



Scripture Union

Meet our new National Director, Dave Newton (video transcript)

AJ: Hi there. My name is AJ, and I'm here today with Dave Newton who has taken up the National Director role at Scripture Union England and Wales. Welcome, Dave.

Dave: Thank you so much.

AJ: Now, we thought you'd like to get to know him a bit and discover some of his aspirations for the role, and for Scripture Union itself. So, Dave, please tell us a bit about yourself and your background.

Dave: Well, AJ, I was four years old when I gave my life to Jesus. My mum and dad were in ministry, and it was Easter Sunday when I knelt down on my knees and said to my mum, I want to give my life to Jesus. I jumped back up to my feet, ran into the front room to tell my brother that I was a Christian and that he needed to be, and I was most disappointed because he already was.

And so I didn't get to lead him to Jesus. But then from there I kind of went into all sorts of different avenues, but eventually focused on leisure management and sport and recreation. That was my background and then landed my dream job as a community evangelist working for the local church. So, we did schools work, we did outreach projects, all sorts of things that eventually morphed into a local Youth for Christ Centre. And for 17 years that's been my background.

I worked with Youth for Christ then locally and nationally, overseeing mission. But then ten years ago, as an Elim ordained minister, I was invited to and become the principal of Regent's Theological College, and it was like the coin flipped from the evangelism to the equipping piece – how do we now help people and train people to share their faith wherever they go?

And so as I sit in this seat now, I kind of like the idea that the coin is now on its edge. The evangelism piece, the equipping piece. And it's all about how we can amplify and make Jesus known in this world.

AJ: That's absolutely amazing. What an amazing testimony, how God has brought you from where you were to where you are now. Thank you so much for sharing. So, Dave, what brought you to Scripture Union?

Dave: What a great question. Okay, so Scripture Union's a fantastic organisation with a rich heritage and history. Wow, 150 years... incredible. And but when I think of the words Scripture Union, the kind of clue's in the name, because we're living in a society where people are looking for all sorts of and foundations to build their lives on. Yeah?! And Scripture, I think, is the perfect foundation.

So, we look into the Bible and we see what the Bible reveals and the Word points us to the Word. Jesus himself. The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us and in Scripture Union – the vision, the mission, the focus – is revealing the Word, Jesus, to the world. And as I sit here in this seat, the reason I have joined Scripture Union is so that we can reveal Jesus to children and young people.

I don't think there's a better thing that we could be doing. And really that's the focus of what this organisation is all about.

AJ: Thanks. Absolutely amazing. Now, Dave, starting a new role can be quite daunting, but what excites you about the road ahead?

Dave: It can be quite daunting. You're right! There's so much to take on board. You know, when you start working for a new organisation, there's new policies and kind of cultures and



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people and all of those kind of things. And acronyms – different kind of phraseology that you're trying to get your head round. But I think some of the things that excite me most are the people that I'm going to get to work with.

You know, when you get past the trappings, you start to see great, committed supporters, volunteers and staff. And I can't wait to kind of and get alongside guys and girls and be able to serve with them. But probably the biggest thing that excites me is this concept of movement. Yeah, you see, Scripture Union is a charity. Of course we are. We're an organisation. But we're more than that. We're a movement of people committed to reveal Jesus. And so what excites me is what would it look like if we could start to mobilise not just the people who are employed, not just the people who formally volunteer, but everybody to get involved in this revealing Jesus strategy. And so an army of people – an army of volunteers – who just gossip the gospel wherever they go, you know, people who just want to make Jesus known. That's the thing that really excites me!

AJ: You made a statement about getting everyone involved, and that's what the whole thing is about... getting everybody involved in this process.

Dave: So yeah, well, there's a fantastic account in the book of John. So, Jesus is just about to raise Lazarus from the dead, you know, a mighty act. And just before he uses his words to bring death to life, he says to his disciples, will you roll away the stone?! Like, Jesus had the power to roll away the stone. He could have blown to smithereens! But he invited some teenagers, actually, to roll the stone aside so he could do what he wanted to do. And I think that's a metaphor really, for what Scripture Union's about. How can everybody find their part, however big or small, to see Jesus' power revealed in our world.

