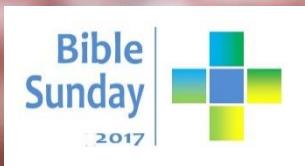




# ACTIVE



PACK INCLUDES

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Welcome / Bible Society & Bible Access / Bible  
Twinning / Reading / Talks / Prayers / Over to You

BIBLE SOCIETY NI

# ACTIVE

BIBLE SUNDAY 2017

## WELCOME

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### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2017 Bible Sunday material from the Bible Society in Northern Ireland.

**'Reaching everyone with God's Word'** still remains our mission statement as we partner with Bible Societies around the world. Together we are involved in Bible translation, publication and distribution as well as projects to improve literacy levels using the Bible and increase Bible engagement and advocacy.

This year we are bringing the challenge closer to home by asking you, and others, to 'twin' your Bible so that we can provide someone else with a Bible to help them grow in their faith and understanding of God. Many of us in Northern Ireland have more than one Bible, yet for millions of people around the world having a Bible is something they only dream of.

As you use this resource we hope that you find ways to connect your congregation, church or small group to be 'clothed, equipped and active' as you think about the reading from Colossians 3:12-17 and reflect on our stories of Bible need from China, Cuba and Togo. Our brothers and sisters in Christ in these countries need us to respond so that they too can be blessed by having access to Scripture in their own language.

It is our hope that you find this resource helpful and informative. We are available to answer any questions in relation to the material presented and are also happy to come and speak about our work to your congregation, church or group.

Do let us know what you think about this material, we appreciate your feedback.

Every blessing

*Catherine Little*

Catherine Little  
General Secretary



*Catherine Little  
General Secretary  
Bible Society NI*

## DATES FOR BIBLE SUNDAY

Thank you for downloading the Bible Sunday resources for 2017. We hope you are planning to set a Sunday aside to make the best use of the material.

You can use this material at any time of the year to fit your church calendar, however, some denominations have specified dates if you wish to follow them:

**29<sup>th</sup> October** - Church of Ireland

**10<sup>th</sup> December** – Presbyterian & Methodist Churches

BIBLE SOCIETY NI

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BIBLE SUNDAY 2017

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[Sermon](#)

[Kids Talk](#)

BIBLE SOCIETY NI

# ACTIVE

BIBLE SUNDAY 2017

## BIBLE SOCIETIES & BIBLE ACCESS

### BIBLE SOCIETIES

There are currently 153 Bible Societies working in over 200 countries. Each Bible Society works as an independent organisation within its own national boundary, while also being connected to each other through membership of the United Bible Societies.

The Bible Society in Northern Ireland works in partnership with this worldwide network. Our main role in Northern Ireland has been to raise awareness of the great need for Bibles around the world and encourage support for various projects, mainly Bible translation, publication and distribution.

As there are projects being carried out by Bible Societies all over the world, there is always a great deal going on and a wealth of inspirational stories.

It is wonderful to be able to continue to provide funding for a number of projects, thanks to the generosity of Bible Society supporters here in Northern Ireland.

Throughout 2017 we have been partnering with Bible Societies in:

Albania, Algeria, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chile, China, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Egypt, Eritrea, Ghana, Guatemala, The Gulf, Honduras, India, Laos, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malawi, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, Slovakia, South Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam.

The projects in these countries range from Bible translation to distribution, from feeding programmes to HIV/AIDS awareness, from literacy programmes to listening groups and a huge range of other life-changing ministries. God is touching hearts, changing families and impacting entire communities through Bible Societies and their partners.



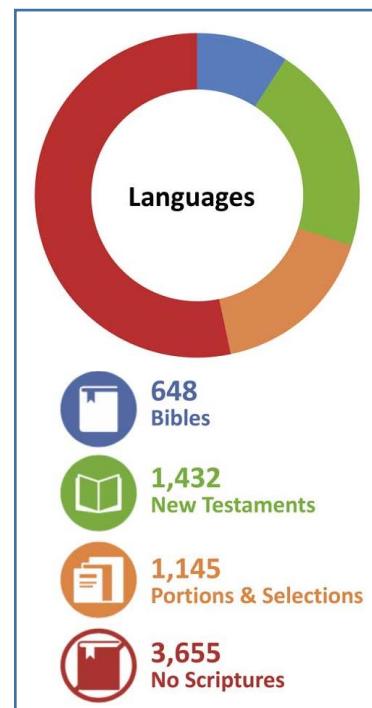
*What a blessing to know that people in Northern Ireland are helping Cubans own and love God's Word. Thank you.*

## BIBLE ACCESS

Bible Societies are working towards the day when everyone in the world can access the full Bible. It is our vision that everyone would be reached with God's Word in whatever language or medium they need to be able to engage with it themselves. The first step towards Bible access is a translation in every language.

