

## November 2019 Ukraine, Preaching Idea, Australia

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>

Helps for the *Bible Companion* readings this week:

**Ezra** <http://n-e-v.info/NEVEzra.pdf>

**Hosea** <http://n-e-v.info/HoseaNEVCommentary.pdf>

**Acts** <http://n-e-v.info/NEVActsCommentary.pdf>

### KIEV BIBLE SCHOOL

For over 25 years we have been preaching and baptizing former atheists and others in Ukraine, once a core part of the **USSR**. It is an amazing testimony to the power of the Gospel to see so many of these dear brothers and sisters holding in faith over the years, despite the very difficult situation in Ukraine at the moment- the economy has collapsed, and pensioners are getting the equivalent of only 3 US\$ / day. And they must meet heating and medical bills. The situation is even worse in occupied Eastern Ukraine, where Ukraine isn't paying pensions to those without the accepted documents even if they lived there all their lives. These *Bible Schools* are a vital opportunity for them to come together in fellowship, although we have to pay for their accommodation and fares. But the fellowship enabled is really beyond price. This year we had brother David Corbin and sister Deirdre from Brooklyn, New York (**USA**) and brother Bill Farrar from **Canada**. David urged the audience to study the scriptures and feed themselves, which is so relevant for them in their isolation; whilst Bill gave a powerful and carefully prepared series of talks on the logic for believing in Divine creation rather than atheistic evolution. These talks were so well received, with very searching comments afterwards- because most had been raised in the Communist years of scientific atheism and Darwinism. There was rapt attention to the talks, and it was common to see brethren and sisters with open Bibles discussing things with each other. All the more wonderful, because many of them had come from at best agnosticism to now be fluent in their faith and knowledge of the Bible:



One of those earnest Bible readers [despite failing eyesight] was INNA, who elected to be baptized in the lake, despite very cold temperatures and recent snow [she is to the right of brother Bill]:



Here you can see sister Oksana, her husband and 5 year old son listening to Bill's talk. Oksana has stage 3 cancer and is not coping well with the chemo. Please please do pray for her. She set a wonderful example of full involvement with everything and encouraging others. You will see

her and her husband and child in some of the photos.



We walked together to the lake to baptize sister Inna, but the bank was extremely muddy after the snow melt, and the lake bed had broken glass vodka bottles. We bought some plastic sandals to preserve our feet, and then with a combination of sticks and another sister on the shore holding on to Inna, we managed to achieve a full immersion:



You can see a video of the baptism at <https://youtu.be/-shCrDXA-ZY>

We were also delighted to baptize PAVEL and SASHA in a bath tub of a neighbouring sanatorium belonging to the Ministry of Defence. Pavel's brother Petr was baptized by us in this same spot a few years ago and has now emigrated with his family to the USA.

In the evenings, the brothers and sisters gather in each others' tiny bedrooms to fellowship over tea and biscuits. Those evenings are just pure spiritual fellowship as it should be; not talking about the state of the nation and the weather, but directly about spiritual things and our experiences of the Lord's work in our lives:



After the breaking of bread, we concluded with a "concert", where everybody sung something, acted in a play or read a poem. Here you can see sister Deirdre from NYC, USA joining in with other very talented sisters and brothers:



Brother David Corbin wrapped up the school with yet another great talk, his evident enthusiasm for God's word of itself getting right through any language barrier even without translation.



So many of our brothers and sisters now have smartphones, and to produce the Bible Companion app in Russian would seem an invaluable thing to do for them as most are in isolation. We can only thank God for the way His word has not returned void over the years here, but has indeed produced a community of true converts to Christ now rejoicing in His grace and the sure Hope of the Kingdom. Thank you for all your support which has enabled this.

### **PREACHING IDEA / BIBLE COMPANION APP**

We all surely want to preach, to get folks interested in the wonderful truths God has revealed to

us. We'd all like local people near us who could share the same ideas. Maybe we're in relative isolation and would love this; or perhaps we belong to one of the very many ageing, declining ecclesias in our community. And we dearly wish there could be more interest shown. But standard methods have failed- people don't go out to church these days, nor to regular meetings of any sort. But although people aren't very religious these days, there is a great interest in spiritual things. People are asking the right questions, even if searching for answers in the wrong places. So how do we connect with those people?

Invitations to meetings evidently don't get much response. Doing good works in the community also generally fails to drive many people into church halls or to read their Bibles. Make a nice website- and you get requests for your literature offers from poor folks on another continent. When what you're looking for is local interest. There may be exceptions, but we need a new paradigm. What people are doing is looking at their phones for hours every day. And listening to audio on their earphones. If you can get our material onto their phones, and get them using it- that's a huge thing. People are shy when it comes to spiritual matters. A woman can view and listen to this material without her atheist husband knowing.

And so we've developed the Bible Companion app.

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

and for iOS / Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/bible-companion/id1475914490>

It has the text of the Bible with commentary on every verse, the text of the Bible read, an audio commentary on every chapter, and the Bible read for youth with explanations, also every chapter.

