

New animated series encourages kids to watch the Bible

February 19, 2024

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The Christian production company Revelation Media will unveil its new animated Bible project on Easter, with the first segment aiming to depict the stories of the Book of Genesis in a child-friendly way.



Steve Cleary

Watching the iBible will appeal to digital natives more than reading Scripture, said Steve Cleary, executive director and producer of the series.

“We want kids to read their Bible, but if we don’t reach them in a visual manner, we’re seeing the result. They don’t. They’re not reading their Bible,” he said.

He believes short attention spans and a growing aversion to reading are

making it impossible for kids to get interested in the Bible. Churches are late to the party when it comes to finding creative ways to interest internet-savvy kids in biblical texts, Cleary said.

His solution is to reach young kids where they are—on screens. From the creation story to the death of Joseph, the 42 episodes will tell stories from the Old Testament in hopes of increasing a younger generation's biblical literacy.

This animated Bible translation, the first of its kind, he said, strives to be a "legitimate Bible translation." All scripts of the seven-minute episodes are approved by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an evangelical nonprofit that rates the accuracy of Bible translations.

'You'll never forget what you see'

The episodes, which are planned to depict the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, were also reviewed by Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, Pentecostal and Methodist clergy members. The entire project is expected to take years to complete.

In the meantime, an episode titled "The Real Story of Jesus" is already available for users who want to skip to the Gospels. Each episode is also followed by a discussion prompt for kids to consider.

With a background in animation—Cleary co-produced the animated "The Pilgrim's Progress" in 2019—he said he's seen the power of visual learning for Generation Z and Generation Alpha.

"You can read something dramatic and easily forget it. But you'll never forget what you see," said Cleary, who has recruited around 50 people to work on the project now.

The 500,000 viewers who watched "Pilgrim's Progress" during the

COVID-19 lockdown were also the first to hear about the iBible project via email, and their monetary donations supported the project's early days. According to a Revelation Media press release, the entire iBible project will require \$25 million in funding.

Touching on taboo topics

Cleary said translating the Bible in short animation clips allows pastors and parents to touch on taboo topics with kids.



A scene from “The Great Flood (Part 1),” part of the animated Bible series produced by iBible. (Image courtesy of Revelation Media)

For a long time, the iBible team was torn on how to tell stories of violence and abuse appropriately for kids. The first feedback from parents on the episode depicting the rape of Dinah, the daughter of Leah and Jacob, convinced the project team that showing these parts of the Scriptures was essential. It also forces churches to have tough but essential discussions with kids.

“If we’re going to do the whole story, we can’t shy away from that,” said Cleary, before adding, “The hard stories ended up being the biggest benefit, honestly, to getting churches involved.”

The first episodes will be available in English, Swahili, Hindi, Spanish, Farsi and Bulgarian. Cleary hopes it will be translated into more languages soon and distributed in hundreds of countries.

Translators from all over the globe joined the project. The Ukrainian team working from Lviv since 2022, before the war with Russia broke out, said it has pursued its efforts despite being psychologically impacted by the war.

“Our mission transcends the challenges we face,” said the team’s manager, according to a Revelation media press release.