

# biblefresh

**It could change your world.**

**LEADERS**GUIDE

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TO PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY  
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WAYS

'The Bible has become toxic for many in British Society and the confidence of Christians to rely on their Scriptures publicly has consequently been knocked. Biblefresh will help confidence recovery.'

Ann Holt, Executive Director, Bible Society

# WHAT IS **BIBLEFRESH**?

**BIBLEFRESH** is a joint initiative which aims to encourage and inspire churches across the UK to make the most of the year 2011, empowering Christians to a deeper level of engagement with the Bible. The initiative brings together nearly a hundred agencies to raise the level of biblical literacy across the UK, through the following four tracks:

## 1. BIBLE READING

According to recent research only 1 in 7 Christians are likely to read the Bible outside of a church meeting. Making use of developments in digital technology and creative publishing, this track seeks to inspire Christians to read the Bible afresh, individually, in groups and as whole churches. Watch out for the **BIBLEFRESH** handbook, packed full of creative suggestions and inspirational material arriving in May 2010.

## 2. BIBLE TRAINING

Our research tells us that only half of church leaders are confident in their Bible knowledge. Forty percent of Christians even feel undermined in their confidence in Scripture particularly after the recent militant atheism onslaught. Many Christians who teach the Bible, such as Sunday school teachers and house-group leaders, have received no training in interpreting and applying the Bible. This **BIBLEFRESH** track aims to equip Christians with improved Bible handling skills. Initiatives include:

- opportunities to learn at the major Christian festivals including: Keswick, Soul Survivor, Spring Harvest, CRE
- special courses and seminars at Bible colleges, churches and institutes around the UK

## 3. BIBLE TRANSLATION

With over 200 million people without the Scriptures in their own language and 2393 language groups yet to have their own Bible, **BIBLEFRESH** will be asking churches during 2011 to give financial support to a translation project facilitated jointly by Bible Society and Wycliffe Bible Translators, enabling more people worldwide to access the Bible. However we also recognise that the Bible is 'foreign' to many people in our own communities. This track also seeks to make the Bible more accessible to those outside the church.

## 4. BIBLE EXPERIENCES

This track seeks to provide fresh experiences of the Bible to draw people back to reading and living it. Through the arts; particularly film, music and painting this track seeks to whet the appetite for biblical engagement. During 2011 the **BIBLEFRESH** tour and resources will highlight some of the ways this can be achieved by local churches.

'When God's church hears and obeys God's word, the Spirit is at work, lives are changed and communities transformed. Join the Biblefresh initiative and let's see what God will do amongst us!

Terry Virgo, New Frontiers

# HOW CAN MY CHURCH GET INVOLVED WITH **BIBLEFRESH**?

All of us would love to see our congregations do better with the Bible. Joining **BIBLEFRESH** means making a pledge as a church to raise the standard in each of the four tracks. It is up to you and your leadership team as to how you honour your pledge. There are hundreds of ideas and resources to help you do this and alongside this leaders guide the **BIBLEFRESH** website, and **BIBLEFRESH** handbook offer stacks of resources. We would love to hear what you are doing - so registering your church on the **BIBLEFRESH** website will be a great help enabling us to pray for you and pass on your good ideas. Together we can help the UK church hear God's word more effectively together.

WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO **READ** THE BIBLE

WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO BE **TRAINED** IN HANDLING THE BIBLE WELL

WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO GIVE TO MAKE A BIBLE **TRANSLATION** AVAILABLE IN BURKINA FASO FOR A PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER HAD THE SCRIPTURES IN THEIR LANGUAGE

WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO **EXPERIENCE** THE BIBLE IN NEW AND CREATIVE WAYS

In the rest of this guide we will explore what this could look like for your local church by providing a range of creative ideas to get your church into the Scriptures.

'Confident communication of God's word has never been more needed – make sure your church is part of Biblefresh as it gets the church hearing God's word again.'

Stephen Gaukroger,  
Director, Clarion Trust International

# "WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO **READ** THE BIBLE"

## IDEAS FOR LEADERS

### **Appoint a Bible champion (team) for the church**

Is there someone in your church that has got a real fire in their belly for the Bible. Someone who can inspire and energise without inducing guilt. Why not approach someone now who will think creatively about helping the church engage afresh with the Bible. Make sure you get a copy of the **BIBLEFRESH** handbook to them as soon as you can - as it is packed full of creative ideas to get them started.

### **Push Bible reading materials at key moments in the year**

Being prepared well in advance for these annual landmarks will enable you to ensure that your congregation is well equipped and resourced just when they are most hungry for God's Word.

- January - speak to your local christian bookshop to make sure there are lots of good bible reading notes and guides available from the start of the year. Encourage readers to give testimonies and feedback from their preferred materials.
- Lent - challenge your congregation or housegroup to read a book together before Easter. "The Book of Books" or "How to read the Bible for all its worth" come highly recommended.
- Summer - The Good Book Company have a great line of family devotional material that are fun to do together on holiday, or recommend some bestsellers, or organize a bookswap to encourage your church members to read during their vacation.
- Autumn - use the 'back to school' feeling to help the church think about taking another step forward in their Bible reading - perhaps encourage something more academic for the new academic year like Foundations21, or introduce your congregations to fantastic online resources such as Bible Gateway or Wordlive.

### **Give your bookstall a makeover**

With fewer local Christian bookshops around, the church bookstall is a vital ministry. Why not begin the **BIBLEFRESH** year with a particular emphasis on Bible-based books. Stock up on Bible-reading notes and Bible-study guides. Bulk-buy a book for the month. See the **BIBLEFRESH** website for some great examples. Perhaps it would be appropriate to channel any proceeds into our Bible translation appeal.

### **Tie it in to the preaching programme**

It is often difficult to decide the teaching programme, but for **BIBLEFRESH** year why not kick off with some Old Testament narrative, then use the gospels at Easter, tackle some wisdom and prophetic literature in the Summer and finish off in the Autumn with an epistle? Bring your small groups on board by choosing complementary books.

### **Plan some retreats**

Firstly why not spend some time with your church leadership team focussing on the simple question "what can we do as a church to help the congregation develop confidence and appetite for God's word". Engaging with the Bible is infectious. If the leaders are enjoying reading God's word regularly, and hearing God speak through his word it becomes quite normal for the church to follow suit. Perhaps the whole church would benefit from a retreat to meditate on God's word and minister to one another.

### **Change the prayer culture**

Pray with the Bible open during **BIBLEFRESH** year. Whether at the beginning of an elders meeting, or in your youth groups, or after one-to-one counselling, use Scriptures to inspire your prayers and give you words to speak to encourage, challenge or train. Make sure your prayer team members are familiarising themselves and others with Scripture.

'The Baptist Union encourages Christians everywhere to engage with the Bible as the life-giving Word of God. We fully endorse the Biblefresh initiative and its aim to re-connect the Church in the UK with the Bible.'

Ian Bunce, Head of Mission, Baptist Union

# WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO BE **TRAINED** IN HANDLING THE BIBLE WELL

## IDEAS FOR LEADERS

### **It starts with the preachers**

Look for ways to refresh your preaching. Perhaps you could read a new book on preaching such as "Communicating for a change" by Andy Stanley or take a look at other preaching resources on biblefresh.com. Perhaps you could go on a preaching refresher course or tackle a book of the Bible you have never preached on before. Check that you are always using the Bible as you preach, and encouraging others to access it and read it.

### **Meet with other local leaders**

If you already have a local pastors network why don't you try and swap recordings of your sermons around the group asking for constructive feedback on your preaching in order to improve the way that Bible is taught in your church. Why not think about going as a group of pastors to a conference where you will be challenged to explore your preaching styles. The biblefresh.com website will have up-to-date details of conferences that will help you improve your preaching.

### **Get some refreshment**

Why not take a break from preaching and organise a special 4 week series where you invite a guest preacher (or preachers) to come and speak on Sunday mornings. This could not only give you a break or time to get ahead on your preparation for the year, but could also expose the congregation to a different kind of preaching.

### **Develop your small groups leaders**

Look for ways to mentor or coach your small group leaders in bible handling skills - you might want to set up a monthly training meeting for your leaders and work through a book like "Leading Better Bible Studies" by Rod and Karen Armstrong. Alternatively invite your local bible college to put on a seminar for you on a Sunday afternoon and use it as a taster to encourage more members of your congregation to look into further theological training.

### **Invest in the youth and children**

How familiar are your young people with the Bible? Make sure your youth and children's workers are growing in confidence in handling the Scriptures by offering them training, resources, and encouragement. You might want to buy them a subscription to Youthworker magazine which has a monthly Bible column or send them en masse to the Youthworker conference.

### **Get on the web**

Biblefresh.com will help you to find and access all sorts of other websites where you can read, download or listen to material, courses and sermons that will enrich your own preaching and teaching, and enable you to help your congregation to access material appropriate to their level of training.

### **Buy the BIBLEFRESH handbook**

Once you have read it, why not order it in bulk for everyone in the church to have their own copy to read and be inspired to love, read and obey Scripture.

'Biblefresh is stirring those of us in ministry amongst youth and children to think about how our ministries engage with the Bible and how we inspire young people to know, love and live God's word in their generation. Let's get going!'

Ruth Gilson, CEO Girls Brigade

# WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO GIVE TO MAKE THE BIBLE **AVAILABLE** IN BURKINA FASO

## IDEAS FOR LEADERS

### **Look in the budget**

In the year that we celebrate 400 years of the free availability of the Bible in our language you could think about giving 4% of the church's budget as a birthday present to help our brothers and sisters who have never had Scripture in their own language.

### **Putting the fun back into fundraising**

Coming up with one creative way to raise money for the Burkina Faso Bible translation project will have a number of positive knock-on effects. It will help church members appreciate their own Bibles more. It will help them feel connected with Christians around the globe. It will help them to give cheerfully!

### **Ban the bible**

To help the congregation value their Bibles more, why not have a Sunday morning service where personal Bibles are gently confiscated for the service, and readings are done in another language. Alternatively have a 'Bring your Bible' month, where regulars are charged a nominal amount to 'hire' a church Bible when they have left theirs at home, with proceeds going to the Burkina Faso Bible translation project.

### **Bible memorising competition**

Encourage the children to memorise either the books of the Bible in order or a chapter from the Bible. This could be sponsored to raise money for the Burkina Faso Bible translation project. Alternatively, get the youth in teams to create some Bible art that can be auctioned.

### **Book Exchange**

To encourage more sharing of good Christian books, ask the congregation to bring in some of their favourite Christian books for an exchange programme. Everyone donates their books to be swapped around the church - but for every book that is exchanged 20p goes to the Burkina Faso Bible translation project.

### **Do a Bible audit**

As a fun way to get people thinking about the wealth of resources we have, suggest that the congregation look through their bookshelves and donate the following amounts to the Burkina Faso Bible translation project:

£1 for every Bible you own

20p for every Christian worship CD you own

1p for every Christian book you own.

### **Buy the BIBLEFRESH handbook**

All proceeds from the handbook will go to the Burkina Faso Bible translation project.

This is really exciting. It's the first time that so many agencies have come together to promote God's word in this way. I honestly believe that Bible Fresh is a move of God and that our Heavenly Father will use this initiative to bless the Church in the UK.

Eddie Arthur, Wycliffe Bible Translators

# WE PLEDGE AS A CHURCH TO PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO **EXPERIENCE** THE BIBLE IN NEW AND CREATIVE WAYS

## IDEAS FOR LEADERS

### **Book a theatre company**

Why not club together with a group of churches in your area to host the visit of a theatre company. Relevant productions currently available include 'God's Smuggler': the story of Brother Andrew and his daring attempts to get Bibles into the Soviet Union; 'The Bible in an hour' or the musical 'Love Esther'. These theatre experiences could be tie in to your teaching programme, and be useful both for discipleship and outreach.

### **Open the church for an exhibition**

Why not team up with your local primary school and offer to host a Bible exhibition at your local church. This will get your church mobilised in creative ways and help local children encounter the Bible, some of them for the very first time. More ideas and details can be found in the **BIBLEFRESH** handbook.

### **Go to a festival**

Lots of the Christians festivals are making engaging with the Bible their main theme for 2011. Why not organise a group to go from the church - there will be lots of creative seminars, theatrical and musical experiences to help your church get new insight into the power and beauty of God's word. Build the festival into your church's calendar so you can maximise the impact it will have in your church's life.

### **Join with other local churches to put on a Bible week**

If going to a Bible week such as Keswick or Spring Harvest is going to be too expensive for your congregation, why not host your own local festival with other churches in your locality. Invite a good Bible teacher to come and help inspire and teach you the Bible for a week. **BIBLEFRESH** can help you with ideas for speakers and programmes, as well as offering advice on organising such an event.

### **Bible Aloud!**

Noted Biblical scholars argue that as the Bible was originally written to be heard rather than read, there is tremendous value even in personal reading of speaking the words out loud. Why not challenge your congregation to either listen to audio bibles as they travel or simply to read the Bible out in their quiet times.

### **Link the Bible in to your local events.**

Whether your town or community has a food festival, an arts festival or a 10K running race, think about how you can add a Biblical experience alongside that. Run a stall, a workshop or a seminar as part of the programme. For example, a soup kitchen giveaway, a screening and talk on 'The Truman Show and the Prodigal Son', or even a bookstall could provide opportunities for discussing the Bible.

Anything that aims to unite us in getting into God's Word in a serious way is something that needs to be cheered on, embraced and encouraged in every way. Biblefresh is just such an initiative. We whole heartedly support it and are deeply challenged by it!

Mike Pilavachi, Soul Survivor

# THE **BIBLEFRESH** YEAR: WHAT COULD 2011 LOOK LIKE FOR MY CHURCH?

You're a busy church leader with 101 demands upon you each and every day. So how can you begin to think about taking on one more thing?

**BIBLEFRESH** will offer many opportunities to engage with the Bible in new ways, but is flexible enough for you to shape it to fit the needs of your church and your community. However it also offers a unique focus for the year which can help structure the programme and strategy for the whole year.

To help you get started, below is a sample structure which suggests how you might include a focal point for each of the four streams and offers a few ideas to spark your own creativity and dream up something that would work in your context and enrich your own ministry.

We expect that many churches across the UK will use **BIBLEFRESH** to attempt projects which they have never done before and which will hopefully will leave a legacy beyond 2010. The challenge to move people forward in their relationship with the Bible should not be underestimated, but if churches are prepared to accept it, the experience could transform our churches our congregations and our communities.

## **2010 - Preparation**

It is important that churches prepare their members if they are to participate fully in **BIBLEFRESH** year and get the most out of this opportunity. The season of Advent has traditionally been a period to prepare spiritually for the coming of Christ at Christmas, but it can also be an important time of focussed prayer, building expectancy in people's hearts and minds, as we enter the **BIBLEFRESH** year. Even if you wouldn't usually do so, you might want to pray the BCP's Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent, which is focused on the Bible:

'Blessed Lord,  
Who caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning:  
Help us so to hear them,  
Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them,  
That through patience and the comfort of your holy word  
We may embrace and ever hold fast  
The hope of everlasting life,  
Which you have given us  
In our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

You might want to do something fresh and different during the Advent season to profile **BIBLEFRESH** and the idea of engaging the Bible in new ways. For example, you could use the short video clips in [www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk](http://www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk) to highlight your Christmas events. Don't forget to put together your Bible Champion team, set aside some dates for key events during the year, order in your copies of the **BIBLEFRESH** handbook and other Bible resources, and register your involvement on the **BIBLEFRESH** website.

## **January - The Launch**

The **BIBLEFRESH** year focus offers a unique way to kick start your year with a special service - perhaps a joint service with other local participating churches. The way a campaign begins can strongly influence the level of commitment from churches and their members. Make sure you invite a number of people from different groups to share their testimonies about how their lives have been shaped by Scripture. Pray for the initiative, and share plans and dreams for the year ahead that will inspire and motivate.

Biblefresh has the potential do something truly significant for individuals, for the Church and even for the wider community. I am delighted to commend and be a part of this excellent initiative.'

Simon Steer Principal London School of Theology

Why not take the commitment a step further and covenant together to engage with Scripture in fresh ways, or join the **BIBLEFRESH** pledge? This could be a New Year's Resolution which could even become a way of life. You might want to use the Methodist Covenant Prayer as you make your commitment:

'I am no longer my own but yours.  
Put me to what you will,  
Rank me with whom you will;  
Put me to doing,  
Put me to suffering;  
Let me be employed for you  
Or laid aside for you,  
Exalted for you  
Or brought low for you;  
Let me be full,  
Let me be empty,  
Let me have all things,  
Let me have nothing;

I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things To  
your pleasure and disposal.  
And now,  
Glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
You are mine and I am yours.  
So be it.  
And the covenant now made on earth,  
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen'.

### **February**

An early event will help the church remember and feel involved in the covenant. Host a public Bible reading marathon with local dignitaries, show a film such as 'Miracles of Jesus' with follow-up discussion groups, organise a fundraising event, or focus in on the Bible training and arrange a weekend of special teaching. Why not try using a different translation of the Bible for the month to keep the experience fresh.

### **March - Lent**

This is a fantastic opportunity to focus homegroups on the gospels, or to shuffle homegroups even between churches. Pray, fast, give and serve together in preparation for the Easter message.

### **April - Easter**

This is a great opportunity to host a Bible Experience, within the church or out in the local community. Think about galvanising local churches to take part in a Good Friday procession, carrying the cross from a church to a public space, followed by a silent vigil or a public reading of the crucifixion narratives. Alternatively perform one of the Mystery Plays based upon the Easter story, involving people from a number of local churches, local businesses and community groups. Show the film The Passion of the Christ or the critically acclaimed Son of Man film which tells the story of Jesus through a tale of corruption and redemption in modern day Africa.