### Translation

Bible translation is a core element of what Bible Societies do. The United Bible Societies is one of the largest Bible translation organisations in the world today. Only 648 of the world's 6,880 languages have a complete Bible... that means hundreds of millions of people still don't have the Bible in their own language. The image on the right is helpful. This shows the breakdown of Bible access for world languages. (For more details, see: [www.unitedbiblesocieties.org/key-facts-bible-access/](http://www.unitedbiblesocieties.org/key-facts-bible-access/))



### Bible Distribution

Each year, Bible Societies publish and distribute tens of millions of printed Bibles. As well as Bibles, there are hundreds of millions of other Scripture items, from New Testaments to smaller items of Scripture. The sheer numbers of printed Scripture distributed each year is something to praise God for.

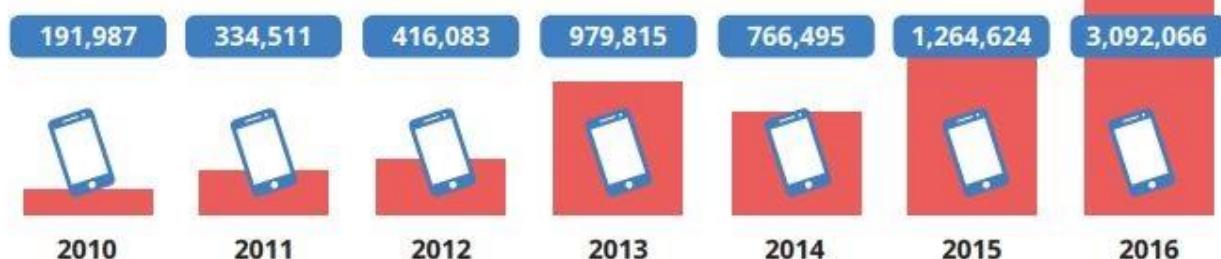
#### Printed Scripture in 2016:

Full Bibles - 34,291,757      Testaments - 13,486,950      All Scripture - 401,356,200

Thanks to the Bible Societies' Digital Bible Library®, many millions of people are also accessing Scripture digitally. People can access the Bible text online, through free sites and apps such as BibleSearch and YouVersion.

The text used on YouVersion is taken From the Digital Bible Library® which is owned and managed by the United Bible Societies.

#### Non print Bible distribution this decade



BIBLE SOCIETY NI

# ACTIVE

BIBLE SUNDAY 2017

## BIBLE SUNDAY PROJECT

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### BIBLE TWINNING

On Bible Sunday 2017, Bible Society NI wants to encourage you and your church to be active and twin your Bibles.

#### What is Bible Twinning?

People in China, Cuba and Togo are desperate for Bibles. They long to read or listen to the words of Jesus. But for many people in these countries the Bible is a luxury that they can't afford. This Bible Sunday you could make their dream a reality by twinning your Bibles.

If you own a Bible you can twin it – whether you've had it for years or it's a brand new Bible. You can twin a Bible as an individual or twin lots of Bibles as a church. All you need to do is cover the cost of a Bible for someone in China, Cuba or Togo.

Bible Society NI have a great leaflet that will give you all the details you need for twinning Bibles. [View the leaflet here](#) or contact Bible House on 028 9032 6577 to receive some copies in the post.

Read the following stories to find out what it means to people to receive their own Bible.



