

Christian gaming apps bring thousands to faith



Originally published in

[Christian Today](#)

More than 16 000 people have come to Christ as a result of one company's gaming apps, the developers have claimed.

In an interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network, Lightside Games chief executive Brent Drusing said that his company gives the 600 million people who play mobile games the opportunity to engage with games that are positive about Christianity.

"Through the course of making these games we've had over 16,000 people come to Christ through our partnership with the BillyGrahamEvangelicalAssociation," Dusing told CBN News. "We've found that people not only enjoy the games, but find change in their hearts."

Lightside has produced games such as 'Stained Glass', 'Journey of Jesus', 'Journey of Moses' and 'Noah's Ark', some of which are available on iTunes. In the games, users can click to see a gospel presentation, and are then led to Billy Graham's online ministry website peacewithgod.net.

“There are choices that are very dark that are out there,” said Dusing. “There’s a Kim Kardashian game, where the object of the game is to sleep your way through Hollywood. There are countless games where you become a criminal... Grand Theft Auto has a mobile version... We found that there was almost nothing on the app store that was fun and beautiful but that also contained a Christian worldview.

“At Lightside we want to be the light in the darkness to the 600 million people who are playing games out there,” he said.

Christian magazine, J-Star Blomag, releases 2nd issue



Birthered out of the prophetic, J-Star Blomag is a blog/magazine focused on inspiring

Christians through testimony. (PHOTO: [J-Star](#)).

Christian lifestyle publication, J-Star Blomag, is a true demonstration of how God can turn a test into a testimony shares owner and writer, Mvokazi Mjayezi. “I experienced the trauma of being molested when I was between the ages of 6-8 years old. That drove me to find an escape in reading, which lead me to start writing down my feelings and thoughts into journals.” The journals soon became short stories, which lead to novels and finally inspired her to start J-Star – an online blomag, which is a mash up between a blog and a magazine.

Prophetic instruction

God began speaking to Mjayezi, as a teen, through prophetic words about a friendship ministry. A few years later He revealed His plan – He wanted her to start a magazine. “The vision God gave me for J-Star is that it is a friendship ministry in blog magazine style. Everything about it is personal – a testimony of what my contributors and I have been through, are going through and will go through.” She explained. The blomag is focused on encouraging its readers to reach for the greatness that God has destined for them. “He then gave me the name J-Star, which means Jesus Star. I ran with it after that and here I am today!”

The blomag offers Christian adults the latest news and views regarding living single, fashion, beauty and other relevant topics, and boasts weekly features such as **You Can** by David Molapo and **Vanessas Corner** by Vanessa Goosen, the former Miss South Africa semi-finalist who was used as a drug mule in 1994 and ended up spending 16 years in a Thai prison.



The blomags' first edition was released digitally on December 16, 2014.

The blomags' 1st issue was published on December 16, 2014 and was a realisation of a dream birthed in her heart since 2013, when God had spoken to her at her desk, at work. Mjayezi had then begun to plan the magazine and approach contributors and in 2014 she discerned that the time had come for her to leave her full time job and focus solely on her project. "I just went for it, trusting God to provide as I go, and He has!" she shared passionately.

The up and coming entrepreneur explained that it wasn't always easy, as God prepared her and her husband, Sinethemba, for the big things He had planned. "Stripping is painful and is a very hard process but we pushed through when it seemed like it would never happen because of finance and other limitations." They had faced many challenges together, but clung on to faith and the words that God had spoken over their lives. Mjayezi shares that the release of the 2nd issue is in itself a miracle because of the road it took to get there.

The magazine will be published bi-monthly with plans set to release an issue every month in the future. The 2nd Issue will be released digitally on February, 28 2015 and will also be available in print in March 2015. "We are very excited about

Issue 2! A very special well-known couple, who works in the music industry, will be gracing our cover. The issue will also hold exciting and encouraging content.”



J-Star Blomag editor in chief, Mvokazi Mjayezi, features weekly on the PE FM Saturday morning show, between 10am and 11am. Photo: [Facebook](#)

Bright future

Mjayezi foresees a bright future ahead for the blomag. She was recently invited to feature on local radio station PE FM's Saturday morning show. "I will be on air every Saturday between 10h00 and 11h00, where I will be chatting about all things J-Star!" She believes that it is a door that has been miraculously opened and that many other doors will also begin to open for the publication. "I see J-Star becoming a global brand, ministering across the globe to men and women!" she shared.

Christian writers who would like to get involved by volunteering are encouraged to contact the magazine. There is specifically a need for male writers who are excited about

writing about topics that will appeal to Christian men. There is also a call to businesses, who would like to buy advertising space, especially Christian businesses who would like to sow into fertile ground. “We need businesses to come and advertise their products and services in the magazine,” shares Mjayezi. “J-Star is young and happening with content that is a living testimony of what people go through on a daily basis!”

The magazine can be ordered through info@jstarmag.com or purchased by clicking on the ‘buy latest issue’ button on the [website](#).

For more information you can contact Mvokazi Mjayezi via email at mvokazi@jstarmag.com or visit the blomags [Facebook](#) page.

Where is the Christmas story being read?



Want to see where people from all over the globe are reading about Christmas? Each time someone looks up a verse about Jesus’ birth in the youversion Bible App, a star lights up in their area of the world. A counter displays how many times passages about Christmas have been read since December 1.

Check it out here: <https://www.bible.com/christmas>

Bible sees renaissance among children, YouVersion reports



Originally published in

[Charisma News](#)

The most popular book of all time may be celebrating a bit of a renaissance.

