



## Engaging with the Bible in digital media

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“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1 (NRSV)

### God’s “Word”

With the digital revolution we live in a world where communication is ever-present and powerful. The words of Professor David Wilkinson at a media training event at the University of Durham have always stuck with me:

“God is a communicating God. He is extravagant in communication. He’s not a silent God who has to be tempted into communicating with people.”

As a communications historian, with a particular interest in the visual, we need to be aware that when we speak of ‘the Word’, God speaks in many different languages, and it doesn’t all have to be text. It is clear that the ‘digital age’ has given us plenty of new opportunities, especially to share, to question, and to bring voices and materials together from across the churches, from across the denominations, and from those who are not currently affiliated to a church. With billions engaging online, it’s important that we, as Christians, are partaking in the conversations. When the King James’ Bible was written in 1611, it was meant to be read aloud, as part of a shared experience, allowing the Bible to inform and transform our lives. What does the Biblical experience look like in the digital age of today?

### Bigger Bible conversations

Christian content online, which has tended to become constrained by the walls of the church building, allows space for views, discussions and debate in the public arena. If we are living 24/7 for God, with our lives informed by biblical principles, then everything that we do online is likely to reflect that. The Big Bible Project ([www.bigbible.org.uk](http://www.bigbible.org.uk)) emerged in 2010 to encourage ‘bigger Bible conversations’, encouraging people to engage with a range of voices and viewpoints via digital tools such as blogs, Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com))

and Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)), and to think about what it means to represent God in the digital spaces.

Individually we can do our bit, although I’m not advocating that you stream a range of Bible verses, any more than you would shout Bible verses as you walk down the street. Social media is just that – social – about building real relationships. Successful sites exist in these social spaces, including United Bible Society’s The Bible page on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/TheBibleUBS](http://www.facebook.com/TheBibleUBS)), with nearly nine million users, and along with The Jesus Daily, ([www.facebook.com/JesusDaily](http://www.facebook.com/JesusDaily)) often appears as one of the top three pages on Facebook for interaction. If you’re bored and want to play a game online, you can try The Journey of Jesus ([www.apps.facebook.com/journeyofjesus](http://www.apps.facebook.com/journeyofjesus)). Some great discussions happen online through blogs such as Bible Reflections ([www.bible-reflections.net](http://www.bible-reflections.net)), and, in a more truncated format (but certainly with plenty of passion), on Twitter: look out for hashtags such as #bible and #sermon.

(Even the Methodist Church’s daily online Bible study A Word in Time ([www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/a-word-in-time](http://www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/a-word-in-time)) is consistently the most popular part of the Church’s website.)

### Bible reading on the move

Mobile phones have become ubiquitous, and most are more powerful than the computer that powered the first rocket to the moon. Websites such as YouVersion ([www.youversion.com](http://www.youversion.com)) and Bible Gateway ([www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)) also have phone applications (apps), which allow you to access multiple Bible translations and languages whilst on the move. YouVersion concentrates more on encouraging more people to read the Bible more often, whereas Bible Gateway offers more features for critique and analysis. These apps, and others such as WordLive ([www.wordlive.org](http://www.wordlive.org)), offer daily reading plans, some using a multimedia format, some keeping track of where you are, some sending

reminders, and some allowing you to share what you're finding with others.

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## Improve your knowledge

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We all have huge amounts of knowledge at our fingertips, and a phrase used in teaching, “no longer the sage on the stage, but the guide on the side”, may be something that applies in church settings also. Do you ever want to check something in a sermon? You can, even whether someone has pronounced it right ([www.biblepronunciations.com](http://www.biblepronunciations.com)) (although I wouldn't play it during the sermon!). Want to increase your Bible knowledge – there's a slew of quizzes online. Apps include Biblicious ([www.biblicious.com](http://www.biblicious.com)), and KnowPro produces a series including Bible verses ([www.knowproapps.com/bible-verses](http://www.knowproapps.com/bible-verses)), people ([www.knowproapps.com/bible-people](http://www.knowproapps.com/bible-people)) and places ([www.knowproapps.com/bible-places](http://www.knowproapps.com/bible-places)). Software such as Bible Analyzer ([www.bibleanalyzer.com](http://www.bibleanalyzer.com)) allows the power of technology to analyse aspects of the Bible as never before.

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## Creative interpretations

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With the invention of every new type of technology, new opportunities for re-interpretation arise. In recent years we have seen the success of The Natwivity ([www.natwivity.com](http://www.natwivity.com)), which scripted the Christmas Story through tweets, or Easter Live ([www.vimeo.com/20791842](http://www.vimeo.com/20791842)), which encouraged script contributions from the twitter public. Chris Juby continues to publish a daily tweet in Bible Summary ([www.biblesummary.info](http://www.biblesummary.info)) – where each day a chapter is reduced to 140 characters. A great video project which continues to produce new work is *The Word became brick* ([www.twbb.co.uk](http://www.twbb.co.uk)), retelling Bible stories using lego. Creative people, as they continue to understand the technology, can find new and interesting ways to interpret the Bible, which can lead us to learn more ourselves, or share more with others.

There are so many different ways to access the Bible, on the move, in depth, or in conversation. Where will you go next on your journey with the Bible?