



Unión Bíblica

Scripture Union International

Ligue pour la Lecture de la Bible

Catalyst

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Young People & the Bible

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*In this issue of Catalyst we explore a critical question for Scripture Union: **Why do we want young people to read the Bible?** Or, unpacked a little more, what transformational outcomes do we want to see in the lives of young people and their communities as a result of their engagement with the Bible?*

During the past year, I have been part of a team working on the development of a social media based approach to Bible engagement. This question of why we want young people to read the Bible has been a key question for us. This article will outline some of our thinking.



We hope that you will use it as a discussion starter with your staff and volunteer teams. You will see that this only scratches the surface of the question. We encourage you to dig deeper as you explore it further.

A starting point for the design team has been a deep commitment to two key ideas:

- That the Bible is a cohesive and progressive story about a King and His Kingdom. It could be described as **The Story of The King and His Kingdom**. This begins with Creation, spans history and moves towards the New Creation, which is still to come. It's a very big story full of many smaller stories, which together make up the whole.
- That we are part of this story and are participants in it. It is actually our story – we belong in it. We exist in the time

between Creation and New Creation. A long line of people have gone before us – including those whose stories we read in the Bible – and other people will come after us.

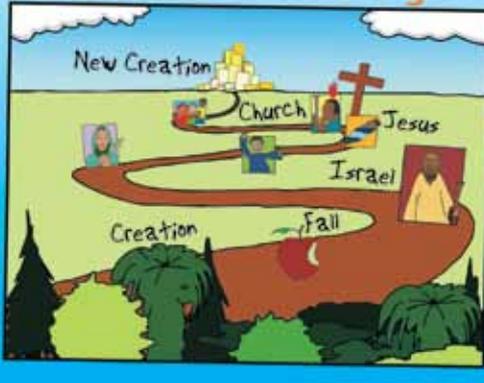
We want young people to read the Bible because we want them to work out what it means to be **Kingdom People**. We want them to grasp and live out (embody) the **values of the Kingdom of God**. We want them to know what it means to be **advocates of the Kingdom**.

The answers to this critical question are about **transformation**, at an individual and a community level. Scripture is understood, not as a book of random and disconnected stories, but as a progressive, cohesive and participatory story of the King and His Kingdom, to our particular point in time (now) and then continues into the future. Young people are participants in this story. The Bible is viewed as an active story that runs from Creation, through history, and then continues into the future, towards the New Creation.

We can look back at people along the story who have **lived and breathed** what it means to be Kingdom people (as well as what it doesn't mean – David is a good example of these!). We can also look back and identify what Kingdom values actually look like >>>



The Story of The King and His Kingdom



The Bible is the progressive, cohesive and participatory story of the King and His Kingdom.

and we can see examples of people who were advocates of the Kingdom of God. Then, with all this rich perspective, we can look forward with a strong sense of where to place **our next step** as contemporary people of the Kingdom.

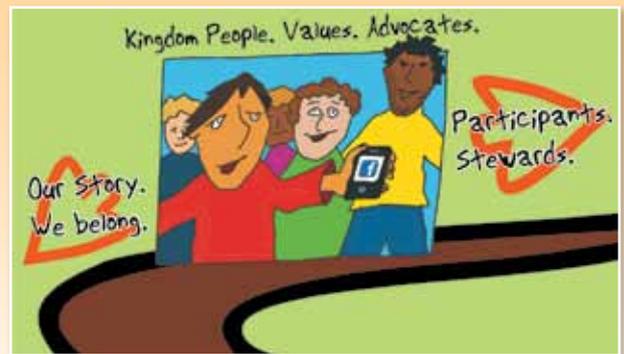
This view understands the Bible as a story in which all of humanity belongs; a story which is actually our story; our heritage. But it goes further. It also views it as a story that points us in the direction of the Kingdom of God with all that this means, as distinct from the opposite direction, with all that that means.

For young people (for everyone), it's a story full of hope. It can inspire them forward, pick them up when they are down and offer restoration when they are broken. Most significantly it offers **another way** from the dominant and counter Kingdom story that is all around them.

In a world where the big issues for young people include such things as corruption, injustice, consumerism, poverty, unemployment, abusive domination of men over women, tribalism, war, major health issues and environmental

sustainability (to name a few) – as well as the very real issues related to their physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual development – this story has the potential to be an incredible light along a very challenging path.

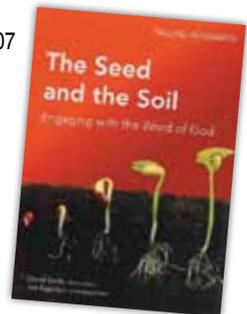
As we work with young people, we want to see them following Jesus in the context of this story – growing in Christian maturity, engaging in communities of faith and serving a world in need – as active and increasingly confident participants in the Story of the King and His Kingdom.



We can look back at those who have gone before us. We can look forward with a strong sense of where to place our next step!

Suggested further reading...

- Available from www.su-international.org
- Opening Up the Bible with Children, Catalyst, Aug 2007
- SU International Aims, Belief, and Working Principles Available from a1admin@su-international.org
- SU Statement on Hermeneutical Principles Available now from Langham Partnership and soon from Amazon and the Book Depository. For more details see <http://www.langhampartnership.org/2011/04/12/9781907713095/>
- The Seed and the Soil – Engaging with the Word of God*, by Pauline Hoggarth



Social Media

...refers to technologies like Facebook, YouTube, Bebo, Twitter and so on. These enable people to communicate with each other over the internet in highly integrated ways, using a broad range of digital media such as video, audio, text, photos and so on.

E100Y

You can read more about this project in SUI News, December 2010 edition available on www.su-international.org

Bible Engagement

This term expands on what we have often called 'Bible reading'. In many situations, people listen to, watch and even sing Scripture (think about how this happens in your situation)! Also, in an era of Social and digital media, people increasingly 'engage' with the Bible through the combination of visual/image, audio/aural and text that is read (which is kind of what happened for most before the printing press was invented!)

In addition to this definition, the term is often used to describe people encountering God's Word in life-changing ways. This is the way Bible Engagement is described on the website of the Forum of Bible Agencies. There are many resources that will help you explore this. Have a look at www.ifoba.org under the Scripture Engagement tab. Or join the discussion on Whitney Kuniholm's blog: www.EssentialBibleBlog.com

Catalyst

Catalyst is planned as a resource that helps us to exchange ideas across the SU movement. Please feed back your comments, questions and suggestions for future editions to catalyst@su-international.org