

# NoBible Sunday

Sermon ideas

Wycliffe  
Bible  
Translators



An overview of running a  
NoBibleSunday



## Introduction

Begin with Bible reading (Romans 10:9–15), *not* in English – use a language from the resource sheet or ask someone from your congregation who speaks another language.

***‘For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.’ (Romans 10:10)***

### Option 1

## Using Latin

### Example: Romans 10:9–15

<sup>9</sup> Quia si confitearis in ore tuo Dominum Jesum, et in corde tuo credideris quod Deus illum suscitavit a mortuis, salvus eris. <sup>10</sup> Corde enim creditur ad justitiam: ore autem confessio fit ad salutem. <sup>11</sup> Dicit enim Scriptura: Omnis qui credit in illum, non confundetur. <sup>12</sup> Non enim est distinctio Judaei et Graeci: nam idem Dominus omnium,

dives in omnes qui invocant illum. <sup>13</sup> Omnis enim quicumque invocaverit nomen Domini, salvus erit. <sup>14</sup> Quomodo ergo invocabunt, in quem non crediderunt? aut quomodo credent ei, quem non audierunt? quomodo autem audient sine praedicante? <sup>15</sup> quomodo vero praedicabunt nisi mittantur? sicut scriptum est: Quam speciosi pedes evangelizantium pacem, evangelizantium bona!

Isn't it remarkable that just 650 years ago what you've just heard was the *only* way the people in this country would hear the Bible? Not only was it in Latin, a language that only 10–20% of the population even understood, but also it was an inaccurate translation from the outset. This was only made worse over centuries by copying it out by hand, because of course this was before the printing press was invented.

We're in a uniquely privileged position as speakers of English, since we have over 450 different translations of the Bible to choose from.

But have a look at this short video from Wycliffe Bible Translators, and I think you'll be shocked – as I was – about what the situation is like for many others.



### Play Bible Banquet video

(If no video, show key statistics on slides or read them out.)

1 in 5 people cannot access the whole Bible in their own language; 160 million don't have a single verse.

I find the idea of Bible Poverty challenging, and that's what today's about.

Traditionally in the church calendar, the last Sunday in October is known as Bible Sunday. But this year we're joining many other churches to have a **NoBibleSunday**. This is a time when we consider people across the world who don't have access to a Bible in their own language.

## Option 2

## Modern language

### Example: Romans 10:9–15

<sup>9</sup> Si tu reconnais publiquement de ta bouche que Jésus est le Seigneur et si tu crois dans ton cœur que Dieu l'a ressuscité, tu seras sauvé. <sup>10</sup> En effet, c'est avec le cœur que l'on croit et parvient à la justice, et c'est avec la bouche que l'on affirme une conviction et parvient au salut, comme le dit l'Écriture: <sup>11</sup> Celui qui croit en lui ne sera pas couvert de honte.

<sup>12</sup> Ainsi, il n'y a aucune différence entre le Juif et le non-Juif, puisqu'ils ont tous le même Seigneur, qui se

montre généreux pour tous ceux qui font appel à lui.

<sup>13</sup> En effet, toute personne qui fera appel au nom du Seigneur sera sauvée. <sup>14</sup> Mais comment donc feront-ils appel à celui en qui ils n'ont pas cru? Et comment croiront-ils en celui dont ils n'ont pas entendu parler? Et comment entendront-ils parler de lui, si personne ne l'annonce? <sup>15</sup> Et comment l'annoncera-t-on, si personne n'est envoyé? Comme il est écrit: Qu'ils sont beaux les pieds [de ceux qui annoncent la paix,] de ceux qui annoncent de bonnes nouvelles!

Does anyone want to guess what language this is?

And how about the passage? It's one many of you will be familiar with. Any guesses about which one it is?

Before I tell you if you're right or not, tell me, how did that feel, to hear a Bible reading in a language other than English?

It's a strange thought isn't it; we really do take it for granted. I don't know if you're like me, but I've got a shelf at home with all my different translations on it. This could be interesting: I wonder, who thinks they've got more than two translations... more than five... more than 10?

Anyone got over 400? That's a big shelf!

I ask because there are actually over 450 translations of the Bible in English. I was very challenged by a video created by Wycliffe Bible Translators, with whom

we've joined in this event. The video puts that 'wealth' of translations into context. Let's watch the video.



### Play Bible Banquet video

(If no video, show key statistics on slides or read them out.)

1 in 5 people cannot access the whole Bible in their own language; 160 million don't have a single verse.

I find the idea of Bible Poverty very challenging, and that's what today's about.

As some of you will know, today we're holding **NoBibleSunday** – when we consider those who don't have the wealth of Scriptures that we're blessed with in English.

So, did any of you guess what the passage was?

## Understanding the Bible and the promise of salvation

*Let's return to that Bible reading again and, this time, hear it in English.*

### *Read Romans 10:9–15 in English*

Isn't it a lot better, and doesn't it have more impact when you hear it in your own language? Can you imagine what it must be like the first time you hear the Bible in your own language. Even though many people have enough grasp of another language to understand some of it, nothing compares to hearing it in your heart language, as it is sometimes called.

And what vital words they are – at the beginning of the passage we have the simplicity of the gospel laid out in just two statements.

