

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Since the beginning of the modern mission movement visionaries and strategists have attempted to ascertain what commands were binding on the church and what was possible in their day. At first the goal was to form beachheads on the continents where the gospel was not preached. Secondly, there came the push inland followed by a defining of exactly who needed to be reached and what languages those peoples needed to be reached in.

At each stage of God's mission, especially since 1974 in Lausanne, when planning commenced to complete the Great Commission in our lifetime, we have increasingly refined the measurement of what such closure entails. But as each mountain peak approaches, new horizons present themselves. One such horizon is to ensure that every people group in the world who will one day comprise the throng before God's throne have access to the Word of God in their own heart language so they may worship him in spirit and in truth.

While many missionary pioneers have for years been plying their talents to the next phase of advancing the Kingdom of God through advocating for transformational redemption of structures in society, a healthy foundation for these structures demands more than a casual familiarity with God's Word as these kingdom principals and structures are introduced to more cultures and nations. We must complete the task of translating the Bible into every heart language, and **we must push the multi-media boundary in presenting the Word to all people that it might elicit the response the gospel is sent forth to achieve. As the Apostle Paul explained, "How can they believe if they have not heard" (Rom 10:14).**

## THE FELT NEED

God desires to see his word alive and accessible to all peoples in establishing viable indigenous church planting movements among all peoples of the earth. While translating the written Word into all heart languages is a significant first step to achieve closure to the task of ending Bible poverty, the written translation alone falls short of enlightening the eyes of every heart (Eph 1:9).

In her article “From Every Language”, Barbara Grimes writes “*Being a disciple of Jesus Christ involves getting to know Him personally. That requires adequate comprehension of the good news and of God’s Word. Understanding and knowledge are repeatedly emphasized throughout the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul said it was his responsibility to make the message clear (Col 4: 4).*”<sup>1</sup>

Reading is no longer the style of a new generation of believers who have grown up with multi-sensory digital media. But far from being an obstacle, this actually opens the way to see God’s Word run more swiftly (Psalm 147:15) to do its work in their hearts and minds.

Some time ago, a scene in an Apple advertising campaign featured a manager peering through a glass partition at his employees, some working on Macs and others on PCs. He asks a fellow manager “*Which computer is the most powerful?*” to which the response was “*The one they will use*”. It is the same with the Word of God.

Q. Which Bible is the most powerful?

A. The one they will use.

I see the target audience ranging from believers who are apt to open the Word, but lose interest due to word fatigue through to motivated readers looking for overview and depth.

## LEARNING STYLE RATIONALE

Both *Structures of Intellect*<sup>2</sup> and *Motivational Learning Styles*<sup>3</sup> vary significantly from one hearer to another. Hearers, who visualize written concepts in their mind’s eye as they read or listen, are much better able to grasp its meaning and how it advances Gods’ message and mission when they are guided visually through the text. Such a medium will draw people into the Word by addressing both their heart language and their perception style. It is now feasible to integrate the Word in written, spoken and visual form.

The International Orality Network asserts that “a Bible translation program that begins with the oral presentation of the Bible through storying and then continues with a translation and literacy program is the most comprehensive strategy for communicating the Word of God in their heart language...primary visual forms may complement, such as illustrations depicting scenes in Bible stories. Of course, films and videos can be an important complement of an oral Bible.”<sup>4</sup>

For visual people, reading the Word alone without the assistance of some visual augmentation is much like reading in a second language. The words may be understood but the meaning remains elusive. When the Word is in a second language, such as when a young English speaker reads The King James Version or a tribesman reads in his secondary trade language, the meaning does not become sufficiently unpacked to teach it themselves and hence advance an indigenous church movement.

For example, are the eyes of someone sitting down at a restaurant drawn primarily to the menu graphics, then secondarily to the text for clarification? Or consider a missionary biography. Are distances and voyages undertaken an important feature for some readers?

