

Factsheet

What's the story? Bible reading among children: the facts

One book outstrips any other as the world's all-time bestseller.

It remains so popular today, thousands of years after it was first written, that it is excluded from bestseller lists so that it doesn't skew the charts.

And yet, while it can be found in millions of homes across the UK, for an increasing number of people, its contents are a mystery. It is ... the Bible.

Our research shows that Bible literacy is falling through the generations. And that, while many of us place great value on this classic book, little is being done to halt the decline.

Today, children simply haven't come across the stories before

- A quarter of children have never read, seen or heard the story of Noah's Ark (23%) or the Nativity (25%).
- More than half (54%) of children have never heard the story of Joseph and his coat of many colours.
- 43% of children have yet to hear, see or read about the Crucifixion.
- More than half have not heard, seen or read Moses parting the Red Sea (56%) or David and Goliath (57%).
- More than 60% of children have not read, seen or heard about the feeding of the 5,000 or the parable of the Good Samaritan.
- Three quarters (72%) of children have not seen, heard or read the story of Daniel in the lion's den.

And so they don't know the stories come from the Bible

- 1 in 5 children don't know that the story of Noah's Ark is from the Bible.
- A third (29%) don't know that the Nativity story is part of the Bible.
- 41% don't know that the story of David and Goliath is from the Bible.
- More than half (59%) don't know the story of Jonah and the whale is from the Bible.

It's not just young children

- A third (30%) of secondary school children (aged 12-15) did not know the Nativity story appears in the Bible.



Why are children not being exposed to the Bible?

- Two in five children (41%) have never had Bible stories read to them.
- More than half of children never, or less than once a year, read Bible stories at school or home.
- 45% of parents say they never read Bible stories to their child.
- By contrast, 86% of parents read, heard or watched Bible stories as a child.

And there's been a decline in Bible reading in school through the generations

- 79% of people aged 55 or over say they read, listened to or watched Bible stories in school when they were children. Among 18-24-year-olds that was 39%.

But the appetite is there

- Around half (49%) of primary school children think Bible stories are interesting, and around a third (31%) think they are important.
- More than a quarter of children (28%) say they would like to read, hear or see more Bible stories.
- Interest peaks at primary school, specifically around the ages of eight and nine, where 40% of children are keen to read, hear or see more.

Why does the Bible matter anyway?

- 43% of parents believe it's important for children to read, see or hear Bible stories because they provide values for a good life.
- 40% of parents believe Bible stories are important to our history and culture.
- A third (36%) think the Bible contains classic stories that continue to stand the test of time.

This study was conducted in January 2014 by YouGov for Bible Society. YouGov Plc interviewed 5,783 adults of which 1,091 were parents of 3 - 16 year olds. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Total sample size of children was 804, of which 713 had read, heard and/ or seen at least one of the listed Bible stories. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB children (aged 8 to 15).

