



“Of all of our inventions for mass communication, pictures still speak the most universally understood language.” - Walt Disney

The most popular global reading format is comics. In almost every area of the world sequential art is an effective inroad into Scripture engagement and bridge to Scripture explanation and reading. Super Bible.TV hosts the most complete graphic adaptation of the Bible ever done in numerous languages. With over 2,000 pages and 10,000 panels this graphic translation of Scripture covers all 66 books of the Bible and is a key Scripture bridge for Bible-less peoples, non-believers and the functionally illiterate.

For the Comic Bible Society and their Super Bible delivery system the low-tech solution to explaining and introducing the unengaged to Scripture was to pair top comic artists from Marvel and DC with experienced Biblical writers to produce an expansive 2,000 plus page and 10,000 panel explanation of all 66 books of the Bible. The high-tech solution has been the concurrent building of shareable flipbook readers on www.SuperBible.TV where readers can read online or offline and share via social media or e-mail.



Job

The decline in Bible reading among millennials and teens has been documented by a recent Barna Report funded by the American Bible Society, demonstrating that 32% of Millennials never read the Bible but the percentage is even more drastic among teens at 48%. Meanwhile, in the greater public sphere comics readership has grown 42% the last five years. The Comic Bible Society sees the continuing growth in comics readership but the plummeting Bible engagement as a dynamic intersection to enter with Holy Writ.

Two Scriptural handles the Comic Bible Society maintains in its quest to graphically explain the Bible in every language are:

- “And all people will see God’s salvation.” (Luke 3:36)
- “For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand.” (2 Corinthians 1:13)

Comic Bible Society President Art Ayriss shares the top ten Scripture engagement keys his non-profit organization uses to engage various languages in Scripture:

1. CULTURAL ACCEPTANCE - The mediums of comics and film are near universal. When seeking to help a culture understand a message, it is advisable to present it in forms that are more familiar to them. The ubiquity of Marvel and DC globally paved the way for this Bible medium.

2. READER ENGAGEMENT - Comics impart meaning through the reader’s active engagement with written language and juxtaposed sequential images. Readers must actively make meaning from the interplay of text and images, as well as by filling in the gaps between panels. Super Bible provides Scripture at the bottom of each of page for reference to the text version for further reader engagement.

3. EFFICIENCY OF FORMAT - The comic format conveys large amounts of information in a short time. In a relatively brief span of time, a graphic Bible reader could discover the major themes and stories of the Bible. Studies show that we can also process visual images multiple times faster than text.

4. EDUCATIONAL - Graphic media is especially effective for teaching content in the subject areas (math, science, social studies, etc.). Slow, reluctant readers, autistic and those with sensory issues gravitate to graphic materials. Graphic novels and comics add an enjoyment factor to education. Libraries have become big buyers of graphic novels as they seek to re-engage next generation readers. Schools and colleges are growing utilizers of graphic novels and even West Point military academy has a required graphic novel for reading. There is some debate on exact percentages but there is little disagreement on a higher percentage of retainage correlated with visual images over merely reading text.

Note - The *9/11 Report* was not widely read or understood popularly until it came out in graphic novel form.

5. LITERACY - Many developing countries contain significant populations of illiterate and semi-literate individuals so graphic explanations of Scripture are a holy must. In many areas Scripture distribution is widespread but blunted by limited functional literacy.

6. EFFECTIVENESS - Neurological experiments have shown that we process text and images in different areas of the brain: known as the Dual-Coding Theory of Cognition. These experiments also indicate that pairing an image with text leads to increased memory retention for both. Processing text and images together leads to better recall and transfer of learning. We remember visuals better because they are processed in our long-term memory. With both graphic and visual media, readers not only learn the material faster, they learn it better.



7. EVANGELISM - Intricate and well-designed comic art can be a more compelling and fascinating pick-up for an unchurched or non-religious person to pick up and peruse. The Bible, full of text and difficult words, sayings and names can be intimidating to a novice seeker of religion. Key products such as the Super Bible can be a gateway to Biblical understanding. Additionally, a well-known and attractive medium may result in more personal and social media sharing.

8. TRANSCULTURAL - Comics are highly transcultural. Every day billions of people worldwide read and understand the visual-story medium that is known as “comics” in the western world. In other countries and cultures they are called manga, manwha, bande dessinée or BD, komika, bilderstreifen

or bildergeschichleter, historietas, quadrinhos or HQ, tabeos, foto novella, funetti, or by some other term. But no matter the name, comics are the most widely read and popular form of literature.

9. SOCIAL MEDIA - Content with visuals gets 94% more total views. Visual content is 40 times more likely to be shared on social media.

10. SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT - The end result is deeper (and wider) Bible engagement. Imagine the difference if organizations supplemented their school or prison Bible distribution of 6-point font, KJV Scripture with Bible comics. Which product would more likely be read, re-read and shared with others? Comic Bible lists the Scripture on each page to further encourage engagement in text versions of the Bible.



With 7,000 languages extant but only 670 having a full textual Bible, Ayris sees graphic explanations as a holy must and a critical bridge to Bible understanding. In response to the need for rapid delivery of Biblical understanding until full literal translations can be completed the Comic Bible Society offers global partners an opportunity to explain and engage readers in the Bible. Realizing the limited budgets of many Bible agencies, the Comic Bible Society offers licensing agreements in any language for the 72 sections of the Bible for only \$25 a section for translation as well as royalty free print and digital distribution.

Several Bible societies and mission agencies have joined forces to translate parts or all of the Super Bible into their indigenous language and have successfully distributed these in public schools and in their target demographic through electronic storage devices, digitally and in print. Ayris illustrates, "Project the difference in Bible engagement (in any country) if Bible colporteurs instead of standing outside schools and prisons with difficult-to-read 6-point font Bibles supplemented their distributions with eye-popping Marvel-quality Scripture engagement tools. We imagine the engagement levels would be significantly higher."

Ayris and his team at the Comic Bible Society see a digital future with mobile phones and electronic devices as some of the most effective outreach and teaching tools available. The Comic Bible Society will be unveiling a digitally shareable flipbook for users to be able to share translated Bible comics via ten top major social media channels as well as e-mail. The end goal is to build the Super Bible App (www.superbible.tv) as a hybrid between the digital text Bibles of You Version and the multi-lingual JESUS Film app on the life of Christ so anyone anywhere could read or watch with pictures the entire Bible.

After a larger rollout of Super Bible languages, the Comic Bible Society plans to follow up with a complement of materials to help develop a larger universe of Bible understanding such as *The Book of God* (how we got the Bible), *Great Conversations* (major worldviews by apologist Dr. Ravi Zacharias), *Eternity* (by Randy Alcorn) and simplified apologetics.

Bible agencies are welcome to contact Ayris and the Comic Bible Society (<https://www.comicbiblesociety.org>) at comicbiblesociety@gmail.com or (352) 728-1414 for more information.

"These are the top requested books at our facility of 1600 inmates."

- *Chaplain Wilson, San Diego Correctional Facility*