THE ILLUSTRATED WORD – PROPOSAL TO SPEED THE WORD INTO THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF BELIEVERS

<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Website</u>	<u>Unique Feature</u>
<u>TEXT ONLY</u>				
Joint Project (11 Partners)	Bible Cloud	787 bibles in 690 languages	<a href="https://dbs.org/">https://dbs.org/</a>	Simul cast side by side versions
American Bible Society	BibleSearch	> 50 versions in > 15 languages	<a href="https://bibles.org/eng-GNTD/Gen/1">https://bibles.org/eng-GNTD/Gen/1</a>	Anyone may apply to begin their language
Life Church	YouVersion	> 1880 versions in > 1300 languages	<a href="http://www.youversion.com">www.youversion.com</a> <a href="http://www.bible.com">www.bible.com</a>	Most text languages and some audio too
<u>AUDIO ONLY</u>				
Faith Comes By Hearing	Bible.is app	> 1250 language recordings; Vision 2033 is to have some scripture read in every language	<a href="http://www.bible.is">www.bible.is</a>	The most audio native-read languages
<u>AUDIO &amp; TEXT</u>				
Bible Gateway	Bible Gateway	> 60 languages and multiple versions	<a href="http://www.biblegateway.com">www.biblegateway.com</a>	Rich featured incl. parallel format
Faith Comes By Hearing	The Live Bible	> 1800 languages in text and/or recordings	<a href="https://live.bible.is">https://live.bible.is</a>	Uncluttered advert-free
<u>AUDIO &amp; VIDEO</u>				
The Bible Project	The Bible Project	Storyboard - single page & scrolling versions	<a href="http://www.thebibleproject.com">www.thebibleproject.com</a>	Great overviews; more languages coming
Jesus Film Media/Partners	The Jesus Movie	Dramatized Movie - Luke & Genesis (short film)	<a href="https://www.jesusfilm.org/watch.html">https://www.jesusfilm.org/watch.html</a>	Most video languages > 1500
GNN International	The Visual Bible	Word-for-word Movie - Matthew, Acts & John	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fc8qOXeTsUQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fc8qOXeTsUQ</a>	Verbatim Scripture Movies (English)
<u>AUDIO, VIDEO &amp; TEXT</u>				
(To Be Determined)	The Illustrated Word	In conceptual phase	<a href="https://illustratedword.org">https://illustratedword.org</a>	Preserves the text while adding illustrations
Biblica/Partners	The Live Bible	Word-for-word Movie - Mark (NIV)	<a href="https://live.bible.is/bible/ENGIV/MRK/1">https://live.bible.is/bible/ENGIV/MRK/1</a>	Word-for-word Movie with optional text
<u>META-SITE DIRECTORIES</u>				
Wycliffe (Canada)	Scripture Earth	Directory of different scripture resources	<a href="https://www.scriptureearth.org">https://www.scriptureearth.org</a>	Unrestricted use of materials
Digital Bible Society	Find-A-Bible	Directory of different scripture resources	<a href="http://find.bible">http://find.bible</a>	Bible books available on website in pdf

## VISUAL PRESENTATION: THE ILLUSTRATED WORD

With the recent advent of foldable phones and tablets, it is time to create graphic illustration for digital Bibles, in which the text appears on one side of the screen alongside an augmenting graphic illustration on the other. Delivery will be by app or web page using an imbedded video player on a computer, tablet or phone.

The technology and most of the content has existed for years. There are audible reader apps where the eyes can follow a cursor traversing the text, karaoke style, as the narrator reads. This is already an aid in helping people become more literate. This same digital cursor that indicates where in the text the narrator is reading could simultaneously ‘trigger’ the timely appearance on the adjacent screen of illustrating maps, charts and other graphics aids. At any time a click of the pause button could freeze both screens.

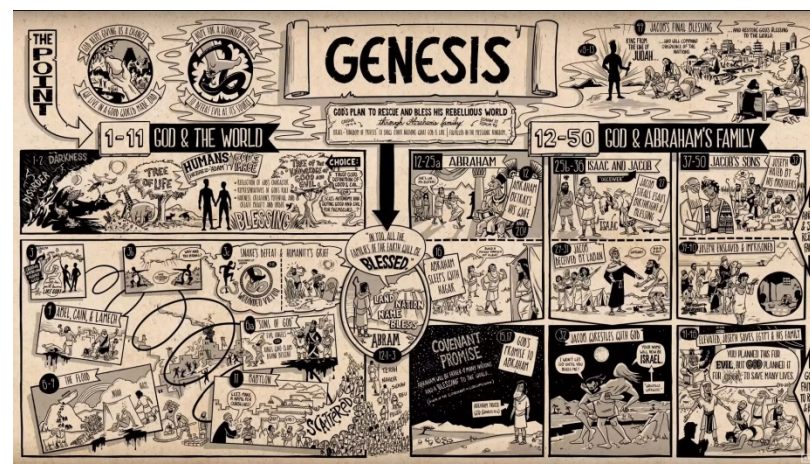
Some digital versions already link text to bible dictionaries and other study aids. These features could be added to any digital version of the Word. However the added time taken to follow these links will distract from an uninterrupted reading of the text. Minimalist illustration that can be paused allows the listener to divert attention to the illustration then easily return to the text as the graphics fade.