## CHINA

Huge numbers of people in China are becoming Christians and asking for Bibles. Bible Societies are helping to print Bibles in China, making them available to people in even the remotest areas of the country. **Just £5 will twin your Bible with a Bible in China.**



**“Why are you so different?”**

*Wu reads the Bible with her daughter.*

Wu Qing is a sales manager from Shanghai. Three years ago, she was burning incense in temples, trying to save her marriage but nothing worked. Her marriage failed and she felt weighed down by the burden of fending for herself and her daughter. On the verge of break down, Wu got in touch with an old school friend called Zhu. Many years before, Zhu had given her a Bible but Wu had set it aside. Now Wu reached out to her friend, asking her to bring her to church.

It only took one visit to the church before Wu’s life began to change.

“My first time to church felt like a long-awaited homecoming. I believe God had been preparing my heart to receive Him. I’ve finally found what I had been looking for all these years—unconditional love, complete forgiveness and acceptance that only God can give.”

Wu was so touched by God that she decided, on her second visit, to pray to receive Jesus into her life. A year later, she was baptised.

“Hearing God’s Word really refreshed my soul. I felt as if I was ‘intoxicated’. Just a small cup of water would satisfy my parched soul deeply,” recalled Wu. The first book of the Bible that Wu read was the Gospel of John. “I was very touched by the love of God and cried uncontrollably,” shared Wu.

Wu has now read the entire Bible twice and is on her third time. “Now I am at the book of Exodus. I am humbled as I can identify with the sinful nature of the Israelites and at the same time grateful for the fatherly love God has towards His people. It’s a love that’s beyond earthly parental love.”

The knowledge of who God is has changed Wu’s perspective towards life. She has learned to continuously surrender and commit her burdens to her Heavenly Father. The change in Wu’s life has become very noticeable to her friends and colleagues. One of her clients asked, “Wu, are you really Chinese? Why are you so different from your co-workers?”

“I think most sales managers would seem profit-oriented and shrewd. I am more straightforward and open in dealing with my clients. Yet because of my straightforwardness, I’ve gained the trust of my clients and boss, and I am able to do well in my job too,” explained Wu.

Besides her clients, Wu’s mother-in-law also noticed the change in Wu. She received Christ a year ago and was recently baptised.

Comparing her days before and after she came to know God, Wu says, “The period before I came to know the Lord was really terrible and dark. Now that I am in the bright light of God, I never want to go back to the darkness again.”

## CUBA

Bible Societies are helping to distribute Bibles in Cuba through the 'One Million Bibles' project. With 40% of believers in Cuba without a Bible of their own, God's Word is in great demand. Bible Societies are currently permitted to import Scriptures into Cuba, so now is the time to be active and help.

**For just £5 you could twin your Bible with one in Cuba.**

**"Every week people ask us if we have Bibles"**

Rev Elmer is 69 years old. He is a Baptist Pastor and teaches at the 'Christian Centre for Training and Services' in Cuba.

"At least once a week there is a knock on our door, and someone asks to buy a Bible. Most often we have nothing to offer them, sometimes we have a New Testament that we can give away. People are very surprised when they hear that we, a Christian seminary, do not have Bibles."

He was a teenager during the revolution in Cuba and remembers what it was like for Christians then:

"There has been a total change in attitude, from a total rejection of God's Word to a great hunger for the Word."

At the moment Bible Societies can distribute Bibles within Cuba. Rev Elmer would love more Bibles and Christian Literature for the Christian Centre. He longs to be able to give Scripture to people through the various ministries he is involved with.

"Books are so expensive. Also, it is so expensive to get a pair of glasses that many seniors cannot afford to go to the optician. Therefore, many older people need a Bible with large print."

Rev Elmer's church is working to bring the Word of God into prisons:

"First, the guards were reluctant to let us into prison, where we handed out Gideon New Testaments. But as they saw the prisoners who read the Bible get a whole new life and behave much better, they were more than willing to let us in. A prisoner came and asked us to get an additional Testament. "It is my jailer, but he is too shy to ask himself". The guard had seen what the Bible had done with the prisoners, and he wanted to have a Bible for himself as well."



*Rev Elmer with his wife Gisela*

## TOGO

The Bible Society in Togo is reaching out to people who cannot read or are visually impaired. The Bible Society are providing Proclaimers (wind-up audio Bibles) to help these people access the Bible in a way they can use. Groups of people are gathering in churches, prisons and schools to listen to the Bible.

