

At 100M Downloads, YouVersion Bible App Changing How People Read the Word

Wednesday marks the fifth anniversary of the launch of Apple's iTunes store. One of the first and most popular free apps, the Bible App by YouVersion, is likewise making history of its own.

On Sunday, YouVersion reached the colossal milestone of 100 million downloads, joining major brands like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter that have all achieved the same landmark. For perspective, the Bible App was among the first 200 apps on iTunes; today there are over 900,000. For three consecutive years, Apple has ranked it among the top 100 free apps. Today it's available for virtually every mobile device.

"This is not a story about an app as much as one about a global mission to share the Bible—from publishers and Bible societies offering 500-plus versions of the Bible for free in 300-plus languages to the assistance of hundreds of committed volunteers that enable our 20+ staff members to provide world-class customer service for an app at no charge," says pastor Bobby Gruenewald of in Oklahoma.

Gruenewald, who came up with the idea of using technology to make the Bible more accessible on smartphones and tablets, initially hoped for 80,000 downloads in the first six months—a number surpassed during the first weekend the Bible App was released.

A first-ever survey of the world's largest digital Bible-reading community found that the Bible App is not only changing the frequency of Bible usage but the experience as well:

- Over 77 percent of respondents read the Bible more frequently because they have it on their mobile device that accompanies them virtually everywhere.
- While the app was most-used at home (81 percent) and church (60 percent), it was also used “on the go” (55 percent). Nearly a third used the Bible App at work.
- Over 67 percent switch between Bible versions.

“Never before could you compare multiple translations of the Bible in an instant. In the past, it would have taken an entire room of Bibles and weeks if not months to do so,” says Gruenewald. “Now when you don’t understand a particular phrasing, it’s easy to check out another translation for clarity.”

Further tracking research indicated:

- People love to share Bible verses. In 2012 alone, there were more than 31 million shares of Bible verses via Twitter, Facebook, email and text message.
- The three most-shared verses were Isaiah 53:5, Hebrews 4:15 and Matthew 7:7.

“Building on this research, we’re currently launching a new social feature of the Bible App that will advance the Bible-reading experience in the context of trusted relationships and community,” Gruenewald says.

The new feature allows readers to form a group of close friends and interact with them about the Bible—learn from what their friends are learning, discover new insights and explore what passages mean in conversation with people they are close to.

A collection of new initiatives announced in celebration of the 100-million milestone will extend the demographic reach of the Bible App:

- Adding the New American Bible Revised Edition, one of

the most popular Catholic versions of the Bible and approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. In recent years, the Vatican has encouraged greater church efforts to teach Catholics about the Bible, equipping them to read it and pray with it more. Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Philadelphia and Cardinal Francis George of Chicago joined others in the Catholic community applauding the move.

- Plans are in development for a new Bible app for children ages 4 to 10 that includes an interactive experience full of fun games and stories to help educate and empower them with God's love.
- A new one-year devotional from the Rev. Billy Graham, which joins hundreds of other reading plans already available for tackling everything from relationship woes to life. There are even plans for reading the entire Bible—another goal many people have achieved thanks to the accessibility of the app.

Gruenewald sees no end in sight when it comes to growth of the Bible App, and the celebratory theme for the historic milestone expresses his sentiments best: "It starts with 100 million."

[Click here](#) to see a special collection of infographics that has been created to examine the engagement behind the 100-million milestone.