

**An Investigation of How Young Christians in a West  
African City Understand and Relate to the Biblical  
Metanarrative**

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# **Abstract**

## **An Investigation of How Young Christians in a West African City Understand and Relate to the Biblical Metanarrative**

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The aim of this dissertation was to investigate firstly, how young evangelical Christians in a particular West African city understand the biblical metanarrative, including how well they know the storyline and what they think it is about, and secondly, how they relate to it, including how they apply it to their lives and whether they see themselves as participants in or observers of the narrative.

Focus groups were carried out with young people aged 18-30 in five churches and follow up interviews were conducted with their pastors.

The research concludes that firstly, the young people knew the basic framework of the biblical narrative, being particularly familiar with the stories of Genesis, Exodus, the Gospels and Acts, but had large gaps in their knowledge of it, especially the latter part of the Old Testament. Secondly, they identified salvation or reconciliation with God as the main theme of this narrative. Thirdly, their applications of it tended to focus on obedience to God, taking biblical characters as role models for how they should live in their relationship to God and to others. Most did not make missional applications. Finally, they see themselves as participants in the biblical narrative primarily as recipients of God's salvation, promises and blessing. Although some are involved in evangelistic outreach, most do not connect this to their role in the biblical narrative.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a pseudonym.

## Preface

During the nine years I have spent in Africa, I have been inspired by the enthusiasm of young people and awed by the power of God's Word to transform people's hearts and lives when they engage with it in a language they understand well. The country where I live has a young population of which Christians are a small minority. I believe that young people are key to God's mission, and that if young Christians understand the biblical narrative and their role in it, they may catch the vision of bringing the gospel to the many peoples of their country. This dissertation investigates, through focus groups with young Christians and follow up interviews with their pastors, how young evangelical Christians here understand the biblical narrative and the role that God is calling them to play within it.

I wish to thank all the young people who participated in this research. It was a joy and encouragement to me to witness their faith and commitment to understanding the Bible. I am also grateful to their pastors who gave me permission to run the focus groups and willingly shared their feedback on the results.

I could not have carried out this research without the help of my research assistant, Mr. Sagara, who assisted me with translation and the running of the focus groups.

Dr. Timothy Davy has guided and encouraged me throughout the research process. I am very grateful to him and to all the staff of Redcliffe College for the teaching and support I have benefitted from throughout my MA studies.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Many scholars have recognised the importance of story to how we live our lives (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2006, x; Wright 2006, p533). Our culture gives us our worldview or “story of the world” (Hiebert, 2008<sup>2</sup>), and as Bartholomew and Goheen (2006, ix) rightly point out if that story is not the biblical story then the Bible will not shape our lives. Therefore, as I will argue in chapter two, it is of great importance for Christians to understand the biblical narrative and live within it.

This dissertation investigates how young evangelical Christians in a West African city understand and relate to the biblical narrative. I will interact with the relevant literature on biblical hermeneutics and Bible engagement and relate it to my own research. Before that, in this chapter I introduce myself, the context and the research questions, and give an overview of the remainder of the dissertation.

## 1.1 Personal background and motivation

Since 2010 I have worked as a Scripture Engagement Specialist with a Bible translation organisation in Francophone Africa. My experience encouraging Scripture Engagement among children and adults in three different countries has taught me various lessons and caused me to ask questions which have led to the research topic of this dissertation.

Firstly, I am convinced that young people have an amazing potential to catch a vision and run with it. Once the young people I worked with in Cameroon believed they could make God’s Word available to those who would not otherwise hear it, they committed themselves to doing so. I therefore believe that if young Christians in my current context catch the vision of living out their God given role in the biblical narrative, at least some will commit their lives to being part of God’s mission in their country.

Secondly, I have observed that many ordinary Christians have gaps in their knowledge of the biblical narrative and that when people begin to understand this narrative, they are motivated to get to know the Bible better and apply it to their lives.

Thirdly, while working in Congo, where almost 90% of the population claim to be Christians (Joshua Project, 2020), I began to question why there are so many social problems. Does it make no difference when the majority of a community put their faith in Jesus? This question is not unique to Congo and I am not the first to ask it. Dembele (2012, p92) and Mburu (2019) comment on the lack of visible transformation in the lives of Christian communities which Dembele (2012, p91) puts down to lack of understanding of the Bible. As a Scripture Engagement specialist, I wondered how we can better help people to engage with the Bible in a way that not only increases head knowledge but transforms lives. Having studied missional hermeneutics at Redcliffe College, I believe this approach which encourages people to see themselves as participants in the biblical narrative of God’s mission, provides some answers to this question.

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<sup>2</sup> Page numbers are not included in the references for e-books.

This research brings together my interest in youth work with a desire to see people understand and take up their role in the biblical narrative. I hope this research will not only inform my future work, but also encourage church leaders in this city to think about this topic.

## **1.2 The missional context of this research.**

Christians make up less than 3% of the population of the country where I now live, and evangelical Christians less than 1% (Joshua Project, 2020). More than half of the people groups of this country are defined as “unreached” by the Joshua Project, meaning that “...outside assistance [is] necessary to reach the rest of the group with the gospel” (Joshua Project, 2020). Therefore, the remaining evangelistic task is enormous. This task is primarily the responsibility of the national church and assistance by foreign missionaries is limited by instability in the region. Many of the “unreached” peoples live in an area of the country affected by ongoing conflict and the expansion of the Sahara Desert, leading to difficulty farming, food shortages, and poverty (Sikiti da Silva, 2019). If the church in these areas wishes to reach out to their community, there are a wide spectrum of practical needs to address as well as people’s spiritual need to know God and find salvation.

The population is young. 67% of the population is under the age of 25 (Worldometer, 2020) and based on personal observation, this is as true in the church as elsewhere. Therefore, if young Christians do not have a vision for reaching their country with the gospel, then the church of this country is unlikely to make much progress in bringing God’s love and God’s gospel to the rest of the country. If, however, young Christians have a clear understanding of the biblical narrative, they will be motivated to play their part in God’s mission, and some may hear God’s call to cross cultural boundaries and go to the “unreached” peoples of their country. Therefore, how young evangelical Christians understand the biblical narrative and their role in it is of great importance to the future of the church in this country.

## **1.3 The research questions**

This research addresses two main research questions:

1. How do young evangelical Christians in this West African city understand the biblical narrative?
2. How do they relate to the biblical narrative?

The first of these questions has two aspects: firstly, to discover to what extent young Christians know the storyline of the biblical narrative, and secondly, to discover what they think this narrative is about.

The second question also has two aspects: firstly, how do they apply the Bible to their lives? Secondly, do they see themselves as participants in or observers of the biblical narrative?

To investigate these questions, focus groups were conducted following a programme of three sections, firstly constructing a Bible timeline, secondly answering questions about the whole Bible and thirdly, discussing two key Bible passages. I discussed the findings of the focus groups in follow up interviews with the church pastors and incorporated their feedback into my analysis.

## **1.4 The structure of the dissertation**

The remainder of this dissertation is structured as follows:

Before describing the methodology and findings of my field research, chapter two reviews the relevant literature and addresses four questions which form the starting point of the discussion:

1. To what extent can mission be regarded as a hermeneutical key to the Bible?
2. To what extent does it matter whether Christians understand the biblical narrative?
3. What trends have been identified in how Africans engage with and interpret the Bible?
4. What trends have been identified in how young people engage with and interpret the Bible?

Having reviewed the literature in these areas, chapter three then explains my research methodology, including a detailed description of how the focus groups were structured and run.

Chapter four presents the findings of the focus groups which formed the main part of the research. While some analysis is included in this chapter, it primarily presents the findings in a descriptive manner.

My analysis of this data follows in chapter five, which includes the feedback from the church pastors. This chapter answers the research questions, relating the answers to the discussion started in the literature review, and makes recommendations for church youth groups.

The final chapter concludes the discussion, summarising the main findings and argument of this research and giving some final reflections and suggestions for further research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I interact with the relevant literature in the areas of biblical hermeneutics and Bible engagement to answer four questions:

Firstly, to what extent can mission be regarded as a hermeneutical key to the Bible? This is important to my analysis of the focus group data. If missional hermeneutics is one way among many to read the Bible, then it is unimportant whether the young people have a missional understanding of the Bible. If, however, it is “the way” to interpret the Bible, then a non-missional understanding of the Bible is inadequate.

Secondly, to what extent does it matter whether Christians understand the biblical narrative? This is also critical to this research because if it does not matter, then the research topic is of no significance.

Thirdly, what trends have others identified in biblical interpretation and Bible engagement in Africa? And fourthly, what trends have others identified in biblical interpretation and Bible engagement among young people? These questions guided my initial expectations about the young people’s interpretation of the Bible. They also informed the design of the research methodology, described in chapter three.

### 2.1 The Bible as the story of God’s mission?

As Goheen (2016, p3) states, although missiological scholars view mission as “a central category in the Bible that needs to be taken seriously if our interpretation is to be faithful”, few biblical scholars share this opinion. Therefore, before embarking on a research project which assumes mission plays a central role in the Bible and in biblical interpretation, we must first ask whether this assumption is valid. I will briefly summarise four approaches to missional hermeneutics and then discuss whether it is one way or “the way” to read the Bible.

#### 2.1.1 Approaches to missional hermeneutics

The term “Missional hermeneutics” emerged in the 1990s (Davy, 2014, p23), based on the idea that not only is the Bible the basis for mission, but mission is “the basis for the Bible” (Hesselgrave, 1993, p17). This idea was developed by various scholars and Hunsberger (2011) helpfully identifies four main approaches to missional hermeneutics. The first focuses on interpreting Scripture within the framework of the whole biblical narrative as the story of God’s mission. This approach has been well developed by C. Wright (2001; 2004) and Goheen (2011; 2016) among others. It is highly relevant to this research because of the missional understanding it offers of the biblical narrative and our role within that. The second and third approaches put a strong emphasis on the recipients of the biblical text: Guder’s (2007a) approach focuses on how the Bible equips the original recipients of the text and today’s recipients for their participation in God’s mission, while Barram’s (2006) encourages Christian communities to ask missional questions of the Bible which come out of their context and challenge their worldview assumptions, particularly questions about God’s purpose and ours. Both Guder’s and Barram’s approaches are relevant to my second research question about how the young people relate to the biblical narrative. The fourth

approach, first developed by Brownson (1994) and more recently taken up by Redford (2012) and Sarma (2015), takes examples of hermeneutics from within the Bible as a model for missional hermeneutics today.

In summary, missional hermeneutics encourages us to consider what God was doing and what he called his people to be and to do at the time the Bible was written and to understand how that fits into the story of God's mission. It then encourages us to apply this to understand what God is doing in our context today, what he is calling us to be and to do, and how we fit into the story of God's mission.

### **2.1.2 Is missional hermeneutics one way or “the way” to read the Bible?**

Having briefly described the nature of missional hermeneutics, we now consider whether this is one way or “the way” to read the Bible. Following Wright's (2004, p104) view that mission is “what it's all about”, Goheen (2016, px) makes the bold statement that: “Perhaps one day we may even be able to say... that to speak of... ‘missional hermeneutic’ is like saying ‘female woman’ - that's the only kind there is!”. In his view and Van Engen's (1993, p29), the Bible cannot and should not be interpreted without consideration of God's mission.

However, others disagree. Bauckham (2016, p28) and Bartholomew (2016, p80) argue that a missional hermeneutic is one way among many to read the Bible because to limit the theme of the Bible to mission is restrictive, causing us to miss many other important themes that Scripture addresses.

This debate hinges on whether mission is the comprehensive subject of the whole Bible or one theme among many, a question which depends partly on one's definition of mission and partly on the focus of the biblical narrative. We consider first the definition of mission. As Goheen (2016, p4) argues, if “mission” is the church's work to spread the gospel, then it cannot be “a central rubric for interpreting Scripture”. However, if mission is understood as the “*Missio Dei*”, as it has been increasingly since the mid-twentieth century, then it can be used as the lens for interpreting the whole Bible. Goheen (2016, p21) and Wright (2006, p22-23) have broad definitions of mission focussed on the *Missio Dei* which includes everything God is doing to restore creation and humanity from the effects of sin. They therefore see mission as the central theme of the whole Bible. Bauckham (2016, pp28-29) and Bartholomew (2016, pp71-74) on the other hand use narrower definitions of mission, focussing on the church's mission and therefore see a missional hermeneutic as one way among many to read the Bible.

We turn now to the main theme of the biblical narrative. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible tells one story, however, as Gottschlich (2013, p19) points out, different authors have different views on what the main theme is. According to Wright (2004, p103), God's mission is the theme of the whole Bible. Bartholomew (2015), on the other hand, sees Jesus Christ as the main theme. This is more specific than “God's mission” although Christ is central to God's mission. Glasser, Van Engen and Redford (2003) see God's Kingdom as the main theme, which is closely linked to God's Mission. Bruce (1962, p82) sees the Bible as “the story of salvation” and “a record of God's revelation of Himself”, putting the emphasis on God as the main character, while Newbigin (1995, p82) emphasises that the Bible is the one true story of our world, putting more emphasis on the world or us as the subject of the biblical narrative. While these scholars do not disagree with each other, they emphasise different aspects of the narrative.

A good understanding of the biblical narrative needs to recognise all these themes. It needs to understand the Bible as the story of God's mission, at the centre of which is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It needs to recognise the role of the church as the key agent in God's mission today and the goal of God's mission as the salvation of people from all nations to be part of God's kingdom. It especially needs to recognise that the Bible is the true story of our world which explains both the origins and the future of humanity (Newbigin, 1995, p82). Taking a broad definition of mission as "God's mission", I therefore agree with Wright and Goheen, that without a missional aspect to our hermeneutics, our understanding of the Bible is lacking something important. I nevertheless recognise, like Bauckham and Bartholomew, that non-missional forms of hermeneutics are helpful in applying the Bible to specific aspects of life.

## **2.2 Does it matter whether Christians understand the biblical narrative?**

Having considered the main themes of the biblical narrative, we now turn to the question of how much it matters. To what extent does it matter how ordinary Christians understand the biblical narrative, and whether they understand it as their story?

Many biblical scholars have identified the importance of reading the Bible as a unified whole (Bartholomew, 2015). As Bartholomew (2015) points out there are two reasons for this. Firstly, our understanding of the biblical narrative is important to our ability to interpret any individual Bible passage (Bartholomew, 2015).

Secondly, our understanding of the biblical narrative is of vital importance to our interpretation of our world and our own lives. As explained by various scholars, worldviews are based on stories which shape how we understand and live our lives (Hiebert, 2008; N.T. Wright, 1992). If a Christian's worldview is not transformed by the Bible, the gospel is interpreted in terms of their existing worldview, which inevitably results in syncretism (Hiebert, 2008; Bartholomew and Goheen, 2006, p4). To avoid this, the Christian must adopt and live out of the biblical narrative as the true story of the world so that it challenges and replaces whatever story they previously believed was the story of the world (Newbigin, 1995, p82). To come to believe the biblical narrative is therefore to undergo a change in worldview which will influence our vision, goals, beliefs, decisions, and actions for the rest of our lives.

This does not imply adopting one of the many cultures of biblical times. Rather it means, as Mburu (2019) says that a Christian's "entire orientation to life" is based on the biblical narrative and on biblical assumptions about the nature of God, humanity, and the world.

Bediako (2000, p25) puts it this way: "Once this basic, universal relevance of Jesus Christ is granted, it is no longer a question of trying to accommodate the Gospel in our culture; the Gospel becomes our story". This change in worldview or "story", in Bediako's view, is more important than contextualising the gospel. It will in fact lead to contextualisation of the gospel as people live out of the biblical story in their context. Gottschlich's (2013, p27) explanation of this is helpful. She says God's story must be "interwoven" with our story, recognising that people are living in particular contexts and need to see how their life stories fit into the biblical narrative of the world.

In summary, it is vital for Christians to understand the biblical narrative, not only to correctly interpret individual Bible passages, but also for their worldview to be transformed so that they live as participants in the biblical narrative and not another story provided by their

culture. It is important, as Wright (2006, pp533-534) says, so that we see ourselves as participants in God's mission and live accordingly. For young Christians in this West African city, it is important so their own lives will be transformed and so they will look beyond their own lives and engage in God's mission to the rest of their country.

## **2.3 Bible Engagement and Biblical Interpretation in Africa**

In this section I examine previous research into biblical interpretation and Bible engagement in Africa, assess to what extent biblical interpretation in Africa tends to be missional and identify trends in how ordinary Africans engage with and interpret the Bible. This literature guided my initial expectations about how the research participants would interpret the Bible. This is a vast topic and I do not attempt to be exhaustive, but rather to identify some main trends which are relevant to this research.

### **2.3.1 African Biblical Hermeneutics**

According to Ukpong (2000a, p11), African scholars tend to follow one of two main approaches to hermeneutics: either the western historical-critical model, or an African approach, broadly referred to as "African biblical hermeneutics". This approach is the focus of this subsection. In recent years, some African scholars have also adopted missional hermeneutics, and this is discussed in section 2.3.2.

#### **Definition and aim of African Biblical Hermeneutics**

Adamo (2015b, p59) says that the distinguishing feature of African biblical hermeneutics is that it "makes African social cultural contexts the subject of interpretation". It differs from Western historical-critical hermeneutics in that it addresses African issues such as poverty, witchcraft, ancestors, and land domination (Adamo, 2015b, p62) and tends to make the community that receives the text the main focus of interpretation (Ukpong, 2000a, p11). Having said this, some scholars put as much emphasis on the biblical context as the African context. Mburu (2019), for example, says that African biblical hermeneutics "must be rooted in an understanding of the culture and worldview of the Bible".

The main aim of African biblical hermeneutics is to enable Africans to understand the Bible and God in a way that relates to their context so their lives will be transformed (Mburu, 2019; Adamo, 2015b, p63). Adamo (2015b, p62) envisages this transformation at the level of deliverance from poverty and evil spirits. Mburu (2019) goes further and speaks of transformation at the level of worldview resulting in transformation of people's lives.

#### **Approaches to African Biblical Hermeneutics**

There are many approaches to African biblical hermeneutics and Adamo (2015b) helpfully classifies them. Two of the main approaches which are of most relevance to this dissertation are described here.

## 1. Comparing African cultures and worldviews to biblical cultures and worldview

This approach includes two aspects, firstly using African cultures and worldviews to interpret the Bible, and secondly using the Bible to critique African cultures and worldviews (Adamo, 2015, pp66-67).

As several scholars point out, there are many similarities between African cultures and biblical cultures and therefore, African cultures are often helpful to biblical interpretation (Mburu, 2019). However, uncritically using African cultures, or any culture, to interpret the Bible is problematic, because as Mburu (2019) demonstrates, our culture and worldview can also cause us to misinterpret the Bible. Therefore, the second aspect of this approach, using the Bible to critique African cultures and worldviews, is of vital importance, as is using the Bible to critique culture and worldview in any other context, so that where our assumptions differ from biblical assumptions, we can change our assumptions to adopt a biblical worldview (Mburu, 2019). Mburu (2019) suggests that the first step in an African biblical hermeneutic involves Africans analysing their own culture and worldview and comparing it to the biblical passage. While undoubtedly helpful to biblical interpretation, this is not necessarily straight forward because, as Hiebert (2008) says, people are often unaware of their own worldview. Hiebert (2008) therefore suggests that Bible seminaries examine local culture and worldview in the light of the Bible to equip churches to articulate a biblical worldview in contrast to the local one.

In summary this approach involves comparing African cultures and worldviews to those of the Bible, either to better understand the Bible or to evaluate African cultures in the light of the Bible. I did not expect the research participants to be aware of academic approaches to biblical hermeneutics. Nevertheless, I did expect them to naturally interpret the Bible in the light of their own context. Therefore, I expected to see some similarities between the young people's interpretation of the Bible and this approach to African Biblical Hermeneutics.

## 2. Reading the Bible with ordinary readers

In this approach, biblical scholars interpret the Bible together with ordinary people, often the poor or under-privileged in society from their socio-cultural perspective (Ukpong, 2000a, p26). This is particularly relevant to this dissertation because it concerns ordinary readers, and some findings of this approach will be discussed in section 2.3.3.

### **To what extent is African Biblical Hermeneutics missional in nature?**

There are some common features of African biblical hermeneutics and missional hermeneutics. Firstly, the emphasis on interpreting and applying the Bible within a particular social context has clear links with the missional approach of Barram (2006). Secondly, African biblical hermeneutics and missional hermeneutics share a concern with social justice issues (Adamo, 2015b, p62; Barram, 2006). Thirdly, there is a shared concern by some scholars in each field to see biblical interpretation lead to worldview change (Mburu, 2019; Barram, 2006; Wright, 2006, p533).

However, there are also major differences. The main difference is that while missional hermeneutics intentionally makes God's mission the main subject of interpretation, African hermeneutics intentionally makes the African context the main subject of interpretation. The

interpretations and applications arrived at are therefore often not missional, although because of the strong emphasis on social justice, there is some overlap between them. Therefore, although sharing some common ground with missional hermeneutics, African biblical hermeneutics does not tend to be either deliberately or overtly missional in nature.

This does not imply that Africans are not concerned about mission, but rather that as in the West, the majority of African biblical scholars do not seek to read the entire Bible from the hermeneutical perspective of mission. However, some African theologians are adopting and adapting the approaches of missional hermeneutics, and this is the subject of the following subsection.

### **2.3.2 Missional Hermeneutics in Africa**

The aim of this subsection is to show that although missional hermeneutics has primarily developed in the West, it is being adopted by African scholars and found to be fruitful in an African context. This is significant for the recommendations I make in chapter five.

Hendriks (2012) and Niemandt (2019), from South Africa, propose that there is an important role for missional hermeneutics in African Bible seminaries and Knoetze (2015) proposes introducing missional hermeneutics at the level of the local church for family and youth ministry, suggesting that churches do missional hermeneutics not just “for” but “with” their youth in order that they “experience new purpose in life”.

