

COMMUNITY BIBLE EXPERIENCE™



- WELCOME PACK -

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BIBLICA EUROPE

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Introducing Community Bible Experience

Nothing is more important to spiritual growth than regular, meaningful engagement with god's word*.

We have more Bibles than ever. And more ways to access Scripture. We can pull it up on our smartphones or have it delivered to our inboxes. We can choose from an endless array of translations and beautifully bound print versions.

And yet... people are reading the Bible far less than they did a generation ago*.

Too often we read in fragments. Staggeringly few Christians have read the whole Bible. Some are familiar with studying whole books, verse by verse, others, a few verses here and a few chapters there — but rarely the whole story.

Too often we read without context. By failing to fully understand the big picture and historical or literary context we can struggle to connect the Bible to our world today. If we can't make sense of it we're far more likely to put it down in frustration and leave it to the 'professionals' to do the work for us.

Too often we read in isolation. We've turned Bible reading into a purely private discipline—something that begins and ends with "me." Personal Bible reading is a wonderful thing. But it's not the only thing. Scripture was originally meant to be read and experienced in community.

Community Bible Experience turns this on its head...

...the **complete** Bible, understood in **context**, experienced in **community**!

How it works:

1. Get together

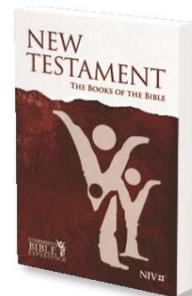
Gather your church, your small group, a few friends—and **commit to reading the entire New Testament in eight weeks.**

2. Read big

For the next eight weeks, you'll read a completely different presentation of the full text. You'll read whole books—not just bits and pieces. By the end, you'll have read every word of the New Testament.

3. Discuss

Each week, you'll meet in small groups to discuss what you're reading. These gatherings are designed to feel **more like a book club than a traditional Bible study.** They're an opportunity to share how God's story is impacting each person—what inspires, surprises, puzzles, or challenges us. There's no advance preparation required for participants or small group leaders, other than keeping up with each day's reading.



Over 350 churches in the UK and Ireland have already taken part and their feedback is inspiring others to join Community Bible Experience every week. Lives are being changed and faith deepened as people become more engaged with the Bible. **Check out the rest of the Welcome Pack for links to these stories and everything else you'll need to prepare for this journey.**

* According to research by the Evangelical Alliance in 2012 & REVEAL in 2008 (& the everyday experience of Church leaders)

Community Bible Experience 'Top Tips'

1. **Get your church excited about Community Bible Experience** by giving plenty of notice and then launching it at a Sunday morning service. Links to useful multimedia resources can be found in the Welcome Pack.
2. **View the weekly small group discussions more as a book club** than a Bible study – simply allowing God's word and its impact on your lives to speak powerfully.
3. **Encourage all of the church leaders/elders to participate** (& ideally not by leading the group) – this helps show that it's about more than just 'knowing our Bible' but being part of an ongoing process of reading and living God's word well and together.
4. **Use CBE as a chance to enter into conversation with the church.** Try to get people talking about the Bible and their reading experience in multiple contexts.
5. **Engage with the social media.** Link to our Facebook page, Twitter handle and hashtag #readthebible. Start your own hashtag... #elimcbe or #stjohnscbe etc. For more ideas see the 'Social Media' sheet in the Welcome Pack.
6. **Allow Sunday sermons to become part of the journey.** Many church leaders have found it helpful to preach on a text from that week's reading. Others have based their sermons on issues that came out of the small group discussions.
7. **Make sure this isn't "just another programme" your church does.** Encourage any new groups or people joining a small group for the first time to keep going. Keep up the momentum and renewed eagerness to delve into God's word. See the 'What Next' sheet in the Welcome Pack for ideas.
8. **Follow up with your CBE groups.** You could give time on a Sunday for people to speak about their experience of CBE and what they've learnt. We also provide a really simple questionnaire to help you gain feedback from participants. See the 'What Next' sheet in the Welcome Pack for more details.
9. **Consider using it in an outreach context.** The simple formatting of the text and book club style provides a non-threatening way for people who have never read God's word to delve into His story and discuss it with others. Could you use it in your youth group or a school SU? What about the parent and toddler group that meet in your church?
10. **If unsure, ask.** If you have any questions about CBE please get in touch with the Biblica team.

