at the front, to prisoners of war, conscientious objectors, chaplains and those left at home. These stories and more are available on our website biblesociety.org.uk/ww1-wia

They're also being told across the country through the media. It truly is a chance for these voices from the past to speak one last time. If your family has a story to tell about how someone clung to the Bible during World War One, we'd love to hear it.

Just get in touch at biblesociety.org.uk/ww1-get-in-touch-wia or call us on 01793 418222.

WHAT'S ALL THE **BIG TALK** ABOUT MISSION?

Join *The Big Mission* to share Scripture with children – because we believe every child has a right to encounter the Bible.

Dai Woolridge Church Partnership Manager, was at the launch of *The Big Mission* at Spring Harvest and shares more about what it is, and how you can be involved.



Maybe you're aware of all we do, or maybe you've recently joined. Either way, it's my pleasure to tell you about *The Big Mission*.

The goal is simple – to reach 20 million young people with the Bible. And to do it by the year 2020... Well, thinking about it, it's not that simple. Actually it's an incredibly tall order. But then it's not called *The Big Mission* for nothing. Bible Society was set up some 200 years ago and the work we've been able to do by God's grace is phenomenal. Today there are more than 140 Bible Societies around the world, and we are working in 200 countries and territories. To say this is a global movement is an understatement.

If there's a Bible in someone's hands, the likelihood is we've had a part to play in the process – whether through translation, production or distribution. I say this not to brag, but to thank God for our founders who had the vision, and the likes of you reading, who committed to help make that vision happen.

However, despite the great work that has been done, we know we've just scratched the surface of what's needed. To think there are 7,000 languages in this world and over half are still waiting for a single book of the Bible. And the issues are not just abroad, they're on our home turf too. A recent survey showed that nearly a third of 11-16 year-olds didn't know the nativity was a Bible story. When I tell you this survey took place just after Christmas, it really puts things in perspective.

This is where *The Big Mission* comes in. We want to change these facts and figures. You may have heard about Open the Book. It's a great project taking Bible stories to primary schools – and it now reaches a quarter of a million children throughout the country,

'The Bible is not just a page-turner; it's a life-changer.'

on a weekly basis. Thanks to Open the Book, Callum can tell you the story of Daniel in the lion's den and what it means to him. Overseas, the Bible is changing the lives of young people like Saliep in Cambodia who is too poor to go to school. Our team recently visited her village and she received her very first book – the New Testament. 'This is my most prized possession, I will treasure it forever,' she said. You see, *The Big Mission* is the heartbeat of our charity.

We believe that the Bible is not just a page-turner; it's a life-changer. It's our mission to make sure the next generation doesn't speak of the Bible as an irrelevance. We believe that the Bible is more than a book and we want to make sure every person has the opportunity to experience it. But here's the thing: all of this is just a pipe dream unless people help us make it a reality. This is where you come in. Will you be part of it, by making *The Big Mission* your mission?



Dai Woolridge
Dai Woolridge is Church Partnership Manager for Wales and West Midlands

THE BIG MISSION... IN CAMBODIA

Around the world, *The Big Mission* teams go to extraordinary lengths to open up the Bible for children. Never more so than in Cambodia, where we're taking the Bible to the most remote communities. We sent Spring Harvest's Abby Guinness to find out more.



I'm Abby Guinness, and I'm in Cambodia with Bible Society to discover more about how *The Big Mission* is opening up the Bible for children here. We're off to the jungle with Bibles and literacy material to set up the first literacy class in the remote village of Spean Kmeng.



It's a long and bumpy journey, and the basic infrastructure makes this one of the most remote places in Cambodia. There are two things that keep the Bible shut for children living out here. One: poverty. Families simply can't afford the cost of a Bible. And two: education. During the Khmer Rouge period of the 1970s, the education system was decimated. Today, a quarter of the population can't read or write. We have to find ways round these obstacles if children are to discover the Bible for themselves.