Several African scholars have already adopted a missional hermeneutical approach. Okure (2009) analyses how Colossians 1:15-20 equipped the original recipients for mission and how it equips Christians for mission today, following a missional approach similar to Guder’s (2007a). Babajide Komolafe (2007) interprets Ephesians through the lens of God’s plan for the universe and the church’s role within that, and therefore his approach has similarities to Wright’s (2006). Sarma (2015), already mentioned in section 2.1.1, studies the hermeneutical approach of Matthew, concluding that Matthew uses a hermeneutic of mission to interpret the Old Testament. Beghela Gibungula (2010) interprets the Sermon on the Mount in the light of the missional context of the original audience and sets the passage within the biblical narrative of God’s mission. He then calls on the church in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to take up the role of peace makers in God’s mission in their context. His approach has similarities to both Guder’s (2007a) and Wright’s (2006). His research included discussion with local church leaders and demonstrates how missional hermeneutics can stimulate church leaders to reconsider their role in God’s mission in the light of the Scriptures.

Certain other authors, although not writing in the name of missional hermeneutics, undoubtedly take a missional approach. For example, Coulibaly (2017) demonstrates a fruitful convergence of African biblical hermeneutics and missional hermeneutics as he interprets the Scriptures in the light of God’s plan for the world to propose a Christian response to contemporary African land disputes.

On the basis of these encouraging examples, I agree with Hendriks (2012) and Niemandt (2019) that there is an important role for missional hermeneutics in Africa and I agree with Knoetze (2015) that missional hermeneutics will be most effective if done “with” rather than “for” ordinary Christians. This is in line with the thinking of several African scholars (Adamo, 2015a, p36; Ukpog, 2000a, p26) and missional hermeneutics scholars (Barram, 2006).

### **2.3.3 Bible Engagement and Interpretation by Ordinary African Christians**

In this section I discuss several features of Bible engagement and interpretation by ordinary African Christians.

#### **1. Importance of orality**

The importance of orality in African cultures is key to understanding Bible engagement in Africa. In many areas, literacy levels are low and even among literate people, many prefer oral communication (Ansre, 1995). As a result, many Christians do not engage with the Bible directly but rely on church leaders to feed them from God's Word (Dembele, 2012, p91-92; West, 2000, p44). Dembele (2012, p91) claims this leads to lack of Bible knowledge by ordinary Christians, however others have reported high levels of oral memorised Bible knowledge in certain contexts (Adamo, 2015a, p65; West, 2000, p44; Kanyoro, 1999, p21), which is acquired and maintained through oral communication such as Bible storytelling, singing, chanting, and dancing (Adamo, 2015a, p65). Clearly, when people engage with the Bible through appropriate oral means they can retain a good knowledge of it. A practical implication of this for my research was to ensure that literacy was not a requirement of the focus groups.

#### **2. Importance of church leaders**

Many have noted the important role of church leaders in bringing people God's Word. R. Margetts' (2013, p40) research in West Africa and O'Donnell's (2013, p41) research in Tanzania found that ordinary Christians cited church leaders as their primary source for understanding and applying the Bible. They both conclude that people prefer to get information from authority figures (Margetts, 2013, p41; O'Donnell, 2013, p43), and Margetts (2013, p41) relates this to a preference for oral communication.

This has positive and negative implications. Ommani (2009, p1) focuses on the negative, noting that pastors have adopted a western lecture style which is unhelpful to Bible engagement and spiritual growth. Gottschlich (2013, p131) on the other hand, focuses on the positive, seeing church leaders as "Scripture Resources" through whom people see Scripture lived out, saying that, "a transformed life... is the strongest motivator for following the Scriptures".

#### **3. Importance of community**

The importance of community in African life means that Bible reading or listening in groups is often more important to believers than individual Bible reading or listening, although many African Christians do also read the Bible individually (Nel, 2018).

#### **4. Multilingualism**

Many churches in Africa are multilingual and many Christians engage with the Bible in a language which is not their first language or in different languages in different contexts. As Dembele (2012, p91) points out, this brings challenges and can contribute to low levels of Bible knowledge among ordinary Christians. Several scholars have emphasised the importance of Bible translation in making God's Word accessible to all (Osotsi Mojola, 2006,

p1315). An implication of this for my research was to ensure language was not a barrier to participation in the focus group discussions.

## **5. Direct uncritical application of Bible texts**

Several scholars have commented that ordinary Africans tend to read the Bible as though it was written directly to them without recognising differences between the biblical context and their own (O'Donnell, 2013, p62; Anum, 2007, p13; Kanyoro, 1999, p21). This is helpful in that people easily relate to the Bible (Kanyoro, 1999, p21). However, it can be unhelpful when the readers' context causes them to misinterpret the text (Mburu, 2019; Kanyoro, 1999, p19).

Another aspect of this direct application is that ordinary readers tend to take biblical characters as role models, which is sometimes helpful, but can lead to legalism (Mabundu Masamba, 2003, p49).

Finally, most ordinary African Christians expect God to act today how he acted in the Bible (Nel, 2018). Nel refers specifically to Pentecostal Christians, but in my experience, this is also true in non-Pentecostal churches. I see this as preferable to the opposite attitude, more common in the West, where many Christians do not expect God to act how he did in the Bible. However, it can lead to false expectations when people do not recognise that God had a particular purpose for doing particular things at particular times.

Since my research involved biblical interpretation by ordinary African Christians, I expected to see evidence of these trends in the focus group discussions.

## **2.4 Bible Engagement and Biblical Interpretation among Young People**

The literature on Bible engagement and biblical interpretation among young people mostly comes from western contexts and therefore is of limited relevance to this research. Nevertheless, it is interesting to include to identify similarities or differences between young people in the West and in West Africa.

I will concentrate on three recent studies. The first is a survey among teenagers in the US which included Christians and non-Christians. It not surprisingly found that those who claim to be "born again Christians" read the Bible more frequently than those who do not (Center for Bible Engagement, 2009, p4). However, disappointingly, when asked how God communicates with them, only 22.4% of those who read the Bible regularly included the Bible in their answer (Center for Bible Engagement, 2009, p8). The study is broad rather than deep and does not investigate how Christian teenagers engage with the Bible or how they interpret it.

The second study, which comes from Australia, also surveyed a mixture of Christians and non-Christians. It found that the young people who read the Bible most frequently are those who have made a commitment to God and expect God to communicate with them through the Bible (Hughes and Pickering, 2010, p19). When asked about the relevance of the Bible to their lives, the young people's answers could be grouped into three main categories: firstly "values" – it tells us how to live; secondly "access to God" – it leads us into a deeper relationship with God, and thirdly "personal life" – it helps us to deal with difficulties in life (Hughes and Pickering, 2010, p27).

The third study (Perrin, 2016), which was conducted in the UK, is the most relevant to this research because it specifically focussed on young evangelicals and on biblical interpretation. Perrin (2016) describes the young people's hermeneutical style as a hermeneutic of "empathy", saying that they identified with the Bible characters and discussed their feelings and motivations. They saw Bible characters as either role models to follow or bad examples to avoid. This is similar to the trend observed among ordinary African Christians by Mabundu Masamba (2003, p49), and therefore may be mirrored among the young people involved in my research. All the groups in Perrin's (2016) study also identified God as a central character in all three texts. Unlike biblical scholars, the young people were not concerned with the dating or authorship of the texts, however they did discuss where the text fit into the biblical storyline and showed awareness of the cultural gap between the biblical context and their own (Perrin, 2016).

I did not necessarily expect to see similarities between the findings of these studies and my own research because of the geographical and cultural distance between the countries concerned. However, Perrin's (2016) research approach has been useful to my research design, described in chapter three.

## **2.5 Summary of Implications for this Research**

In summary, this chapter reviewed the relevant literature in the domains of biblical hermeneutics and Bible engagement to answer four questions. Here, we briefly review the answers to these questions and implications for this research.

Firstly, to what extent can mission be regarded as a hermeneutical key to understanding the Bible? We noted that while some scholars see mission as key to biblical interpretation, others see it as one way among many to interpret the Bible. I concluded that although the Bible is relevant to all aspects of life, when the Bible is interpreted without taking God's mission into consideration, something important is lacking. Therefore if the research participants' interpretation of the biblical narrative does not take God's mission into account, I will consider it to be missing something important, although I will consider non-missional interpretations to be valid provided they are in line with the Bible's wider teaching.

Secondly, to what extent does it matter how Christians understand the biblical narrative? I concluded that it is of vital importance that Christians not only understand but live out of the biblical narrative because this results in the transformation of worldview which leads to a change in lifestyle and purpose. If young Christians understand themselves as participants in the biblical narrative, they will be motivated to engage in God's mission, leading to the spread of the gospel and transformation of not only their own lives, but also the wider society.

Thirdly, what trends can be identified in how Africans engage with and interpret the Bible? We noted that in African biblical hermeneutics the emphasis is on interpreting the Bible for the African context, and although this has some parallels with missional hermeneutics, it does not always result in missional interpretations and applications. Nevertheless, we have seen several examples of African scholars who are adopting missional hermeneutics and finding it fruitful in proposing biblical responses to African issues. We have also noted several important features of Bible engagement among ordinary African Christians including orality, multilingualism, the important role of church leaders and the importance of community. Several scholars have noted a tendency for ordinary Christians to directly apply

Bible passages without consideration of differences between the biblical context and their own, a tendency to take the Bible characters as role models, and to expect God to act today how he acted in biblical times. Some implications for my research are that firstly, in my design of the focus groups, I needed to take orality and multilingualism seriously to make sure the content was accessible to all participants. Secondly, in the focus group discussions, I expected to see direct applications of the Bible similar to those identified by others.

Finally, what trends have been identified in how young people tend to engage with and interpret the Bible? We noted that young evangelical Christians in the UK were found to interpret the Bible using a “hermeneutic of empathy” (Perrin, 2016), identifying with the Bible characters and taking them as either role models or examples to avoid. Perrin’s study was helpful to my research design.

Having reviewed the relevant literature, the remainder of this dissertation will focus primarily on my own research, beginning with a description of the research methodology in chapter three.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology, restating the research objectives, explaining my philosophical stance, and then describing and justifying the research approach, the choice of participants, the two research methods and some ethical considerations.

### **3.1 Research objectives**

This research seeks to answer two main questions:

1. How do young evangelical Christians in this West African city understand the biblical narrative?
2. How do they relate to the biblical narrative?

### **3.2 Philosophical stance**

As Creswell (2013, p15) says, all research is influenced by the philosophical viewpoint of the researcher. Since this research focussed on biblical interpretation, my view of the Bible has undoubtedly influenced my approach. I believe that absolute truth is found in the triune God who has revealed himself to us through His Son Jesus Christ and through His Word, the Bible. I believe that the biblical narrative is the true story of the world which is of great importance to everyone everywhere. However, although I believe in the existence of absolute truth, the philosophical stance of this research is not positivist. I recognise that different people use different hermeneutical processes whether consciously or unconsciously to interpret the Bible leading to different interpretations and applications. I assume that by discussing the Bible together, the research participants have constructed an understanding of the biblical narrative which they may not have held individually beforehand, because in a focus group, participants develop their ideas together (Smithson, 2008). By analysing their discussions, I have constructed a picture of their collective understanding of the biblical narrative and how they relate to it. This research is therefore constructivist according to Creswell's (2013, p24-25) definition.

### **3.2 Research approach**

The research topic has not to my knowledge previously been researched among young Christians in this country and therefore I did not have a strong hypothesis of the results beforehand. Because this research was explorative and concerns people's ideas and opinions, I have taken a qualitative approach as recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016, ch1). This allowed me to ask open ended questions and analyse the themes and patterns which emerged in the results. I therefore chose two qualitative research methods, focus groups and semi-structured interviews, which are described in detail below.

### **3.4 Research participants**

According to Morgan (1997), projects typically include three to five focus groups because additional groups beyond five do not usually produce significant amounts of new data. There

are four large evangelical denominations in this West African city. I therefore ran one pilot group, and then four more groups in one church from each of these denominations. After the pilot group, the method was not significantly changed, so the pilot group is included in the results.

All five churches are relatively large with congregations of between 300 and 600 members. I chose these churches because they are well established and have organised programmes for children and youth. The research therefore shows how young evangelical Christians who have been well taught understand the Bible. A disadvantage of this is that they may not represent the average level of Bible knowledge in churches in this city.

Each church was asked to select eight young people aged between 18-30 years of age to participate in the focus groups. I asked for eight, hoping to have a minimum of six in each group, because Morgan (1997) recommends over-recruiting by 20%. In practice group "B" had only three participants, while the other four groups had between six and eight participants.

As Morgan (1997) says, although focus groups are typically made up of "homogenous strangers", there are advantages to participants knowing each other. In this research, one focus group was held in each church and in every group the participants knew each other well. This was the most practical way to organise the groups and ensured the young people felt free to discuss and at times disagree with each other. The church youth leaders were asked to select young people who had been part of the church for at least five years and were not new believers, four male and four female, so that any differences between male and female participants would be the same in all groups. One purpose of the pilot group was to determine if mixed groups would work, and it was found that this was not a problem as everyone participated well. The youth leaders were asked to include a mixture of those fluent in French and those only comfortable in the language of wider communication. This was to avoid having groups consisting only of highly educated youth who would not represent the majority of young people in their churches.

It is likely that the youth leaders chose eight of their most committed young people to give a good impression, therefore not only do the churches probably have among the best teaching programmes in this city, but also the participants were probably among the most committed from these churches. All of this is taken into account in the analysis.

Because of the limited number of churches, I cannot draw definite conclusions for all evangelical churches in the city, and any generalisations must be tentative. Nevertheless, by choosing five of the largest churches from four of the largest evangelical denominations, I can assume the results are to some extent indicative of the wider situation of evangelical churches in this city, taking into account that the participants' Bible knowledge is probably above average, for the reasons explained above.

### **3.5 Research Methods**

The primary research method used to address the research questions was focus groups with young people. After the focus groups, I conducted semi-structured interviews with their pastors. This was used as a secondary method to aid in the analysis of the results.

### **3.5.1 Research method 1: Focus groups**

The purpose of the focus groups was to answer the two research questions. I chose this method because it allowed the young people to interact with each other and develop their ideas over the course of the discussion (Smithson, 2008). As Morgan (1997) points out, in focus groups, the participants tend to engage with the topic deeper than they would individually and this was useful because my research topic was one which the young people may not have consciously thought about beforehand. One implication of this is that the data produced does not necessarily represent the views of the young people before they participated in the focus group, but rather their views as a result of the focus group.

#### **Design of the questionnaire**

I did not ask either of the research questions directly, in order not to indicate to the young people what answers I was looking for. As Smithson (2008) points out the focus group moderator inevitably influences the group dynamics. In this country there is a strong culture of trying to please elders and those in authority by saying what they want to hear, and I was aware of the potential for this to obscure the results. Therefore, I asked open ended questions, which did not reveal the exact research questions.

The focus groups were conducted in the style of a semi-structured interview. The focus group discussion guide can be found in appendix A. The questionnaire had three parts.

#### Part 1

The first activity was to create a Bible timeline. This was based on an activity from the Scripture Engagement course, 2009, run by Wycliffe Bible Translators UK. The participants firstly brainstormed Bible characters, which were written on slips of paper. They then created a chronological timeline by putting Bible events on one side and Bible characters on the other in the order that they happened, including the characters they had already mentioned and others they thought of during the process. Finally, they were asked to add themselves to the timeline (for example “[Church A] youth group”).

This activity served two purposes. It was a fun group activity which functioned as an ice breaker. It also gave me an initial indication of their knowledge of the biblical storyline. In addition, the final question gave me an initial feel for whether they understand the biblical narrative as an ongoing story that they are part of or as something from the past. It therefore was relevant to both research questions.

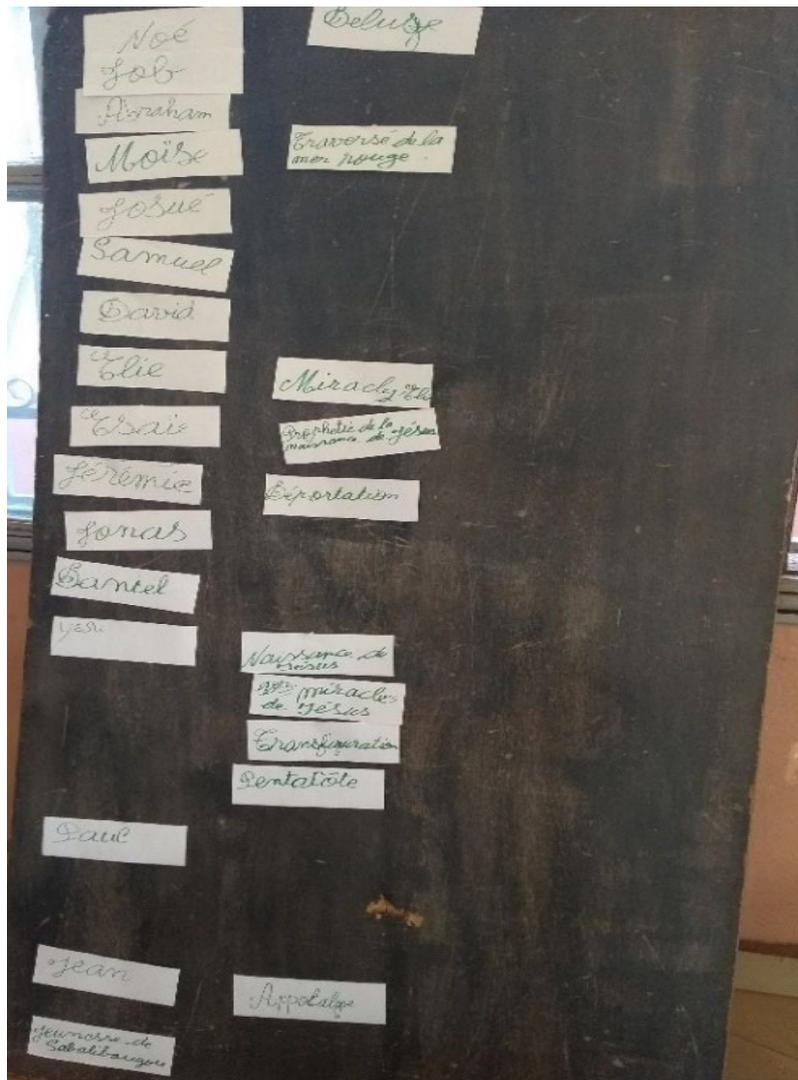


Figure 1: Completed timeline by group D

## Part 2

This section included two questions:

1. Imagine a non-believer asked you what the Bible is about. How would you answer?
2. Why is the Bible important to us?

The purpose of these questions was for the young people to discuss the big themes of the Bible and its significance to us today. This section was therefore relevant to both research questions.

The reason for framing the first question in the context of a discussion with a non-believer was to put the focus on how to explain it to a friend, not me, in order to make it a more natural question and minimise my influence as moderator (Smithson, 2008).

### Part 3

In this section the young people listened to and discussed two Bible passages in more detail. This section was inspired by Perrin's (2016) study, in which she analysed focus group discussions of three Bible passages.

I chose Genesis 12:1-7 and Acts 10:1-36 because these passages mark key turning points in the biblical narrative and could have either a missional or a moral application. This allowed me to see whether the participants identified the significance of the passage to the wider biblical narrative, which was important to the first research question. It also allowed me to see whether their applications were primarily of a moral nature or whether they also made missional applications, which was relevant to the second research question.

Acts 10 is a long and detailed narrative and bearing in mind the importance of orality mentioned in section 2.3.3 and the fact that we may have non-readers in the group, I did not want the passage to be too long and complicated for them to remember after hearing it only once. I therefore decided to cut the narrative at verse 36, by which point they had covered enough content for my purposes, instead of reading the whole chapter.

In Perrin's (2016) study, she asked one question after reading the passage, "What are your thoughts, observations or questions about that passage?" and then left the discussion open-ended. The advantage of her approach is that she did not influence which themes were discussed. However, for my purposes this could be a disadvantage because although the data produced in a focus group reveals themes which are important to the group, individual participants may not mention certain ideas that they are nevertheless thinking about simply because it is not relevant to the discussion taking place at the time. Unlike Perrin, I was investigating specific aspects of their interpretation, and as Morgan (1997) points out when the research questions are more specific, it is useful to use a more structured approach to ensure the groups produce the data you are looking for. Therefore, I used a "funnel" approach (Morgan, 1997), starting with two open questions to see which themes they identified without being directed, and then explicitly asking them to place the passage on their timeline and make links between the passage and the broader biblical narrative to elicit responses to these questions if they had not already been covered.

There were four questions for each passage:

1. Explain the main ideas of the passage in your own words.
2. Why is this passage important to us?
3. Where does the passage fit on the Bible timeline?
4. What is the importance of this passage to what comes afterwards or beforehand in the Bible?

After discussing both passages there was one final question:

What links do you see between these two passages?

The purpose of this question was to see whether they would make the missional link between God's promise to Abraham to bless all nations (Genesis 12:3) and the beginning of the fulfilment of this promise as Peter took the gospel to Gentiles for the first time (Acts 10).

## **Conducting the focus groups**

The focus groups took approximately 90 minutes. As concluded in section 2.3.3, it was important to take orality and multilingualism into account to make sure everyone could participate freely. For this reason, both the consent form and the Bible passage were read aloud in the language of wider communication (LWC), and the discussion was conducted bilingually with questions asked in the LWC and French and participants free to choose which language they responded in. My research assistant translated when necessary. In practice, most participants were bilingual, but a few only understood the LWC and about half the participants in each group chose to speak the LWC even though they understood French, showing a clear preference for that language.