These tips are discussed in more detail on our blog - <http://biblicaeurope.wordpress.com/>



Community Bible Experience Resource Kit

1. Resources for introducing Community Bible Experience to your church...

For more information and helpful video clips please check out the following links:

www.biblicaeurope.com/community-bible-experience

www.youtube.com/user/BiblicaEurope

Posters, Newsletter inserts and a PowerPoint presentation with talking points to help you introduce the campaign to your group are also available at www.biblicaeurope.com/CBENT

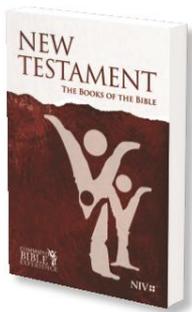
2. Resources for during the campaign...

Planning Guides & Daily Email Sign Up

Pastor's Planning Guide, Small Group Leader's Guide & Reader's Guide can all be down loaded from our website:

www.biblicaeurope.com/CBENT

The Books of the Bible: New Testament



Reading through *The Books of the Bible: New Testament*, you will see the Scriptures stripped of centuries of additional formatting, leaving behind the Bible text. This makes it easier to read larger sections, to fully comprehend and experience the Bible's power and meaning.

Features:

- Single column format
- Chapter and verse numbers removed
- Natural literary breaks restored
- Introductions to unlock the context of each book
- Books reordered and grouped to maximise understanding of context

In addition to the print version, **digital formats of *The Books of the Bible: New Testament*** are available (eBook, mp3 audio and kids audio) - also found at www.biblicaeurope.com/CBENT

Social Media

Us:



facebook.com/CommunityBibleExperienceEurope



[@BiblicaCBE](https://twitter.com/BiblicaCBE)



biblicaeurope.wordpress.com

You:

Use your facebook, twitter & blog to build a conversation around the bible and your CBE campaign. For more ideas see the 'Social Media' page.



Community Bible Experience & Social Media

Social Media is a great way to build up excitement about Community Bible Experience and make the whole experience accessible for all – both within your church/group and as part of the wider movement across the UK/Ireland and beyond. Here are some ideas as to how you might do this but we'd love to hear about any others you come up with.

Things to do within your church/group:

1. Facebook

Create a page

Create a Community Bible Experience page for your church/group. On the page you could:

- Use it to advertise the start date. If you've planned a special Sunday to launch the event you could even set up an event on the page to invite people to the service. People can then share this event to encourage people to be there that day.
- Post photos and videos about Community Bible Experience such as our Community Bible Experience infographic or videos from our YouTube page
- Encourage participants to share quotes or stories as they progress through Community Bible Experience
- Encourage people to pray
- Share your thoughts on the daily readings or even just post a quick reminder for everyone on what the reading is that day
- Point people towards useful resources such as our daily email sign up page

We've even created some Facebook banners and icons for you to use for your page's cover and profile picture.

Create groups

You could encourage each small group leader to set up a group, which could either be public or private, for participants to discuss what they've been reading or ask questions. This could be a great way for those who are unable to make the weekly meetings to ensure they get a chance to participate in the community side of Community Bible Experience!

[How to create a Facebook group](#)

Picture solidarity

You could encourage those taking part in Community Bible Experience to change their cover and/or profile picture. You could use one of the banners or icons we've created or you could personalise these for your church/group.

2. Twitter

Encourage people during the week to tweet about their journey through Community Bible Experience. We really want to hear about what's been happening in your groups so it would be great if you could encourage people to use our Twitter handle @biblicacbe

We've set up a hashtag #readthebible but you might also want to set up your own Community Bible Experience hashtag e.g. #stjamescbe or #cbegracechurch14

3. Google +/Skype

As a church you might have people who are quite spread out geographically or struggle to attend a group due to ill health or child care issues etc. It doesn't mean they have to miss out. Use technology to include them and have a weekly Skype call or a Google Hangout set up. A few tips if you do this:

- Try to keep the number of people in these online groups quite small. It could get quite confusing if there were too many people on the call. 3-5 might be a good size group.