***That if you declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that Jesus was raised from the dead, you will be saved.***

What an incredible promise!

Sometimes we feel like it's such a complicated process to bring someone to faith, but here it's broken down into just two components.

***First, believing that Jesus was raised from the dead.*** This claim was central to his ministry and message.

***So the Jews answered and said to him, 'What sign do you show to us, since you do these things?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in***

***three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body.***

***When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken. (John 2:18–22)***

This was the most powerful claim of who he was, God himself. For only God could raise himself from the dead.

So, when Romans 10 talks about believing that God raised him from the dead, it's not just believing that it happened, it is believing everything Jesus said about himself,



and who he was – Immanuel, God with us. In Paul's words, 'He is Lord'.

But it isn't enough to just believe. We can believe all kinds of things, but they may not make a difference to our lives. We can believe that exercise will make us fitter, but it won't make a difference if we just believe it from our sofas.

And so it is with what we believe about Jesus. We can believe he is who he says he is. We can believe that he died for our sins, and that he was raised back to life. **But unless we decide to put him in charge, to declare to ourselves and others that he is Lord – he is in charge, he is number one in our lives – then all that he's done won't impact us or transform our lives.**

After this 'formula' for salvation, Paul breaks down a delivery process for that message.

I'm sure most of us have ordered parcels online. Even though I have an estimated delivery date I just can't resist those links that tell you more details about where your awaited parcel is. 'Oh look, it's awaiting collection, still! Or, currently at the sorting office, sometimes in the most obscure locations.

And then the final messages, 'Your parcel is seven steps from being delivered', which is either redundant because I'm not there to receive it, or redundant because I am.

Nonetheless, I do love to see the process it's gone through.

Likewise Paul sets out the delivery pathway for the gospel. This is perhaps easiest to understand if we reverse the process:

**Send** – Christ sends heralds of the gospel  
**Preach** – the heralds preach

**Hear** – the people hear

**Believe** – the hearers believe

**Call** – the believers call

Each is essential to the next. If no-one is sent, they can't preach. If no-one preaches, people can't hear. If they don't hear, how can they believe, and if they don't believe, why would they call on his name or declare he is Lord?

Just like that delivery tracking, if one part of the process breaks down, you won't receive your parcel.

This is why people need the Bible in their own language. How can the message of Jesus be preached if people don't have the



words to do it? What will they hear if it's in a language they barely know, and what are the chances of them believing the message if they do?

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. This is what organisations like Wycliffe Bible Translators are here to do – bring that good news into a language which people groups around the world, with few or no Christians, need.

I hope that after the notice last week some of you have been following the daily emails that have been building up to today, and if you have then you'll appreciate just how much work is involved in making a single translation of the Bible.

***As I said, we're partnering with Wycliffe Bible Translators today. They are named after John Wycliffe, who is famous for translating the Bible into English for the very first time, at the end of the 14th century.***

At that time the only Bible translation available was the Vulgate, an error-prone translation in Latin – a language the majority of the population didn't understand.

It was not very accessible. Not only would it have cost a labourer 13 years' wages to buy (it took 10 months just to write out a copy of the Bible), it was declared heresy to have a Bible in English, and promptly banned.

It was John Wycliffe who decided to change that. He believed that 'the sacred Scriptures are the property of the people' and, despite persecution and arduous handwritten work, he and his team produced the very first Bible in the English language.

However, it was the start of a spiritual revolution across Europe. William Tyndale produced the first printed New Testament (which cost just a week's wages) about 150 years later. The people having access to Scriptures in their own language was a key part of the Reformation, which brought the full message of the gospel within the reach of so many for the first time. Similarly today, technology is making a huge impact on the way translations can be accessed by people who are part of communities with very few, or no, Christians.

So as you can see, there is far more to this work than just the translation.

Finding new and innovative ways to share the message of the Bible, as well as enabling those new readers to engage with it, are a vital part of Wycliffe's work today.





## To finish

## Verse 17

***Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.***

We are so blessed to have the many versions of Scripture that we do. I hope that as well as enlightening us about the need for translations around the world, we will be spurred on not to take our own riches for granted.

Like the banquet that we referred to at the start, we have a feast sitting in front of us. Yet for many it's something that we just occasionally snack on. Perhaps just once a week, being fed by someone standing at the front of church.

The word of God, we are told in Hebrews 4, is living and active. It is God-breathed and useful for teaching and training us and 'equipping us for every good work' Paul tells Timothy (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

But if this banquet just remains on the table, and we never dig in, it won't do us any good. So I encourage you, church, as we think about those people who have little or no Scripture, let it spur us on to make the most of the riches we are so blessed to have.



### Lectionary Gospel passage

#### Romans 15:4-6

*<sup>4</sup> For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.*

*<sup>5</sup> May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, <sup>6</sup> so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

#### Luke 4:16-21

*<sup>16</sup> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

*<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."*

*<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup> He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*



***Finally, 1 in 5 people don't have the whole Bible. How can they have faith, if they have nothing to hear? How can they fully understand God's message if they don't have the entire Bible?***

We are taking a collection today to support the work of Wycliffe Bible Translators. I encourage you to have a look at their short devotionals: just seven days of interesting information and videos that you can quickly read, with some items to pray for.

You will find more information on your seats.