We started each group by giving a brief explanation of the purpose of the group and the consent form. The participants were then given time to sign the form. After this I started the recording and began the questionnaire.

Whenever the discussion stopped, I asked whether anyone had anything to add before moving on to the next question. In some cases, I asked specific people to answer a question if they had not been participating much. Although this may have influenced the discussion slightly, it was nevertheless valuable to make sure everyone was participating (Smithson, 2008).

## **Analysis of the data**

All the focus group discussions were transcribed, and the parts in the LWC were translated into French. The transcriptions were then entered into the programme “QDA Miner Lite” which was used for coding the data. An example of a focus group transcript with coding is found in appendix B. For the Bible timeline part of the discussion, I found the coding unhelpful and abandoned it, since it was easier to work with the photos of their timelines together with the transcripts. However, for the remaining sections, coding the data was helpful in order to easily identify which themes came up in which groups. As Morgan (1997) says, the important factors for analysing the data include how many groups a topic was mentioned in, how many participants mentioned it, and how much enthusiasm the topic produced. I therefore made tables showing the total number of mentions of the different codes and in which groups each code appeared. All the results tables are found in appendix C. These were used to analyse the trends in the focus group discussions. In my analysis, I considered a topic to be a main topic if it was mentioned in three or more of the five groups. Since I had separated the codes by section of the questionnaire, I then considered topics to be particularly important if they came up in more than one section of the questionnaire. Nevertheless, as I was specifically investigating the young people’s understanding of the biblical narrative and their role in it, I was particularly interested in certain types of responses. Therefore, the presence or absence of these types of responses is commented on in the analysis even if not mentioned by three groups. Like Perrin (2016), I compared the young people’s interpretation of the two Bible passages with that of biblical scholars. The main analysis of the results is presented in chapter five.

### **3.5.2 Research method 2: Semi-structured interviews with pastors**

After completing my initial analysis of the focus group data, I wrote a preliminary report of the findings for the pastors of the five churches. For reasons of anonymity, the report gave the combined results of all groups without disclosing which group said what. A translation of this report is found in appendix D. After sending this report, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the pastors of four of the churches to get their feedback. The fifth pastor was unfortunately unavailable for personal reasons. A summary of their feedback is found in appendix E. This feedback was incorporated into my analysis and is included in chapter five.

During the interviews, I summarised the main findings of the research and then asked three main questions:

1. Is there anything about the results which surprises you?
2. After reading this report, what words of encouragement or advice would you give to your youth leader?
3. Do you have any other comments?

The purpose of these questions was to find out what the pastors thought about the young people's responses and whether they saw the need for more teaching on Bible and mission.

### **3.5.3 Ethical considerations**

Because this research involved human subjects, it was necessary to consider research ethics carefully. Firstly, in the choice of participants, I decided only to include young people over the age of 18 to avoid the need for parental consent which would have been complicated to obtain. All participants were asked to sign a consent form before participating. This form explained the research topic, that it would be recorded, that all data would be kept anonymous, and that they were free to leave at any point. Although written in French, the form was translated orally into the language of wider communication at the start of the focus groups to make sure all participants understood it before signing.

To protect the anonymity of the churches and participants, the focus groups are referred to as groups A, B, C, D and E and the pastors of the corresponding churches as pastors A, B, C, D and E.

In summary, this chapter has outlined the methodology of this research. The following chapter will present the findings of the focus groups with some discussion and chapter five gives the main analysis of the results including the feedback from the pastors.

## Chapter 4: Findings of the focus groups

This chapter presents the main findings of the focus groups in three parts following the three sections of the focus group questionnaire. I focus primarily on points made in at least three out of five groups, but also mention points made by fewer groups which are of particular relevance to the research questions. Several of the results tables are included in this chapter and a full set of results tables is found in appendix C. I bring out some brief points of discussion here which are further developed in the main analysis in chapter five.

### 4.1 Focus group part 1: Bible Timeline

This part of the focus group was particularly relevant to the first research question, how young people understand the biblical narrative. Each group was able to quickly brainstorm a list of Bible characters and events. The challenge was to organise them into chronological order. This generated a lot of discussion in every group as the participants had different opinions about the order of the characters, especially in the Old Testament. The timelines of all the groups are shown in appendix C. Table I below shows characters and events mentioned in the correct order by at least three groups. I have added the column “Book(s) of the Bible” to show which parts of the Bible the groups are most familiar with.

Bible character	Groups	Bible event	Groups	Book(s) of the Bible
Adam	A,B,C,E	Creation	A,B,C,E	Genesis
		Fall	B,C,E	Genesis
Noah	A,B,C,D,E	Flood	A,B,C,D,E	Genesis
Abraham	A,B,C,D,E	Sacrifice of Isaac	A,B,C,E	Genesis
Joseph	A,C,E	Joseph sold as a slave by brothers	A,C,E	Genesis
		Joseph governor of Egypt	A,C,E	Genesis
Moses	A,B,C,D,E	Liberation of Israelite slaves	A,B,C,E	Exodus
		Crossing of red sea	B,C,D	Exodus
		Israelites in the desert	A,B,E	Exodus
		10 commandments	A,B,E	Exodus
Joshua	A,C,D,E			Numbers/Joshua
Mary	A,C,E	Birth of Jesus	A,C,D,E	Gospels
Joseph	A,B,C			
Jesus Jesus' disciples	A,B,C,D,E	Crucifixion of Jesus	A,C,E	Gospels
	A,B,E	Resurrection of Jesus	A,C,E	Gospels
Paul	A,B,C,D,E	Persecution of the church	A,C,E	Acts
		Conversion of Paul	A,C,E	Acts

		Revelation	A,B,D,E	Revelation
[Church X] youth group	A,B,C,D,E			
		End of the World	A,B,C,E	Revelation

*Table 1: Summary of Bible timeline results*

The following characters and events were mentioned by at least three groups but not in the correct order:

Ruth, David and Goliath, Solomon, Elijah, Jonah, Isaiah and the prophecy about the coming Messiah, Jeremiah and the exile to Babylon, Ezekiel, Esther, Daniel, Nehemiah.

### **Old Testament**

Four out of five groups produced a coherent timeline from creation to Joshua, especially covering many of the main people and events from Genesis and Exodus. Group E continued to King Solomon in the correct order and group D mentioned Samuel, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel in the correct order. Beyond Joshua, the other groups cited many biblical characters and stories connected with them but were unable to put them into chronological order.

### **New Testament**

All five groups produced a correct timeline for the New Testament, concentrating on the life of Jesus and the ministry of Paul recorded in the Gospels and Acts. There was no mention of the epistles. However, this is not surprising given that the authors had already been mentioned as characters from the gospels and the book of Acts. Revelation was mentioned by all five groups, but this is largely because I asked them what the last event in the Bible is before asking them to place themselves on the timeline.

### **Christians today**

Some groups were initially perplexed when asked to place themselves on the timeline, however after further explanation, all five groups correctly inserted themselves in between the book of Revelation and the end of the world.

## **4.2 Focus group part 2: General questions about the Bible**

This section included two questions. The first question, “What is the Bible about?” was relevant to the first research question about their understanding of the biblical narrative, and the second “Why is it important to us?” was relevant to the second research question about how they relate to the biblical narrative.

### **What is the Bible about?**

For this question in every group the first response given was that the Bible is “the Word of God”. This is probably because the question in French “*La Bible s’agit de quoi?*” is ambiguous and can mean either “What is the Bible?” or “What is the Bible about?” When they were asked to expand on their response, the discussions opened up and various

answers were given. Their discussions were coded for analysis and the frequency of the codes is shown in tables II and III below. Table II shows responses given as the theme of the whole Bible, and table III shows elements mentioned as topics that the Bible talks about but not as the theme of the whole Bible.

<b>The Bible is about...</b>	<b>Total no. of responses</b>	<b>Groups</b>
The Word of God	12	A,B,C,D,E
How to be saved/reconciled to God	7	A,C,D,E
God's love	3	C,D
The past, the present and the future	2	A,E
The Acts of God	4	D
It reveals God to us	3	D
The thoughts of God	2	D
God's power	1	D
The problem of human sin	1	E
How to live	1	A
Jesus	1	C
The story of God's people, Israel	1	D

*Table II: Bible themes*

<b>The Bible talks about...</b>	<b>Total no. of responses</b>	<b>Groups</b>
The end of the world	3	B,D
Creation	3	B,D
The life of Jesus	3	B,D
The law of Moses	2	B
The prophets	1	B
Submission	1	D

*Table III: Bible topics*

After the "Word of God", the most popular response was that the Bible is about how to be saved or reconciled with God. However, the emphasis of each group was different.

The two main points made by Group A were that the Bible is about salvation and how we should live today. They also mentioned that the Bible is about the past, present and future, showing an awareness that it is an ongoing story which is not yet finished.

Group B listed some main topics of the Old and New Testaments but did not identify any overall themes.

Group C gave two main answers: The Bible is about salvation and Jesus. This is the only group that identified Jesus as the theme of the whole Bible. One person especially

emphasized this saying, “The Bible revolves around Jesus”, similar to the view of Bartholomew (2015) discussed in section 2.1.

Group D’s discussion largely focussed on how the Bible reveals God to us, mentioning God’s love, thoughts, power, image, splendour, and acts. One person in this group also said the Bible tells the story of God’s people.

Group E said that the Bible is about the problem of human sin and how people can be reconciled to God. They also mentioned that it talks of the past, present and future, showing an awareness of it being an ongoing story that is not yet completed.

### Why is the Bible important to us?

This question generated more discussion than the first. The frequency of the codes is shown in table IV.

The Bible is important to us because...	Total no. of responses	Groups
To know God	7	A,B,C,D
To know God’s will for our lives	7	A,B,D,E
To do God’s will	5	A,B,D,E
To find salvation	6	A,D,E
God talks to us through the Bible	4	B,C,E
The Bible is our spiritual food/strength	4	B,C,D
It is deeply relevant to us	2	A,D
For evangelism	1	E
The Bible helps us make good choices	2	D
Happiness is found in the Bible	1	D
To resist temptation	1	D
If we obey the Bible, we will be successful	1	C
The Bible teaches us	1	B
It helps us to think properly	1	A
The Bible transforms us	1	A
The Bible encourages us in our faith/walk with God	1	A
X <sup>3</sup> The Bible is God	1	B

*Table IV: The Bible’s importance to us*

The top responses to this question focussed on two areas: firstly, knowing or being close to God and secondly knowing and doing God’s will. Finding salvation was also mentioned by three groups, not surprisingly three of the same groups who said that the Bible is about how to be saved. The fact that God talks to us through the Bible and the idea of the Bible as our

<sup>3</sup> “X” indicates an incorrect response.

spiritual food or strength were also discussed in three groups. Again, the focus of the discussion was different in each group.

Group A focused on the importance of the Bible for how we live: knowing and doing God's will, knowing how to think, walking with God, and the Bible transforming our lives. They also mentioned the other top answers: being close to God and finding salvation.

Group B gave various answers including the top three, knowing God, knowing God's will, and doing God's will. One person from group B misunderstood the reference to the "Word" in John 1:1, thinking it refers to the Bible rather than Jesus. He said, "the Word is God so if we have the Bible with us, we have God with us", thereby equating the Bible with God. This type of misinterpretation was rare in the focus group discussions.

The main points of Group C's discussion were being close to God and God talking to us through the Bible. Therefore, relationship with God seemed to be primary for this group. They were the only group which did not mention knowing or doing God's will in answer to this question.

Group D covered all the top answers: Closeness to God, knowledge and obedience to God's will and finding salvation. They also discussed how the Bible helps us make good decisions and resist temptation. This group, like group A focussed a lot on the importance of the Bible for how we live.

Group E also focussed on knowledge of and obedience to God's will and finding salvation. They were the only group to mention use of the Bible in evangelism.

In conclusion, for most groups the primary importance of the Bible seems to be for knowing God, knowing and doing God's will and finding salvation. For group C, the primary importance seems to be for knowing God and living in relationship with him.

### **4.3 Focus group part 3: Questions about Genesis 12 and Acts 10**

In this section the groups looked at two passages: Genesis 12:1-7 and Acts 10:1-36. There were four questions for each passage and a final question about the relationship between the two passages.

There was a lot of overlap in the responses to question 1, "Explain the main ideas of the passage in your own words", and question 2, "Why is this passage important to us?". Therefore, the responses to both questions were combined and coded under three categories:

1. Events.
2. Themes.
3. Applications.

We will consider each passage in turn.

### 4.3.1 Genesis 12:1-7

#### Events

Most groups covered the main points of God's call and promises to Abraham in verses 1-3. However, only group C picked up on the last part of the promise in verse 3 – that all nations on earth will be blessed through him. This was surprising given that this is identified by almost all biblical commentators as a key part of the passage as will be further discussed in chapter five. Most groups stopped at this point, however group D added that Abraham went to Canaan, and group E mentioned all the remaining details of the passage. A table showing the events of the passage mentioned by each group can be found in appendix C.

#### Themes

The codes for themes were divided into "themes" and "sub-themes". The "themes" identified are shown in table V below. The corresponding table in appendix C breaks these down into sub-themes, thereby showing more detail about the discussions.

Theme	Total no. of responses	Groups
Obedience to God	23	A,B,C,D,E
God's blessing	13	A,B,C,D,E
Faith in God	10	C,D,E
God's plan	5	A
Salvation comes through Abraham's line	3	C,E
Israel will inherit promises to Abraham	2	A,B
God's love	1	A
Intimacy/communication with God	1	A

*Table V: Themes of Genesis 12:1-7*

Three main themes were mentioned by at least three groups:

1. **Obedience to God.** This theme was discussed in all five groups and mentioned a total of 23 times. It therefore came across as being by far the most important theme. In all five groups it was said that obedience results in blessing, and in only one group did somebody counter this by saying that obedience does not always result in blessing. This idea also came out in their applications, as discussed below.
2. **God's Blessing.** This was discussed in all groups. The young people saw this as linked to obedience and faith.
3. **Faith in God.** This was discussed in three groups. In one group someone said that faith results in blessing.

Four of the groups identified some significance of this passage for those coming after Abraham. Group A discussed God's plan for Abraham, which they said was to make

Abraham the father of many nations. Groups A and B mentioned that the nation of Israel would inherit God’s promises to Abraham and groups C and E said that salvation comes through Abraham’s line.

### Applications

As with the themes, the responses were coded into main topics and subtopics, and the main topics are shown here in table VI. The corresponding table in appendix C shows the subtopics.

<b>Application</b>	<b>Total no. of responses</b>	<b>Groups</b>
We should obey God	21	A,B,C,D,E
How we (Christians) are related to Abraham	6	A,C,E
How God relates to us	4	A,E
We can have confidence/faith in God	2	C,E

*Table VI: Applications of Genesis 12:1-7*

In accordance with the themes identified for this passage, the biggest application brought out by all the groups was that we should obey God. Two of the groups said that if we obey God as Abraham did, then God will bless us as he blessed Abraham. This corresponds with the theme identified by four of the groups that obedience results in blessing.

Three groups discussed how we relate to Abraham, two saying that we inherit blessing through Abraham, and one that Christians are now Abraham’s family. Group C brought out the fact that we inherit salvation through Abraham. Group A spent longer than the other groups discussing how we relate to Abraham and revealed some confusion about it. One person applied the promise that “those who bless Abraham will be blessed” directly to themselves and said that if we bless Abraham, we will be blessed. When asked how they could bless Abraham they could not answer. Several people referred to Abraham as the “father of every man” and when asked what this meant, somebody said all peoples are descended from Abraham. Several of the participants laughed at this but nobody disagreed, suggesting that they did not think it was correct but were not sure enough to say so. They were happy to disagree at other points, so this was not out of timidity.

### **Question 3: Where does this passage fit on the Bible timeline?**

All five groups placed this passage on their Bible timeline correctly.

### **Question 4: What is the importance of this passage to the rest of the Bible?**

This was the question that the young people found hardest to answer for both Bible passages and only one or two people answered in each group.

<b>Link from Genesis 12:1-7 to rest of Bible</b>	<b>Total no. of responses</b>	<b>Groups</b>
Abraham is a source of blessing to the generations coming after him	3	A,B,C
Link between God's promise to Abraham and salvation	4	C,E
Abraham's obedience was necessary for what happened next	3	D,E
Comparisons between Abraham and other Bible characters	4	C,D
God has not abandoned his creation	1	A

*Table VII: Links from Genesis 12:1-7 to biblical narrative*

Three groups identified links between God's blessings to Abraham and God's blessing to the generations coming after him. Group C made a clear link from God's promise of blessing to all nations to the fact that all nations would find salvation in Jesus. Group E also made the link from Abraham to salvation, although not as clearly as group C. Not surprisingly these were the same two groups which had identified salvation through Abraham's line as a reason why the passage is important to us in answer to question two. None of the other three groups mentioned salvation coming through Abraham's line at any point. Groups D and E said that Abraham's obedience to God was necessary to what happened next, showing an awareness that this was a significant moment in the biblical narrative. All five groups identified links between Abraham and the remainder of the biblical narrative in at least one of these three ways, therefore showing some awareness of how the story of Abraham fits into the biblical narrative. Two of the groups also made thematic links with other Bible stories, for example "Abraham and Moses both obeyed God".

### **4.3.2 Acts 10:1-36**

#### **Events**

A table showing the events mentioned by the participants is found in appendix C. Most groups picked up on all the main parts of the storyline from the angel's appearance to Cornelius to Peter's arrival to tell them the gospel.

#### **Themes**

Table VIII, below, shows the main themes identified. The corresponding table in appendix C show all the subthemes.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Total no. of responses</b>	<b>Groups</b>
God loves everyone equally and does not show favouritism	14	A,B,C,D,E
Obedience to God	9	A,B,C,D,E
God responds to those who seek him	14	A,B,D,E
Salvation is for all who believe in Jesus	10	A,C,D,E

All ethnic groups are one in Christ	6	B,C,D,E
God works through people	5	C,D
Faith in God	3	D
Importance of prayer	3	B
God's love in sending Jesus	2	A
Intimacy with God	2	A
God's revelation	1	A
It is God who prepares hearts to receive the gospel	1	E

*Table VIII: Themes of Acts 10:1-36*

Five themes were brought out by at least three of the groups:

1. **God loves everyone equally.** This was discussed by all five groups and was usually related to ethnicity. This is very relevant to the young people's context in this West African city where most churches are made up of several ethnic groups. In addition, there is a caste system in the traditional culture which was mentioned by groups C and E.
2. **Obedience to God.** This theme was also mentioned by all five groups. Two people in group B said that obedience results in blessing and one person in group E that obedience does not always result in blessing – this was not the same group that made this point in their discussion of Genesis 12:1-7.
3. **God responds to those who seek him.** This theme was mentioned by four groups, who noted that God saw Cornelius' faith and good works and answered his prayers.
4. **Salvation is for all who believe in Jesus.** This theme was also mentioned by four groups. Group E referred to this as "God's plan" for people from all nations, showing an awareness of the nature of God's mission.
5. **All ethnic groups are one in Christ.** This theme was mentioned by four groups and is closely related to the first theme of God's love for all.

### **Applications**

The applications for this passage can be grouped into two main categories: firstly, our relationship with others, shown in table IX, and secondly, our relationship with God, shown in table X. The corresponding tables in appendix C show subtopics of these applications.

<b>Applications concerning our relationship with others</b>	<b>Total no. of responses</b>	<b>Groups</b>
We should not show favouritism or judge others	11	A,B,C,D,E
We should love each other	2	B,E
We should be humble	2	A
We should share the gospel with all types of people	1	E
We should forgive each other	1	E
We should help the poor	1	B

*Table IX: Applications of Acts 10:1-36 concerning our relationship with others*

<b>Applications concerning our relationship with God</b>	<b>Total no. of responses</b>	<b>Groups</b>
We should obey God	6	B,D,E
We should pray with faith and God will respond	6	B,D,E
God communicates with us/reveals himself to us	4	A,B,D
We should worship God alone	2	A,B
We should have faith in God	2	D
We should seek God's presence/face	2	A
God loves us	2	A
We should seek God's will	1	B
We should listen to the Holy Spirit	1	D

*Table X: Applications of Acts 10:1-36 concerning our relationship with God*

Four main applications were mentioned by at least three groups:

1. We should **not show favouritism or judge others**. This was mentioned by all five groups and was based on the fact that God does not show favouritism so we should not either. Four groups related this to ethnicity or caste.
2. The **importance of obeying God** was mentioned by three groups. This was not surprising given that obedience was mentioned as a main theme by all five groups.
3. The **importance of prayer** was mentioned by three groups.
4. **God's communication with us** was also mentioned by three groups.

Of the applications about our relationship with others, most were about how we relate to each other within the church. Only one person mentioned evangelism. This person said that we should take the gospel to all kinds of people, but nobody mentioned crossing ethnic or cultural boundaries which is surprising given that the passage is about Peter taking the gospel to someone of a different ethnic group for the first time.

### Question 3: Where does this passage fit on the Bible timeline?

All five groups placed this passage on their Bible timeline correctly.

### Question 4: What is the importance of this passage to the rest of the Bible?

Link to rest of Bible	Total no. of responses	Groups
This is the start of the gospel going to all nations	4	C,D
God's love in sending Jesus	1	A

*Table XI: Links from Acts 10:1-36 to biblical narrative*

Most groups found it harder to link Acts 10 to the rest of the Bible than Genesis 12. However, groups C and D picked up on the main missiological link, saying that this moment was the start of the gospel going to all nations. Group A mentioned God's love in sending Jesus which clearly links the passage to one of the main themes of the Bible.

#### 4.3.3 Links between Genesis 12:1-7 and Acts 10:1-36

Table XII shows the main topics and includes one subtopic "obedience to God" because it was mentioned by all five groups. A table showing all the subtopics under "Similarities between the two passages" is found in appendix C.

