



## On your marks

2011 is the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Version of the Bible (Authorised Version). Many churches have used this as a springboard to focus on why Christians think their book is special, to look afresh at its stories and to highlight the amazing impact that its availability in the language of ordinary people has had on our nation's life and indeed the world. Bible Sunday is traditionally celebrated by many churches in October - and this will be another opportunity to talk about our special book and give thanks for those who have laboured to make sure we could read its stories for ourselves.

## Get set

The following idea is an outline for an all-age service for Bible Sunday. In advance:

- Ask everyone to bring a Bible with them from home.
- Consider setting up a display area near the entrance to your place of worship with as many different Bibles as you can muster: include different translations, printing styles, languages, bindings, ages and formats.
- The following verses might be a useful accompaniment to your collection of Bibles:

*The Lord gave a message. Many people made it widely known.* (Psalm 68:11, NIRV)

*Long ago in many ways and at many times God's prophets spoke his message to our ancestors.* (Hebrews 1:1, CEV)

*The good news is spreading all over the world with great success. It has spread in that same way among you, ever since the first day you learnt the truth about God's wonderful kindness.* (Colossians 1:6, CEV)

*When the good news about the kingdom has been preached all over the world and told to all nations, the end will come.* (Matthew 24:14, CEV)

*[Jesus said] 'I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won't be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life.'* (John 8:12, CEV)

*The earth and everything on it belong to the LORD. The world and its people belong to him.* (Psalm 24:1, CEV)

*This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.*

- Possible hymns and songs could include:



Lord, through the years

Lord, thy Word abideth

Break thou the bread of life

I am so glad to that my Father in heaven (with the line 'wonderful things in the Bible I see')

The best book to read is the Bible

Every day with Jesus (by Ishmael - Glorie music) beginning 'I realise the Bible is the book I need to read'

God's way (by Nick Harding) beginning 'Take the Bible, live it out'

When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word (perhaps just the first verse and chorus)

I will sing the wondrous story

Make the book live to me, O Lord

The wise man built his house on the Rock (i.e. the rock of his words) or 'Don't build your house on the sandy land'

- For a short talk, you will need three visual aids: an empty frame, a painting and a mirror. There is a rap version of [The house on the rock](#) from Matthew 7 available on the website - you might like to rehearse this beforehand with a small all-age group:

## Go!

### 1. **Introduction:** A special year - A special book

Now as you know here in... *insert the name of church*... this year is a special year for our special book, The Bible. A birthday year! The 400th birthday of the publication of the King James Bible - The AV - a version for the whole country, in the language of the people to bring them together and to bring them to God!

Now we all have our favourite type of book. Let's see what sort of reading you go for in this church... Hands up if you like... detective stories, fantasy stories, science fiction, romance, books of facts and figures, poetry, biography/autobiography, comedy, cookery...

Guess what? You can find all this and more in the Bible! It's an amazing book! No wonder it remains the world's number one most published book of all time... and if you include all the books about the Bible... you are into the billions!



Look... here is my Bible... the one I use every day. But why is it special? Well, let's apply the 'browsing in a bookshop' test! (*Invite everyone to pick up a Bible, either one available at church or the one they have brought from home - see above.*)

Let's find and read the first line... Genesis 1:1.

Let's find and read the last line... Revelation 22:21.

Let's find the middle... Psalm 118:8.

This book is special because

*It starts with God...*

*It takes us to Jesus...*

And how do we get there?

*By putting our trust in the Lord.*

## 2. A time to say sorry

Let us bring our story alongside God's story as we say sorry together.

- Everyone should hold a Bible in their hands and say together:

*Lord God, forgive us for not listening carefully to your words.*

- Now open the Bible somewhere in the first book - Genesis. Pause and then say:

*Lord God, forgive us for the wrong choices we have made this past week.*

- Next, open the Bible somewhere in the second book - Exodus. Pause and then say:

*Lord God, thank you for rescuing us again and again and keeping us safe even when we forgot you are with us.*

- Open the Bible somewhere in one of the books of Kings. Pause and then say:

*Lord God, forgive us for trying to do things on our own and not letting you be king over all we do.*

- Open the Bible in one of the books of the prophets. Pause and then say:

*Lord God, forgive us for not caring properly for others and for forgetting to be honest and fair.*

- Open the Bible somewhere in one of the four gospels. Pause and then say:



*Lord God, thank you for speaking to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.*

- Open the Bible among the letters at the end. Pause and then say:

*Lord God, help us to be living letters so that others can read from the way we live this coming week the truth of your love.*

- Everyone should now be encouraged to hold the Bible close to their heart. Pause and then say:

*Lord God, help us to hear you speaking to us today and to do what you tell us to do. Amen*

- Then say: *The Lord's Prayer*

### 3. What does the Bible mean to you?

When William Tyndale produced his New Testament in English back in 1526, copies had to be smuggled back into this country. It was an explosive book. It was so special that people hid it away – they valued it highly. Some people put their lives on the line for this book including Tyndale himself. And it was largely his translation that was eventually used to produce the King James Version in 1611.

- What makes this a special book for you?
- Why is it important to you?
- How would you recommend it to others? Get people to talk about this in groups. Then hear some of the comments with a roving microphone.

Reading: Matthew 7:24 – 28.

### 4. We are people of the 'book'

In order to get a glimpse of the big picture of this special book, we are going to try and become the book... all of us... the whole congregation! We are going to do this where you are: for example, the two halves of the church are going to be like the book opened with the centre aisle becoming the spine down the middle! We are going to have 11 sections... of about 3 or 4 rows each, up and down each side...

*Divide up the congregation into sections, numbering them from 1 to 11. Ask for 11 volunteers, one from each section.*

*Tell each section what they represent and encourage them to make related actions:*

- **Law**- policemen... desert travellers... making the ark... numbering the people... praying for help
- **History**- bowing, ruling, fighting, building the Temple
- **Wisdom** - stroking beards and looking wise
- **Love stories** - looking love struck and all romantic

- **Sad poems**- crying and looking devastated
- **Songs**- singing and playing instruments
- **Prophets**- looking ahead, listening and pointing out what was wrong
- **Gospels** - actions/scenes from the life of Jesus (baby, cross, stories, parables, miracles)
- **Acts** - preaching and teaching
- **Epistles** - letter writing and delivery!
- **Revelation** - seeing amazing things and rejoicing

Face each other across the 'book' (church)! Set the book in motion, group by group, saying:

*We are people of the book... The first Bible that people read is us!*

### 5. **Talk: Why bother about the Bible?**

Use the three visual aids: an empty frame, a painting and a mirror.

#### 1. **The Bible for Christians is like...**

- A window into the way people lived long ago. The Bible contains about 1700 years of history as well as other ancient stories that stretch back to the beginning of time.
- A painting of these same people but how God saw their lives - a God's eye view of that history like an artist picking out what was most important to him in a scene. For example, when you read about the kings and leaders, what matters is not how powerful or rich they were but whether they followed God's ways or not.
- A mirror into which we look as we read and discover ourselves in these stories. The Bible is about people like us and so we can learn more about how to follow and love God from what happens to them.

#### 1. **Let's see some of the ways in which the Bible can 'speak' to us**

Invite everyone to mime the actions as they hold a Bible:

- It's like a guide book that shows the way (it is 'a lamp that gives light wherever I walk' - Psalm 119:105, CEV) - *Scratch your head looking puzzled and then open the book and read it.*
- It's like a sword to fight off what is dangerous and harmful, because it shows people the right way to live ('for a sword use God's message' - Ephesians 6:17, CEV) - *Fence with the book as if it were a sword.*
- It's like a hammer to break up wrong ideas about ourselves and others, and even wrong understandings of God! ('My message... is like a hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces' - Jeremiah 23:29, NIRV) - *Use the book as a hammer.*
- It's a comfort when times are tough to remind people that God's love doesn't change and God's plans are bigger than the present moment ('I find true comfort, Lord, because your laws have stood the test of time' - Psalm 119:52, CEV) - *Cuddle the book close.*



- It's like food that makes people strong. The stories in this Bible give Christians energy and nourishment ('No one can live only on food. People need ever word that God has spoken' - Matthew 4:4) - *Pretend to eat the book!*

### 1. **And its like a foundation...** back to the reading

Lead into 'The house on the rock' rap - see above.

### 1. **To conclude**

In the end, it isn't a case of which translation you prefer and use. It is what you do with the words that matters. Unless the words of the Bible are translated into our day-to-day lives... it is a waste of time!

I wonder what difference the Bible will make to our lives this week, month and year. And I wonder what difference the words of this book will make through us to the lives of the people we live and work with. This is the translation that matters in the end!

### 6. **Prayers**

Use a series of key verses from the Bible as a focus for the intercessions. These prayers could be projected on a screen or printed on a large placard. Everyone should read each one together and then different (primed) people (of different ages) to use directly for a prayer. Use the King James Version for one these verses:

- Psalm 8:1 - Focusing on God's greatness
- John 3:16 - Focusing on God's love
- Lamentations 3:22 - 24 - Focusing on people facing hard times
- Matthew 28:19 - 20 - Focusing on our mission as a church locally and globally
- Ephesians 3:17b - 19 - Focusing on ourselves

### 7. **A Blessing**

Read a screen-projected version of Numbers 6:24 - 26 from the Authorised Version to each other.