



## On your marks

2011 was the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Version of the Bible. Although there had been Bibles in English before this time, the appearance of the Authorised Version, as it is also known, was a landmark moment. The greater availability and accessibility of the Christian's special book had explosive consequences for individuals, the nation and the world. Now anyone could hear or read its stories for themselves and respond to its good news about God's love.

## Get set

The following idea is a way into exploring why Christians regard the Bible as a special book and could be used as the introduction to a short series with a children's group or as part of an all-age service that focuses on the Bible. This material would also work as an outline for Collective Worship in school, perhaps as part of a special series of assemblies to celebrate the Bible.

This idea is a part of a series of four. See also: [What is the Bible? What's in the Bible? What's the story of the Bible?](#)

You will need: a Bible; an empty picture frame that you can look through like an open window; a painting in a frame depicting scenery and people; a mirror in a frame. Ideally the three 'frames' should be about the same size and big enough to be seen clearly by the group you are working with. You will also need to prepare a bag of objects that represent the different ways we can encounter books (see the list in 1 below). Finally put together as big a collection of different Bible translations, retellings, paraphrases, versions, sizes as you can lay your hands on!

## Go!

1. Can you work out what links all the objects in my bag?

Take out: a folded piece of paper; a folded piece of heavy duty-card (use an old hardback cover from an unwanted book); a piece of leather; a mobile smart phone (or equivalent); a laptop; a roll of paper (as for a scroll); a newspaper; a flat stone (like a small gravestone).

Take some suggestions. They all can have writing on or more precisely are used to carry writing inside or on them. They are all ways to carry stories so we can read them for ourselves. Whether it is on stones (like the stories of the battles and victories of the kings of long ago) or on scrolls, or in newspapers (many of our classic stories began life serialised in newspapers) or printed between paper, leather or hardback covers, or as downloads on a computer screen or, bang up to date, as books available to read on our smart phones and e-readers!

2. Books come in all shapes and sizes, and some particular books are so popular that they are published in several different ways, sometimes with different covers like the Harry Potter books for different audiences. I suppose the more times a book is published and the greater

the variety of ways it appears the more popular it is. Well, how about this for popularity?

Start piling up as many different Bible translations, retellings, paraphrases, versions, styles and sizes as you can lay your hands on!

And that's only some of the hundreds of ways the Bible has appeared down the years and continues to appear.

3. Pick up some of these Bibles and say what version it is. Comment on the sort of names they have (Good News; Contemporary English Version; The Message; The Living Bible, and so on). Some have pictures and some have notes. Others are designed with a particular sort of reader in mind and others are less complicated versions for those who can't read so well yet.

Invite everyone to say which they like best and why. What other versions do people know about? Try a quick survey, by show of hands, between three versions most used by the group you are with to find out which is the most popular.

All these types of Bible show how important and special this book is for Christians. Every effort has been made to make sure that it is possible for everyone to find a version of the Bible that helps them. But why bother? What is so special about this book that has meant Christians go to all this trouble?

4. Christians read their Bibles not just because it has good stories; not just because it's an amazing library of different types of books; and not just because it's full of interesting information. Christians believe that their special book is something more! Let me show you.
5. Produce the three frames as described in 'Get set' above.

The Bible for Christians is like a window... a painting... and a mirror

o A window into the way people lived long ago. The Bible contains about 1700 years of history as well as other ancient stories that stretch back to the beginning of time.

o A painting of these same people about how God saw their lives - a God's eye view of that history like an artist picking out what was most important to him in a scene. For example when you read about the kings and leaders, what matters is not how powerful or rich they were but whether they followed God's ways or not.

o A mirror into which we look as we read and discover ourselves in these stories. The Bible is about people like us and so we can learn more about how to follow and love God from what happens to them.

It is a window into *their story*; a painting that show us *God's story*; and a mirror that reveals *our story*.

6. Christians believe this special book can 'speak' to people about others, about themselves and about God. It is one of the ways God speaks to people and that's why it is so important to



Christians. It's a talking book and when God speaks things happen!

7. Let's see some of the ways it can 'speak'.

Mime the following actions as you hold a Bible:

*Scratch your head looking puzzled and then open the book and read it* - it's like a guide book that shows the way (it is 'a lamp that gives light wherever I walk' Psalm 119:105, CEV)

*Fence with the book as if were a sword* - it's like a sword to fight off what is dangerous and harmful, because it shows people what is the right way to live ('for a sword use God's message' Ephesians 6:17)

*Use the book as a hammer* - it is like a hammer to break up wrong ideas about ourselves and others and even wrong understandings of God ('My words are like... a hammer that shatters rocks' Jeremiah 23: 29)

*Cuddle the book close* - it is a comfort when times are tough, reminding readers of God's love that doesn't change and God's plans that are bigger than the present moment ('I find true comfort, Lord, because your laws have stood the test of time' Psalm 119:52)

*Pretend to eat the book* -it is like food that makes people strong. The stories in this book give Christians energy and nourishment ('No one can live only on food. People need every word that God has spoken' Matthew 4:4)

Ask everyone to join you in doing these five mimes as a way to remember why Christians think their book is special. Do them faster and faster as you call out the words: guide, sword, hammer, comfort and food. Change the order sometimes!

For a fuller exploration and activity linked to these mimes see the idea: [Images of the Bible](#)

See also Psalm 19:7-11.

8. This gives you some idea why the Bible is so special for Christians. And 2011 is a special year because 400 years ago a version of this book first appeared in English that was readily available in the UK and more people than ever before discovered its impact on their lives. Still today there are millions of people who read it regularly and who say it helps them hear God speaking to them. It is a book that has changed some people's lives for good for ever.

Perhaps this is an opportunity for you to say what the Bible means to you personally and talk of its influence on your life.

9. Imagine not being able to read the Bible for yourself. What if this great library of stories was only in another language and you couldn't understand it? How did this story get to be in English and translated to produce all these versions? Well, that's a big story in itself and it's what we'll explore next!