Link	Total no. of responses	Groups
Acts 10 is the beginning of the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham	2	C,E
Similarities between the two passages: obedience to God	11	A,B,C,D,E
Other similarities between the two passages	20	A,B,C,D,E

*Table XII: Links between Genesis 12:1-7 and Acts 10:1-36*

Only groups C and E made the link that Acts 10 is the beginning of the fulfilment of God's promise to bless all nations in Genesis 12. These are the same two groups that mentioned salvation coming through Abraham's line in response to questions 2 and 4. All five groups identified thematic links between the passages. Of these the one mentioned by all five groups was obedience to God, which had come up as a main theme repeatedly throughout the discussion of both passages.

Having presented the main findings of the focus groups and made some initial observations, in the following chapter I will analyse the findings in detail and relate them to the research questions and the literature discussed in chapter two.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis of the results**

In this chapter I analyse the results and answer the two research questions, connecting my analysis with observations from the literature review and the feedback of the church pastors. This chapter has two main sections, based on the two research questions: firstly, how the young people understand the biblical narrative and secondly how they relate to it.

### **5.1 How the young people understand the biblical narrative**

As stated in section 1.3, this research question has two aspects: firstly, to what extent the young people are familiar with the storyline of the biblical narrative, and secondly what they think the biblical narrative is about. We shall approach these two aspects separately.

#### **5.1.1 To what extent are the young people familiar with the storyline of the biblical narrative?**

The first part of the focus groups, presented in section 4.1, showed that all of the groups understand the basic framework of the biblical storyline from creation to the end of the world, including some main characters and events. However, their ability to fill in the details varied greatly, with only one group able to give an outline of the Old Testament narrative beyond Solomon. The young people are a lot more familiar with some parts of the narrative than others. The Bible books they are most familiar with are Genesis, Exodus, the Gospels and Acts. This may be because these are the books which tend to be best covered in Sunday school materials, and it is possible that Sunday school is the only context in which they have heard Bible stories presented in chronological order. Pastor D said he was not surprised by their lack of detailed knowledge of the biblical storyline because most young people do not read the Bible in a “coherent fashion”, tending to jump between the parts that interest them and because many find reading difficult and therefore only read the easier narratives, avoiding more difficult books.

In their discussion of the links from Genesis 12:1-7 to the rest of the Bible, presented in section 4.3, all five groups made connections between the story of Abraham and the story of the Israelites, demonstrating an awareness that this story is part of a bigger story. Therefore, the young people demonstrated an awareness that there is a biblical metanarrative which the smaller Bible stories fit into, however, as R. Margetts (2013, p44) also found, they are unsure how and where many of the Bible stories fit.

I was impressed by the young people’s knowledge of a wide range of biblical characters and events which showed some familiarity with most of the Bible even if they did not know how it fits together. Nevertheless, as pastors D and E commented, there is clearly a need for more teaching about the biblical narrative to give them a better idea of how the Old Testament fits together and how it connects to the New Testament.

#### **5.1.2 What do the young people think the biblical narrative is about?**

During the second part of the focus group discussions, presented in section 4.2, the main theme of the Bible identified by four out of five groups was salvation or reconciliation with

God. This is not surprising, as this theme has also been identified by biblical scholars as the main theme of the Bible (Bruce, 1962, p82). As noted in section 2.1.2, this theme is more specific than the theme of God's mission proposed by Wright (2004, p103), but it is nevertheless central to it, because salvation through Jesus Christ is at the centre of God's mission. Therefore, the theme identified by the young people is indisputably the core of what the biblical narrative is about.

In addition to identifying the theme of salvation, group D put a strong emphasis on the Bible being about God. This was summed up in the words of one participant who said, "The Bible reveals God to us". This was a very positive emphasis, because they clearly do not see the Bible simply as a guide for how to live, but rather as the means by which we may come to know God.

None of the groups referred explicitly to the mission of God, however, in their discussion of the links between Genesis 12:1-7 and Acts 10:1-36, one participant in each of groups C and E recognised that the story of Acts 10 is part of the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12.3. This showed an awareness that starting from Abraham, God was working out a plan of salvation for all peoples, and group E explicitly referred to this as "God's plan". Two members of group D also said that Acts 10:1-36 is the start of the gospel going to the non-Jewish peoples, thereby showing an awareness of God's plan to save people from all nations, although they did not link this with Genesis 12. Therefore, although the participants did not use the language of mission to describe the biblical narrative, some individuals in three of the groups showed an awareness of God's mission to the nations. It was however notable that a minority of participants in these groups made these links, and given that as discussed in chapter three, these groups probably included some of the young people with the best Bible knowledge in this city, it is likely that many young evangelical Christians here would not have this level of understanding of the biblical narrative.

In summary, four out of five groups showed a reasonably good understanding of the main themes of the biblical narrative and three groups related this to God's plan of salvation for the nations. Group B was the only group that failed to identify any overall themes.

## **5.2 How the young people relate to the biblical narrative**

Like the first research question, this question also has two aspects: firstly, how the young people apply the Bible to their lives, and secondly whether they see themselves primarily as participants in or observers of the biblical narrative. My data did not provide direct answers to the second aspect of this question, but it can nevertheless be addressed indirectly on the basis of how they apply the Bible to their lives. The answers to these questions will be largely based on how the young people interpreted and applied the two Bible passages in part three. Therefore, we shall start by considering their interpretation and applications of these passages in some detail, comparing them with those of evangelical biblical scholars to highlight what was distinctive about the young people's interpretation. We shall then use this analysis to answer the broader question of how the young people apply the Bible to their lives, before addressing the second aspect of this question about whether they see themselves as participants to or observers of the biblical narrative.

## **5.2.1 Comparison of interpretations and applications of Genesis 12:1-7 made by biblical scholars and by the young people**

### **Interpretation and applications by biblical scholars:**

Several biblical scholars draw parallels between God's call to Abraham in verse one and the call of the gospel to put our faith in Jesus not knowing what the future holds (Assohoto and Ngewa, 2006, p29; Hughes, 2004; Wenham, 1994; Kidner, 1967).

Commentaries on God's promises to Abraham in verses two to three are varied. Several point out that some of the blessings are for Abraham personally, while others will be brought about through Abraham for others (Assohoto and Ngewa, 2006, p29; Hughes, 2004; Hamilton, 1990). Kidner (1967) suggests that none of the blessings were of material benefit to Abraham, however Wenham (1987) assumes that the promise "I will bless you" in verse two includes material blessing. This makes sense since Abraham is blessed with abundant material blessing throughout his lifetime. There is some discussion among scholars as to whether the verb in the promise that all nations will be blessed through Abraham (verse 3) is passive or reflexive. As Kidner (1967) says, in the New Testament it is interpreted as passive which as Hamilton (1990) argues, supports the interpretation that this verse refers to "the final goal in a divine plan for universal salvation". Most evangelical commentaries seem to adopt the passive interpretation since they point out the fulfilment of this promise through Jesus (Assohoto and Ngewa, 2006, p29; Hughes, 2004; Kidner, 1967). The LWC Bible used in the focus groups also interprets this verb as passive.

Assohoto and Ngewa (2006, pp29-30) and Hughes (2004) comment on Abraham's obedience and see this as an example to Christians today, but apply this differently. Hughes' (2004) application focusses on obedience which involves trusting in God's promise of eternal life and setting our hope on the things of heaven, citing Colossians 3:1-4. This application, like his application of verse one, takes the gospel into account when interpreting this Old Testament passage. Assohoto and Ngewa (2006, p30) on the other hand, make the application that we should trust God to fulfil his promises and never use biblical promises to justify violence, just as Abraham trusted God and did not take the land by force.

Hughes (2004) and Wenham (1994) comment on Abraham's response of worship in verse seven and encourage Christians to likewise respond to God in worship.

### **Interpretation and applications by the young people:**

Like the biblical scholars, four out of five groups commented on God's call to Abraham to leave his home and country, however unlike biblical scholars they did not connect this to the call of the gospel. Group D made the useful application that we should obey God even when we do not know the outcome. Two groups made the application from this verse that God communicates or reveals himself to us, an application which is not made by any of the biblical scholars mentioned above. It is likely that Western scholars see God's revelation to Abraham as an unusual occurrence which cannot necessarily be generalised, whereas the research participants expect God to act today as he acted in the Bible. This is an example of the kind of direct biblical interpretation identified by Nel (2018) among ordinary African Christians (see section 2.3.3).

The theme of God's blessing was brought out by all five groups, and like Wenham (1987), they interpreted this as material blessing. All five groups made the application that obedience leads to blessing which is not made by any of the biblical scholars mentioned above. This again demonstrates a more direct interpretation of the text than that of biblical scholars, as they tend to appropriate God's promises to Abraham as direct promises to them, rather than seeing Abraham as a historical character who played a particular role in God's plan.

As noted in section 4.3.1, most groups mentioned all of God's promises to Abraham except the last one to bless all nations, which was only mentioned by two groups. This was surprising given that almost all biblical scholars see this final promise as a key part of the passage. These two groups correctly linked this promise to the salvation available to all nations through Jesus. As Pastor D points out, the failure of the other groups to mention this demonstrates a lack of understanding of this promise.

All five groups saw Abraham's obedience as the main theme of the passage and like Assohoto and Ngewa (2006, p30) and Hughes (2004), they see this as a model for Christians, however they were less specific than these scholars about what this means for Christians today. Three of the groups also commented on Abraham's faith and two of these took his faith as a model for Christians.

Only one of the groups referred to Abraham's worship and they did not make any applications from it. They apparently did not see this as a main point of the passage.

In general, the young people focussed more on application and less on interpretation than the biblical scholars. Their applications were primarily direct applications taking Abraham as a role model for Christians in his obedience to and faith in God, with the assumption that God will respond to this with blessing, in the same way that he did for Abraham. Whereas biblical scholars took account of the gospel in applying this passage to Christians, the young people's applications were solely based on this passage. Pastor D expressed concern about this tendency to apply the Old Testament directly without reference to the gospel which he thinks is a widespread tendency among Christians in this country.

## **5.2.2 Comparison of interpretations and applications of Acts 10:1-36 made by biblical scholars and by the young people**

### **Interpretation and applications by biblical scholars**

Many biblical scholars start their commentary on this passage by pointing out its importance in the biblical narrative, as the apostle Peter takes the gospel to a Gentile household for the first time (Longenecker, 2007; Stott, 1990; Bruce, 1988).

There is some discussion as to whether Cornelius was a God fearer in the technical sense of someone who worshipped the Jewish God and practised Jewish customs while remaining uncircumcised (Peterson, 2009; Bruce, 1988), or whether he was God fearing in the wider sense of worshipping one God without necessarily associating with Jews (Longenecker, 2007). It is not too important for the sense of the passage. As Mumo Kisau (2006, p1318) points out, God saw this, but it was not sufficient; he needed to hear the gospel. Most scholars mention Cornelius' immediate obedience to the angel's instructions (Cook, 2007;

Longenecker, 2007; Mumo Kisau, 2006, p1318; Stott, 1990; Bruce, 1988) but do not consider it a main point of the passage.

Most scholars give some explanation of the background to the division between Jews and Gentiles and point out that Peter's vision about food was an analogy to be applied to people. (Peterson, 2009; Longenecker, 2007; Stott, 1990; Bruce, 1988). Peterson (2009) explains the purpose of the vision particularly well saying that the Jewish Christians had to realise that people are cleansed and sanctified through Christ and therefore they should accept gentile believers on the basis of "faith in Christ alone".

Most commentators mention Cornelius' attempt to worship Peter which Peter does not accept (Peterson, 2009; Longenecker, 2007; Stott, 1990; Bruce, 1988). Mumo Kisau (2006, p1319) makes the application from this that we should discourage admiration from others and point them to worship God.

Several commentators mention Cornelius' expectation to hear from God through Peter (Mumo Kisau, 2006, p1319; Stott, 1990; Bruce 1988), and Mumo Kisau (2006, p1319) takes this as a model for the attitude believers should have when listening to their pastor preach. Most scholars comment on the first point of Peter's sermon, that God does not show favouritism but accepts people from all nations who fear him and do what is right (Longenecker, 2007; Stott, 1990; Bruce, 1988). Cook (2007) sees this as the main idea to be applied from this passage saying that churches must overcome all prejudices so that the gospel can reach all peoples. They then point out that the main point of the sermon is that salvation is for all who believe in Jesus (Peterson, 2009; Mumo Kisau, 2006, p1319; Stott, 1990; Bruce, 1988).

### **Interpretation and applications by the young people**

Three out of five groups pointed out, like the biblical scholars, that in this passage Peter takes the gospel to Gentiles for the first time.

Four groups mentioned that Cornelius was an upright man who prayed to God and four groups also emphasised God's response to Cornelius, making the application that God responds to those who seek him. Two of these pointed out like Mumo Kisau (2006, p1318) that his good works were not enough; he needed to hear the gospel. Unlike the biblical scholars, all five groups considered obedience to God to be one of the main ideas of the passage, and three groups made the application that we should obey God like Cornelius.

Three groups gave some explanation of the division between Jews and Gentiles. It was clear that all participants understood Peter's vision to mean that God does not differentiate between people on the basis of ethnicity. None of the groups went further like Peterson (2009) to explain the vision in terms of people being sanctified through faith in Christ.

Cornelius' attempt to worship Peter was mentioned by two groups, but no applications were made from it and it was not considered to be a main theme.

The young people emphasised the same main points as the biblical scholars from Peter's sermon: that God does not show favouritism and that salvation is for all who believe in Jesus. All the groups, like Cook (2007) identified overcoming prejudices within the church as one of the main applications of this passage, specifically referring to ethnicity and caste. However, only one person made this application in relation to evangelism and unlike Cook

(2007) he did not mention evangelism of “all peoples” by rather said we should take the gospel to “all kinds of people”.

The young people made more applications than the biblical scholars. There were two main types of application made: firstly, as for the Genesis passage, they took Peter and Cornelius as role models to be copied, with the expectation that God will respond how he responds in the passage. Secondly, they took God as an example saying that as God does not show favouritism, we should not either. It was surprising and a little concerning that only one participant applied this passage to evangelism and nobody applied it to cross-cultural mission, given its significance in the biblical narrative as the point at which the gospel starts to cross major cultural and ethnic boundaries.

### **5.2.3 How do the young people apply the Bible to their lives?**

Having considered how the young people applied these passages, we shall now consider the broader question of how they apply the Bible to their lives. To do this we shall consider why they said the Bible is important to them and make some generalisations based on their applications of Genesis 12:1-7 and Acts 10:1-36.

When asked why the Bible is important to them in the second part of the discussion, presented in section 4.2, the top answers were to know God and to know and do God’s will. Interestingly, these results correspond to the two top categories of answers given by young people in Australia when asked how the Bible is relevant to their lives: firstly, knowing how to live and secondly, growing into deeper relationship with God (Hughes and Pickering, 2010, p27). The theme of obedience to God came up again and again in the discussion of both Bible passages in all five groups and came over as being the most important theme. Therefore, the young people seem to see the Bible as a means of both coming to know God and knowing God’s will so that they can obey him.

Pastor D expressed concern about the young people’s emphasis on obedience, because he said for Christians, obedience to God primarily means faith in Jesus and obedience to Jesus’ teaching, and he suspects that when the young people talk about obedience they mean obeying a list of rules. He sees this as similar to Islam, practised by the majority of the population here. He therefore thinks that relationship with Jesus should have come out as primary in the young people’s discussion of the Bible’s importance to their lives. Previous experience leads me to believe pastor D’s concerns are valid, however it is not clear from the focus group discussions exactly what the young people meant by “obedience to God” because I did not ask any follow up questions about this. Therefore, more research would be required to know to what extent pastor D’s concerns are correct.

Most applications of the two Bible passages were about Christian living – how to live well in our relationship with God and how to live well in our relationships with others. Pastors B, C and E were encouraged by the young people’s applications and I agree that they made useful and valid applications. Nevertheless, there was a conspicuous gap in their application of Acts 10: although three out of five groups recognised this as the beginning of the gospel going to all nations, only one person made the application that we should therefore share the gospel with others, and even this person did not mention taking the gospel to other ethnic groups. The other four groups made no missiological applications from either passage. Given that the major significance of this passage is that the gospel begins to cross ethnic boundaries, this was surprising. Therefore, as pastors B and E commented, there is a clear

need for more teaching about God's mission in the biblical narrative and how all Christians are called to be part of it.

The majority of applications of both Bible passages took the main characters as role models, similar to the trend identified among young evangelicals in the UK by Perrin (2016), and among ordinary African Christians by Mabundu Masamba (2003, p49). There was a clear expectation by all five groups that if we follow the example of these Bible characters, then God will do to us what he did to them. The main example of this was the idea that obedience results in blessing from Genesis 12, discussed in all five groups, and another example is that if we persevere in prayer then God will answer us like he answered Cornelius, which came up in two groups. As mentioned above, this differs from the applications of biblical scholars and demonstrates the kind of direct application of the passage observed by Nel (2018) among ordinary Christians. These direct applications are partially helpful, in that we can expect God to act today in line with how he acted in the Bible stories, because God does not change. However, it is also important to realise that God made the promises in Genesis 12 to a specific person at a specific point in his plan for the world, and we cannot appropriate them directly as though he has made the same promises to us personally.

All five groups took God as their example in their application of Acts 10:1-36, identifying the major theme that God loves everyone equally and does not show favouritism between ethnic groups or castes or different types of people, and that we should do likewise. This is a major teaching of this passage, and it is very relevant to their context given that all the research participants are members of multi-ethnic churches in a culture where caste still plays a role in traditional society. This shows that in their application of the Bible they are thinking through how God wants them to act as His followers in their context. This has similarities to the African biblical hermeneutics approach described in section 2.3.1 which uses the Bible to critique African culture, and also to the missional hermeneutical approach of Barram (2006), who encourages critical questioning of our worldview and social norms in the light of the Scriptures.

#### **5.2.4 Do the young people see themselves primarily as participants in or observers of the biblical narrative?**

As already mentioned, the focus group data does not directly answer this question, but we can nevertheless draw some conclusions based on their applications of the two Bible passages. We will consider not only what was said, but also what was not said.

The young people clearly do see themselves as part of the biblical narrative to a limited extent. This was suggested in the second part of the focus groups, when two of the groups said that the Bible is about the past, present and future. But it came out most clearly in their discussions of Genesis 12:1-7, as three groups made reference to how we are related to Abraham, one group mentioning that we are part of Abraham's family and two groups saying that we inherit blessing through Abraham. One of these groups specified that we are recipients of the salvation that has come through Abraham's line.

However, although the young people see themselves as recipients of the blessing and salvation promised to Abraham, most do not seem to see themselves as active participants in the biblical narrative. Their primary mode of application was to take the Bible characters as role models, which although it results in useful and valid applications, does not imply active participation in the narrative. As already mentioned only one person made a missional

application of Acts 10:1-36 saying that we should share the gospel with others, in spite of the fact that three groups identified this as the beginning of the gospel going to all nations. Therefore, most of the young people did not seem to see themselves as active participants in the biblical narrative of God's mission to bring salvation to all nations.

Having said this, the fact that only one of the groups brought out evangelism as an application does not imply that the others are not involved in evangelism. To the contrary, Pastors C and E both shared that the young people from their churches are actively involved in evangelism. This suggests that the young people do think they have a role to play in evangelism, but do not connect this with the biblical narrative.

Therefore, I conclude that the young people do see themselves as participants in the biblical narrative, but primarily as recipients of God's blessing, promises, and salvation. They are less inclined to see themselves as having an active role in this narrative in bringing God's blessing, promises and salvation to others and there is no evidence that they see themselves as having a role to play in God's mission to other peoples. Nevertheless, some are involved in evangelism for other reasons, perhaps because it is something that their pastor is encouraging them to do or perhaps because they have heard preaching on a specific Bible passage such as Matthew 28:19-20 which explicitly commands Christians to be involved in making disciples. The implication of this is that they probably see evangelism as part of their obedience to God which they put a great emphasis on, but not as part of their role in the biblical narrative.

### **5.3 To what extent are the research participants representative of young evangelical Christians in this West African city more generally?**

As mentioned in section 3.4, the research participants were probably among the most committed young Christians from five of the largest evangelical churches in this city which all have well organised teaching programmes for children and young people. This is supported by the fact that many of the participants in all groups mentioned participation in church Bible studies and courses during informal discussion after the focus groups. Therefore, the research participants are likely to be among the young Christians with the best Bible knowledge in this West African city.

The implications of this are that I would not expect there to be many groups of young evangelical Christians in this city with a more thorough knowledge of the biblical narrative than the research participants, although some may exist. I would however expect to find many groups with significantly less knowledge of the biblical narrative.

I expect that the kinds of applications that these young people made, focussing largely on obedience to God, taking Bible characters as role models and applying Bible passages primarily to Christian living and relationships, are representative of typical applications made by young evangelical Christians in this city because they are in line with what others have observed about how ordinary African Christians tend to apply the Bible (see section 2.3.3). Given that only one group of young people from these large and well taught churches showed some awareness of having an active role to play in the biblical narrative, I think it is likely that relatively few young evangelical Christians here see themselves as participants in the biblical narrative of God's mission to the world, although it is possible that some have gained this understanding of the Bible even without being taught it in church.

#### **5.4 Implications and recommendations for church youth programmes based on this research.**

In this final section of my analysis, I draw some implications from the research for church youth programmes in this city and share some of the recommendations of the pastors of the participating churches and my own recommendations.

As we concluded in section 2.2, it is of vital importance for Christians to understand the biblical narrative and their role within that. In addition, as argued in section 1.2, in this country, given that Christians make up such a small proportion of the population and young people such a large proportion of the population, young Christians have a vital role to play in bringing the good news of the gospel to the rest of the country. If young Christians have a good understanding of their role within the biblical narrative, they are more likely to be motivated to do that. This chapter has concluded that although the research participants have a reasonably good understanding of the biblical narrative, and see themselves as participants in the narrative as recipients of God's salvation, promises and blessing, the majority do not see themselves as active participants in bringing the good news of God's salvation to all peoples. Therefore, if as argued in the previous section, the research participants are among the young Christians with the best Bible knowledge in this city, it is likely that many young Christians here do not have a good understanding of the role that God is calling them to play in his mission to the world.

On the basis of this, the main recommendations made by the pastors of these churches were that the young people should be encouraged to read and study their Bible more and to attend Bible courses or Bible studies organised by their churches. Pastor B emphasised that the whole Bible talks about the mission of God and that the young people need to understand that God calls everyone to be involved in his mission, adding that it is important for them to know that "God is counting on the youth" to reach the predominantly young population. I agree with these pastors that there is a need for young people to understand the Bible better. However, I would suggest that doing more of what they are already doing will not necessarily improve their understanding of their role in the biblical narrative. The young people need to understand better what the Bible is: not just a guide to life, but a story to live out of. They then need to understand well what this story is about and how they are part of it.

Pastors B, C and E all thought that there are enough books and Bible courses available, but the problem is motivating young people to take advantage of them. However, they were referring to either written literature available in French or literacy-based courses run in French. Informal discussions with the research participants revealed that only one out of the five churches runs a Bible study for young people in the LWC. Given that about 50% of the research participants chose to participate in the LWC, it is clear that many are most comfortable in the LWC even though they have been educated in French. In addition, there are many young people in this city who have not been to school or not gone far in school. The fact that this group seems to be under-represented in church youth groups may reflect the fact that the activities of church youth groups are inaccessible to them. I would therefore recommend that as well as promoting literacy-based courses and literature in French, that the churches explore orality-based options and offer activities in the LWC which many of the young people are more comfortable in.

As I concluded in section 2.1, mission is very important to understanding the biblical narrative, and given the fruitful examples of missional hermeneutics in Africa described in section 2.3.2, I agreed with Knoetze (2015) that there is an important role for missional hermeneutics in Africa which will be most effective if done with ordinary believers in the local church. I therefore recommend that if new orality-based materials are developed in the LWC to help young people to better understand the biblical narrative, then these materials should be designed to follow a missional hermeneutical approach, helping the young people to understand the story of God's mission as told in the biblical narrative (Wright, 2006), and teaching them to ask missional questions of the Bible about God's purpose and ours (Barram, 2006).

In summary, this chapter has answered the research questions by analysing the findings from the focus groups and relating it to the relevant literature and the feedback of the pastors. It has also given some recommendations based on this research. The final chapter will conclude this research, giving an overview of its purpose and outcomes, and some final reflections and suggestions for further research.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter gives an overview of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research and some final reflections and suggestions for further research.

### 6.1 Overview of the research objectives, findings, and recommendations

The aim of this research was to answer two questions: Firstly, how young evangelical Christians in this West African city understand the biblical narrative, and secondly, how they relate to it. To achieve this, I have reviewed the relevant literature in the areas of biblical hermeneutics and Bible engagement and designed and carried out a research project involving focus groups with young people from five churches and follow up interviews with their pastors.

As discussed in detail in chapters four and five, the findings of this research were that, firstly, the young people have a reasonable understanding of the basic framework of the biblical narrative, but have large gaps in their knowledge of it, especially the latter part of the Old Testament. Secondly, they identify salvation or reconciliation with God as the main theme of this narrative. Thirdly, in their application of the Bible they tend to take the biblical characters as role models, with the expectation that God will act how he acted in the biblical stories. Their applications tended to focus on obedience to God and they view the Bible as a means to know God's will so that they can obey it. Most applications were primarily concerned with their relationships with God and with others and most groups made no missional applications. This was in line with the types of applications observed among ordinary African Christians by others, described in section 2.3.3. Finally, they see themselves as participants in the biblical narrative as recipients of God's promises, salvation, and blessings, but most do not see themselves as active participants in the narrative in bringing God's salvation to all peoples. Having said this, several are involved in evangelism, but most do not appear to connect this with their role in the biblical narrative.

Based on these results, in chapter five I recommended that there is a need for more teaching for young people about the biblical narrative and God's mission. Due to the young people's preference for the LWC and the low level of engagement with literacy-based materials observed by their pastors, I recommended that materials be made available in the LWC in a format accessible to oral learners. I also recommended that any such materials be based on a missional hermeneutical approach which can help the young people to understand the story of God's mission as told in the biblical narrative and teach them to ask missional questions of the Bible about God's purpose and ours.

### 6.2 Final reflections and suggestions for further research

This research has fulfilled its objectives and produced at least tentative answers to the research questions.

I was very encouraged by the participants' level of biblical knowledge. With hindsight I may have organised the groups differently to be more homogeneous in terms of education levels. The aim of having mixed groups was to avoid having groups made up only of highly educated participants, but as a result the highly educated participants influenced the results

in all the groups. If I had separated those with little or no French from those with good French, the results would have represented a wider spectrum of young Christians in this city. There are also points at which asking more follow-up questions would have been helpful, for example to discover what the participants really meant by “obedience to God”. Having said this, I feel that in general the focus groups went well and provided the necessary data to answer the research questions.

This research has also revealed various areas for further research. One topic which was uncovered but not developed by this research was the fact that young people are motivated to be involved in evangelism for reasons other than their understanding of the biblical narrative. It would be interesting therefore to research further what currently motivates young people to be involved in evangelism, since this may have implications for how they could be envisioned to be involved in cross-cultural mission.

Another area which could be researched is the gap between the pastors’ theology and the theology of their congregations which was hinted at by pastor D’s comments about how Christians understand “obedience to God” (see section 5.2.3).

Finally, I observed during the focus groups a significant difference in how the literate and non-literate participants contributed to the Bible timeline section of the discussion. Whereas the highly literate participants used summarising statements such as “the flood”, the non-literate participants gave full narrations of the Bible stories they knew, which were both detailed and accurate. This demonstrates the high level of oral-memorised knowledge of the Bible described by some of the African scholars referred to in section 2.3.3. An interesting line of further research would be to run similar focus groups with homogeneous groups of highly literate and non-literate participants to investigate the effect of literacy on how people understand and relate to the biblical narrative.

It has been a great privilege to get a glimpse into how the participants understand and relate to God’s Word and my prayer is that they will continue to grow in their understanding of it and that they and other young Christians in this city will increasingly understand and live out the role God has given them to play in his mission.

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## Appendix A: Focus group discussion guide

This is a translation of the focus group discussion guide, originally written in French and the LWC.

### Opening prayer

#### Introduction (15 minutes)

- The aim of this meeting:
  - o This meeting is part of my dissertation research for an MA in missiology with a university in England.
  - o The aim of the research is to analyse how young evangelical Christians in this city understand the Bible.
  
- What the research is not:
  - o It is not a test. I am not going to give you a grade and report back to the pastor. I will ask open questions which have several possible answers. I am not looking for one particular answer. You are free to discuss between yourselves and to agree or disagree with the answers given by others.
  - o It is not a competition. What you say here will be anonymous in the research report. I am not going to make comparisons between the churches.
  - o It is not teaching. I want to know your ideas, but I am not going to share mine during this meeting.
  
- The structure of the meeting:
  - o Make a Bible timeline
  - o General questions about the Bible
  - o Questions about two Bible passages
  
- Language policy:
  - o The discussion questions will be asked first in the LWC with translation into French. You are free to use either language at any time.
  
- Consent for your participation in the research:
  - o The consent form will be read aloud with translation into the LWC.
  - o All participants should sign the consent form and hand it in before the discussion begins.

**Part 1 – Bible Timeline (20 minutes):**

1. Brainstorm the main Bible characters that you know, and we will write them down for you on slips of paper.
2. Now you are going to make a timeline of the events and characters of the Bible in the order in which they happened. We will start with creation. After creation what happened? And after that?
3. There is one more piece of paper here: it says, “[Church X] youth group”. Where should I put this one on the timeline?

**Part 2 – General questions about the Bible (20 minutes):**

1. Imagine a non-believer asked you what the Bible is about. How would you answer?
2. Why is the Bible important to us?

**Part 3 – Questions on two Bible passages (65 minutes):**

1. Genesis 12:1-7 (25 minutes)
  - a. Explain the main ideas of the passage in your own words.
  - b. Why is this passage important to us?
  - c. Where does this passage fit on the Bible timeline?
  - d. What is the importance of this passage to what comes afterwards or beforehand in the Bible?
2. Acts 10:1-36 (40 minutes)
  - a. Explain the main ideas of the passage in your own words.
  - b. Why is this passage important to us?
  - c. Where does this passage fit on the Bible timeline?
  - d. What is the importance of this passage to what comes afterwards or beforehand in the Bible?
3. What links do you see between these two passages?

**Word of thanks**

**Closing prayer**

**Refreshments**

## Appendix B: Sample coded transcript of a focus group

This is the coded transcript of focus group A's discussion.

### Abbreviations:

JC = Jenny Coulibaly (researcher and moderator)

RA = Research assistant

M = male participant

F = female participant

X = incorrect response

### Explanatory Notes:

1. The recording and therefore the transcript were started after the participants had signed their consent forms and therefore does not include the introduction. It was ended before the final comments and word of thanks.
2. The first part of the focus group discussion when the groups constructed their Bible timeline was not coded as the analysis was based on the photos of their timelines and transcripts. Parts two and three are coded.
3. The transcription is in French: all responses given in the LWC have been translated into French. The coding is done in English.

Speaker	Discussion	Coding
	<b>Part 1</b>	
JC	On va commencer par faire une chronologie, donc citez les grands personnages de la Bible dans n'importe quel ordre d'abord et on va les écrire. Est-ce que vous avez compris ?	
F	C'est par ordre ?	
JC	Non, dans n'importe quel ordre d'abord.	
F	Ok	
M	Abraham	
JC	Abraham, très bien.	
F	Noé	
M	Moïse	
M	Joseph	
F	David	
M	Salomon	

M	Il y a Josué aussi	
F	Jésus	
JC	Jésus – très bien merci	
	(On rit)	
M	Néhémie	
F	Ezéchiël	
M	Marie	
F	Laquelle ? Magdala ?	
M	La mère de Jésus, Marie Magdala	
F	Non, non...	
JC	Si vous voulez tous les deux, on peut mettre tous les deux	
M	Ah, mais c'est la même chose	
F	Non, ce n'est pas la même chose !	
F	La reine Esther	
M	Chadrac	
F	Paul	
M	Marthe	
M	Ruth	
M	Michée	
RA	Zachée ?	
M	Non, non, j'ai dit Michée, je n'ai pas donné Zachée !	
JC	Ok, on laisse Zachée alors. Ça va pour l'instant ? Je pense que ça va pour l'instant. Donc, la deuxième question est ceci : on va raconter les grands événements de la Bible. Et cette fois-ci on va commencer par le premier grand événement et on va continuer jusqu'au dernier. On va raconter les grands événements et on va prendre les personnages et les mettre dans leur place dans la chronologie. Alors, quel est le premier grand événement dans la Bible ?	
M	Par rapport avec les grands personnages ?	
JC	Non, si j'ouvre ma Bible, quelle est la première chose ? Le premier événement ?	

M	La création	
JC	Ok, la création, donc on va écrire la création. Donc on va essayer de le faire dans le bon ordre en commençant par la création jusqu'à la fin, les grandes choses et les grands personnages, on va les mettre là-dedans aussi. Donc à partir de maintenant, vous pouvez dire soit les grands événements ou soit les grands personnages que vous avez déjà dit – on va les ajouter. Donc on a la création. Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé après ça ?	
M	Le déluge	
JC	Ok le déluge. Si quelqu'un veut ajouter quelque chose, vous pouvez intervenir, changez l'ordre, etc. Si vous n'êtes pas d'accord c'est bon de le dire. Ok, le déluge. Et après ça ? Si vous voulez prendre l'un des personnages que vous avez déjà cité pour l'ajouter à la chronologie, vous pouvez le faire.	
F	Pour la création, il faut mettre Adam, Adam et Eve.	
JC	Ok	
	(On écrit)	
JC	Voilà – la création avec Adam et Eve. Après ça vous avez le déluge. Maintenant après ça, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé, ou bien, qui est venu ? On veut le faire dans l'ordre dans lequel les choses se sont passées, ne pas forcément l'ordre que ça se trouve dans la Bible, mais l'ordre dans lequel ça s'est passé dans l'histoire.	
F	La tour n'est pas venue avant le déluge ? La tour de Babel ?	
JC	Ok, on peut mettre la tour de Babel	
F	Ce n'est pas venu avant ça ?	
JC	Qu'est-ce que vous pensez ? C'est avant ou après le déluge ?	
M	Oui, oui, avant.	
Plusieurs Personnes	Avant	
JC	Ok, et après ça ?	
F	Noé	
F	Non, non, Abraham, non ?	

M	Noé et le déluge	
M	C'est Noé à côté du déluge	
JC	Ok, on met Noé à côté du déluge. Et puis, qui est-ce que tu as dit ?	
F	C'est Abraham	
F	Et le sacrifice de son fils, Isaac	
JC	Ok, on peut écrire ça. Merci. Est-ce qu'il y avait d'autres grands événements avec Abraham ?	
M	Oui	
F	La patience de sa femme	
JC	La patience de sa femme – est-ce que tu peux expliquer ça un peu ? Elle était patiente dans quel sens ?	
F	A cause de sa stérilité, donc la stérilité de Sarah	
JC	Ok, donc on peut ajouter ça à la chronologie.	
M	L'autre chose liée à Abraham : Dieu l'a fait sortir de son pays d'origine et lui a promis une autre terre qui est Canaan.	
JC	Ah, ok	
F	La terre promise	
JC	Ok, donc Dieu a appelé Abraham à la terre promise, on peut mettre ça au tableau. Maintenant si on veut mettre les trois choses qui s'est passé avec Abraham dans le bon ordre, on doit les mettre dans quel ordre ?	
F	Et les bénédictions d'Abraham et la bénédiction universelle	
JC	Ok, est-ce que tu peux expliquer ça ?	
F	Bon le passage qui me vient en tête c'est que vous avez été bénit à cause de l'obéissance d'Abraham à la Parole de Dieu. Donc je veux juste parler des bénédictions que nous avons mais qui sont liées à Abraham.	
JC	Ok... ok, je veux qu'on mette les quatre choses-là dans le bon ordre.	
	(Pause)	
JC	Ou bien, on laisse les quatre, tous au même temps ?	

F	Je n'ai pas bien saisi la question	
JC	Bon, les quatre là, on veut les ajouter à la chronologie, qu'est-ce que je prends d'abord entre les quatre fiches là ? On a la patience de Sarah, le sacrifice d'Isaac, Dieu a appelé Abraham pour la terre promise, et la bénédiction d'Abraham.	
F	Je pense qu'on va commencer par « Dieu a appelé Abraham pour la terre promise », ensuite le sacrifice	
F	La patience	
F	Ah non, la patience	
M	La patience, le sacrifice...	
JC	La patience, le sacrifice et puis la bénédiction d'Abraham ?	
M	Oui	
JC	Ok, merci, donc tout ça c'est Abraham. D'accord, donc après Abraham qu'est-ce qui s'est passé, ou bien qui était là ?	
M	Joseph.	
JC	Ok, Joseph. Et qu'est-ce qui s'est passé dans le temps de Joseph ?	
M	Il a été vendu par ses frères	
M	Il a été roi d'Egypte	
M	Gouverneur, gouverneur d'Egypte	
	(On écrit)	
JC	Ok, quoi encore ? ou bien qui encore ?	
	(Pause)	
JC	Quand il est devenu le gouverneur d'Egypte, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé ?	
F	Le roi avait fait un songe, il avait rêvé de quelque chose et donc il avait besoin de l'interprétation. Et c'était Joseph qui a interprété le rêve.	
M	Ça c'était avant... quand il était gouverneur il a fait appeler ses frères et son père, Jacob, pour les faire venir.	
F	Non sa question était comment est-ce qu'il est devenu gouverneur !	

JC	Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé ? Donc les autres aussi sont venus en Egypte n'est-ce pas ?	
	(On continue à discuter la question)	
JC	Ok ça va, ça va. Donc les autres aussi sont allés à Egypte ?	
Plusieurs personnes	Oui, oui	
JC	Ok, et après ça ?	
	(Pause)	
M	Moise	
JC	Ok, est-ce que vous êtes d'accord ?	
M	Oui	
	(On rit)	
JC	Dans l'époque de Moise, quels étaient les grands événements ?	
M	La servitude des enfants d'Israël en Egypte.	
M	La traversée de la mer rouge	
M	Après la servitude, la libération des enfants d'Israël... après la libération il y a eu quarante ans de marche dans le désert	
	(On discute où on va mettre la traversée de la mer rouge)	
F	C'est inclus même dans la libération	
JC	Ok, on le laisse comme ça ? Ok, et après ça ?	
M	Je crois Josué va relier Moise directement – c'est bon pour Moise	
M	Non ! C'est la loi - comment dire... ?	
M	Les dix commandements	
JC	Oh ok	
F	Donc il doit d'abord mettre les quarante ans de marche suivi par les...	
JC	Ok quarante ans dans le désert et puis les dix commandements ?	
F	Voilà !	

JC	Ok, après ça qu'est-ce qui s'est passé ou bien qui est venu ?	
M	Le fait que Moïse n'est pas rentré dans la terre promise	
JC	Oui c'est vrai. Et puis après ça ?	
F	C'est Josué	
M	Josué	
JC	Ok, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé avec Josué alors ?	
F	Il a fait rentrer les Israélites dans la terre promise.	
JC	Très bien	
M	Il y a la traversée de la mer de Jordan avant ça	
	(Pause – on est en train d'écrire et d'arranger les fiches)	
F	Je pense qu'on va faire descendre ça (en indiquant l'un des fiches)	
JC	Ok c'est bon alors... Ok voilà, donc ils sont entrés dans la terre promise. Après ça, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé, ou bien on peut prendre qui après ça ?	
M	Il y a le découlement du mur de Jéricho.	
JC	Ok, les murs de Jéricho. Voilà, et après ça...	
M	Il y a la répartition de la terre promise entre les différentes tribus.	
JC	Ok.... Quoi encore ? On prend qui après ça ?	
M	Après ça, il y a eu la déportation des enfants d'Israël pour aller au pays de Babylonie.	
JC	Ok, très bien. Ok, quels autres événements ou quels autres personnages est-ce que vous voulez mettre ?	
M	Néhémie	
JC	Néhémie ? Ok où est-ce qu'on va le mettre ? Ici ?	
F	Non, non...	
M	Oui, oui, il a été déporté...	
M	Est-ce qu'il a été déporté en Babylonie ?	
M	Je crois qu'il était parmi ce peuple déporté-là.	
F	Je pense qu'on doit faire descendre Néhémie.	

JC	On fait descendre Néhémie ? Qu'est-ce que vous pensez – comme ça ?	
M	Voilà	
F	Maintenant il n'a pas d'événement alors on va le faire remonter !	
JC	Voilà, alors si vous avez d'autres événements à ajouter, on peut les ajouter. Ou bien si vous voulez faire venir d'autres personnages on peut le faire.	
F	Sinon, si c'est la déportation, c'est Jérémie. Mais bon, comme ce n'est pas parmi les noms on peut le laisser.	
JC	On peut ajouter Jérémie alors. Ok, quoi encore ? Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé avec Néhémie si ce n'était pas la déportation ?	
F	La construction des murailles	
M	Reconstruction des murailles	
JC	Ok... les autres personnages qui sont là, qu'est-ce que vous voulez faire avec eux alors ? Après Néhémie et la construction des murailles on a qui encore ?	
	(Pause)	
F	Est-ce qu'on est obligé de prendre tout ça ? Ce n'est pas trop dans l'ordre...	
JC	Bon, tous ces personnes sont dans la Bible, donc ils doivent aller quelque part. Mais si vous ne savez pas où ils sont, on peut les laisser à côté comme ça, d'accord ? Donc si vous savez où les mettre, on veut les mettre dans l'ordre, mais sinon on va les laisser à côté comme ça. Est-ce qu'il y a quelqu'un d'autre que vous voulez mettre dans la chronologie ici ?	
F	Oui !	
JC	Ok, qui encore ?	
F	Il y a David qu'on doit mettre... et Jésus !	
	(On rit)	
F	Si Jésus vient là on va sauter tous ces...	
F	Non, non, il faut David d'abord avant qu'on puisse mettre Jésus.	

F	Voilà, donc on fait l'Ancien Testament d'abord, voilà.	
M	Voilà	
F	Par exemple, même si on n'a pas mis.... Michée, bon je ne pense pas que c'est un problème, mais David – il faut qu'il vive pour que Jésus vient !	
JC	Donc sans David, Jésus ne serait pas là ?	
F	Oui, oui.	
M	Dans ce cas, si on va parler de Jésus, il faut parler de Marie.	
	(Tout le monde parle au même moment – les filles continue à parler de David)	
JC	Ok, donc qu'est-ce que David a fait ? Qui était David ?	
M	David contre Goliath	
F	On met David, Roi d'Israël... et puis la naissance de Salomon	
JC	Ok, Salomon – qu'est-ce que Salomon a fait ?	
M	La construction du Temple	
JC	Ok, merci. Ok, on prend qui encore ou bien quel événement encore ?	
	(Pause)	
JC	Est-ce que vous êtes tous d'accord avec ça jusqu'à là ?	
Plusieurs personnes	Oui	
F	Est-ce que ça ne serait pas la naissance de Joseph et de Marie ?	
F	Est-ce qu'on va rentrer dans la généalogie ?	
	(On rit)	
JC	Vous voulez ajouter Joseph avec Marie ? On peut ajouter Joseph et Marie... Est-ce qu'on ajoute quelqu'un d'autre ou est-ce que c'est fini ? ... Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé avec Jésus ? Est-ce que vous voulez ajouter quelques événements à côté de Jésus ?	