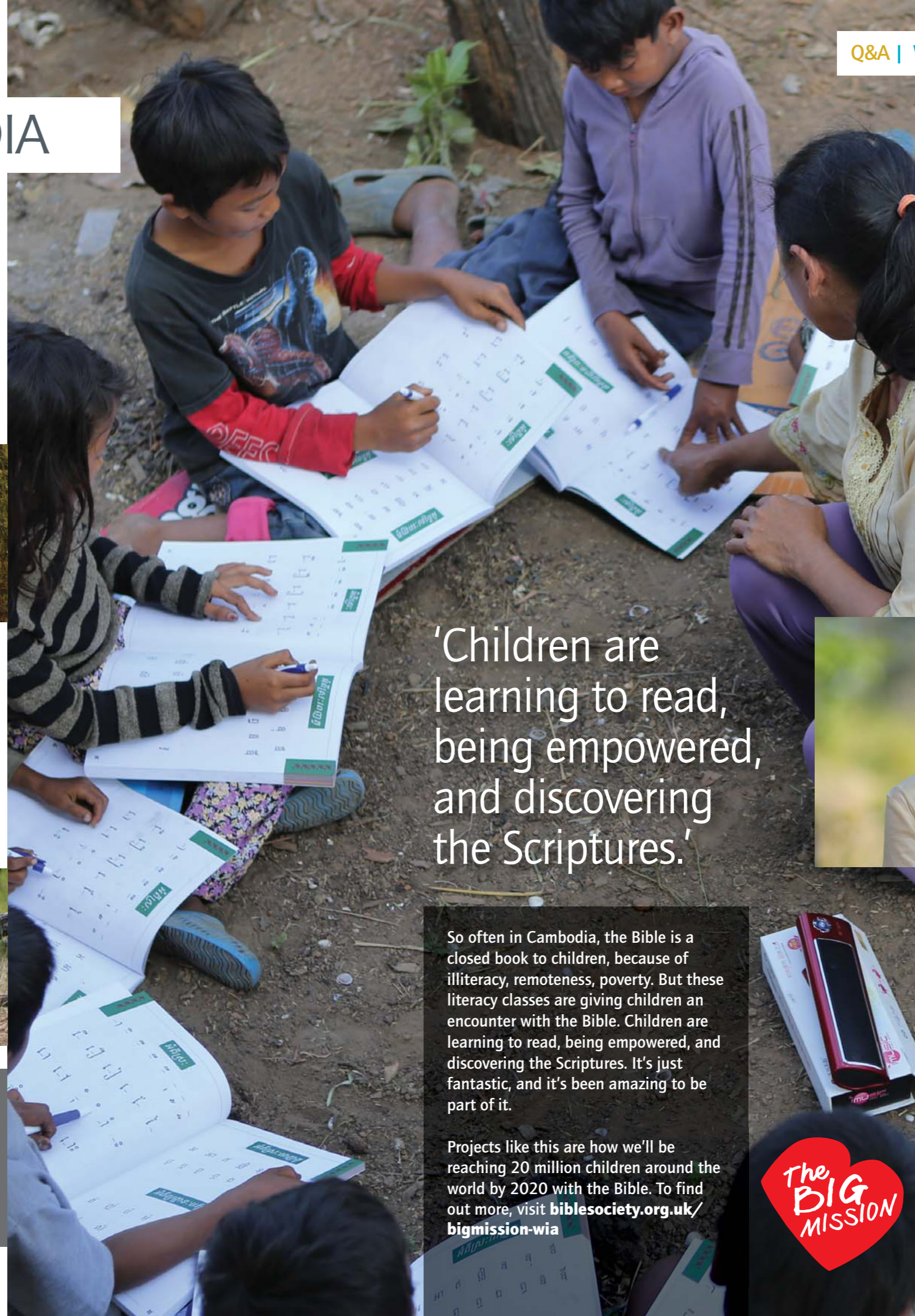
With six miles to go, the team transfer our load to this tractor, as the van can't go any further on the muddy roads.



We're nearly at the village. Around 60 families live here, and 10 families are Christians. It's a poor community. There's no school, and people scratch out a living from farming.