Sensory overload should be avoided. The goal is to speed the reader along with enhanced comprehension of the Word in order to encourage their frequent return. Audial and visual learners will be most impacted. When an external resource or cross reference must be studied to understand the relationship between elements (people, places, etc.) the meaning can get lost.

## MARKET PLACEMENT - THE ILLUSTRATED WORD

Many are adding audio readings to the written word. This proposal seeks to push these efforts further by adding graphic illustrations, much as children’s novels typically contain. As the medium is digital, this opens the possibility for some of the graphics to be animated and for the graphics to refresh multiple times for each page of text.

[The Bible Project](#) initiated by Multnomah Bible College graduates employs two storybook techniques to bring the Word alive. In the first video format titled *Read Scripture* an illustrator animates in real time as the speaker walks through an inductive commentary. Each animation results in a page as exemplified below the viewer can use to review their understanding of that book or explain it to others.



Their second storybook format draws its way through each book in a left-to-right scrolling format. Employing fewer written words this second approach lends itself to production in additional languages which are underway. A transitory clip from Genesis follows below.





[The Jesus Film](#) of the Gospel of Luke was produced in 1979 in English, and has been dubbed with 1750 translations since.

The Visual Bible 1993 is the [Gospel of Matthew](#) and [Acts](#) verbatim in English and 3 major languages, followed in 2003 by the [Gospel of John](#). The [Gospel of Mark](#) at Bible.is adds the medium of text.

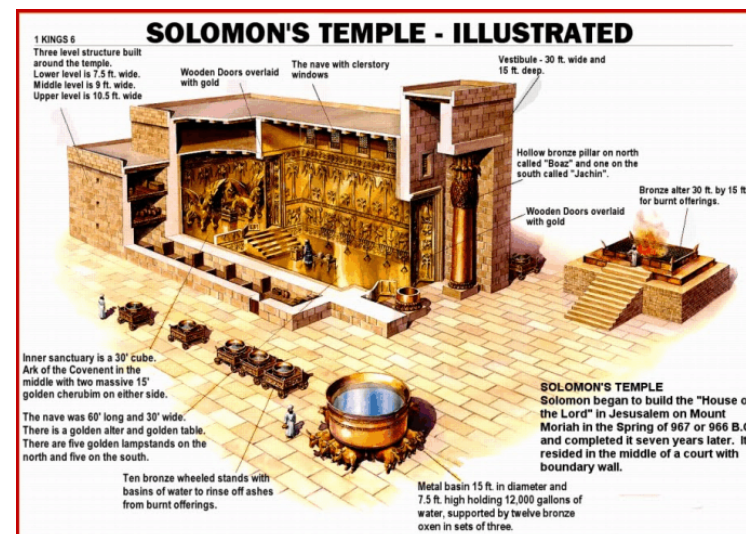
A more extensive survey of Bible formats is attached in Table 1 above to show where this project fits with others underway.

*The Illustrated Word* will intentionally be minimalist in depth compared to the above approaches but utilizes elements of each. Like *The Jesus Film* it can be continually translated into new languages, like the *Visual Bible* the text is preserved, and like *The Bible Project* it can extend to all books of the bible.

The amount and type of illustration in each book will ultimately be decided by the illustrator and publisher, but possible examples in static format are shown below. The first two could be animated.

## EXAMPLES FOR INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1) In 1 Kings 7 and 2 Chronicles 4 the narrative describing the physical layout of the temple Solomon is building begs for a dynamic animated reconstruction with some elements tied to the larger section and others adhering to verse by verse.



## THE ILLUSTRATED WORD – A PROPOSAL TO SPEED THE WORD INTO THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF BELIEVERS

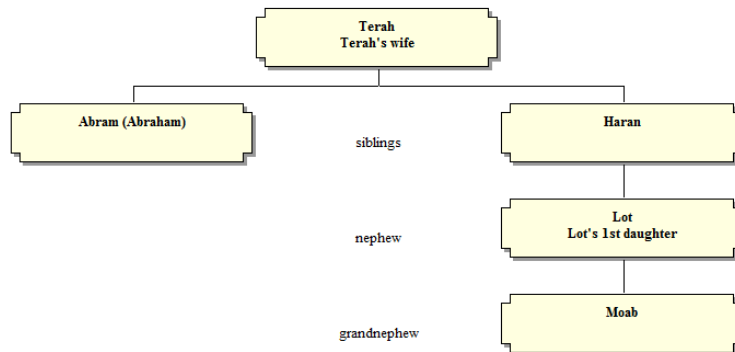


- 2) In 1 Kings 18 at the end of the chapter when Elijah tucks his cloak into his belt to outrun King Ahab's chariot to Jezreel, a moving (red) line could trace the route from Mt Carmel to Jezreel indicating the pathway and distance of this feat.