*Case Study: The Bigger Picture was an innovative, world-record breaking attempt staged in Loughborough over the Easter period. This Loughborough Churches Partnership project involved 19 church congregations, coming together to paint the biggest paint-by-numbers community picture in the world.*

*The painting was comprised of over 500 ply-board paint panels, totalling 80 metres in length and standing 8.6 metres from the ground to the highest point - the length of a football pitch and the height of a house. 52 gallons of paint were used and each panel was painted by various community groups, schools, churches, families and individuals, overseen by a local artist.*

*The painting depicted the events of Passion Week: Jesus' entry into Jerusalem; the cleansing of the Temple; the last supper; Gethsemane; the trial of Jesus; the crucifixion; the burial; the resurrection and Jesus on the Emmaus Road.*

*The Bigger Picture reached its peak on Easter Monday with a fun day, barbecue, concert and firework display attended by approximately 1300 people. It also included a ceremony for putting the last piece of the picture in place, making a new world record.*

*The concept came from Rev Phil Weaver, one of the ministers in the town: 'Many people know just snippets of the Bible story but aren't that familiar with the full story and real meaning of Easter. The Bigger Picture was an ideal opportunity not only to engage the community but also to enable us to retell the life-transforming story of Easter in a creative way.'*

*In total approximately 2000 people from within the community took part in creating the artwork and many more came to view and photograph this extraordinary piece of art. Each person received a souvenir brochure outlining the full Easter story. The Bigger Picture certainly created a community buzz and captured the imagination of the whole town.*

Biblefresh is most definitely a vision for our time and the now generation who need to experience the transforming power of the Word.

Eric Brown,  
New Testament Church of God

### **May**

Many churches focus this month on a week of community service. From litter picking to running a football tournament, it is an opportunity to take the church outside of the building and onto the streets. This year think how we can take the Bible with us as we offer to do discovery courses in pubs, cafes, business canteens and retirement homes.

### **June - Pentecost**

When the Holy Spirit filled the disciples, people from many different backgrounds and cultures heard them speaking in their own language, understood their words and became followers of Jesus. The church's challenge today continues to be communicating the message of Jesus in every language and in culturally appropriate ways. But for many, the need is still simply for access to a Bible that they can understand. Over 200 million people do not have the scriptures in their own language and 2393 language groups are without a Bible. The story of Pentecost is a great way to focus the church's attention on this need and encourage giving towards the **BIBLEFRESH** translation project in Burkino Faso. There are dozens of resources to help highlight the issues around Bible availability, which can be used in church services.

### **July and August - Summer**

With many of your church members away at festivals, on short term mission trips, and visiting friends and churches around the globe, why not make sure that they get a chance to talk about how God is speaking to them through the Bible in fresh ways. Run a Bible holiday club for children, or help another local church that is running one.

### **September - Harvest**

In the autumn months, harvest festival is the high point in the church calendar, providing a means to draw alongside fringe members of the church and the local community, particularly in rural areas. The biblical imagery of God as a sower and his word as a seed helps us to make direct links to the Bible in ways that are simple and understandable. So this autumn, why not 'bed in' the learning that took place during the summer festivals, by establishing Bible discussion groups and encourage ongoing grappling with the scriptures. At the start of the academic year, you could take up an opportunity for some training at your nearest Bible college or through an online provider. Many colleges will be running special courses for those who are lay leaders, some of which will be during evenings or weekends – as well as refresher courses for church leaders. Theme a service around the parables relating to sowing and reaping and use the time to remind people about the covenant at the start of the year. You could plant mustard seeds as a creative act of worship and re-commit to growing God's word in our lives.

### **October**

This month profile scripture engagement on Bible Sunday and make use of the resources on the website: [www.biblesunday.org](http://www.biblesunday.org) As the nights draw in, you could get cosy in a café or pub and start up a Lyfe group [www.lyfe.org.uk](http://www.lyfe.org.uk). And as Halloween items appear in the shops, think about running an event for the community that offers a different sort of celebration.

### **November**

This month is one for looking back - whether it is bonfire night or Remembrance Day. Why not go back to study the heroes of the Old Testament and make sure that the church is confident in its understanding of the Bible timeline.

### **December - Christmas**

Churches receive more visitors during the Christmas celebrations than at any other so its a wonderful opportunity to engage people creatively with the scriptures. Many churches experiment with alternative acts of worship, or invite people to visit the crib or the stable. The Baptist Union run a great initiative where local churches set up a nativity scene in the town centre and invite passers-by to have their picture taken in biblical costumes. The pictures are then made available for people to download from the website ([www.getinthepicture.org.uk](http://www.getinthepicture.org.uk)). As you celebrate the birth of Christ, together as a church you can pause, look back and give thanks for a year of enrichment through rediscovering the life-changing power of God's word. Why not have a service of testimony so that as many people as possible have a chance to reflect publicly on how God has spoken to them through Scripture during the year.