As soon as we hand out the workbooks, the literacy class gets underway. Children listen to an MP3 player and follow along with the sounds and letters in their book. It's effectively their teacher. As you turn the pages, you realise that each chapter is a Bible story. So, as they learn to read, these children are also discovering the Scriptures.



This is Mrs Lorn Oun Moun Ta, a village elder who is running this literacy class. She makes sure the children are in the right place in the workbook, and helps them with the sounds. She told me, 'It's vital that Bible Society comes here to set up literacy classes so children can learn to read and understand the Bible. The Bible transforms communities - I've seen it! I see people stop relying on themselves and instead learn to trust God.'



'Children are learning to read, being empowered, and discovering the Scriptures.'

So often in Cambodia, the Bible is a closed book to children, because of illiteracy, remoteness, poverty. But these literacy classes are giving children an encounter with the Bible. Children are learning to read, being empowered, and discovering the Scriptures. It's just fantastic, and it's been amazing to be part of it.

Projects like this are how we'll be reaching 20 million children around the world by 2020 with the Bible. To find out more, visit biblesociety.org.uk/bigmission-wia

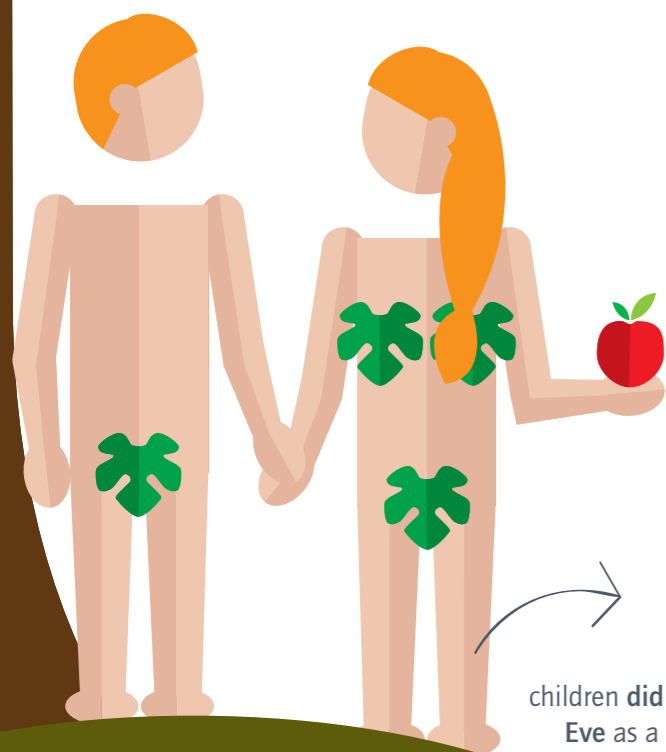




THE BIG MISSION... AT HOME

Here, it's not typically poverty or illiteracy that keeps the Bible shut for children.

It's the simple fact that people don't read it. But we're working to change that.



Almost 1 in 5 children did not select Adam & Eve as a story from the Bible

Here at home, *The Big Mission* faces a big challenge. Our research shows that nine out of ten adults in England and Wales have no regular engagement with the Bible.

And yet, research we commissioned from YouGov suggests that four in five parents think it's important to pass on Bible stories to their children. That's why we've launched *Pass It On*, encouraging parents to read Bible stories with their children. We want to help people open up and explore Scripture, perhaps for the first time.

We officially launched the campaign back in February with a report drawing attention to the issue of Bible engagement. It generated plenty of media coverage and, we hope, has begun a conversation about the value of sharing Bible stories with the next generation. Against the backdrop of that conversation, we've now launched a free 'Bible Bedtime' app to help parents – whether or not they consider themselves 'religious' – to get started with reading Bible stories to their children.

The app is already proving popular: hundreds of people downloaded it on its launch day. It's been written by children's author Martin Coleman (martincolemanbooks.co.uk) and is his unique take on a handful of classic Bible stories: Adam and Eve, Jonah, the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the Easter story.