- 3) In the book of Isaiah the reader needs to know the family origin and current geographical location of the peoples mentioned. For instance in Chapter 15 concerning Moab, a chart could depict Moab and Ammon as the children of Abraham's nephew Lot, and a map could show the geographical relationship between Israel and Moab. When any of the sixteen or so towns or geographic features is referenced, the name should pulse or light up on the map.





- 4) In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, Matthew 18, the reader would see a conversion chart of weights and currency values of the denarii and talents used in the passage to advance the narrative.

Hebrew measure	US weight	Current Value
100 denarii	1.25 lbs/0.5kg	US\$ 1,000
	$\times 600,000 =$	
10,000 talents	375 tons (US)	US\$600 million

## TEXT-SIDE FEATURES

Scripture is read showing karaoke-style curser. While merely reading the word is insufficient to fully satisfy an oral learner, it will aid their eyes to move from one side of the screen to the other.

## SKIN ESSENTIALS

Skin (graphic and text-side) may be an important feature for some languages such as exists in the Urdu translation where acceptance of the scriptures is enhanced by a particular artistic presentation.

Wrap screens in a culturally acceptable skin when appropriate.

Skin should accommodate platform. Present the project in either HTML or imbedded video format using Vimeo, YouTube or other system playable on any digital platform. Multi-screen spanning should accommodate foldable devices.

## GRAPHICS-SIDE FEATURES

Maps with names that pop out or pulse; journeys are traced out in color, relevant distances measured and borders depicted.

Genealogical charts of relationships (e.g. Rahab-Ruth, Saul-Joab) and birth order (e.g. sons of Jacob, sons of David).

Static conversion tables for weights and measurements.

Dynamic construction of buildings, walls and artifacts.

Premium versions could be developed for languages where users can support the cost, with drill down features such as multi-layered maps, 3D enhancement and links to other bible reference materials.

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ... FOR ALL PEOPLES

Without knowing which languages need this tool, here is the overview. Of 7111 living visual languages<sup>5</sup> (including sign languages), as of 2018 683 had complete bibles and a further 2667 had the New Testament or some portion of Scripture translated.<sup>6</sup> That means there are currently active translation teams for at least 2667 languages that could be tapped through their networks for participation in this project right now. Teams are being recruited to begin work in the remaining languages by 2033.

The initial development could be performed by a publisher or a third party. The project will start where the resources are greatest in English. Once a primary visual version has been developed, with minimal additional effort, the reader and content can be adapted for use with other translations in that language. Adapting to new visual languages would be done in much the same way as the Jesus Movie is done with partners in each local language. For the visual translations that are incomplete or not yet started, work could be done by the translation team as part of their translation project.

As the quantity and style of graphics may need to vary from language to language, these decision-makers should have access to a development 'kit' that includes alternative graphic components. This kit could also be applied to a chronological bible. Village testing may be an important issue for some languages.

Development could make use of exiting graphic content but that would require cooperation from one or more publishers. Some content will need to be created from scratch.

If the task is underwritten by a publisher, the basic reader edition should be presented without charge, so as to be accessible to as many people as possible. The model of free bible web content allowing for advertising space is already proven out.

If the task is done by a third party without access to copyrighted materials, it could nevertheless progress like Wikipedia® where a team of editors accepts content from contributors and slowly improves the product. The problem with this approach may be in updating other translations that have already been developed.

## FOOTNOTES

1. *From Every Language*, Barbara F Grimes, adapted from 'Reached' Without Scripture? International Journal of Frontier Missions, 7: 2, pp. 41-47.
2. *Structure of Intellect* (SI) theory 1955, J.P.Guilford
3. *Finding a Job You Can Love*, Ralph T Mattson and Arthur F Miller Jr, 1982
4. *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, book by a study group at the 2004 LCWE consultation in Pattaya, Thailand, jointly published by ION and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.
5. Ethnologue 22<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 2019 <https://www.ethnologue.com/>
6. Wycliffe Global Alliance, Scripture & Language Statistics, Oct 2018, <http://www.wycliffe.net/statistics>

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