F	Beaucoup de choses ! Les miracles, les guérisons, les sermons... la crucifixion, l'enseignement... la résurrection...	
	(Pause – on écrit)	
F	Au niveau de Joseph et Marie, on peut mettre naissance ?	
JC	Naissance de... ?	
Plusieurs personnes	Naissance de Jésus	
JC	Ok, est-ce que vous voulez ajouter quelqu'un d'autre, ou est-ce qu'on s'arrête là ?	
F	Paul.	
M	Marie Magdala	
F	Oui, oui, avant Paul, avec la résurrection	
JC	Oui, ok.	
M	Il y a un événement avec Paul - la venue du Saint Esprit	
F	Avec Paul ?	
M	Non, ça n'est pas avec Paul	
F	C'est avant Paul et ce n'est pas avec Marie non plus.	
M	C'est avec les disciples	
F	Est-ce qu'on peut mentionner les disciples au niveau de Jésus, ou est-ce que c'est bon ?	
JC	Les disciples – oui c'est possible. On met quels événements à côté de Paul ?	
F	L'appel de Paul par Dieu	
JC	Ok – Dieu appelle Paul	
M	Bon, avant qu'il soit Paul, il y a eu	
F	Saul	
M	Il a été Saul d'abord	
F	La persécution des chrétiens	
M	Voilà, la persécution	
JC	Ok, la persécution.... Et puis autre chose ? Avec Paul ?	

F	Son engagement dans...	
M	Son engagement...	
JC	Quel est la grande chose que Paul a fait ?	
M	L'évangélisation	
JC	Ok.	
F	On a mis persécution des chrétiens, après ça je pense qu'on doit mettre appel.	
M	Non, si on met persécution des chrétiens je pense que ça englobe le tout...	
	(Plusieurs personnes parle au même temps)	
F	Non ! Il n'était même pas Paul ! Il n'était même pas Paul !	
	(On continue à discuter un peu)	
JC	Ok ! Est-ce que c'est fini, ou est-ce que vous avez d'autres événements à ajouter à la fin ? ... Quel est la dernière chose...	
M	Les choses qui se sont passé au temps de la grande personnalité...	
JC	Quel est la dernière chose ? Si on a commencé par la création, on va finir par quoi ?	
	(Pause)	
M	Mmm ?	
JC	Si on a commencé par la création, on va finir par quoi ?	
M	On va finir par la révélation	
JC	Ok, la révélation. Est-ce que vous êtes d'accord ? Est-ce que la révélation est un événement ?	
M	Oui ! C'est un événement !	
JC	Ok, donc on va écrire ça alors...	
F	La fin des temps	
JC	Ok, la fin des temps	
F	Ça rentre dans la révélation	
M	Oui, ça rentre dans la révélation	
M	Bon, il faut mettre la fin jusqu'à en bas	

JC	Ok, et la révélation, vous voulez mettre ça où ?	
F	En dessus de la fin du temps	
M	Voilà	
JC	Ok, il y a encore une chose, c'est la dernière chose qu'on va ajouter. On a ici « Jeunesse de Daoudabougou » On va mettre ça où ?	
M	Quoi ?	
JC	« La jeunesse de [l'église A] »	
	(On rit)	
M	Après la révélation, avant...	
M	Avant la fin du temps !	
M	Non, non, non	
M	C'est avant la fin du temps eh !	
	(On rit)	
F	On n'est pas encore à la fin des temps !	
JC	Ici ?	
M	Non ! C'est entre la révélation et la fin des temps !	
M	Voilà	
M	Entre la révélation et la fin des temps	
JC	Comme ça ?	
Plusieurs personnes	Voilà !	
F	Non, moi je ne suis pas d'accord	
JC	Vous n'êtes pas d'accord, qu'est-ce que vous voulez faire ?	
M	Pourquoi ?	
F	Parce qu'on existe depuis oh !	
	(On rit)	
M	Mais, vous oubliez que la révélation aussi a été... ah ?	
	Tout le monde parle au même temps	
F	Ok, bon, on va le laisser seulement que moi je suis... bon je vais réfléchir	

JC	Tu voulais le mettre où ? Après ça, ou bien avant ça ?	
F	C'est bon – quand l'inspiration va me venir...	
JC	Bon, ok, tu peux me dire après si tu as une autre idée sur ça... merci beaucoup ! Donc acclamez pour vous !	
	(On acclame)	
	<b>Part 2</b>	
JC	Ok, voilà. Donc ça c'est la chronologie de la Bible que vous avez fait. Maintenant on est dans la deuxième partie – questions générales sur la Bible. Donc, la première question : imaginez qu'un non-croyant vous demande « la Bible s'agit de quoi » comment est-ce que vous pouvez répondre ?	
M	Je dirai que la Bible est la Parole de Dieu... Et j'avancerai mon idée en disant que c'est la plus divin auprès des hommes pour montrer comment est-ce que nous devons marcher, pour montrer par quel chemin nous pouvons aboutir jusqu'au paradis.	Bible theme: Word of God Bible theme: How to live Bible theme: How to be saved
JC	D'accord, merci beaucoup. Est-ce que quelqu'un d'autre veut ajouter quelque chose ?	
F	J'ajouterai que ce qui a été fait avant et ce qui est en train de se faire aujourd'hui et ce qui va passer demain, tout ça se trouve dans la Bible.	Bible theme: Past, present, and future
JC	Oui, ok, merci beaucoup, très intéressant.	
F	Pour dire que la Bible est toujours actuelle, il n'y a pas de passé dans la Bible, on peut quand même trouver des événements passés, mais la Bible accompagne toujours l'actualité.	Bible's importance: deeply relevant to us
JC	Ok, d'accord. Ok, très bien. Est-ce que quelqu'un d'autre a quelque chose à ajouter ? La Bible s'agit de quoi ?	
M	Je lui dirai que c'est la Parole de Dieu...	Bible theme: Word of God
F	Je voulais ajouter la Parole vivante de Dieu.	Bible theme: Word of God
M	Ok, qui a été révélé à certains hommes de Dieu qui ont écrit tout cela.	

M	La Bible est un livre... un document de 66 livres – 33 de l’Ancien Testament et 27 du Nouveau Testament.	
M	Donc dans deux grands morceaux.	
JC	Ok, donc on va aller à la deuxième question	
RA	Pourquoi est-ce la Bible important pour nous ?	
M	Je dirai que l’importance de la Bible dans notre vie, est que ça permet et renforce notre marche avec Dieu, donc ça nous permet d’être mieux dans la foi, donc je pense que c’est ça qui est vraiment l’importance de la Bible dans notre vie – c’est-à-dire le renforcement de notre foi en Dieu et la bonne marche avec Dieu	Bible’s importance: it encourages us in our faith
JC	Merci, quelqu’un d’autre...	
F	Moi je dirai que c’est... il a déjà souligné l’édification, mais je dirai que ça nous permet une vie de transformation – on vit tous les jours une vie de transformation quand nous sommes attachés chaque fois à la Parole de Dieu, donc l’un des importances.	Bible’s importance: it transforms us
JC	Ok, merci beaucoup, une vie de transformation, très bien...	
F	L’importance de la Bible, c’est immense ! On peut dire que pour connaître Dieu il faut lire la Bible, pour se mouiller spirituellement, il faut lire la Bible, pour bien réfléchir ou bien étudier, il faut lire la Bible... même si on travaille, on ne doit pas se focaliser sur notre travail, ou sur nos études, ou bien encore nos vies modernes, je pense qu’on doit se focaliser sur la Bible pour que tu puisses... ce que tu es en train de faire, ou ton travail ou bien ton mariage ou autre chose... il faut lire la Bible pour que ça puisse te mettre sur la bonne voie.	Bible’s importance: to know God  Bible’s importance: it helps us to think properly  Bible’s importance: to know God’s will for our lives
JC	Ok, merci beaucoup. Oui ?	
M	Moi je surveillerai les cas particuliers que la Bible peut nous offrir... la Bible nous permet premièrement de nous rapprocher de Dieu à travers sa connaissance, donc quel document dans le monde nous permet de faire cela si ce n’est pas la Bible ? La Bible nous permet deuxièmement de nous conformer avec les rêves de Dieu. Aucun autre document ne peut faire cela. La Bible nous permet troisièmement d’hériter la vie éternelle. Aucun autre document ne peut nous	Bible’s importance: to know God  Bible’s importance: to do God’s will  Bible’s importance: to find salvation

	permettre cela. Donc ça c'est les trois apports que je peux donner sur la Bible. Ça nous rapproche de Dieu, ça nous permet de nous conformer avec Dieu, et ça nous permet d'hériter également la vie éternelle.	
JC	Ok, merci beaucoup. Ok, autre chose ?	
M	Non, c'est bon	
F	Eh ?	
	(On rit)	
F	La Bible est le livre le plus lu. Donc on ne peut que dire quelques importances, sinon on ne peut même pas finir avec.	
JC	Ok, bon merci beaucoup – vous avez donné des très bonnes réponses.	
	<b>Part 3</b>	
JC	Ok, on va donc aux deux passages. Le premier passage est Genèse 12 :1-7. Avant de lire, je vais lire les questions pour que vous ayez une idée avant de lire. Donc, expliquez dans vos propres mots les idées principales de ce passage, puis pourquoi est-ce ce passage important pour nous ? Puis on va vous demander où ça se trouve dans la chronologie et quel est l'importance de ce passage pour ce qui vient avant ou après dans la Bible. Donc écoutez bien ou bien lisez bien pour que vous puissiez répondre à ces questions.	
	(CS lit le passage)	
JC	Ok, la première question est : expliquez dans vos propres mots les idées principales de ce passage.	
M	Bon je trouve que l'idée principal de ce passage est d'abord l'obéissance d'Abraham envers la Parole de Dieu, puisque Dieu lui a ordonné de quitter son pays, sa nation, sa maison, pour aller autre part. Et sans poser des questions il a obéi à Dieu, donc pour moi l'idée principale de ce passage est l'obéissance à Dieu.	Gen 12 theme: obedience to God  Gen 12 event: God called/commanded Abraham to leave his country
JC	Ok, merci. Maintenant, entre les filles, qui veut ajouter quelque chose ?	
F	L'amour de Dieu. Abraham était un homme comme nous aussi. Il a obéi à Dieu, Dieu lui a promis un grand amour, jusqu'à il a dit qu'il bénira tous ceux qui.... Il rendrait Abraham une source de	Gen 12 theme: God's love

	bénédition, il bénirait tous ceux qui béniraient Abraham et il maudirait tous ceux qui maudiraient Abraham – je pense que ça c'est l'amour.	Gen 12 theme: obedience to God  Gen 12 theme: Abraham – source of blessing  Gen 12 event: Promise - those who bless Abraham are blessed...
JC	Ok, merci beaucoup. Une autre personne ? Quelles sont les idées principales ? Ou est-ce que tout est déjà dit ?	
F	Oui, ici moi je peux comprendre que Dieu avait déjà un plan pour Abraham... parce que même bien avant que Abraham commence à entrer dans la résolution de ce que Dieu lui avait dit, quand on lit les premiers trois versets on va voir que Dieu avait déjà tout planifié et il était juste en train de lui dire, et c'était un ordre de partir, voilà selon ma compréhension.	Gen 12 theme: God's plan for Abraham
JC	Ok	
M	Est-ce que c'était bien un ordre ?	
M	Oui	
F	Oui c'était un ordre – il n'a pas donné sa permission.	Gen 12 event: God called/commanded Abraham to leave his country
M	Oui parce qu'il a dit – « va-t'en »	
M	Il avait la possibilité aussi de refuser	
F	Oui mais j'ai parlé de la promesse de Dieu – quand on lit les premiers trois versets pour moi c'est déjà une promesse, parce que bien avant que Abraham ne se lève pour partir, Dieu avait dit tout ça – c'est un ordre et tout ce qui va avec l'ordre – c'est comme ça que j'ai compris, ou bien ?	Gen 12 event: God's promises to Abraham
M	Voilà, oui il a dit en verset deux, je ferai de toi une grande nation et je te bénirais...	Gen 12 event: God's promise – Abraham to be a great nation
F	C'est un plan... voilà...	
JC	Donc quel est le plan exactement ?	

M	C'est de faire d'Abraham une grande nation.	Gen 12 event: God's promise – Abraham to be a great nation
M	Voilà	
JC	Ah ok.	
M	Ah... (Il n'est pas tout à fait d'accord)	
F	Oui c'est dedans, oui...	
	(Tout le monde commence parler au même temps)	
JC	Quel est le plan que Dieu a pour Abraham ? Tu peux le dire dans tes propres mots ?	
F	Bon, le plan c'est tout d'abord qu'il quitte son pays et là Dieu va l'utiliser pour les choses qui sont citées là, voilà, il fera de lui une grande nation, il sera béni...	Gen 12 event: God's promise – Abraham to be a great nation
F	Et il sera le père de tout homme	
F	Voilà	
JC	De tout homme ?	
F	Oui de tout homme	
JC	Comment est-ce qu'il sera le père de tout homme ?	
	(On rit)	
M	Ok, je vais reformuler cela...	
JC	Je vous comprends mais je veux que vous le disiez !	
M	Voilà, le plan de Dieu pour Abraham c'était de faire d'Abraham le père des nations.	Gen 12 theme : God's plan = Abraham to be father of many nations
JC	Ah... ok, d'accord. On va revenir là-dessus. Maintenant, pour quoi est-ce ce passage important pour nous ?	
	(Pause)	
JC	Ou bien quel est le lien entre ce passage et nous ? Quel est l'importance de ce passage pour nous ? Oui ?	
M	Ok, donc je dirai que l'importance de ce passage pour nous est que nous devons être obéissants. Quand nous sommes obéissants, nous pouvons être sûrs que Dieu va nous bénir, parce qu'avec	Gen 12 application: we should obey God

	les paroles que Dieu a prononcées ici... parce qu'il a donné l'ordre à Abraham, Abraham a obéi, donc on a vu que le résultat était la bénédiction, Abraham a été béni par Dieu. Pour quoi ? Parce que Abraham a obéi. Donc, s'il n'avait pas obéi, peut-être c'est le contraire de ce que Dieu a dit qui lui allait arriver.	Gen 12 theme: obedience results in blessing
JC	D'accord...	
F	Donc c'est la récompense de son obéissance ?	
M	Voilà, parce que ça veut dire que nous sommes récompensés en fonction... en fait je pense que c'est ce que le passage... si nous sommes obéissants dans ce que nous faisons...	
F	Dès fois c'est compliqué dans la Bible eh !	
M	Oui ! Oui ! C'est pourquoi...	
JC	Toi tu comprends ça autrement alors ?	
	(On rit)	
RA	Voilà – laisse-la expliquer ce qu'elle a	
M	Ok donc explique ce que tu veux...	
F	Non, c'est bon, je pense que c'est ça.	
M	Ok	
M	Tu ne penses pas que c'est ça !	
F	Bon, comme X a dit, Dieu avait planifié déjà ça pour Abraham, parce que dans la Bible dès fois on voit des hommes qui ont tellement travaillé, qui ont été tellement obéissants, que leur récompense sera autrement...	Gen 12 theme: obedience does not always result in blessing
	(On rit)	
F	Donc je pense que ce que Dieu a déjà planifié, il a planifié que Abraham soit le père de tout homme	Gen 12 theme : God's plan = Abraham to be father of many nations
JC	Ok, comment est-ce que Abraham est le père de tout homme ? Est-ce que vous pouvez m'expliquer ça ?	
F	Toutes les nations alors.	
JC	Oui, mais comment ? Pourquoi ? Est-ce que ça veut dire que si je cherche dans mes ancêtres je vais trouver Abraham quelque part ?	

F	Non... ce n'est pas ça, je pense que c'est une sorte de bénédiction	
F	C'est ça	
F	C'est une sorte de bénédiction, surtout, Abraham n'avait qu'un seul fils, c'est ce fils qui a été Isaac, lui il a eu beaucoup d'enfants, sa maison était grande, je pense que tout ça, c'étaient les descendants d'Abraham, vu qu'Abraham n'avait qu'un seul fils, mais voilà Dieu lui a béni pour lui donner beaucoup de descendants.	X Incorrect information  Gen 12 theme: God blessed Abraham with many descendants
F	Maintenant la réponse à ta question devient oui – quand tu vas fouiller dans tes ancêtres là, tu vas voir que Abraham était un père – voilà c'est oui.	X Gen 12 application: Abraham is our biological ancestor
JC	Ok...	
	(Plusieurs personnes rient mais personne ne le conteste)	
JC	Ok, est-ce qu'il y a d'autres choses à ajouter ? Pourquoi est-ce ce passage important pour nous ?	
M	Oui, dans ce passage il y a question de bénédiction, et pour nous, nous avons la bénédiction à travers Abraham aussi, c'est-à-dire nous avons hérité les bénédictions d'Abraham. Comment ? Parce que Dieu l'a béni et dans ce passage il est dit que tous ceux qui vont le bénir aussi seront bénis, donc à travers Abraham nous avons la bénédiction.	Gen 12 application: we inherit blessing through Abraham  X Gen 12 application: we are blessed by blessing Abraham
JC	Ok, donc nous sommes bénis parce que tous ceux qui bénissent Abraham seront bénis ?	
M	Oui	
JC	Ok. Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres choses à ajouter par rapport à la bénédiction là ?	
M	Moi je vais poser une question. La question est comment est-ce que nous on peut bénir Abraham ?	Disagreement
JC	Bonne question !	
F	Pour moi ce n'est pas [une réponse à] la question, je veux ajouter un autre point qui est souligné dans le passage. Ici, on dehors de tout ce que Dieu a promis à Abraham, je vois aussi une intimité entre Abraham et Dieu. Il y avait la communication entre le Créateur et la créature, Abraham et Dieu. Donc beaucoup de fois, quand nous méditons, bon Dieu	Gen 12 theme: Intimacy/communication with God  Gen 12 application: God can reveal himself to us by various means

	a plusieurs manières de se révéler. Donc on dehors des points qui ont été ressortis, on peut aussi voir que ah ! donc Dieu peut parler à un homme et comment. Donc il y avait une intimité entre Dieu et Abraham et il y avait la communication, il y avait l'échange, voilà.	
JC	Ok donc ça c'est important pour nous ?	
F	Oui, c'est important.	
JC	Ok – d'avoir cette même intimité ?	
F	Voilà c'est important de le savoir et c'est important de le vivre.	Gen 12 application: We can have intimacy with God
JC	OK, on va avancer.	
F	On n'a pas répondu à sa question – c'était quoi même ?	
M	Comment bénir Abraham.	
JC	Bon, est-ce que vous pensez que ça fait référence à nous, quand il est écrit « ceux qui le béniront seront bénis » Est-ce que ça fait référence à nous ou est-ce que ça fait référence plutôt aux personnes qui étaient là au temps d'Abraham ?	
F	Bon on peut dire qu'au premier lieu ça fait référence aux personnes qui étaient autour d'eux... peut être qu'il y avait des personnes qui étaient avec lui et des personnes qui étaient contre lui. Voilà. On ne va pas oublier qu'il y avait des guerres entre les rois, je ne sais pas si à cette époque il y avait des rois, mais moi je pense que c'est par rapport à ceux qui étaient autour de lui.	
JC	Oui, d'accord, merci. Est-ce que les autres sont d'accord ?	
Quelques personnes	Oui	
M	Je pense qu'en ce qui concerne la bénédiction là... quand Dieu a dit que Abraham sera le père des grandes nations, nous voyons que dans la Bible, Dieu va choisir Israël et Israël est issu d'Abraham, avec l'exemple de Balaam et Balaq si nous nous souvenons, nous voyons déjà que le prophète avait essayé de maudire Israël, mais il ne pouvait pas, donc voici un exemple pour bénir et maudire.	Gen 12 theme : God's plan = Abraham to be father of many nations  Gen 12 theme: Israelites to inherit God's promises to Abraham

JC	Ok merci. Ok, on va continuer. Je vous encourage à poser ces questions... moi je ne suis pas ici pour enseigner, mais ce sont des bonnes questions que vous posez, donc je vous encourage à faire plus de recherche – posez ces questions à vos enseignants ou pasteurs, si vous avez encore des questions sur ce passage. Ou lisez un commentaire sur le passage parce que c'est intéressant. Ok ? Troisième question : Quel est la place de ce passage dans la chronologie de la Bible ? Je pense que c'est déjà là en fait – on a déjà mis « Dieu appel Abraham » dans notre chronologie, donc c'est bon. Maintenant quel est l'importance de ce passage pour ce qui vient avant ou après ? Donc quel est l'importance de ça pour la chronologie en gros ?	
M	Bon l'importance pour ce qui vient avant c'est que Dieu n'a pas laisser ce qu'il a créé – ces créatures – il est toujours là avec eux, c'est pourquoi il a béni Abraham. A travers lui tous ceux qui vont venir après Abraham seront bénits aussi.	Gen 12 link to Bible: God has not abandoned his creation  Gen 12 link to Bible: Abraham = source of blessing to those after him
JC	Ok merci beaucoup. Autre chose à ajouter ?	
	(Pause)	
JC	C'est tout ?	
F	C'est comme il a dit.	
JC	Donc ça va alors. S'il n'y a pas d'autres commentaires ça va. D'accord, on va lire le deuxième passage. Actes 10 :1-36. C'est long. On va poser les mêmes questions à la fin ok ? Actes 10 :1-36.	
JC	Merci beaucoup. C'était long ! Donc, la première question : expliquez dans vos propres mots les idées principales de ce passage.	
M	Ce passage, je comprends que Dieu dans son amour n'avantage personne	Acts 10 theme: God loves everyone equally
JC	Ok, oui, merci beaucoup – est-ce que vous êtes d'accord ? ... X, Tu veux ajouter quelque chose ?	
M	Oui, ça rejoint un peu ce qu'on a lu dans Genèse – tout d'abord on voit d'abord l'intimité de Dieu avec sa création et l'obéissance de ces personnages aussi.	Acts 10 theme: Intimacy/communication with God

