

Updated 23rd September 2020

We are delighted that so many of you are already thinking ahead and asking questions about the best way to go back to schools. There are many questions that cannot be answered at this time, but we are keeping a very close eye on the government guidance and will keep you updated.

Our guidance to Open the Book Storytellers follows government guidelines as the starting point.

If you would like to read the government guidance, follow this link. It appears that the older guidance has not been removed, so you will have to scroll around a bit to get the latest updates.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

As and when the government (keeping in mind that this may mean something different for the various parts of the UK) does loosen social distancing restrictions, to the point where OTB assemblies are again possible, teams should refer to:

- a. their Local Education Authority's guidelines for Covid-19, as these may vary from place to place.
- b. their denominational guidance for gathering to meet (keeping in mind that teams are often ecumenical and there may be different guidance for different churches)

As an OTB Storyteller you have signed up to our Code of Practice, and this is just as important now as when you are in the school.

So, what can we do until we can go back into schools as normal?

1. **Pray.** Pray for your team, the children, their families and your school and their staff;
2. **Do some behind-the-scenes jobs**
 - a. Update your team info with correct contact details, new team members, etc. (Go to <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/content/get-involved/open-the-book-2017/training/OtB%20Team%20Changes%20form.pdf> for the team changes form.)
 - b. Does everyone on your team have an OTB membership number so that they can access the resources section of our website? Does everyone on your team receive a newsletter? If not, now is a good time to sort this out for them. If you have questions about this, contact contactus@biblesociety.org.uk
 - c. Recruit new team members. Who comes to mind when you think of someone you would love to have on your team? Someone in your church? , Another church? Someone who loves acting? Someone newly retired? Or someone who loves children? Pray about it and start asking around. It might be just the encouragement someone needs to get involved. Ask your church if you could show an OTB video in an online service.
 - d. Practise doing OTB with puppets.
 - e. Practise your miming skills in front of a mirror for the times you don't have props.
 - f. Work on sets, props and costumes – cleaning, repairing, or making new ones
3. **Learn and grow**
 - a. Do our new online training as a refresher until we can do face-to-face training again: <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book/online-training/>

- b. Do The Bible Course with your team. It is being offered at the special price of £9.99 during this time: <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/the-bible-course/>
 - c. Run a 'Bible Book Club' with your team. This is an easy and fun way to read the Bible, with excellent accessible resources. You can study one book at a time, in any order you wish. It's an excellent follow on from The Bible Course and it's completely free! <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/bible-book-club/>
 4. **Show your school you care** and that you want to continue to be in relationship with them even though you can't come into school.
 - a. Offer to do some gardening at the school
 - b. Send 'welcome back to school' cards to staff and/or each class, with a message of support, even though you can't be together
 - c. Provide refreshments for the staff room (purchased from a café providing takeaway)
 - d. Send in goodie boxes for teachers (e.g. a plant, a voucher for coffee and cake from a local café, local jam, local honey, face masks, etc.)
 - e. See our Open the Book Facebook page for ideas from other teams of what you might do to nurture your relationship with the school
 5. **Send the school Open the Book assembly recordings.** You can do this in two ways:

A. You can use Bob Hartman's recorded stories from our website or those in our Video Library (accessible via the login)

- We have recorded Bob Hartman reading some of his stories, with an introduction and conclusion from a member of our team. These recordings are available for download from our website, once you have logged in as a Storyteller: <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book/otb-resources/>
- We have also written curriculum resources for some of the videos, which are suitable for Key Stages 1 and 2. These are also available on our website: <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/homeschool-resources/>
Find out if your school is interested in having these resources to reinforce the stories.

B. Or you can make your own video recordings of Open the Book assemblies

You may be able to gather as a team and record videos as restrictions let up, or you may have to do it via Zoom or some other platform for your group gathering. (Liaise with your school on which platform is appropriate for their use.) See the guidance below, which gives helpful hints and tips about how to put together your own video assembly.

We would love to use your recording of OtB stories more widely. It would be great if other teams were able to access them, [via our website](#), and send them to their local schools too.

If this applies to your team, please follow the guidance below. Send a link to the recording by email to training@openthebook.net and include the wording below:

I confirm that each member of the [name] team is happy for this recording to be used more widely for OtB by Bible Society.
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Guidance for recording your stories

Many of you have enquired about the development of short home-made videos of your OtB assemblies for use in your local schools.

The short answer is YES, go for it.

The long answer is YES, go for it, but here are a few things that we would appreciate you considering.

Meeting up to record stories in person

If you are meeting in person to record your stories, please bear in mind the following points:

- Current guidance is that people should not go out to work, or to volunteer unless they are required to do so.
- If you are in an area under local lockdown restrictions, the gathering of the team in one member's home or garden is not possible.
- If the activity is in an area with no local restrictions it would be possible for it to take place in someone's garden (but not indoors) provided that no more than 6 people are involved.

Please continue to adhere to the Open the Book Code of Practice. Although you are not physically in the school environment, you are still engaging with children.

