
Audio Players in Use

9 ideas for using digital audio players in Scripture Engagement

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“Yes, I really like this new digital audio player... but how exactly would we use it?”

In recent years we’ve seen the launch of a number of multi-purpose digital audio players, designed for contexts without easy access to electricity: such as the NGP and FM Ambassadors¹ (from MegaVoice), the Saber² (from Global Recordings Network), the Papyrus³ (from Renew World Outreach) and the Audible⁴ (from Davar Partners International). They can contain hours of audio Scripture, songs, teaching, Bible stories, or whatever audio content you choose.



Suppose you had 10 of them, or 100, or 1,000? What would you do with them? Not only would you need to decide what to put on them, but you would also need to think about how people will get hold of them and put them to use.

Here are some possible distribution models:

1. Subsidise and sell

This is similar to the way printed publications such as New Testaments and Bibles are sold. Audio players with Scripture content could be subsidised and sold at an affordable price. You could have them for sale at the same time as the printed version is launched.

¹ <http://www.megavoice.com>

² <http://globalrecordings.net/topic/saber>

³ <http://renewoutreach.com/papyrus.html>

⁴ <http://www.davarpartners.com/audible.html>

The advantage of this system is that people tend to value, look after and use things they have had to invest in themselves, more than things that are given to them for free.

When new content is produced (such as newly translated books of the Bible), it could be made available to those who have already purchased an audio player: either for free, or at a small charge for each update.

Remarks

The purchase cost of a digital audio player is at least US \$25, so for many people in minority language communities around the world there would need to be significant subsidies to make them affordable.

If people already have MP3-capable phones or FM radios with SD card slots, an alternative to selling them an audio player would be to sell the SD or Micro SD card containing the Scripture content. This might not need to be subsidized.

2. Listening groups

Here the audio player is loaned to listening groups that are set up in churches or in the community. These groups commit themselves to meeting regularly to listen and discuss what they hear.



The passage they listen to could vary from several verses up to several chapters at a time. The leader of the group should be ready with questions to stimulate the discussion:

- What did you hear that particularly struck/touched/surprised you?
- Was there something you heard that you did not understand?
- What did we learn about: God? Jesus? what it means to follow Jesus?
- What does God want to say to us/you today through what we've heard?
- Does anyone want to share about how God has particularly touched them as they've listened to his Word today?

This is the model of distribution used by most Faith Comes By Hearing programmes, using the Proclaimer or Mini-Proclaimer audio players, where local promoters are involved in travelling from group to group to encourage and follow-up on how the groups are getting on.

Remarks

This model has the advantage that it promotes engagement with the Scriptures in a community setting. You would need to think about how you would train the listening group leaders, do follow-up, what you would do if a group stopped meeting, and what would happen to the audio player when a group has listened to all of its contents.

3. Audio libraries

Another method to consider is the church audio library method. A few digital players are given to a church, with someone given the responsibility for looking after them. They can loan players to local believers for a given length of time, keeping a careful note of who has borrowed which player and making sure they are returned in good condition.

Different audio players could contain different contents: e.g. one player with the whole of Luke's gospel, some songs based on Luke, and a few sermons on Luke; another player with a selection of materials for children; another with a set of chronological Bible stories, etc.

4. Help in literacy

Audio players are loaned to active members of a literacy programme. The contents would contain recordings of some of the available reading materials, well-read by a clear speaker, at a speed appropriate for the learners' reading level.

5. Tools for pastors and evangelists

Give audio players to local pastors and evangelists, with content that they can use in their ministry for sharing the good news, discipling new believers and in giving pastoral care.

If such people are working outside their own language area, or are in an area with multiple languages, the audio player could contain recordings in several languages, including those that the Christian workers themselves do not speak fluently.

Recordings of Bible stories could be accompanied by visual aids, such as the *Look Listen & Live* series of pictures from Global Recordings or another set of Bible pictures.

6. New communities

For new communities of believers who have no older Christian or pastor with them all the time, an audio player could be loaned to them with content to play at their weekly meetings. This could contain Scripture readings, teaching messages, Bible stories and Christian hymns and songs.

In such contexts it is not unusual to hear people say: “The audio player is our pastor!” It could contain training materials to equip some to take on leadership roles.

7. Translation testing

When a portion of the Bible has been newly translated, the translators could record it and load the audio onto a player which can then be used in testing the translation with the local population.

8. Bible for the blind

An audio player could be a valuable aid to a blind or visually impaired person in their engaging with the Scripture.

9. Give away for free

Give away audio players to friends, new believers and those interested in hearing more of God’s Word – as long as they agree to listen to it. This could range from giving to a few people you know – or it could be part of a mass distribution strategy. You might be able to follow-up some of these people, but for many it would be a case of sowing the seed and praying that people would listen and respond to the Scriptures as the Lord speaks to them.

Remarks

The reasons for avoiding a ‘give away for free’ model of printed Bible distribution also apply here, i.e. where possible it is good to encourage local contribution and personal investment in Scripture publications. But in some contexts it might be appropriate and could be received warmly as a much valued gift.

We know that just because someone has a printed Bible doesn’t mean they will use it. After the novelty has worn off, how can we encourage people to go on listening and engaging with God’s Word with their audio player? It is vital that the content is as ‘engageable’ as possible.

What other models of audio player distribution could we add to this list?

This document is available for download at: <http://www.scripture-engagement.org>

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