- Encourage people to have a set of headphones each and mute their microphones when they're not speaking. These both massively cut down on noise interference.

[How to start a Google Hangout](#)

4. Blog

Blogs could be used really effectively as an online focal point for your church as they go through Community Bible Experience. There are lots of free places you can set up a blog website such as Wordpress, Blogger, Tumblr and Typepad. You might use the blog to post:

- Some thoughts on why the church has chosen to do Community Bible Experience
- Some personal reflections on each day or week's reading
- Testimonies of people in the church who've been greatly affected by Community Bible Experience

Engaging with the wider movement:

Social media is also a great way to interact with the wider Community Bible Experience movement. Firstly, it gives us and others taking on the campaign an opportunity to see how God is working through Community Bible Experience in your church/group. Secondly, it enables us to pray for you in a more informed way. Thirdly, it gives you the chance to keep up to date with our news, stories from other churches/groups, and tap into a wider network of churches and individuals passionate about reading the Bible.

To do this you can:

- Like the [Community Bible Experience Europe](#) and [Biblica Europe](#) Facebook page
- Follow the [Community Bible Experience Europe](#) and [Biblica Europe](#) Twitter account
- Ensure you tag us in Facebook statuses and include our Twitter handle in any tweets you write.
- If you've written something online (such as a blog) or had any media coverage, send us the link so we can share this with others – biblicaeurope@biblica.com
- Keep tuning into [our blog](#). As well as news about Biblica's wider work we'll be posting new content about Community Bible Experience including new ideas you might want to try out.

Community Bible Experience FAQs

Q1. Has Community Bible Experience been designed to replace other forms of Bible reading/study?

Absolutely not. 'Reading big' is never a replacement for 'digging deep' or meditating on a few verses – it is complementary to them both. Each of us might be more familiar or comfortable with one style over another but we should never limit ourselves to one approach (or translation) when it comes to engaging with God's word. We must immerse ourselves in the breadth and depths of this incredible gift from God.

What Community Bible Experience offers is an excellent opportunity for *anyone* at *any* stage of their Christian walk to engage with the full picture of God's story - every word of it, and in community! This provides a great foundation and context for more detailed study of chapter and verse. It also helps develop a love for God's word and his people. After all, whenever we study a book (other than a textbook) the first thing we do is read it – all of it – before digging down into the detail of key messages and characters etc.

Q2. There is a lot of reading involved - what if I or others in my group fall behind?

If you're not used to carving out time to read the Bible (or any other book), reading 12 pages a day might appear too big a challenge, but with God all things are possible. The support and accountability of your community group is hugely important and can help you get back on track if you've missed a few days - the free days over the weekend allow for this. However, if you fall behind significantly we would suggest that you jump to the page the rest of your group are on and read the section you missed at the end. You could also catch up using the mp3 audio. Also, if you have members of your groups for whom reading is very difficult they may wish to go through the whole New Testament using the mp3.

Q3. Can it be used with non-Christians?

Community Bible Experience is very well suited for use with non-Christians. The simple formatting of the text and book club style provides a non-threatening way for people who have never read God's word to engage with His story and discuss it with others.

One of the videos on the Biblica Europe YouTube channel – Jim's Story – speaks of how a non-Christian husband and father came to faith through Community Bible Experience.

Q4. What about children?

There are Community Bible Experience resources just for children so that families can take part together. Each day the children can listen to their own audio version and read along using an accompanying transcript (in the Nlrv), if able. There are even notes for the parents to help guide chats about that day's reading. A number of churches have integrated this very successfully into their adult campaign and we would be very happy to discuss ideas with you.

Q5. What about young people?

Some churches have chosen to have their young people read the whole New Testament alongside the adults, others have used the Luke-Acts resource instead which requires less reading each day and is completed in 4 weeks. Whichever way you choose to do it, we would highly recommend that you include your young people. It is so important that they develop a good understanding of God's story and a love for His word early in their journey.

Q6. Why are you starting to give away the Books of the Bible: New Testament for free?