31% of children describe Bible stories as being important

Being asked to retell these stories in child-friendly language was actually the first time that Martin had picked up a Bible since he was a child himself. While the stories are very close to the biblical source material, there are also a few quips and asides from Martin along the way: Jonah is credited with inventing sushi because he eats raw fish in the whale's belly; the prodigal son is described as smelling of 'pig poo'; and God gets 'ribbed' about the fiddly task of creating Eve.

The app also features beautiful illustrations from Claire Simmons-Clark. Children are invited to use their creativity in the app, too. A nifty camera function lets them draw or colour in their own picture, or even make a model out of Lego or cardboard or plasticine, and take a photo of it to use in the story.

This is all because the app is designed to encourage parents and children to really explore the stories, to ask questions and to think for themselves about the Bible. One journalist did exactly this and wrote about her experience for *The Daily Telegraph*. Her story (Bit.do/biblebedtime) captures some of the brilliant and funny ways that children engage with the Bible, exactly as we were hoping. She recounts how 'I began by retelling how a father



27%

of parents thought a plot from Superman could be a Bible story

had two boys, an older and a younger, that he loved them both equally.

"Did he?" asked my belligerent younger daughter – and shot

her older sister a hard stare.' We love seeing people engage with the Bible for the first time like this.

As James Catford, our Group Chief Executive, puts it: 'We believe passionately in the power stories have to enhance and enrich our lives. It's why we think every child should have the opportunity to experience the Bible.'

'Our campaign is about the people that count in children's lives helping to keep the Bible alive for many generations to come.'

'We want to remind all those who value this classic text, regardless of their reason, that we must "use it or lose it".'

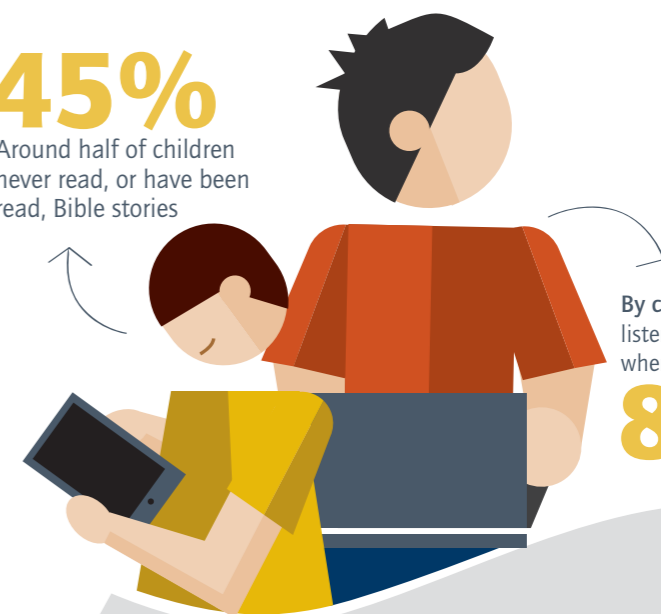
You can download the Bible Bedtime app to your iPad free from the iTunes store, or visit biblesociety.org.uk/biblebedtime-wia to find out more.

To find out more about the *Pass It On* campaign and to read the report, visit biblesociety.org.uk/PassItOn-wia

'We think every child should have the opportunity to experience the Bible.'

45%

Around half of children never read, or have been read, Bible stories



By contrast, parents who read, listened to, or watched Bible stories when they were growing up:

86%



Left: **Ethan, 13 and Ellis, 11**, cycle to and from school to raise money for Bibles in China. Right: **Seven-year-old Zhao Yi Bo**, in Shaanxi Province, China, holding his new Bible.



BIKE FOR BIBLES

Hazel Southam met two young boys cycling to and from school to raise money for Bibles in China.

Brothers Ethan and Ellis Gill from Yorkshire have raised an amazing £125 to provide Bibles for families in China.

The boys, who cycle 3.5 miles from their home to school, were inspired by reading the story of seven-year-old Zhao Yi Bo from China. He was from a poor farming family, and so although the family were Christians, they couldn't afford a Bible. 'We realised

that we are quite lucky to live in this society,' said 11-year-old Ellis. 'We want to help other people too.'