		Acts 10 theme: Obedience to God
JC	Ok, quels personnages en particulier ?	
M	Pierre et...	
F	Corneille	
M	Corneille	
JC	Ok – tous les deux n’est-ce pas ? Oui, Y et puis je vais revenir ici d’accord ?	
F	Ça nous montre aussi que Dieu est fidèle à ceux qui cherchent réellement. Par exemple, voilà – Corneille, on a dit ici qu’il priait continuellement, il ne se laisse jamais de prier, et il a fait des bonnes actions aux pauvres, voilà. Donc Dieu dans son amour il a envoyé Pierre pour que Pierre et Corneille puisse avoir une bonne communion entre eux – des choses comme ça.	Acts 10 theme: God’s faithfulness to those who are faithful  Acts 10 event: Cornelius prayed regularly  Acts 10 event: Cornelius helped people  Acts 10 event: God sent Peter to Cornelius
JC	Ok, merci très bien, oui ?	
M	Je voudrais appuyer mon idée – vous m’avez coupé la parole mais ce n’est pas un problème	
JC	Pardon	
M	Vous m’avez demandé d’expliquer les grandes idées... je vois ici à travers ce passage une tradition. La tradition est que chez les juifs – les juifs considéraient uniquement les juifs comme ceux qui craignent Dieu – ceux qui sont proches de Dieu. A travers ce passage je comprends que Corneille, qui n’était pas juif, et qui n’était pas considéré par les juifs comme étant cette personnalité, proche de Dieu, Dieu fait comprendre à Pierre, Pierre qui n’avait pas encore compris cela, Dieu prend cet exemple pour faire comprendre à Pierre que lui Dieu, dans son amour n’avantage personne, cette loi juive qui considérait les autres ethnies ou les autres membres de la population comme étant des personnes qui ne sont pas proches de Dieu, Dieu fait comprendre que dans son amour il s’intéresse également à ces personnes-là.	Acts 10 background: Jews thought only Jews were close to God  Acts 10 event: Cornelius was a gentile  Acts 10 event: Peter understood God does not show favouritism  Acts 10 theme: God loves everyone equally

JC	Ok, merci beaucoup – bonne explication	
F	Il ne fait acception de personne – quand Pierre a dit que maintenant j’ai compris que Dieu ne fait acception de personne – tout homme est égal pour Dieu	Acts 10 event : Peter understood God does not show favouritism  Acts 10 theme: God does not show favouritism
F	Mais la fin de ce verset met la différence.	
JC	Comment ?	
F	Là où il est dit – verset 34, en vérité je reconnais que Dieu ne fait point acception de personne mais en toute nation, pas seulement les juifs, celui qui le craigne et qui pratique la justice lui est agréable – voilà – donc il y a un « mais » - il ne fait acception de personne mais...	Acts 10 theme: Everyone who fears/obeys God pleases God  Acts 10 event: Peter understood God does not show favouritism
F	On avait déjà soulevé ça !	
M	Laisse-la expliquer – elle n’a pas encore terminé – il faut comprendre son idée d’abord	
	(Pause)	
JC	Est-ce que l’idée est toujours là ?	
	(On rit)	
F	On avait déjà dit que Dieu est fidèle à ceux qui sont fidèles	Acts 10 theme: God’s faithfulness to those who are faithful
F	À ceux qui sont fidèles aussi – ok	
JC	Donc tu voulais dire qu’il ne fait pas la différence entre les différentes ethnies, mais il fait la différence quand même entre qui et qui ?	
F	Non – bon, je veux dire – la personne qui est plus proche a lui. Dieu n’a pas d’enfant chouchou - Il nous aime tous, mais je peux dire il se révèle plus à la personne qui s’approche de lui qu’à celui qui vient de temps en temps.	Acts 10 theme: God reveals himself to those who seek/obey him
M	Voilà	
JC	Ok merci	
M	Mais ça ce n’est pas la différence.	

M	Je voulais ajouter – au niveau du verset 25, lorsque Pierre entra, Corneille qui était à l'œuvre devant lui tomba à ses pieds en se prosternant mais Pierre lui releva en disant lève-toi, moi aussi je suis un homme. C'est pour dire que on ne doit pas se prosterner devant un homme, on doit se prosterner devant Dieu. Donc je pense que, bon, ça c'est l'humilité. On doit être humble. Voilà, donc ici Pierre a voulu faire savoir à Corneille que lui aussi il est...	Acts 10 event: Cornelius bowed down to Peter  Acts 10 event: Peter told Cornelius not to worship him  Acts 10 application: We should worship God alone  Acts 10 application: We should be humble
F	Comme lui	
M	Voilà – il est comme Corneille. Donc de la manière que Corneille est en train de chercher la face de Dieu, c'est de cette même manière que moi aussi je suis en train de chercher la face de Dieu. Donc je ne suis pas supérieur à lui, même si on peut dire que... (il commence rire)	Acts 10 application: We should seek God's presence/face
M	Non on ne peut rien dire !	
	(On rit)	
M	Voilà on peut dire qu'il était... (on ne peut pas comprendre le dernier mot parce qu'on rit)	
M	Et puis il a plus d'intimité avec Dieu que... (on n'entend pas bien) – il y a la différence mais tout le monde est égal aux yeux de Dieu en fait.	Acts 10 theme: Intimacy/communication with God  Acts 10 theme: God does not show favouritism
JC	Ok, merci beaucoup. Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres choses à ajouter ?	
M	Non c'est bon.	
JC	C'est bon ? Ok, deuxième question – pourquoi est-ce ce passage important pour nous ?	
F	Il nous fait comprendre quelques choses... comme l'humilité, l'amour de Dieu, il nous montre aussi que.... Je reviens...	Acts 10 application: God loves us  Acts 10 application: We should be humble
JC	Ok. Quelqu'un d'autre entretemps... Pourquoi est-ce ce passage important pour nous ? Pour nos vies ?	

M	Ce passage est important pour nous parce que Dieu veut nous montrer que nous ne devons faire acception de personne, et Dieu veut nous montrer également qu'il est fidèle à nous lorsque nous le respectons et que nous obéissons à ses rêves. Voilà, ça c'est le deuxième point, et le troisième c'est l'amour de Dieu	Acts 10 application : We should not show favouritism  Acts 10 theme: God's faithfulness to those who are faithful
JC	Pourquoi l'amour ?	
M	Dieu veut nous montrer que.... Parce qu'au verset 36 on dit... il a envoyé son message au peuple d'Israël la bonne nouvelle de la paix par Jésus Christ. Donc cet amour-là c'est Jésus Christ. Et cet amour est accessible à tous. Voilà ça ne fait acception de personne.	Acts 10 theme: God's love in sending Jesus  Acts 10 theme: Salvation is for all who believe in Jesus
JC	Ok, merci beaucoup. Donc la bonne nouvelle de Jésus est pour tout le monde.	
M	Oui	
F	Ce que je veux aussi ajouter... bon, ça revient à la fidélité de Dieu, mais ce qui me tique c'est... Et on a aussi vu la même chose dans l'autre passage, c'est le processus que Dieu a utilisé juste pour montrer qu'il ne fait pas acception de personne à partir de sa révélation, à travers le songe, ainsi de suite, voilà, donc il communique avec nous, et il agit toujours comme dans Jean il est dit il agit toujours, et ce qui est bien, il faut que nous soyons attentifs. Voilà. Donc il se révèle. Donc ça veut dire qu'il n'a pas un seul moyen, pas un seul canal à travers lequel il se révèle, il y a plusieurs... – l'autre là, on a vu que c'était à travers un rêve, ici aussi la même chose mais dans notre passage tu vas voir que Dieu a plusieurs moyens de se révéler à nous. Donc comment le savoir si on ne vient pas aux pieds du Seigneur pour chercher à savoir ce qu'il a pour nous ? Donc c'est ça. Dieu est prêt toujours à se révéler.	Acts 10 theme: God's faithfulness to those who are faithful  Acts 10 theme: God does not show favouritism  Acts 10 theme: God's revelation  Acts 10 application: God reveals himself to us by various means  Acts 10 application: We should seek God's presence/face
JC	Merci beaucoup, très bonne réponse. Est-ce que quelqu'un a d'autres choses à ajouter ?	
M	Un autre élément important - ça c'est l'amour du Christ annoncé à Corneille. Nous voyons ici qu'au début du passage on dit Corneille était un homme pur, il respectait Dieu, il obéissait à Dieu. Mais par finir nous voyons que Dieu a envoyé Pierre a lui pour lui montrer que cela ne suffisait pas. Il fallait qu'il puisse croire à Jésus Christ comme son Seigneur et Sauveur. Donc ce n'est pas seulement	Acts 10 theme: God's love in sending Jesus  Acts 10 event: Cornelius believed in God even though gentile

	être pur, ou d'obéir à Dieu ou le respecter, que cela suffit – non. Il faut croire aussi à Jésus Christ, il faut accepter l'amour de Dieu.	Acts 10 theme: obedience to God  Acts 10 theme: importance of salvation – obedience is not enough
JC	Oui, d'accord, merci beaucoup, très bien. Ok, quel est la place de ce passage dans notre chronologie ? On avait mis l'appel d'Abraham dans la chronologie déjà, mais on n'a pas encore mis Corneille donc ou est-ce que ça entre dans notre chronologie ? Spécifiquement la rencontre entre Corneille et Pierre.	
JC	Ici ?	
Plusieurs personnes	Non !	
F	Après Paul	
F	Avant Paul !	
JC	Avant Paul ? Ok...	
M	Non, c'est après la conversion de Paul... donc juste après Paul	
JC	Après Paul, donc ici quelque part – au niveau d'évangélisation ici ?	
M	Voilà	
JC	Ok, merci. D'accord. Et quel est l'importance de ce passage pour ce qui vient soit avant ou soit après dans la Bible ? Est-ce qu'il y a des liens avec ce qui vient avant ou après ?	
M	L'importance de ce passage-là – le dernier aspect que j'ai expliqué – l'amour de Christ, l'amour de Dieu par Jésus Christ... je peux dire que ce passage a été important pour ceux qui était avant parce qu'il y a un passage de la Bible qui dit que quand Jésus est rentré dans le séjour des morts, il est allé annoncer la bonne nouvelle à ceux qui sont morts avant lui. Donc maintenant l'importance de ce passage-là est l'amour de Christ pour ces gens-là et cet amour qui continue également pour nous qui sommes présents.	Acts 10 link to Bible: God's love in sending Jesus  Acts 10 application: God loves us
JC	Ok, merci, donc l'amour de Christ pour tous. Est-ce que quelqu'un a d'autres choses à dire sur ça ?	

F	Il a déjà tout dit.	
JC	Ok, on a une dernière question par rapport aux deux passages. Quel lien voyez-vous entre les deux passages que nous avons lus – Genèse 12 et Actes 10 ? Quel lien voyez-vous entre ces deux passages ?	
M	Je vois l'intimité entre Dieu et les hommes. Dieu communique toujours avec les hommes qui sont fidèles	Link from Gen 12 to Acts 10: Intimacy/communication with God
JC	Ok, oui merci beaucoup.	
F	L'amour de Dieu envers les hommes. Comme j'avais dit – le passé, le présent et le futur aussi, c'est dans la Bible. Quand on a lu Genèse, les histoires d'Abraham, c'étaient des choses passées – c'était dans l'Ancien Testament. Maintenant Corneille est dans le Nouveau Testament. Comme X a dit, c'est un processus. C'est comme avant il y avait Abraham, il n'y a plus Abraham mais il y a une relation entre Abraham et Pierre et Corneille – il y a l'amour qui était là-bas, il y a l'amour qui est là dans Pierre et Corneille, et cet amour est toujours là.	Link from Gen 12 to Acts 10: God's love
JC	Ok, d'accord, merci beaucoup.	
M	Je voulais ajouter un autre élément – c'est l'obéissance. Nous voyons que Abraham était obéissant à Dieu, et c'est le même cas avec Pierre... c'est le même cas entre Pierre et Dieu. Quand Dieu l'avait ordonné à travers son Esprit de descendre avec ces gens-là, les envoyés de Corneille, pour aller chez Corneille, il a obéi. Voilà.	Link from Gen 12 to Acts 10: Obedience to God
JC	Très bien, merci. [X], est-ce que tu as quelque chose à ajouter ?	
F	Ils ont déjà souligné les éléments...	
Plusieurs personnes	L'amour... l'obéissance.... L'intimité...	Link from Gen 12 to Acts 10: God's love  Link from Gen 12 to Acts 10: Obedience to God  Link from Gen 12 to Acts 10: Intimacy/communication with God

F	Bon, ce qui englobe le tout – la fidélité de Dieu qui est inconditionnelle, qui...	Link from Gen 12 to Acts 10: God's faithfulness
M	Parce que nous avons vu avec tous ces hommes qu'ils étaient obéissants à Dieu, et Dieu a été fidèle à eux.	Link from Gen 12 to Acts 10: Obedience to God  Link from Gen 12 to Acts 10: God's faithfulness
F	Même ceux qui n'ont pas été obéissants, comme on n'a pas touché, Dieu a toujours été fidèle, donc...	
F	Dieu est toujours fidèle	Link from Gen 12 to Acts 10: God's faithfulness
F	Oui Dieu est toujours fidèle. Moi j'ai essayé d'englober – c'est toujours la fidélité de Dieu	
JC	D'accord. Merci beaucoup pour tout ce que vous avez partagé.	

## Appendix C: Tables showing focus group results

### Part 1: Bible timeline

The tables below show the final timelines produced by each group. An asterisk (\*) marks parts of the timelines that were in the incorrect order.

#### Group A's Bible timeline

Person	Event
Adam and Eve	Creation
	*Tower of Babel
Noah	Flood
Abraham	God called Abraham to the promised land
	Sarah's barrenness
	Sacrifice of Isaac
	*Blessing of Abraham and universal blessing
Joseph	Joseph sold by his brothers
	Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams and becomes governor of Egypt
	Jacob and brothers come to Egypt
Moses	Israelites in slavery in Egypt
	Liberation of Israelites
	40 years in the desert
	*10 commandments
	Moses did not enter promised land
Joshua	Crossing the Jordan river
	Walls of Jericho
	Division of the promised land
*Jeremiah	*Exile to Babylon
*Nehemiah	*Rebuilding of walls of Jerusalem
*David – King of Israel	*David and Goliath
*Solomon	*Building of Temple
Joseph and Mary	Birth of Jesus
Jesus	Miracles of Jesus
Jesus disciples	Teaching of Jesus
	Crucifixion of Jesus
Mary Magdalen	Resurrection of Jesus
	Coming of Holy Spirit
Paul	Persecution of Christians
	Call of Paul
	Evangelism
	Cornelius and Peter
	Revelation
[Group A] youth group	

	The End of the World
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The following Bible characters were written down but were not included in the timeline:  
Shadrack, Ruth, Micah, Martha, Ezekiel, Esther.

### Group B's Bible timeline

Person	Event
	Creation
Adam and Eve	Fall
	Adam and Eve chased out of garden
	Adam and Eve have children
	Murder of Abel
Noah	World full of sin
	Construction of Ark
	Flood
Abraham	Sarah's barrenness
	God's promise of a son
	Sacrifice of Isaac
Moses	Pharaoh ordered killing of Israelite boys
	God called Moses
	Liberation of Israelite slaves
	Crossing of red sea
	Israelites in the desert
	10 commandments at Mount Sinai
	Moses disobeyed God and did not enter promised land
*Isaiah	*Announced coming of Jesus
*Joseph (son of Abraham!)	*Joseph's dreams
	*Joseph sold by brothers
	*Joseph tempted
	*Joseph becomes governor of Egypt
	*Joseph gives food to Israelites
*Joshua	
*Jonah	
*David – King of Israel	*Killed a giant
*Solomon	
*Ezra	
*Esther	
*Naomi	
*Elijah	
*Elisha	
Joseph, husband of Mary	
John the Baptist	
Jesus and Jesus' disciples	
Paul	

	Revelation
[Group B] youth group	
	End of the World

The following Bible characters were written down but were not included in the timeline:  
Jeremiah, Daniel, Ruth, Nehemiah.

### Group C's Bible timeline

Person	Event
	Creation
Adam	Fall
Abel	First death
Noah	Flood
	Tower of Babel
Abraham	Sacrifice of Isaac
Isaac	
Jacob	Jacob wrestles with God
Joseph	Joseph sold into Egypt
	Joseph administrator in Egypt
Moses	Call of Moses/burning bush
	10 plagues
	Liberation of Israelite slaves
	Crossing of red sea
	40 years in desert
Joshua and Caleb	Exploration of promised land
*Elijah	
*Elisha	
*Saul	*First King of Israel
*David	*Victory over Goliath
*Hannah	*Prayer of Hannah
*Samuel	
*Daniel	*Exile to Babylon because of disobedience
*Nehemiah	*Construction of walls of Jerusalem
*Gideon	
*Esther	*Fasting of Esther
*Ruth	
*Boaz	
*Jonah	*Refusal to go to Nineveh
*Ezekiel	*Vision of dry bones resurrected
Elizabeth	Meeting of Mary and Elizabeth
Joseph, husband of Mary	Joseph's dream
	Joseph accepts to marry Mary
	Journey to Bethlehem
Jesus	Birth of Jesus

Nicodemus	Conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus
	Death of Jesus
	Resurrection of Jesus
Paul	Persecution of the church
	Conversion of Paul
	Evangelism of non-Jews
Eunice	*First woman converted in Europe
	*Resurrection of Eunice
[Group C] youth group	
	Return of Jesus
	End of the world

### Group D's Bible timeline

Person	Event
	This was the pilot group. All other groups were given "creation" as a starting point except this one.
Noah	Flood
Job	
Abraham	
Moses	Crossing the red sea
Joshua	
Samuel	
David	
Elijah	Miracles
Isaiah	Prophecy about birth of Jesus
Jeremiah	Exile to Babylon
*Jonah	
Daniel	
Jesus	Birth of Jesus
	Miracles of Jesus
	Transfiguration
	Pentecost
Paul	
John	Revelation
[Group D] youth group	

### Group E's Bible timeline

Person	Event
Adam	Creation

	Fall
Noah	Flood
Abraham	Covenant – God promises to give Abraham a son and make him a great nation – salvation will come through his family line
	Sacrifice of Isaac
Isaac	
Esau and Jacob	Sale of birth right
	Jacob works for Laban for several years and marries Leah and Rachel
Judah and Joseph	Judah is an ancestor of Jesus
	Joseph sold as a slave by brothers
	Joseph governor of Egypt
	Jacob and family go to Egypt
	Israelites in Slavery in Egypt
Moses and Aaron	Liberation of Israelite slaves
	Israelites in the desert
	10 commandments
Joshua and Caleb	Israelites enter Canaan
	Walls of Jericho
David – shepherd and then King of Israel	David and Goliath
Solomon	Construction of temple
*Esther	*Fasting of Esther and salvation of Jews
*Ruth and Naomi	
*Elijah and Elisha	*Elisha is the disciple of Elijah
	*Elijah went to heaven
*Nehemiah	
*Zephaniah	
*Habakkuk	
*Zerubbabel	
*Jeremiah	
*Ezekiel	
*Isaiah	*Prophecy about birth of the Messiah
*Daniel	
Mary	And angel appears to Mary
	Birth of Jesus
John the Baptist	
Jesus	Crucifixion of Jesus
	Resurrection of Jesus
Jesus' disciples – John, James, Peter	Jesus' disciples continue his ministry
Paul	Persecution of the church
	Conversion of Paul
	Revelation
[Group E] youth group	

	Return of Jesus and the End of the World
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## Part 2: General Questions about the Bible

### What is the Bible about?

Some of the answers to this question were main themes of the whole Bible and some were topics that the Bible talks about. These are shown separately in the two tables below.

#### Main Bible themes

The Bible is about...	Total no. of responses	No. of groups
The Word of God	12	5 – A,B,C,D,E
How to be saved/reconciled to God	7	4 – A,C,D,E
God's love	3	2 – C,D
The past, the present and the future	2	2 – A,E
The Acts of God	4	1 – D
It reveals God to us	3	1 – D
The thoughts of God	2	1 – D
God's power	1	1 – D
The problem of human sin	1	1 – E
How to live	1	1 – A
The Bible is about Jesus	1	1 – C
The story of God's people, Israel	1	1 – D

#### Bible topics

The Bible talks about...	Total no. of responses	No. of groups
The end of world	3	2 – B,D
Creation	3	2 – B,D
The life of Jesus	3	2 – B,D
The law of Moses	2	1 – B
The prophets	1	1 – B
Submission	1	1 – D

#### Why is the Bible important to us?

The Bible is important to us because...	No. of responses	No. of groups
To know God	7	4 – A,B,C,D
To know God's will for our lives	7	4 – A,B,D,E

To do God's will	5	4 – A,B,D,E
To find salvation	6	3 – A,D,E
God talks to us through the Bible	4	3 – B,C,E
The Bible is our spiritual food/strength	4	3 – B,C,D
It is deeply relevant to us	2	2 – A,D
For evangelism	1	1 - E
The Bible helps us make good choices	2	1 – D
Happiness is found in the Bible	1	1 – D
To resist temptation	1	1 – D
If we obey the Bible, we will be successful	1	1 – C
The Bible teaches us	1	1 – B
It helps us to think properly	1	1 – A
The Bible transforms us	1	1 – A
The Bible encourages us in our faith/walk with God	1	1 - A
X <sup>4</sup> The Bible is God	1	1 – B

### Part 3: Questions about Genesis 12:1-7 and Acts 10:1-36

The responses to questions 1, “What are the main ideas of this passage?” and question 2, “Why is this passage important to us?” were combined and coded under three categories: “events”, “themes and interpretation” and “applications”.