The unique and high quality resources used in Community Bible Experience, most notably the Books of the Bible edition of the NIV, are worth every penny of the £5 rrp. However, Community Bible Experience has been running in churches around the globe for 2 years now and the feedback has been incredible. So much so that we want to make it accessible to all churches no matter what their financial circumstances.

We are...

- passionate about the Bible & that people would read and live it well
- confident that Community Bible Experience will help you do just that
- excited about you partnering with us to build this movement

So, if you become a Community Bible Experience partner church we will provide all resources free of charge.

Q7. Why do we need to become an official Community Bible Experience partner church to receive the free resources?

By choosing not to pass on the cost of Community Bible Experience resources to churches we are committing ourselves to a huge and exciting step of faith. However, we must still be good stewards of the funds raised to make this possible. Therefore, we are seeking a corresponding commitment from church leaders to use the resources to their greatest potential. It is not about being prescriptive but about applying two years' worth of experience, with tens of thousands of global participants, to best effect. Secondly, we believe very strongly in partnership and want to learn from the churches joining with us in this movement to get people reading the Bible.

Q8. What if we don't think we can meet one of the commitments or recommendations in the partnership agreement, like meeting weekly in small groups?

There is no doubt that small groups meeting weekly will cultivate the community aspect of Community Bible Experience most effectively. Encouragement, accountability and shared learning is vital to the campaign. Individuals or groups meeting less frequently will find this hard to replicate and it may have a negative impact on the overall Bible reading experience.

However, there is more than one way to achieve this. A number of churches who didn't have existing weekly small groups have come up with creative ways to address it and we would be more than happy to chat through what would work best for you.

Also, as CBE develops there will be new and exciting opportunities to use it in ways that may look a little different from the 'traditional' church small group and we would love to hear your ideas and feedback on this.

Q9. If it is free, why are you asking partner churches to provide participants with the opportunity to give to the work of Community Bible Experience?

We already have some funding to provide resources to churches signing up in the UK & Ireland. Offering participants the opportunity to give to the work is about becoming part of a bigger movement to get people reading God's word, and enabling participants in other parts of the world to benefit from taking part in CBE.

Q10. How do we sign up?

Simply contact the Biblica Europe office and a member of staff will be in touch to discuss how CBE could work in your church.

The Mount Conference Centre, Woodstock Link, Belfast, BT6 8DD

biblicaeurope@biblica.com, 02890 735875



What Next...?

1. Reflect on your experience:

Already feedback from churches across the country (& beyond) has highlighted a number of trends and similarities but we are also aware that aspects of *your* circumstances and *your* experience will be unique to you. This is why taking time to reflect on your experience is so key.

To make it as easy as possible for you, we have developed a **new online support tool**. It's a very short and straight forward questionnaire.

All you need to do is give your members the link below. Send it to them by email and post it on your Facebook page/ website etc encouraging them to spend just a couple of minutes filling it in. When you've done that let us know and we'll contact you as soon as we start getting responses.

www.surveymonkey.com/s/CBEfeedback

*A separate questionnaire is also available for the church leader at www.surveymonkey.com/s/CBEleaders

2. Build on your experience:

Having reflected on your experience you will be in a much better place to know what is best for *your* church/group in terms of moving forward.

Here are just a few ways you could build on Community Bible Experience - NT:

(Each idea can stand alone or be run simultaneously with one or more of the others depending on circumstances)

- Going through the full 8 week New Testament reading plan again
- Digging deeper - possibly going through Luke-Acts in 4 weeks or Paul's letters in 8 weeks (New reading plans coming soon!)
- Starting on the Old Testament - Covenant History is the first of three OT volumes
- Using CBE as an outreach tool – the simple formatting of the text and book club style provides a non-threatening way for people who have never read God's word to engage with His story and discuss it with others.



3. Share your experience:

Give your church/group the opportunity to help fund Community Bible Experience for others around the world by showing a short video that invites participants to "join the movement". (VIDEO TO FOLLOW SHORTLY)

If you wish to discuss any of this in greater detail or how Biblica might further serve your church/group - now or in the future - please get in touch.