The two boys, who attend St Michael's Church in Tollerton with their brothers Job, seven, and Japheth, six, decided to raise money for Bibles by cycling to school every day for several weeks. 'I saw that it only cost 80p for a Bible in China,' says the boys' mother, Helen. 'Ellis realised that was what he spent

on his bus fare getting to school. So I suggested that they cycle to school and I would save up 80p every day.'

'We thought it would be a good idea,' said 13-year-old Ethan. 'They have the chance to be Christians, but they can't if they haven't got a Bible.' Ellis agreed saying, 'We hope it will generate more Christians in places where there aren't too many. We hope it will have a big impact.' Members of the congregation

'EVERYBODY SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO THE BIBLE. IT'S THE MOST PRECIOUS THING WE HAVE.'

at St Michael's also donated money to the boys' appeal, raising the total to an impressive £125.

Ethan and Ellis said that the cycling got 'tough' towards the end when they were 'really shattered'. But they said,

they 'got fitter' over the weeks, and sped up, improving their time from 25 minutes to 18 minutes.

Thanks to the boys, more families like Zhao Yi Bo's now have the chance to read the Bible. All three boys share a farming background, despite living on opposite sides of the world. Zhao Yi Bo's family are fruit farmers, but he loves the goats which live in the family's back yard.

Equally, Ethan and Ellis's youngest brother, Japheth, was keen to show off the seven rare breed sheep and their lambs basking in early spring sunshine, as well as the two goats and dog Sam. The Gill boys from York read Bible stories every day with their parents

Helen and Howard. Current favourites include the walls of Jericho falling; Jonah and the great fish and Jesus stilling the storm.

Meanwhile, back in China, Zhao Yi Bo says, 'I really like the story of Jesus being born in a stable. I would like to be a shepherd in the nativity play. But I've never been one yet.'

Helen says she's proud of what the boys have achieved through their daily seven-mile round trip to school. 'It was such a little bit of money,' she says, 'and yet to think that people in China are sharing Bibles because they can't afford one. Everybody should have access to the Bible. It's the most precious thing we have.'

join...



And help overcome the barriers that keep the Bible shut for children. Here are some different ways you can join...



- **Get your free sand-timer and take a moment each day to pray** for *The Big Mission* and for those who encounter Scripture for the first time. To join *The Big Mission* fill in the form attached with your *Word in Action* to request your free sand timer.
- **Download your free Bible Bedtime app**
The app allows you to read Bible stories with your children or grandchildren and even share them through social media. It's designed to help those who wouldn't usually open a Bible, so why not tell your neighbours or friends about it? Available to download free to your iPad from the iTunes store.
- **Volunteer with your local Open the Book team**
Become a storyteller in a primary school near you, and share the Bible with the next generation. Visit biblesociety.org.uk/openthebook-wia or call us on 01793 418222
- **Pledge to support**
 - £5 could provide a Bible to a child in Cambodia
 - £10 could bring the Bible to life for 10 children in our country through Open the Book
 - £20 could help seven children in Cambodia to read the Bible
- **Coming soon... Hello World**
Grow in your faith and experience Bible work around the world. Check out Bible Society's all-round experience for 18-30 year olds, launching at New Wine and Momentum this year. Visit biblesociety.org.uk/helloworld-wia



DO IT YOURSELF

Noah, the latest Hollywood blockbuster movie, seems to be like Marmite... you either love it or you hate it.

But there is no denying that it has got people talking.

Even Christians are talking about which parts of the story are biblical and which bits are ...well, creative license. It's a staple childhood Bible story, but do we really know it? When was the last time you read the story of Noah from your Bible?

Which brings us to an interesting exercise. How do you retell the Bible for children, and to what extent does the retelling draw us back to the text, to consider it again carefully and look through fresh eyes? For example, which elements of a story are integral? Are there details that are more important than we sometimes appreciate?

When we look at Scripture and try to consider it from a child's perspective, it forces us to look at what we're reading through a different lens. Why not have a go? You may be surprised by what unexpected nuggets you might take away...