#### Events in Genesis 12:1-7

Event (listed in the order mentioned in the passage)	Total no. of responses	Groups	Verse
Abraham had no children	1	E	Not mentioned in this passage
God appeared to Abraham	1	D	1
God called/commanded Abraham to leave his country	14	A,B,C,E	1
Abraham did not know where he was going	5	C,D,E	1 (Assumed but not

<sup>4</sup> “X” indicates an incorrect response.

			mentioned in the passage)
God promised to make Abraham a great nation	11	A,B,C,D,E	2
God promised to bless Abraham	6	A,B,C,D	2
God promised that whoever blesses Abraham will be blessed, whoever curses will be cursed	3	A,B,E	3
God promised to bless all nations through Abraham	2	C	3
Abraham was old	2	E	4
Abraham went to Canaan	4	D,E	4-5
God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants	3	E	7
Abraham built an altar and worshipped God	1	E	7

### Themes of Genesis 12:1-7

Theme	Sub-theme	Total no. of responses	Groups
Obedience to God		23	A,B,C,D,E
	<i>Obedience to God</i>	15	A,B,C,D,E
	<i>Obedience results in blessing</i>	7	A,B,C,E
	<i>Obedience does not always result in blessing</i>	1	A
God's blessing		13	A,B,C,E
	<i>Abraham source of blessing</i>	1	A
	<i>God blessed Abraham and gave him lots of descendants</i>	1	A
	<i>God blessed Abraham's descendants</i>	2	B
	<i>Obedience results in blessing</i>	7	A,B,C,D,E
	<i>Obedience does not always result in blessing</i>	1	A
	<i>Faith results in blessing</i>	1	E
Faith in God		10	C,D,E
	<i>Faith in God</i>	7	C,D,E
	<i>Faith results in blessing</i>	1	E
	<i>God saw Abraham's faith</i>	2	E
God's plan		5	A

	<i>God had a plan for Abraham</i>	2	A
	<i>God's plan is to make Abraham the father of many nations</i>	3	A
Salvation comes through Abraham's line		3	C,E
Israel will inherit promises to Abraham		2	A,B
God's love		1	A
Intimacy/communication with God		1	A

### Applications of Genesis 12:1-7

Application	Subtopic	No. of responses	Groups
We should obey God		21	A,B,C,D,E
	<i>We should obey God</i>	12	A,B,D,E
	<i>We should follow God</i>	2	C
	<i>We should obey God even if we do not know the outcome</i>	2	D
	<i>If God calls us to go somewhere, we should go</i>	3	B,E
	<i>If we obey God like Abraham, God will bless us as he blessed Abraham</i>	2	B,D
	<i>We should consult God before making decisions</i>	1	E
Our relationship to Abraham		6	A,C,E
	<i>We inherit blessing through Abraham</i>	2	A,C
	<i>We (Christians) are now Abraham's family</i>	1	E
	<i>We receive salvation through Abraham</i>	1	C
	<i>X We are blessed by blessing Abraham</i>	1	A
	<i>X Abraham is our biological ancestor</i>	1	A
How God relates to us		4	A,E

	<i>God can reveal himself to us by various means</i>	1	A
	<i>We can have intimacy with God</i>	1	A
	<i>God does not force us to do anything</i>	1	E
	<i>God leads us to what is good for us, not what is bad for us</i>	1	E
We can have confidence/faith in God		2	C,E

### Links from Genesis 12:1-7 to the rest of the Bible

Link to rest of Bible	Subtopic	No. of responses	Groups
Abraham is a source of blessing to the generations coming after him		3	A,B,C
Link between God's promises to Abraham and salvation		4	C,E
	<i>All nations will be blessed through Jesus</i>	2	C
	<i>Salvation comes through Abraham's line</i>	1	C
	<i>God's covenant with Abraham will lead to salvation</i>	1	E
Abraham's obedience was necessary for what happened next		3	D,E
	<i>Because Abraham obeyed, God's promise will be fulfilled</i>	1	E
	<i>If Abraham had not obeyed, everything afterwards from Moses to Jesus would not have happened</i>	2	D

Comparisons between Abraham and other Bible characters		4	C,D
	<i>Faith</i>	2	D
	<i>Obedience</i>	1	D
	<i>God's help</i>	1	C
God has not abandoned his creation		1	A

### Events in Acts 10:1-36

<b>Event</b> (Listed in the order mentioned in the passage)	<b>Total no. of responses</b>	<b>Groups</b>	<b>Verse</b>
Cornelius believed in God/feared God even though gentile	6	A,C,D,E	1-2
Cornelius helped people	4	A,B,C,E	2
Cornelius prayed regularly	4	A,B,D,E	2
An angel talked to Cornelius	6	C,D,E	3
Cornelius sent for Peter	4	B,C,D	8
God answered Cornelius' prayers	5	B,D,E	4
Peter's vision	9	B,C,D,E	10-16
God/the Holy Spirit told Peter to go to Cornelius	3	A,D,E	19-20
Peter went to tell Cornelius about salvation	4	B,C,D	23, 34-36
Cornelius bowed down to Peter	2	A,B	25
Peter told Cornelius not to worship him	2	A,B	26
Jews did not associate with non-Jews	7	B,C,E	28
Because of the vision Peter understood that he should accept Cornelius	7	C,D,E	28
Peter understood that God does not show favouritism	3	A	34

### Themes of Acts 10:1-36

Theme	Sub-theme	Total no. of responses	Groups
God loves everyone equally and does not show favouritism		14	A,B,C,D,E
	<i>God does not show favouritism</i>	10	A,B,C,D,E
	<i>God's love is for everyone/everyone is important to God</i>	4	A,E
Obedience to God		9	A,B,C,D,E
	<i>Obedience to God</i>	6	A,B,C,D
	<i>Obedience results in blessing</i>	2	B
	<i>Obedience does not always result in blessing</i>	1	E
	<i>Everyone who obeys/fears God, pleases God</i>	4	A,B,E
God responds to those who seek him		14	A,B,D,E
	<i>God reveals himself to those who seek him/obey him</i>	5	A
	<i>God answered Cornelius' prayers</i>	5	B,D,E
	<i>God saw Cornelius' good works</i>	3	B,E
	<i>God saw Cornelius' faith</i>	1	E
Salvation is for all who believe in Jesus		10	A,C,D,E
	<i>Salvation is for all who believe in Jesus</i>	6	A,C,D,E
	<i>Importance of faith for salvation – obedience is not enough</i>	2	A,D
	<i>No ethnic group is unable to be saved</i>	1	E
	<i>Nobody has sinned too much to be saved</i>	1	E
	<i>God's plan is for people from all ethnic groups to be saved through Jesus Christ</i>	1	E
All ethnic groups are one in Christ		6	B,C,D,E
	<i>All ethnic groups are one in Christ</i>	4	B,D,E
	<i>God has removed the barrier between Jews and Gentiles</i>	2	D
God works through people		5	C,D
	<i>God can work through anyone</i>	3	C,D

	<i>God uses people (not angels) to bring the message of salvation</i>	2	C
Faith in God		3	D
God's love in sending Jesus		2	A
Importance of prayer		3	B
Intimacy with God		2	A
God's revelation		1	A
It is God who prepares hearts to receive the gospel		1	E

### Applications of Acts 10:1-36 concerning our relationship with others

<b>Applications concerning our relationship with others</b>	<b>Subtopic</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>Groups</b>
We should not show favouritism or judge others		11	A,B,C,D,E
	<i>We should not show favouritism</i>	1	A
	<i>We should not take people's caste into account</i>	1	C
	<i>We should not show favouritism on the basis of ethnicity</i>	3	B, D, E
	<i>We are all sinners so we should not judge each other</i>	1	E
	<i>We should not consider anyone to be impure</i>	3	B,E
	<i>We should not think some are better than others</i>	2	E
We should be humble		2	A
We should love each other		2	B,E
We should share the gospel with all types of people		1	E

We should forgive each other		1	E
We should help the poor		1	B

### Applications of Acts 10:1-36 concerning our relationship with God

Applications concerning our relationship with God	Subtopic	No. of responses	Groups
We should obey God		6	B,D,E
We should pray with faith and God will respond		6	B,D,E
	<i>We should pray with faith and God will respond</i>	2	B,D
	<i>If we persevere in prayer, God will answer us like he answered Cornelius</i>	4	B,E
God communicates with us		5	A,B,D
	<i>God communicates with us</i>	1	B
	<i>God can reveal himself to us by various means</i>	1	A
	<i>If you read something in the Bible that you do not understand, God can use another person to clarify it to you</i>	1	D
We should worship God alone		2	A,B
We should have faith in God		2	D
We should seek God's presence/face		2	A
God loves us		2	A
We should seek God's will		1	B

We should listen to the Holy Spirit		1	D
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### Links from Acts 10:1-36 to the rest of the Bible

Link to rest of Bible	No. of responses	Groups
This is the start of the gospel going to all nations	4	C,D
God's love in sending Jesus	1	A

### Links between Genesis 12:1-7 and Acts 10:1-36

Link	Subtopic	No. of responses	Groups
Acts 10 is the beginning of the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham		2	C,E
Similarities between the two passages		31	A,B,C,D,E
	<i>Obedience to God</i>	11	A,B,C,D,E
	<i>Faith in God</i>	5	D,E
	<i>God's faithfulness</i>	4	A,E
	<i>God's love</i>	2	A
	<i>Intimacy/communication with God</i>	2	A
	<i>Courage</i>	2	E
	<i>Abraham and Peter both left home to go to others</i>	1	C
	<i>God's blessing</i>	1	B
	<i>God revealed himself to people</i>	1	B
	<i>Importance of holiness</i>	1	D
	<i>Abraham and Peter's actions both result in great blessing to humanity</i>	1	D

## **Appendix D: Report sent to the pastors of the participating churches**

*This is an adapted translation of the report (originally written in French) sent to the leaders of the participating churches before they were interviewed.*

### **Report about the focus groups with young evangelical Christians which took place from December 2018 to February 2019**

Dear pastors and church leaders,

I am writing you this report to give you an account of the focus groups which I had the opportunity to lead in your churches between December 2018 and February 2019 as part of my research for my MA dissertation on the topic : “How young Christians in a West African city understand the biblical narrative”.

#### **A Word of thanks**

I would like to start by thanking you for giving me permission to conduct these focus groups in your churches. I also thank the youth leaders who helped to organise the groups and all the young people who participated. I very much appreciated the level of commitment and participation of all the young people who took part in this research. It was a great encouragement to me to see their faith and their desire to know and understand the Word of God.

#### **The aim of the research**

The aim of the focus groups was to answer two research questions:

1. How do young evangelical Christians in this city understand the Bible metanarrative?
2. How do they apply it to their lives?

However, I did not ask these questions directly. I asked the young people several other questions during the focus groups to help me to respond to these research questions.

#### **The motivation for the research**

The Bible is a grand narrative which starts with the creation of the world in Genesis 1 and finishes with the creation of the new world in Revelation. This story is described differently by different theologians – some say it is the story of salvation or the story of redemption. Others say that it is the story of the mission of God in our world. This story is the true story of our world and we are in the middle of this story. In fact, we are part of this story – we are the church to whom God has given the task of accomplishing his mission on earth.

According to several missiologists, how Christians understand the story of the Bible and how they apply it to their lives has a profound effect on their understanding of the world and their actions and behaviour in the world. If a Christian understands that the Bible is the story of God’s work in our world and that God has given us an important role to play in this story, that

will radically change his objectives in life, so that no matter if his job is to sell in the market or to be the pastor of a church, he will try to show the love of God to everyone and to share the gospel of Jesus Christ when he has the opportunity. If all Christians had this understanding of their role in the story of the mission of God in our world, the world would change!

Given the context of this country, where Christians make up a small proportion of the population and young people make up a very big part of the population, it is therefore important that the young Christians of this country understand the story of the Bible and their role in this story.

### **Structure of the focus groups**

The discussion in the focus groups was divided into three parts:

1. The young people made a Bible timeline by firstly thinking of all the main Bible characters and events that they know, and then trying to put them into the correct order.
2. The young people responded to two general questions about the Bible.
3. The young people listened to two Bible passages, Genesis 12:1-7 and Acts 10:1-36 and responded to a series of questions about these two passages.

### **Summary of the results of the focus groups**

#### **1. Bible Timeline**

All the groups were able to cite a large number of Bible characters and events. They found it a little difficult to put them into the correct order.

In general, most of the groups did well with the first part of their timeline from creation to Joshua. However, four out of five groups had a lot of difficulty putting the rest of the Old Testament into the correct order, even if they knew a lot of characters from this part of the Bible. One group did this well. In general, all the groups did well with the New Testament.

Here are the Bible characters and events which at least three groups out of five were able to put into the correct order:

<u>Characters</u>	<u>Events</u>
Adam and Eve	Creation Fall
Noah	Flood
Abraham	Sacrifice of Isaac
Joseph	Joseph is sold by his brothers Joseph becomes governor of Egypt
Moses	Liberation of Israelite slaves Crossing of the Red Sea The ten commandments
Joshua	
Mary and Joseph	The birth of Jesus
Jesus and his disciples	The crucifixion of Jesus The resurrection of Jesus
Paul	Persecution of the church

Conversion of Paul  
The end of the world

One group was able to continue in the correct order after Joshua: Samuel, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel.

The other groups did not succeed in making a correct timeline of this part of the Old Testament, but they nevertheless mentioned several characters from this part of the Bible.

Here is a list of the other characters who were mentioned by at least three out of five groups but not in the correct order: Ruth, David, Solomon, Elijah, Jonah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Esther, Daniel, Nehemiah.

**2. General questions about the Bible**

**a. *If a non-Christian asks you “What is the Bible about?”, how would you respond?***

The young people gave lots of good answers to this question. Two big themes came up again and again in almost all the groups. Firstly, that the Bible is the Word of God. Secondly, that the Bible is about salvation or how to be reconciled with God.

**b. *Why is the Bible important to us?***

The two big themes in the responses to this question were firstly, the importance of the Bible for knowing God and secondly the importance of the Bible for knowing God’s will. They also talked about the importance of the Bible for finding salvation and for communicating with God.

**3. Questions about two Bible passages**

**Genesis 12:1-7**

**a. *What are the main ideas of this passage?***

The big themes that the young people found in this passage were Abraham’s obedience to God, Abraham’s faith and God’s blessing of Abraham. At least one person in each group said that obedience results in blessing, and one person in one group said that obedience does not always lead to blessing. Two out of five groups commented that salvation comes through Abraham’s line.

**b. *Why is this passage important for us?***

Almost all the applications of this passage were related to obedience, saying that we should obey God like Abraham did.

**c. *What links do you see between this passage and the rest of the Bible (what happens before or afterwards in the Bible?)***

Three groups said that Abraham is a source of blessing to the generations that come after him.

Two groups said that salvation comes through Abraham's line and one of these groups explained that God's promise to Abraham to bless all nations through him will be accomplished through Jesus.

Two groups said that Abraham's obedience was necessary for what happened next in the Bible story.

### **Acts 10:1-36**

#### **a. What are the main ideas of this passage?**

The young people found five big themes in this passage. Firstly, that God loves everyone without exception. Secondly, the importance of Cornelius and Peter's obedience. Thirdly, that God responds to those who genuinely search for him. Fourthly, that salvation is for all who believe in Jesus. And finally, that all ethnic groups are one in Christ.

#### **b. Why is this passage important for us?**

There were lots of good answers to this question, but three themes came out more than the others:

Four groups said that we should not judge others or show favouritism to certain types of people.

Three groups talked about the importance of obeying God like Cornelius and Peter.

Three groups talked about the importance of persevering in prayer with faith.

#### **c. What links do you see between this passage and the rest of the Bible? (What happens before or afterwards in the Bible?)**

The young people had some difficulty responding to this question, but two groups said correctly that it is from this story onwards that the gospel started to go to non-Jewish peoples.

#### **d. What links do you see between these two passages?**

Most of the groups gave thematic answers to this question, for example the theme of obedience was mentioned in all five groups as a link between the two passages.

Two groups said that the story in Acts 10 is the start of the evangelisation of non-Jews which is the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 to bless all nations through him. The other three groups did not make this link.

## **Preliminary answers to the research questions**

### **1. How do young evangelical Christians in this city understand the Bible narrative?**

- All the groups have an understanding of the main outline of the Bible story, including creation, the call of Abraham, Moses and the Exodus, the arrival in the promised land, the life of Jesus and the end of the world. However, they have big holes in this story, especially concerning the story of the people of Israel after they had arrived in the promised land.
- Four out of five groups identified salvation or reconciliation with God as the main theme of the Bible story. The other group did not identify a major theme.

- Two out of five groups understood God's promise to Abraham to bless all nations as a reference to the salvation that all nations can find in Jesus, and these two groups were able to make the link that the story in Acts 10 is at the start of the fulfilment of this promise.

## **2. How do they apply it to their lives?**

- The young people said that the importance of the Bible for them is to know God and to know God's will for them. In addition, obedience to God was a major theme which was mentioned several times in the discussion of both Bible passages. Therefore, it seems that the main role of the Bible in the life of these young people is to show them the will of God so that they can obey God.
- Most of the applications of the Bible passages were about Christian life – how to live well in relationship with God and how to live well in relationship with others. Only one group made a missiological application from Acts 10, saying that we should share the gospel and evangelise other ethnic groups. The other four groups did not make this kind of application.
- The young people took the Bible characters as role models to show them how to live. They believe with confidence that if we follow the example of the Bible characters, then God will act as he acted in the stories of the Bible, for example if we obey God like Abraham, God will bless us as he blessed Abraham, or if we persevere in prayer like Cornelius, God will answer our prayers, like he did for Cornelius.

### **Some questions for you**

If you are in agreement, I would like to take the opportunity to ask for your reaction to these results in order to help me in my analysis of the results. I have three questions for you:

1. Is there anything in these results which surprises you?
2. After having read this report, what words of encouragement or advice do you have for the youth leader in your church?
3. Do you have any other comments or reactions to this report that you would like to share with me?

With your permission, I would like to conduct a short interview with you either at your home or by telephone. I will be in contact soon to arrange an appointment with you.

Thank you very much for your good will and for agreeing to the participation of the young people of your church in this research.

Please accept my warmest greetings in the precious name of Jesus Christ.

*Jenny Coulibaly*

*MA Student at Redcliffe College, University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom*

## **Appendix E: Summary of feedback from pastors of participating churches**

The pastors were asked three main questions:

1. Is there anything in these results which surprises you?
2. After having read this report, what words of encouragement or advice do you have for the youth leader in your church?
3. Do you have any other comments or reactions to this report that you would like to share with me?

Their feedback is summarised below by theme:

### **Encouragements from the results:**

- The young people were able to give good answers to the questions and recognise the main themes of the Bible passages we looked at. (Pastors B and C)

### **Surprises or concerns about the results:**

- The participants did not talk about mission in their discussion of either passage. (Pastor B)
- They did not mention many events in the life of Jesus. (Assistant Pastor C)
- Most were not able to make connections between the Bible passages and the wider story of the Bible. (Pastor D)
- To say that we should obey God like Abraham is a good application, but it needs more explanation. What do they mean by “obedience”? They probably mean doing certain things and not others and this is not a sufficient application. They needed to specify that for Christians to obey God means to have faith in and obey Jesus, otherwise there is no difference with Muslims. (Pastor D)
- The young people who talked about Abraham as a source of blessing to future generations but did not mention salvation in Jesus have not understood the meaning of God’s promise to Abraham. (Pastor D)
- Their relationship with Jesus should have come out as primary in their discussion of the importance of the Bible. This is more important than imitating Bible characters. (Pastor D)

### **Recommendations for church youth groups:**

- Young people should be encouraged to read the Bible more. (Pastors B and C)
- They should be encouraged to think deeply about how the Bible applies to their lives. (Pastor E)
- They should be encouraged to listen well to sermons. (Pastor B)
- They should be encouraged to attend Bible courses offered by the church. (Pastors C and E)

- They should understand that the whole Bible talks about God’s mission to save humanity and that he calls everyone to be involved in that. “God is counting on the young people of our country”. (Pastor B)

#### **Comments about available resources:**

- Most young people in the church know how to read and there is enough literature available, but the young people are not motivated to read them. (Pastors B and C)
- There are more digital media available today for evangelism than in the past – the young people of today can use the internet and social media to reach their generation. (Pastor B)
- There is a very good resource offered by another mission organisation which is an oral narration of the story of the Bible from creation to the end of the world. (Assistant Pastor C)

#### **Comments about teaching in church:**

- The church offers the Emmaus Bible course (a Bible course by correspondence), but most of the young people do not complete the course. (Pastor C)
- This kind of teaching (about the biblical narrative and the mission of God) could be the subject of a two-day seminar in the church or a Bible camp. (Pastor D)
- The young people have lots of opportunities to attend courses and Bible studies in the church, but all of these are in French, there are no activities for young people in [the LWC]. (Pastor E)

#### **Other comments:**

- It is difficult to motivate young people today to read the Bible. (Pastors C and E)
- Although they do not read the Bible, many are involved in evangelism – they often share conversations they have had with non-believers and ask for advice about how to answer their questions about Christianity. (Pastor C)
- The church runs a lot of evangelistic activities which the youth are involved in (Pastor E)
- Young people do not read the Bible in a coherent fashion – they jump about between the parts that interest them. (Pastor D)
- Many people have difficulty reading and if they read the Bible at all, they read the easier narratives like Genesis or the Gospels and do not read books that they find more difficult.
- This kind of study is helpful to us to show us where the Christians in our churches are in their understanding of the Bible. It would be useful to send this report to other church leaders. (Pastor D)
- The young people who took part in the focus group were encouraged to read the Bible more. We need more activities like this which motivate young people to read the Bible. (Pastor E)