AJ: Amen. Amen. Now I understand you've only been in the role for a couple of months now, but what have you noticed about Scripture Union?

Dave: What have I noticed? Wow! So I think I've noticed, first and foremost, is a committed team. And I use that word team because it's not just the staff team. You know, I got to meet some of the supporters online at one of our prayer meetings online, and they're really bought into what we're doing. You know, I got to meet some of the volunteers who were working on our camps – over 2000 volunteers who are running holidays and events – and committed staff. So at every level there are people who are totally bought in. That's the first thing I've noticed.

I think the second thing I've noticed is that people are really passionate about the cause, like focused on what it is that we exist for. So an organisation that's 150 years old is probably known for lots of different things over the years. But what I've noticed is that Scripture Union has now united around one single focus. We call it our priority, really, to reach the 95% of children and young people who don't engage with church. And that is one thing that I've really noticed. So I would say – a great bunch of people to work with and committed and focused on the mission that Jesus has given us.

AJ: And I definitely agree with you because we have dedicated people who have such passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ, and getting young people connected to the gospel. So that's an amazing statement you made.

Dave: Thank you.

AJ: Now you've inherited a clear vision and mission. Will you be making any changes?

Dave: Now you get into the *really* important stuff! Okay, so no in one sense, we're not going to change it. We know why we exist as an organisation. We know what Scripture Union is about. We know what our priority is – to reach the 95% of children and young people. The question is, how do we do that? How do we amplify that?



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And I think there's a danger that Scripture Union is known for so many different things, yeah!? Over the years we've done so many different brilliant things. But as we really start to focus and give priority to reaching the 95, we want to get everybody on board with that.

So what does it look like to **connect** with children and young people? What does it look like to help them **explore** Jesus and discover him for themselves? What does it look like for them to **respond** and then start to **grow**? And then as they grow, start to connect with others and we start to get this cycle. And I'm really excited about how we can take that forward.

I think it was Einstein that said the very definition of insanity is to do the same thing and expect different results, okay. So, please don't call me insane because in one sense we are going to do the same thing, but it's not because it's not working, yeah?! We've seen growth over the last two to three years. We've seen Faith Guides who are coming on board, who are walking alongside children and young people. We've seen churches who are signing up as well to the revealing Jesus strategy. And I just want to see that grow and grow and grow, not for statistics, but because there are young people behind every single number. And that's what matters.

AJ: So how can our supporters pray for you and Scripture Union at this time? And is there anything else that they can do?

Dave: Yeah, definitely. There are things that we can all do. And I think the first thing you mentioned is prayer, and prayer is absolutely key. It's crucial to our success in this mission that God has called us to. And I would just like to take an opportunity to thank supporters now and over the years. The reason Scripture Union exists is because of the prayers and the support of our supporters.

So the first thing is, please keep praying. Please join us online for our supporter prayer events and please get hold of our Bible reading notes with all sorts of things that can help you pray for this fantastic organisation.

I think the second thing I would ask for is prayer for wisdom. I think we are operating in an interesting cultural moment, and as we navigate that, as we lead in this space, we need the wisdom of God in all that we do.

So please pray for wisdom for the leadership team, for the staff team as we seek to kind of make the necessary steps to move forward. And another thing to pray for will be staff. We can't do the job without the right people. You know, there are certain skills I have, there are certain skills others have, but there are a number of key roles at the moment. And I would love our supporters to be thinking and to be praying, to be asking for friends and others to get involved in what we do.

And then finally support. You know, let's be honest about it, none of this can happen without financial support. And again, a huge thank you to those who've given over the years.

But what would it look like if we all just knocked on a friend's door and said, hey, I've been giving to Scripture Union for the last 12 years, why don't you join me? And it'd be fantastic to get a few more people on board supporting and helping us with this fantastic mission to reach the 95.

AJ: Thank you so much. Thanks again to Dave and thank you for your prayers and gifts. They really do make such a difference. As you've heard, this is such an exciting and time for Scripture Union, and we can't wait to update you on all God is doing through the movement soon. God bless.