



Information Sheet – What challenges do we face as we encourage a deeper engagement with Scripture?

A question the whole Anglican Communion needs to address

Throughout the life of the *Bible in the Life of the Church* [BILC] this question has been asked at workshops and seminars in many places in the Anglican Communion, for example Kenya, Tanzania, England, America, Canada, Hong Kong and the Philippines. While the contexts have differed the answers given were, in most cases, similar.

Following these workshops and seminars BILC has drawn up a list of these challenges and this Information Sheet also points to BILC resources that might help to meet these challenges. The challenges come from two separate but interconnected directions: from within the Church and from outside the Church.

From within the Church:

At all these workshops and seminars there was agreement that the Bible held a central role in the life of the Anglican Communion's churches around the world. But the question was posed as to whether someone from right outside the church would find enough evidence to prove that this is true in practice. So the first set of challenges people saw were those from within the Church itself.

- 1. Lack of enthusiasm for and commitment to Bible engagement** leading to questions of how we re-build enthusiasm and motivate engagement. How do we encourage people to become 'friends of their Bible'? As those in these workshops said,

“People do not wish to come to Bible Study”

“There is a lack of Bible Study programmes”

“There is a lack of commitment to study – people are too busy or lazy”

For some in geographically spread congregations the distances to get to church at times other than on Sunday was difficult. Others simply admitted it was down to bad time management.

What might the BILC resources offer? Look at:

Do we need to do the Bible better?– four short videos by Archbishop Justin Welby and Stephen Lyon

- i. **Why might we need to read the Bible better?**
- ii. **The challenge of Biblical Illiteracy**
- iii. **Making more of the Bible in worship**
- iv. **How can we 'do the Bible better'?**





Looking at the Bible in a reflective way and Finding a different approach to Bible study – these offer new ways into engaging with Scripture.

Understanding more of the place the Bible plays in our worship – making a closer link between what we do and say in our worship with other times we engage with Scripture.

- 2. Lack of access to Bibles and poor literacy** leading to questions as to how we enable access and find ‘non-book’ approaches to our engagement with Scripture. As those in these workshops said,

“For many the levels of education are low we have to rely on the minister and cannot study on our own”

“This is not a reading culture Preaching is preferred to Bible Study”

“We have no Bibles or commentary translations in our own language”

What might the BILC resources offer? Look at:

Engaging with the Bible through drama and image

Devising Biblical Drama

Case Study – Drama of the Pharisees and the Tax Collector

All these resources outline approaches to engaging with the Bible without everyone needing to be able to read or have the text in front of them.

- 3. A lost emphasis on the Bible** leading to questions of how we live up to the place we (say) we believe the Bible should occupy in our life as the Church. How we do lead our Churches so that we motivate engagement? In some places this lost emphasis has led to a growing Biblical illiteracy so Bible study exposes this lack of knowledge and understanding of the Bible. As those in these workshops said,

“There is an illiteracy and ignorance of Bible”

“We have a lack of resources – no Bibles, materials lacking so do not engage with the Bible outside our Sunday services”

“There is a lack of trained personnel so it is difficult to arrange Bible Studies”

“There is a lack of advanced technologies for resources”

What might the BILC resources offer? Look at:

Bible Challenge, BIBLE360 and Good Book Club – all address biblical illiteracy and put Scripture at the centre of our lives, everyday.

Bible Studies on Ruth, Jonah, Sending of the 70 – can be undertaken by a group without the need for ‘trained personnel’





- 4. Lack of hermeneutical tools** leading to questions about how we expand our learning. How do we move from the original context of the Bible and apply it to our own context?

“How do we handle different understandings of Scripture in our life together?”

“How do we address the effects of secularism/the influence of atheism etc on our understanding of what the Bible is saying?”

What might the BILC resources offer? Look at:

Reading the Bible course, Making Good Sense, How might Anglicans better interpret what we read in the Bible? – are all resources that offer hermeneutical insights for any group undertaking Bible study.

From outside the Church

It was also clear from these workshops and seminars that those participating saw influences from outside the Church affecting the way we engaged with the Bible.

“We are deep into our own culture so the Bible is seen as a foreign culture”

“The effects of secularism affect understanding of the Bible and how we engage with it”

“There is a strong influence of atheism on Kenyan [or many other contexts] society”

“The growth and significance of other religions has affected how we understand and read the Bible”

“New technologies have influenced how we access and understand the Bible, for example mass media preaching which might interpret the bible in very different ways from our own church”

What might the BILC resources offer? – all the BILC resources are offered to help us have a deeper engagement with the Bible. As we do and understand more clearly not only the world of the Bible but how what was said into that world can be applied to the context where we live then we can begin to find answers to some of these concerns. It is not easy but we are no different from many previous generations who have also had to apply afresh the message of our faith as we read it in Scripture to the context we live in.

