

May 2020 Latvia, Guttering Appeal, UK, Iran, Canada, Call for Ideas

We strongly recommend you download the "*Bible Companion*" app, from where you can access *Carelinks* messages, daily Bible readings, *Bible Basics*, commentary on every verse of the Bible and audio exhortations on every chapter of the Bible.

For Android / Google Play at

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.carelinks.bc>

and on the App Store for Apple / iOS at

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/bible-companion/id1475914490>

You can see the list of exhortations at

<http://christadelphia.net/audio.htm>

We are continuing our online breaking of bread on Facebook on Sundays at 10:00 a.m. GMT, on our Carelinks Ministries Facebook page. And there is an Australian online breaking of bread on Tuesday evenings Australian time using PalTalk.

A CALL FOR IDEAS

Fellowship App: A Call for Ideas

Background

We are soon (God willing) heading for 100,000 active users of the English Bible app, in almost every nation on earth. And we're not even a year from when it was released. That number is likely to increase. And of the tens of thousands of users in other languages, probably a fair number know some English. People are learning the truth, and baptizing themselves. But they need connection with a wider community. Many of them are geographically and otherwise isolated from ecclesias. Or they are not comfortable attending live meetings for one reason or another, or perhaps quarantine and isolation prevents them. But they are legitimate believers. We need an app to bind them together, to enable a real "virtual church". The recent experience of the global lockdown means that even in established ecclesial areas, many are in the same position- longing for some kind of virtual fellowship. And there are so many isolated believers who share our faith, but are in odd situations, or in ones and twos here and there, worldwide. At any one time, it seems there are around 1000 people using the Bible Companion app- and the number is increasing. The need and opportunity is to give them a chance to fellowship together in real time.

The Need

What's needed is some kind of app which enables meaningful virtual fellowship between us all, worldwide. I have seen no app which really enables this. Go through the apps which there are on the Stores, searching for "virtual church" or "church online", and you don't find anything which really fully does the job. Most existing apps just showcase a pastor giving his talks twice / week, or some kind of church. They offer access to previous talks, videos and recordings. But you can get all that from a website.

There's no dimension of the app user interacting in real time with others who are online "in" the virtual church at the same time. It's quite likely that if we were to "add" this app to the existing Bible Companion apps, as well as having a new app for it, that we might have say 1000 people online "in" the virtual church at any one time.

But how do they connect with each other on the app? The potential is huge.

But what would such an app look like? How would it work? You, as a user, need to have the sense of 'entering' a church, and being able to connect with the others who are "in" the church

at the same time as you. The numbers of users we have would suggest that many people are online using the app at the same time.

Someone somewhere is booting up the app every few seconds, around the clock. How can we get them to connect with each other? Does each user have an avatar and an account?

Can people just walk in, as it were, and listen, without having to go through the hoops of registering? How can users have a chance to see who else is online and get into conversation with them?

What visually should the app user experience? A sensation of entering a building, sitting down?

Your Vision

The need is clear. But as yet, we don't have a full vision to take to the app developers and ask them to "Make this". We really need your prayerful thought and input. The tendency might be to just come up with a list of problems to watch out for. We're aware of some of them [unwanted visitors dominating discussion, spreading wrong teaching etc.]. But we want to move ahead positively. What's your vision? What would you like to see on an app like this? For example, a prayer section... if on the existing app there are 1,000 people using it at any time, well, how powerful would it be if they all have the chance to pray for issues that arise...

Please let me know at freebibles2000@gmail.com

This is a great potential, a great door is being opened... if you can have 1000 people online at a time... listening to true teaching and learning and fellowshiping with each other... wow. This is a paradigm breaker and a total game changer. We would be at the very cutting edge of advancing Christian fellowship in the digital age, and of course, this would be a total gamechanger for our community. But HOW to do it, and what it'd look like... I am unsure. We see the need, we see the potential, but currently, not the vision in concrete terms. And when you go to app developers, they always ask "So what do you want, exactly? Are there existing apps you'd like us to copy?".

And in concrete terms at this moment we can't answer those questions, that's why I'd like to invite thoughts from folks, especially younger ones, as to what they'd like.

Please join me in praying that the vision gets clearer.

