



# NO BIBLE SUNDAY?

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## Drama resource

# On the other hand...

**Description:**

A brief history of the English Bible.

**What's needed:**

Two people with scripts

**Aim:**

Remind people that we only have the Bible because of the suffering of others.

**Time:**

4 minutes

**Dramatic reading:**

**Person A:** It's great to have the Bible in English! And it's good to remember how we first received it.

**Person B:** On the other hand, it used to be quite dangerous to own or even read a Bible in English.

**Person A:** The first person to make the entire Bible available in English was John Wycliffe, way back in the early 1380s.

**Person B:** On the other hand, church leaders were so opposed to the Bible being read by the common people in English that several years after John Wycliffe's death, his bones were dug up, burned and scattered onto the local river.

**Person A:** Wycliffe's translation inspired many poor preachers, called Lollards, to go throughout England preaching and reading from the English Bible.

**Person B:** On the other hand, many of these men were arrested, condemned and burned at the stake.

**Person A:** A few years after Wycliffe's time, Gutenberg invented the modern printing press. He quickly began printing Bibles in German.

**Person B:** On the other hand, by now the church in England had made a law forbidding anyone to translate or read the Bible in their own language. Anyone doing so would lose both their lands and their life.

**Person A:** Next came William Tyndale. He did another translation of the New Testament into English in the 1520s.

**Person B:** On the other hand, to avoid capture Tyndale had move to the Continent in order to complete and print his translation.

**Person A:** By 1530, about fifteen thousand copies of the New Testament in English had been published and brought into England.

**Person B:** On the other hand, the books had to be smuggled into the country in sacks of flour, bales of cotton and bundles of flax. Whenever they were found, they were confiscated and burned.

**Person A:** In fact, Tyndale did such a good job on his New Testament translation that the Authorised Version reproduces 90% of it!

**Person B:** On the other hand, Tyndale's reward was to be arrested, condemned as a heretic, and then both strangled and burned at the stake at the same time.

**Person A:** Soon thereafter another Bible was produced by Thomas Matthew -- the first English Bible to be printed in England.

**Person B:** On the other hand, Thomas Matthew was burned at the stake by Queen Mary in 1555.

**Person A:** Half a century later in 1611 we received the Authorised Version – so called because it was produced with the blessing of King James 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Person B:** It was finally safe to read the Bible in our own language!

**Person A:** On the other hand, more than 2700 languages are still waiting for someone to translate the Bible for them. Who will carry on the tradition?

### **Optional ways to adapt this idea:**

- Have the two speakers stand back to back, each turning to the front as it is their turn to speak.
- Have only Person A at the front. Person B's lines are read somewhere offstage into a microphone.
- Have one person do both lines. They would deliver Person A's lines in their normal voice. But they have a sock on one hand. By moving their fingers they can create a talking mouth and the sock mouths Person B's lines (which should be delivered in a loud "Muppet" style voice).

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