

## **Must Know Stories**

The Bible. What thoughts does it conjure up for you?

Breathtaking or boring, wise or woolly, fact or fiction?

For many people today, sadly the word is 'irrelevant'.

What's the Bible got to do with me?, they say.

Well, quite a lot actually.

Ever watched a 'David and Goliath' cup tie?

Ever admired Rembrandt's Prodigal Son?

Ever poured Lyle's Golden Syrup on your pancakes?

These all contain references to the Bible.

Other such references fill our vocabulary and culture.

They make up some of life's most known stories about loss and pain, heroism and friendship, life and death.

The Must Know Stories series have been written to connect

with today's culture – the David and Goliath story

is written from the perspective of Goliath,

a binge-drinking celebrity and the Adam and Eve story

is full of seduction and suspicion.

The Author of this contemporary take on the Bible stories,

Explains how, the idea came about.

He says, I was taking an assembly in a well-respected school near my home. I had planned to tell the story of King Saul,

who when hunting David to kill him,  
went into a cave for, shall we say, a comfort break –  
unaware that it was the very cave in which David  
and his fellow mercenaries were hiding.

He began his assembly saying,  
'You know the story of David and Goliath...'  
and was met with a school half full of blank faces.

He was surprised.

'Put up your hand if you know the story of David and Goliath.'

Worryingly few hands went up.

So He told the story of David and Goliath instead.

Not long after that, He heard a television news  
journalist employ the David and Goliath image  
in a piece about global computer giants.

It was clear that although the reporter  
had heard of David and Goliath,  
he did not understand the story.

Next came a cartoon from a cricketing magazine,  
in which the diminutive David was accused of ball tampering.

Must Know Stories was born.

Scripture Union conducted research  
among school teachers and parents to find out

which were the most culturally iconic stories in the Bible.

The results were quite clear.

These are the undisputed top ten must-know Bible stories.

Several are from the Gospel accounts,

Half of them come from the Jewish Scriptures,

and a number have parallels in the Qur'an.

These ten ancient, wonderful stories are worldwide cultural icons.

Further research was conducted among young people

in secondary schools to discover how well

these amazing stories are known.

The results were unsettling.

Only the stories of Jesus' birth and death are widely known;

the rest were recognised by only a minority of students.

RE lessons focus on the practices and philosophies of different world religions; school assemblies are generally devoted to matters of discipline and general morality.

Sure, Millions of young children encounter images of Noah and his colourful ark in toys, games and pictures.

And, No FA Cup campaign is complete without references to David defeating Goliath.

These stories fill our literature;

they are repeatedly employed by journalists,

politicians and cartoonists alike.

But the knowledge of the stories themselves  
is rapidly fading, as they quietly fade into obscurity.

It is a cultural tragedy.

If we do not know the stories, we are missing out.

In this book, the author has lifted these stories out of the text  
of Jewish and Christian Scripture and presented them  
as stories about real people caught up in real struggles.

In my summer sermon series, I will attempt to help  
us find ways to re-engage with these classics,

And apply them to our daily lives.

For many of us will find an echo in our own life and experience.

Just look around you...art and culture,

Scientific debate and the media, literature and music,

All include references to these stories,

which are too often they are overlooked or just misunderstood.

Today, we will try and unpack just one of these Biblical references:

As we consider the story of David and Goliath.

Listen and consider what it might be saying to you today.