Plus *Bible Basics* and the opportunity to answer the questions online and privately correspond with us. Around 1000 people / day download this app- from Greenland to Antarctica, from spiritually curious CEOs to factory workers. Most free apps are downloaded and then deleted- after 24 hours, the retention rate is only about 20% for free apps, according to stats from Google and Apple. People download free apps to see what they're like, and delete them.

But our retention rate is around 80%. And people are using it, watching the videos, listening to the audio, and every hour or so somebody sends in answers to *Bible Basics* lessons from it.

But to return to the critical question- how can I get people in my immediate local area doing this? After all, I don't live in Greenland or Nigeria or Micronesia. I want people in my street or in my town to be doing this. You can advertise on Google Ads within a minimum radius of about 1 mile from any point on the planet. That means that when people in that radius do a Google search for various search terms, such as "What happens when we die?", "Is there life after death?", "What is hell?", then they will see an advert in the sidebar offering our free app.

And people are taking this up and downloading it. And apparently, they like it. Because we have such a great retention rate. You of course can't see who they are- until hopefully at some point, after using the app for an extended period, they take up our offer of contact with local folks who believe according to what's taught in *Bible Basics*.

There's no guarantee you will get people doing this- but at least you can know that in your immediate area, there are people seriously looking into our message. And by God's grace, they may want to respond further. We offer a free hard copy of *Bible Basics* and the *NEV Bible* and urge them to be in personal contact. And at some point, users will hopefully do this. After having studied our material at their own pace, in absolute privacy and with no personal pressure.

How much does it cost? That's hard to answer because Google Ads operate a bidding system which varies according to your location and the search terms you choose. They charge per download, and you can fix the maximum you are willing to pay per download and the maximum total cost per day. You can get downloads in places like Iraq or Ghana for say one or two pennies / download.

But in the West, prices rise sharply. You may begin bidding at say \$1 / download, and then, once the downloads start happening, reduce your bid to say 50 cents / download. You can open your own Google Ads account and do it yourself, run your own credit card etc. We're happy to advise further on the "how to". But there are other options:

**1)** Just donate towards advertising so others can do this- it'd be great to raise say \$40 / day so we can advertise the app more extensively worldwide

**2)** We have Google Ads accounts. You tell us how much you want to spend and what location [s] you want to try, and we can run our card, bill you afterwards, and let you know the results. We'll let you know any direct response we get from your area, e.g. if someone then requests a hard copy Bible or *Bible Basics*.

The metrics of 'success' in all this are of course very different to traditional forms of preaching. We used to run special campaigns where we budgeted so much for hall rental, for a press advert, for fliers, for the literature on display at the hall, for the tea and coffee. And the metrics were visible- how many people attended, how many literature requests were there in the mail, did anyone get baptized. But we're living in a different world, and the metrics are different and not so visible. The question now is, how many people are using the app as a result of your flutter of \$100 or \$1000, are they making further contact over the next months after using the app... and that is all far less visible than in the old days of trying to fill lecture halls.

What typically happens with our internet work is that someone may come forward and make contact after months or years of reading, listening or watching our material- and have acquired a very good knowledge of the Gospel.

And even if they don't come forward to make contact, they may well have grasped much of the Truth and in their own way come to Christ- even if it is not seen in terms of attendance at our meetings. And this of course raises the far deeper questions of what are our real motivations in evangelism- to bring men and women to Christ, or solely to get people into our halls...

We've put these suggestions together in a video presentation at <https://youtu.be/UTfvHq0RLsQ>

We don't want this to become 'preaching for the lazy'. Because initially, all you may do is flutter say \$100 on the idea and then be pleased to think that now there are say 150 people using the app in your town. We believe that what God ideally intends is personal, face to face witness to folks we know. That cannot be replaced. And yet we live in this virtual world of screens and online existence. And we need to go out into that too.

Please pray for these developments, consider donating so we can advertise more, and have a think about whether this is something you'd like to try in your immediate area. You can contact us at [freebibles2000@gmail.com](mailto:freebibles2000@gmail.com)

## **AUSTRALIA**

There's been good response from chaplains to brother John Thatcher's offer of calendars to prisons in Australia.

From near **Port Macquarie NSW:**

Hi John, Thank you for sending through the calendar. It really is impressive. We would love to get some more if possible. Inmates will be getting a calendar from the Salvation Army for 2020 but with the increase of numbers at our centre I don't think that we will have enough. Other inmates throughout the year ask for calendars so it would be great to have some extras. Staff also appreciated using them. Do you think you would be able to send up 200, otherwise what would be the max that you could provide? Thanks

**From Broken Hill, NSW:**

G'day John, Thank you for your recent letter and sample calendar (which is great!). I have no

doubt that some of the Broken Hill inmates would appreciate their own calendar of this quality very much. Could you let me have a supply of ten? Many thanks

**PRAYER POINTS**

- For those newly baptized
- For the continued spread of the *Bible Companion* app
- For the response of prisoners worldwide receiving the 2020 *Creation Calendar*
- For those in poorer countries struggling with cancer and other illnesses

**With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks**