



Every once in awhile God allows an amazing new invention that makes it possible for many more people to read his Word. It seems that these inventions, which have an impact on all aspects of human life, come at the exact time and place that God is planning to bring about a great increase of access to his written Word. In this brief article we can mention only three of these inventions.

The first and most important was the invention of the alphabet. Before the invention of the alphabet, a person had to learn hundreds or even thousands of signs to read texts written in scripts like Akkadian cuneiform or Egyptian hieroglyphics. After the invention of the alphabet, a person had to learn only 25 to 30 signs to read documents. Literacy became accessible to the masses. The invention of the alphabet by the Canaanites (or could it have been Israelites??) came at the right time and in the right place so that it was possible for the books of Moses to be the first enduring alphabetic writing. Coincidence or divine providence?

The Greeks refined the alphabet by adding vowels so that reading texts on your own without a teacher prompting the reader on the right pronunciation became possible. In the “fullness of time” this refined alphabet was spread across vast areas of the Mediterranean world. Certainly not the first, but arguably the most important and enduring writings in this refined alphabet were the books of the New Testament. Coincidence or divine providence?

The second invention that made possible an explosion of knowledge of the written Word was the development of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in Germany in the years surrounding 1450. This occurred at the exact time and place that made possible an explosion of the written gospel that flowed from the Reformation. Coincidence or divine providence?

That brings us to the third invention that has led to an explosion of availability of the written Word—the widespread availability of computer software that makes it much easier to produce print books and to create electronic Bible apps which make it much more possible to share the Bible for free even where it is rare or suppressed. Coincidence or divine providence?

We do not yet know where this development is leading. For us it does not really matter whether the End is near or another Reformation still lies ahead. Our job is the same in either case—to make the Word as widely available as possible.

In this article our topic is one specific example of our increased power to spread the Word, the YouVersion Bible App. On November 17, YouVersion celebrated the milestone of passing 1

billion installs of its Bible App (that is right, it is B as in billion). How did this explosion happen? The growth of YouVersion is a remarkable story.

In October 2006, Bobby Gruenewald, the founder of what would grow into YouVersion, was standing in an airport security line in the Chicago O'Hare Airport and asking himself a question, "I wonder if there's a way to use technology to help me read the Bible more consistently?"

Gruenewald decided to launch a website. However, the website ultimately failed to capture engagement the way that they had hoped and thought it would. The team then decided to optimize the website for the then-popular BlackBerry smartphone. That step led people to engage more consistently with God's Word through the website.

In 2008, when Steve Jobs announced a new App Store would be established for the iPhone, the YouVersion team decided to build a Bible app. The YouVersion Bible App was one of the first free apps offered in the new App Store. The very first weekend, 83,000 people installed the Bible App on their iPhones. Gruenewald said, "That number blew our minds. We had no idea that we would see that kind of interest that quickly." Now, incredibly, in 2025 YouVersion has reached 1 billion installs. While it took YouVersion 17 years to reach its first billion installs, the team believes they'll see the next billion installs in just five years.

What's most important about the milestone of one billion installs is that every install represents an opportunity for someone to encounter the life-changing power of God's Word, all for free. YouVersion is not monetized in any way—there aren't even any ads to slow down the reader. While YouVersion isn't free to maintain, it is supported by donors worldwide who use and love the app, as well as Bible societies and publishers who make their content available on YouVersion for free. Because there's no fee to install or use the app, it also breaks down barriers to access, reaching people in areas where physical Bibles are rare or restricted.

Thousands of translations are available on the app. The EHV has been available on YouVersion only since last spring. During that time, 61,681 members of the YouVersion Community have accessed the EHV on the Bible App, and there have been 3,030,758 engagements with Scripture through the EHV. Those are big numbers for the EHV, but the EHV is just one of more than 3,700 versions in 2,380 languages on the app

Every day on YouVersion there are 9,885,941,131 chapters read and 26,643,415 verses shared. In an average second, there are 40 Bible Plan days completed and 112 Bible verses highlighted, bookmarked, and noted. To learn more about the YouVersion Family of Apps, including the Bible App, Bible App Lite, and Bible App for Kids, visit youversion.com.