
Bible Engagement: a process

By Harriet Hill

How can we eradicate Bible poverty? Scripture Engagement can be seen as a process from *Bible Availability* to *Bible Engagement*. The process can be arrested at any step along the way.

1. Bible Availability	<p>Do people have access to the Bible in a language and media that they are able to use?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Challenge:</i> More than one billion people in the world today do not have the Bible in their language.• <i>Challenge:</i> Bibles are available in print form, but people either prefer oral communication or do not have the opportunity to learn to read.• <i>Challenge:</i> People want Bibles, but are not able to get them.• <i>Challenge:</i> Displaced populations do not have Bibles available in their language.
2. Bible Awareness	<p>Are people aware of the Bibles that are available? Are they exposed to them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Challenge:</i> The more people are aware of the availability of the Bible and other Scripture products, the more they will engage with Scripture. But many are not exposed to Scripture regularly.• <i>Challenge:</i> Many minority-language speakers are not even aware that a translation of the Bible exists in their language.
3. Bible Use	<p>Do people choose to read or listen to the Bible?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Challenge:</i> People do not think the Bible is relevant to their lives.• <i>Challenge:</i> People risk persecution if they associate themselves with the Bible.• <i>Challenge:</i> Church leaders do not encourage people to use (read or listen to) the Bible.

4. Bible Understanding	<p>Do people understand what they read?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Challenge:</i> The Bible was originally written to peoples of very different times and cultural contexts. To the extent that people lack the background information, they have difficulty understanding the Bible. • <i>Challenge:</i> People are not aware of the overarching narrative of the Bible from creation to the cross and beyond. They may lack the Old Testament, or only hear the Bible in bits and pieces.
5. Bible Engagement	<p>Through interaction with the written word, do people encounter the Living Word (Christ)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Challenge:</i> People already know the end of the story, and so are not able to enter into the narrative as it unfolds. • <i>Challenge:</i> People don't expect the Bible to engage them in fresh ways. They feel they already know what it means. • <i>Challenge:</i> People approach the Bible cognitively, without also engaging their senses, emotions, and imagination. Engagement involves more than our intellects. • <i>Challenge:</i> People may have experienced the Bible as an oppressive or moralizing text in which they have encountered anything but the truth that makes us free.

Questions for discussion

As you reflect on the Bible Engagement process above, consider these questions:

1. Are you stuck along the way of engaging with the Bible? If so, where? Why?
2. If you're involved in ministry, are the people you work with stuck? If so, where? Why?
3. Are you aware of other significant steps in this process?
4. What other significant challenges are there to each step?

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