**For £18 you could twin your Bible with a Proclaimer in Togo.**

**“The entire Gospel resides in my heart”**

“My name is Dorcas and I am a deacon is the Assemblies of God Church of Kolokopé. When I go home after listening to the Sunday sermon, I find myself not remembering much of anything because many things are not conveyed correctly by the person interpreting from French into Ewé (my language). I also tend to forget more because of that.

When I listen to the Gospel in Ewé, using the Proclaimer, however, I remember so much more easily and I obey as a result, because it is as if God is speaking to me directly. Since I have received a Bible in Ewé from Bible Society of Togo, I feel like the entire gospel resides in my heart now.

After each listening session, I try to read some more and discover even more things through the reading of Scripture in my mother tongue, Ewé. I can only praise God and ask him to abundantly bless the lives and projects of those who gave us the gift of this Proclaimer and Bible in Ewé.”



*Dorcas and the Pastor of her church hold Bibles and  
Proclaimers.*

## BIBLE READING

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### COLOSSIANS 3:12-17 (NIVUK)

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

## SERMON OUTLINE

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### ACTIVE – COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

#### SET THE SCENE

- Paul writes a letter to the believers in Colossae who were struggling with false teaching.
- He encourages them in their faith, highlights that it's all about God and challenges them to think about the new life that they have through Christ. The challenge is to take off the old clothes and put on the new. Paul reminds them that their lives need to be and look different now that they are followers of Christ.
- In Colossians 3:12-17 Paul lists the new clothes they should put on and gives some pointers on who they should be when they wear them.

#### OUTLINE

- This passage tells us that there's so much more to this 'new life' than simply putting on clothes. Being a believer – being a community of believers – has to be more than appearances. It's not just about wearing a uniform. We need to be active.
- We are reminded that we all need to be,
  1. Clothed: to be dressed by Jesus – our clothes need to reflect the designer.
  2. Equipped: to hold on to God's Word, letting the message of Christ dwell among us.
  3. Active: to allow our designer's brand to become a state of mind not just a stitched on slogan.

#### ILLUSTRATION

Have you ever made the decision to get fit? To do a bit more exercise? We can be full of good intentions – buying the outfits, picking out the right sports equipment, signing up for a gym membership – but what if we never follow it through to action? Our clothes can give us all the appearance of being active without us ever having to get off the sofa. But soon it becomes

noticeable that we're eating cake rather than going for a run; watching another box set rather than going to the gym. If we really want to be transformed we need to be clothed, equipped and active.

### 1. Clothed – Colossians 3:12-15

- These verses list the ‘Christ qualities’ that we should be clothing ourselves in.
- This teaching was given to a group of believers. Today we need to hear these words as a group. Does our church have a uniform? Are we all kitted out for the same purpose?
- Jesus has designed our clothing; he has picked it out of the wardrobe for us. When we put them on is it obvious that they have been stitched together with the love of the Lord?
- Read Wu’s story from China, [“Why are you so different?” – BIBLE SUNDAY PROJECT](#)

### 2. Equipped – Colossians 3:16

- We are equipped for God’s purpose – we have the message of Christ written out for us on the pages of the Bible. But what are we doing with these words? Are they sitting in our pews or are they dwelling among us. Paul challenges us to let this message be more than just a guest for the weekend but to let it make its home amongst us.
- Read Dorcas’s story from Togo, [“The entire Gospel resides in my heart” – BIBLE SUNDAY PROJECT](#)

### 3. Active – Colossians 3:17

- Many clothing designers and brands have a slogan, a few words that make a statement about what their clothes stand for. The most obvious example is perhaps Nike with their slogan ‘just do it’. These words are stitched onto jumpers. But they’ve become more than just words, they’ve become a state of mind. Nike want people to believe that when they wear their clothing they become determined, active and brave.
- Paul challenges us to ‘do it’. We need to allow our designer’s brand to become more than a stitched on slogan but a way of life. As the Church we need to do more than wear the clothes, we need to be active.
- Read Rev Elmer’s story from Cuba, [“Every week people ask us if we have Bibles” – BIBLE SUNDAY PROJECT](#)

## YOUR RESPONSE ON BIBLE SUNDAY: BE ACTIVE

- We have the clothes, but we need to do more than just wear them. We have the Bible, but we need to do more than just have it. We need to let God’s Words dwell with us, transform us and equip us.
- Today on Bible Sunday we’ve been thinking about being active. As a group of believers how will you do this? Join with Bible Society NI as they challenge people to do more than just have the Bible. Be active in encouraging each other to lift the Bible off our pews and down from our shelves. Meditate on the message of Christ. Pray the Scriptures. Be equipped with the Word.
- You can encourage other believers around the world with this message. Download the [‘Bible Twinning’](#) document and discover how you can take action today.

BIBLE SOCIETY NI

# ACTIVE

BIBLE SUNDAY 2017

## CHILDREN'S TALK

### ACTIONS

**What you need:** photographs of people in different uniforms, OR some uniforms that the children can try on. See the images following the talk, or search for uniform images online.

**Bible verse:** Colossians 3:12

**Teaching point:** what you believe in your heart should be visible in your actions.

Download PowerPoint from <http://www.bsni.co.uk/articles/385-bible-sunday-2017>

### Illustration

This illustration will get the children thinking about the different uniforms people wear.

Use the above PowerPoint file, or show some of your own photographs of people wearing uniforms (display these one at a time on your church projector screen so everyone can see them, or print them out where this isn't possible). Get the children to tell you what jobs the people have. Some ideas are police officer, vet, school pupil, nurse, fire fighter, pilot, football player and chef. (Alternatively, you could bring along some uniforms and get the children to try them on.)



## Teaching

It's really easy to work out what job someone has if they are wearing a uniform. A police officer wears a uniform that will protect her and let other people know that she is there to help them. A football player wears a uniform that is easy to move in and that makes it obvious that he is part of a team. When people put on a uniform it means that they are ready to do a particular job.

Did you know that in the Bible we're told what sort of uniform we should wear? Listen to this verse from the book of Colossians:

*"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."*

(Have the words of Colossians 3:12 on the screen so that the kids can see it).

This verse is saying that when God loves us and chooses us to be his children he expects us to put on the clothes of concern, kindness, humbleness, gentleness and patience. That sounds a bit strange doesn't it? What does it mean to put on the clothes of kindness? Kindness isn't like a pair of jeans or a hoody! How can we put it on?

Really what this verse is saying is that when God loves us and when we love him, we should act in the right way. It isn't enough to just believe something in our hearts. If we love God then people should be able to see that in the way we act. If we love God then we should act in a way that is kind, gentle and patient. People should see that we are kind. It should be as obvious as us wearing a uniform. People know that someone wearing an apron and a white hat is a chef.

People should know that when we wear the clothes of kindness we love God and he loves us.



Photo by Doug Linstedt on Unsplash





Photo by chuttersnap on Unsplash





Photo by Arūnas Naujokas on Unsplash



BIBLE SOCIETY NI

# ACTIVE

BIBLE SUNDAY 2017

## PRAYERS

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### PRAISE, REFLECT, INTERCEDE

These simple prayer points are for you to adapt for your own particular setting. You might find you want to use parts from each section, or focus on just one area. Whatever you do, may you be inspired as you lead people before the throne of God in prayer.

There are three sections focusing on prayers of Praise, Reflection and Intercession. If you would like more prayer information for Bible Society ministry either here or around the world, we would be happy to help you access what you need. Contact us on 028 9032 6577 or email [info@bsni.co.uk](mailto:info@bsni.co.uk)

#### Prayers of Praise

##### For ourselves

- Father, we praise you for your life changing Word and the promises you give us through it. We thank you for the truth that it contains that enables us to stand firm, knowing that our lives are built on your unchanging, eternal Word (Psalm 119:89).
- Thank you that you speak to us through your Word, both as a church and as individuals – that your Word is alive and active (Heb 4:12), changing us to be more like you.

##### For the World

- Thank you for the wonderful work that is being carried out by Bible Societies and other agencies all over the world to bring your truth to every language. We declare that people from all nations and languages will one day bow before you (Rev 7:9). Praise you that salvation is for all people.
- Praise you that the Bible is being made available in digital formats, in Braille, in audio files and in many other formats so that more people than ever can discover your wonderful message and grow closer to you.