STEP ONE

Read the following Scripture:

Genesis 12
Genesis 15-18
Genesis 20-21

STEP TWO

What would you pass on to an eight-year-old?

Which parts are **integral to the story**?

Are there any parts you **might leave out**?

What **questions** might an eight-year-old ask from reading this story?

YOUR LETTERS & COMMENTS

'I like stories being on the iPad but my best bit is colouring.'

AIDEN SHARP, AGED THREE
(BIBLE BEDTIME APP)



'A brilliant little app. Well done.'

GWILYM LUKE JONES ON FACEBOOK
(BIBLE BEDTIME APP)

'The five-day challenge was really great! The kids were captivated by the stories, they found the interactive app format exciting, loved the illustrations, and we got to spend some quality time together as a family.'

JEMMA SHARPS

'I really like reading the stories with my mum and my brother.'

EMILY MOORE, AGED SEVEN
(BIBLE BEDTIME APP)



'I like seeing my pictures on the book.'

SPENCER BENTLEY, AGED FOUR
(BIBLE BEDTIME APP)



'It was one of the most meaningful Bible encounters I've had with my kids.'

MATT VALLER
(BIBLE BEDTIME APP)

'A colleague gave me your magazine to look through to see what other charities are doing... and I just loved it! The Open the Book feature was so inspiring and made me SO glad you're doing that work in schools. Also loved the story about Jesus in Brighton - awesome!! Hoping to take my daughters to Trafalgar Square on Good Friday - so glad I read your magazine today! Keep up the fantastic work!'

MARY STRINGER

'Thank you so much. All those around me (at *The Passion of Jesus* in Trafalgar Square) were reverent. You could hear a pin drop as they listened to the performance. Thanks to all involved.'

ANGELA HARDING ON FACEBOOK

WE LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Email us your thoughts and comments at wia@biblesociety.org.uk or use the comments form attached. We reserve the right to edit letters for style and length. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of Bible Society.

One verse



I've always found God's creation to have an immensely calming effect, in a way that nothing else does. As someone who is a 'techie', I spend most of my waking hours in front of a screen of some sort.

But I love enjoying his creation - by surrounding myself with it, taking it in and marvelling at his stunning world, I worship God - giving him glory for all that he is, and does. Creation shouts out God's power, his wisdom, his protection and so much more.

Summer is coming - I hope - and I can't wait to get outside, enjoy the sun,

and enjoy the presence of God and his creation.

Away from my computer, God willing...

Midas Gordon-Farleigh, Bible Society's Digital Webmaster

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Romans 1.20 (ESV)

Biblepeople: Thida Hul Kol Project Officer in Cambodia

Proclaiming Scripture

It's almost 40 years since the war in Cambodia, but the post-genocide generations still live with the scars. Some of Thida's relatives were killed during the genocide but she finds comfort in reading Scripture. 'The Bible helps me a lot,' says Thida, who works for the Bible Society in Cambodia. 'It encourages me when I am upset or feel alone but I stand firm through difficult times with the Bible.'

Since 2001, Bible Society in Cambodia has run a radio programme on secular stations which opens up Scripture to millions of people who are illiterate.



With her experience of working in Christian radio, Thida now runs this project called *15 Minutes for Life*. 'Many people have been through a similar situation as me,' she says. 'How can they find peace without God? This

radio show helps people overcome trauma. It is hard to find forgiveness if you do not understand God's love, that's why the Bible is so important to me. The Bible changes lives, it changes families and it changes communities.'

I think it's quite odd that people like myself, in their forties, are quite happy to dismiss the Bible, but have never read it. I always think that if an alien came down and you were the only person they met, and they said, 'What's life about? What's earth about? Tell us everything,' and you said, 'Well, there's a book here that purports to tell you everything. Some people believe it to be true; some people (do) not believe it (to be) true.' 'Wow, what's it like?' and you go, 'I don't know, I've never read it.' It would be an odd thing wouldn't it? So, at the very least, read it.

LEE MACK, COMEDIAN. BBC'S *DESERT ISLAND DISCS*



Photo: BAFTA/REX