- Stick to the script and present the story simply, without addition or deviation, following the guidelines in the Open the Book Handbooks.
- Allow each story to speak for itself, as a Bible story, not as a sermon.
- Liaise closely and sensitively with schools, and be mindful of the educational environment.
- Make minimal demands on schools and be aware that you are invited visitors.
- Show respect and sensitivity to those of other faiths, and to those with none.
- Fulfil the relevant safeguarding requirements as outlined in the OtB Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Uphold the copyright of Open the Book material.

As with all Open the Book presentations, telling the story is the most important thing, so don't compromise on your storytelling by trying to do something different.

In practical terms, here are a few suggestions about getting the best from your story:

- Only those who are safely recruited should be in the video you record. Please do not ask family members or friends to be a character in the video you make.
- Choose your location wisely: do not film in a bedroom and ensure that your environment is free of any inappropriate images or references.
- Although using video gives you new opportunities to be creative with your storytelling, please still stick to the script.

- As well as upholding the copyright of the Open the Book materials, think carefully before using any extra videos, images or music in your video and ensure that they are free of copyright. If you would like to use any additional copyright free video, images or music, we suggest sourcing it from www.unsplash.com and www.bensound.com
- When filming, have your recording device in landscape, not portrait position.
- Film in a quiet location, so as to avoid any unintended background noise.
- The closer the camera is to you, the better the audio will be. Try not to get too far away. Aim for your head and shoulders to be in shot.
- Have your light source in front of you, not behind. If you are outside, you should have the sun at 45° to your left or your right. This will mean that your face is nicely lit but you won't have the light directly in your eyes. The same thinking applies to any light indoors.
- Whatever background you use should be simple, but this does not mean boring. Don't feel you can only use a plain white wall. Show a bookcase, a plant or something that supports the telling of your story. Give it some thought and be intentional about what is seen behind you.
- Think about any accessibility features, such as subtitles or sign language. At Bible Society we use Rev.com to produce our subtitles but we also check every word ourselves to check for mistakes. Please do check subtitles if you use a service like Rev.com, as sometimes inappropriate words are produced by the algorithm.

When it comes to sending the school your finished video, here are a couple of options. It will not work simply to attach your video to an email – it will be too big.

1. Upload the video to a private Vimeo or YouTube account and send the school the private link.
2. Use www.wetransfer.com. They provide a free transfer service, using your email.

Please take a look at our website for some guidelines regarding the sharing of stories:

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book/otb-content/important-information-for-open-the-book-storytellers-with-regards-to-coronavirus-covid19/>

All stories from our Christian Values book and those from Storybooks 2 and 3 which are not in *The Lion Storyteller Bible* are owned by Bible Society, so you are free to use these.

We also suggest you take a look at Lion Hudson's website, as they own *The Lion Storyteller Bible*:

<https://www.lionhudson.com/page/sales-and-rights/>

- We are allowing no more than 10% of a title to be used across all the videos made (not 10% of a title for each video). *There are around 70 stories in The Lion Storyteller Bible.*
- The videos need to be made for private use only (i.e. churches can only share videos of the content from the books within their congregation by email, not upload them to YouTube or a website).
- The video content using our OtB Storybooks must not be created for any commercial use.
- The videos must only show someone reading out the text. Please do not show the illustrations.
- The videos must show the copyright line from the book (Text copyright © ... etc) and include 'Used with permission from Lion Hudson'.
- The videos can be distributed for a period of six months; after this they must be deleted.
- The emails containing the videos sent out to the congregation need to include a link to the book on our website.

Below are some frequently asked questions about returning to school. If we still haven't answered your question, please do contact us at contactus@biblesociety.org.uk

FAQ

Q Some of our team are concerned about going back into school for their own health reasons. How should we proceed?

A No one should return to a school setting until they are comfortable and confident to do so. This may mean that some people never return, and that is fine: we thank you for everything you have done during your time as an Open the Book Storyteller. If the government guidance allows you to return to schools and lead assemblies, only do so with those who are happy to be involved. Also, keep in mind that some of your team may be coming from a home where someone is "'shielding', which may mean it would not be safe for them to return with the team.

Q Will we need to think differently about costumes and props when we go back to school?

A The answer is: we don't know. By the time you can return to school to do assemblies, it may be that costumes and props can be used as normal, or it may be that we have to rethink how we do things to protect the safety and well-being of everyone concerned. Perhaps you can do more miming instead of using props? Perhaps only the adult Storytellers should wear costumes that they have cleaned at home. It is a good question: keep an eye on the website for future guidance.

Q Do we need to wear face masks to return to school?

A Your team leader should ask the school what they would prefer. If the school doesn't have a preference, go with what you are comfortable with and/or government guidance.

Q What should we do about cleaning after we do an assembly?

A The team leader will need to discuss this with the school when they talk to them about returning. Remember that the amount of space you have now may be different, as schools have had to adjust room sizes and move furniture around.

Q Will our team still be covered by Bible Society's insurance when we go back into schools?

A As long as you are following government guidance for when and how you return, then yes, you are covered by our Open the Book insurance.

If you have any further questions, please contact us at contactus@biblesociety.org.uk