## Prayers of Reflection

### For ourselves

- Heavenly Father, we need more of your presence in our lives, our families, our church and our communities. We need guidance from the Bible as we seek to live lives that reflect your glory and love to those around us.
- Help us to draw near to you and understand that we are here to honour you and bring you praise. May we live so deeply rooted in your Word that we display the fruits of the Spirit in our daily lives and generate fruit for the kingdom as a community of your people.

### For the World

- We are amazed by the faith we see in people living under great pressure. We see your Spirit and Word breaking down walls and giving strength in the face of persecution. Your Church is growing and nothing can stand against it.
- Open our hearts to the cries of our Christian family around the world and inspire us with their example. Teach us to live in awareness of the needs of others. Many are still without the Bible in their own language, others cannot read, some simply cannot access it because of restrictions. We pray that you will continue to break down walls for nothing can stop you, our Lord God Almighty (Matt 16:18-19).

## Prayers of Intercession

### For ourselves

- Teach us to be filled with gratitude, awe and excitement as we approach the Bible. May we come in expectation as we seek to know your heart and live in the light of your truth.
- Lord may we never live with apathy in our hearts, rather, help us to live life to the full as you intended (John 10:10). Teach us to love your Word – not seeing it as a guide book, but a window to your heart, a way to draw closer to you and become more like you.
- May we be a people who are prepared to stand up and stand out when you call us to. May our attitude of praise and lifestyle of gentleness be evident to all (Phil 4:4-6).

### For the World

- The earth is yours and everything in it belongs to you (1 Cor 10:26). Thank you for the provision that enables Bible Society ministries to flourish and your Word to spread. We pray Lord for those serving in places where practical resources are not readily available, that you will meet their needs according to your plan. May no good work be halted due to lack of resources.
- We ask for your protection on Bible Society teams who work in remote or dangerous places. We pray for those who work alone, often at great risk. Would you pour your encouragement on them and may they know your protection and your unfailing love.
- We pray for those who love you yet have little or no opportunity to read the Bible. Guard them from misleading teaching and the lies of the enemy. Hold them close and quicken the work of bringing the Bible to their hands.
- We pray for the people of the world who are yet to hear your name. For all who are without knowledge of your truth. Lord would they see your hand in the wonder of creation (Rom 1:20) and know your presence with them. Lord God we ask that you would advance the Gospel that all may hear and your name would be glorified in all the earth.

**AMEN**

## OVER TO YOU

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### WHAT'S NEXT?

Thanks for downloading the Bible Sunday pack – ACTIVE. We really do want it to be helpful. If you have any feedback or thoughts, please feel free to email us at [info@bsni.co.uk](mailto:info@bsni.co.uk)

What is next for you? If you have used parts of this Bible Sunday pack we would love you to put into action what you have been thinking, or even teaching about. Will you get ACTIVE and help others have the same access to the Bible as we do?

Here are a few things you could do:

- **Sign up to receive our supporter's magazine** – Word at Work. You might even like to encourage others to do the same. Find out more here [www.bsni.co.uk/articles/54-word-at-work](http://www.bsni.co.uk/articles/54-word-at-work)
- **TWIN YOUR BIBLES.** Do you have pew Bibles? Would you like to twin them? Perhaps your congregation would like to twin their own individual Bibles? Have a look at this idea and consider making a huge difference to others in this simple way. If you would like to chat to someone about this feel free to ring us on 028 9032 6577 or email [info@bsni.co.uk](mailto:info@bsni.co.uk)
- **Have us along to speak to your church.** God is doing amazing things through Bible Society ministries and we would love to tell you more.
- **Pray for us.** Why not sign up for our fortnightly Prayer Circle by email – you could use these prayers to lead others in intercession. Many use them in their own personal quiet time but others share the material in small groups or midweeks or even on a Sunday morning. See recent Prayer Circle or sign up here: [www.bsni.co.uk/pages/12-prayer-circle](http://www.bsni.co.uk/pages/12-prayer-circle)

### Get in Touch

If there is anything we can help you with or you think your church could connect with our work – please feel free to get in touch for a chat.