I am sceptical of the value of forum like discussion. It tends to be dominated by ill informed people who have the time to flood the forum with their rather idiosyncratic views, and they require a huge amount of human moderation. And little of real spiritual value comes out of it. That is not a path we intend going. Problem is there is nothing similar on this large scale currently in the market. No template to follow. We have to be ground breakers in this.

Many apps and websites are geared towards a church holding a Sunday service and mid-week Bible study, with the speaker broadcasting live. That is of course good, but the problem is that our users are world-wide. People are on different time zones. People often can't block off a specific amount of time online. We have a critical mass of people using the existing app at any one time- maybe up to 1,000. This is a significant number. Instead of one big meeting on Sundays at 11 a.m. GMT, which would be the middle of the night in California and late evening in Australia, we really need a rolling 24/7 opportunity to break bread, knowing that the chances are that a significant number of people will be up for it, at whatever time. There will always be people "in" the virtual church, because we have already a critical mass of people using the existing app. How can we capitalize on that?

So, pray about it, think about it, download or look at existing apps to get ideas... *and remember that we are looking to enable real time fellowship and contact between users, not simply*

showing people text, videos or audios.

Yours for His sake

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LATVIA

One thing we noticed with the feeding program this week is that people are actually quite hungry. There was a lot more agitation in the lines, worried our food might not be enough for them, people pushing in, giving all kinds of reasons to jump the line. It's mythical to imagine that hungry, suffering people are going to just stand quietly in line with no elevated level of emotion.

Video at <https://youtu.be/pATczpKed0U>



GUTTERING APPEAL

The *Bible Center / Soup Kitchen* in **Riga** is a beacon of light for so many, both spiritually and in terms of food and clothing. The guttering needs to be re-done, as the water is now pouring under the facade material and will soon wreck it unless we fix those gutters. We've been to the builders yards and worked out the cost at around 1000 Euros. We are open to your donations towards this.



IRAN

The Farsi "*Bible Companion*" app continues to be downloaded throughout Iran and Afghanistan, as well as by Iranians worldwide. This is an incredible entrance of the true Gospel into areas which were previously off limits to our preaching. We're approaching 20,000 downloads of the Farsi app. It's such a pleasure to receive messages from people who want to become Christian, who have been attracted to our Lord Jesus and now want to know more detail. Often their first approach comes through as a message like this one:



It's wonderful to have the privilege of explaining the true Gospel to someone who has no pre-existing bias when it comes to what the Bible says. Many of these people were only nominal Muslims anyway. They are of course running significant risks in their surrounding societies. But He is the one worth sacrificing all for.

This week we were able to do the online baptism of SAJID. After extensive discussion and study, he went out to a small swimming pool in a country house, a beautiful spot under palm trees, balanced his phone on the side of the pool so we could see his baptism fully, and immersed himself into Jesus after we'd chatted and prayed. Do pray for him. He has a hard road before him.

UK

The seeds sown amongst the Iranian community during the days of our house church in Croydon continue to bear fruit. It was a joy to assist brother Samedi in baptizing a friend of his, AFSAL, in a bath tub of a flat where he's living now. You can see the video [poor quality]

at <https://youtu.be/299pKpXD71I>

and here are some photos. We were present by video link.



And then also in London, it was a pleasure to help SANDRA baptize herself in her bath tub. She must be the truest convert to the Lord Jesus. An ordinary secular woman concerned about the state of the world, who turned to God and bought a Bible from a bookshop. Then got our app, and a hard copy of the *NEV Bible*. She truly has come to the Lord, in spirit and truth. Living in Battersea, around the corner from the street where Marcus grew up.

One wonders at God's greater plan, working in so many lives in similar geographical areas but at different times. That's why it seems "a small world" from our viewpoint.

CANADA

The Gospel must go into all the world before the end comes, and the app advertising campaigns are achieving this. Do consider funding them to go yet further. Here's the result of a recent such campaign in Canada, showing 51 downloads of the app in Nunavut Province. This is the frozen north of Canada, next to Greenland. Folks living or working up there may have little to do in their free time apart from playing with their phones. And now, people there are using the Bible Companion app. Truly, "to the ends of the earth".



PRAYER POINTS:

- For those recently baptized
- For all those in Iran and Afghanistan now learning the Gospel in such difficult circumstances
- For our work with the soup kitchen and all the associated issues
- For wisdom and vision for making the next app

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks