



Bible Encounters ...

The aim of these “Bible Encounters” is to introduce the scriptures in a new and dynamic way. Using “tellings” of the Bible rather than reading, people are introduced to the Bible as story, a powerful story that had major impact on the biblical communities in which it was formed and could likewise affect our society today.

Many people have learnt their way around the Bible through devotional reading. This tends to put the focus on the relationship between the individual and God. We tend to read short pieces and select verses that we can easily apply to our lives. Biblical exposition in churches likewise tends to focus on small portions of scripture and is often acutely analytical. This can mean that we never really feel the power of the biblical stories or see them in their social context. The end result is that we can all too easily miss out on how the scriptures can give God’s vision for human society.

These “Bible Encounter” sessions are designed to help us think about the importance of stories in every society. The stories that a community embraces express their deepest commitments about life and how it should be lived. What are the stories that inform our lives today, spelling out the purpose of life to us? What does the media do to us? What impact does Hollywood have? And how do we engage with the Bible afresh? “Bible Encounters” aims particularly to make the link between the Bible and public issues of today. Working with some of the most difficult stories in the Bible, the ones we naturally shy away from, it helps us to see the relevance of the scriptures to today’s power struggles, issues about the market, corrupt leadership and much more.

Before communities became book-bound, all stories were told. That was their natural medium. And every community had its storytellers. These were people who not only entertained others, but also passed on the traditions of the community and formed its ideas of purpose and meaning. People have always been fascinated by the telling of stories. The best public speakers are still those who have a host of stories to tell. “Bible Encounters” encourages us to hear the bible again as a told story. It has been said that when a Bible is read, it goes into the mind, but when the Bible is told it goes for the guts! Something like that certainly seems to happen.

Many of those familiar with Bible Society will have heard of *The Telling Place* initiative forged as a partnership between Bible Society and the Northumbria community. *The Telling Place* runs regular workshops and schools in the art of telling stories and telling Bible. Why not send someone from your congregation to learn this art and enliven your own worship and teaching?

As yet “Bible Encounters” is only available in the greater Bristol area. For those outside this region, why not get involved with *The Telling Place* as a first step?

Contact *The Telling Place* at St Wilfrid's Enterprise Centre, off Royce Road, Hulme, Manchester M15 5BJ. Or e-mail thetellingplace@bigfoot.com

Also let us know your interest in "Bible Encounters" and we will make sure to inform you if we develop anything in your area. For those who want to think more deeply about this, AGORA will also be publishing material on our website that accompanies our "Bible Encounter" sessions and which is available to all.



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