Thanksgiving Day (Thursday, November 27, 2014) marks the first anniversary of the Bible App for Kids, developed by YouVersion in partnership with OneHope. The app has been downloaded in 200-plus countries and nearly 5 million times.

“This app literally brings the Bible to life,” wrote reviewer Zach Green. “This app is great for new believers as well as for children.”

Today’s digital age requires new formats for media consumption. And Hollywood responded to that call with two Bible-based blockbusters: *Noah* and the December release of *EXODUS: Gods and Kings*.

“Today’s kids love technology,” said OneHope president Rob Hoskins. “We’re raising a generation of digital natives. That is why we have placed a significant focus on developing digital ministry tools to support parents and churches by providing them with quality, age-appropriate, Scripture-rich content that is a good digital option for kids to engage with.”

In late August, the Bible App for Kids was translated into its first language: Spanish. Now nearly one-quarter of all Bible App for Kids downloads use the Spanish translation. Last week, it launched in Chinese and Korean. By the end of 2015, developers plan to release the app in 9 additional languages, with a total of 40+ stories so children around the world can experience the gospel through this innovative and engaging platform.

“My 2- and 4-year-old love it,” said Melinda York in her Google Play store review, “they love the interactive stories and I like that they are getting a good introduction to the Bible. Thank you to the developers of this app and for making it free.”

Free downloadable parent resources were also created to accompany each story so that the whole family can engage in God’s Word together.

In another app review, Terri Lozano calls it, “The BEST interactive Bible story app. It’s the first thing they go to on my phone on our ride home from school. They even made a trivia game of it between them. It’s such a delight to my heart to see their interest in the stories. Keep the new stories coming. God bless you.”

The Bible App for Kids is available for free on the App store, Google Play and Amazon.

New Christian Blogger publication will focus on 'thoughtful analysis'



Ryan Peter.

In the South African media space there is a lack of informative, smart and thoughtful writing, especially in and from a Christian context, writes Ryan Peter, editor of the newly launched Christian Blogger.

Meanwhile, he says, there are plenty of bloggers who do fill this space and actively engage the culture. But most readers don't have the time, inclination or tools to find and read their blogs.

On July 4, this year, The Christian Blogger launched to fill this space and provide a platform where readers can find bloggers and bloggers can find readers. The idea is both simple and rather new, says Peter. The Christian Blogger is not just a website but also a publication which is delivered directly to Kindle bi-weekly and can be downloaded for other e-reader devices as well. The Kindle service requires readers to subscribe for free at <http://www.thechristianblogger.com/register/>.

Peter says that the publication is about supporting bloggers and their independence.

“Unlike many other platforms (mostly set up by traditional media) or news aggregator websites, we want to make every effort to get readers to visit the bloggers who contribute to The Christian Blogger,” he says. “I believe in the blog platform and think independence is a good thing. So, instead of asking for writers to submit exclusive pieces (and not get paid for it) we’re asking for bloggers to submit content they’ve already published.”

At its posts, The Christian Blogger points readers to the original blog and has switched its comments system off so that readers would comment at the original blogger’s website.

“There are a lot of websites providing news, but not many providing thoughtful opinion,” Peter says. “But thoughtful opinion needs to be read in a thoughtful way. That’s why we’re releasing bi-weekly and have created a Kindle / e-reader version. When Amazon’s Jeff Bezos bought out The Washington Post he hinted that he wanted to recreate the ‘daily ritual’ of ‘reading The Post as a bundle, not merely a series of individual stories.’ Furthermore he said that ‘People will buy a package, they will not pay for a story.’ We’re not charging for The Christian Blogger, but we’re creating a platform where you can choose the kind of environment that you want to read in – the fast-paced web or the ritual of reading your favourite newspaper or magazine.”

As to the kind of content The Christian Blogger is publishing, Peter speaks a lot about what he perceives to be a general shallowness in the theological and writing sphere of South Africa.

“Karl Barth once told Time Magazine that he advised young theologians to ‘take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible.’ Regardless of whatever you may think of Barth’s theology in general, I think he’s right on this count. Christians must have the ability to filter the news through the Bible and writers, theologians, and Christian teachers in particular must be on the forefront of doing that. If they can do that well, just by making use of their gift, they help to bring

Christians to maturity and, at the same time, can use the news apologetically to help the world see the Light of Christ amongst its muck, mire, pain and sin," he says at a post about the First Edition of The Christian Blogger at <http://www.thechristianblogger.com/welcome-to-our-first-edition/>

Peter hopes that *The Christian Blogger* will also encourage more South African Christians to get blogging.

"We need more thoughtful Christian writers in South Africa. As things stand now, we don't have nearly enough," he says.

Christian website, Bible Gateway, revamps to make site more personal



Article originally posted in [Religion News](#)

The design is now responsive and accommodates synchronized personal user notes and Bible highlights

The world's most visited Christian website, the online Bible search engine [Bible Gateway](#) has remade its site to include new functions for users to personalize and deepen their online experience. "We've worked a long time on this, to make sure we carefully and properly meet the expectations of the hundreds of millions of users of Bible Gateway," says Rachel Barach, general manager. "Our new design now gives them a streamlined experience that's easier to navigate, while retaining the reliable and fast Bible search engine they've come to know, love, and use every day." Among early reviews of the new design, [About.com](#) declares, "The premier Bible website has become even better;" United Bible Societies says, "Loving the new Bible Gateway look!;" and bestselling author Lee Strobel calls it "great!" Features of the new site include all the attributes of the previous site that have led Christianity Today magazine to call it "the world's leading Bible website" (such as the ability to compare different Bible version passages side-by-side, audio narrations of the Bible, and a daily blog of Bible-related articles) plus: a responsive design that automatically adjusts to the proper screen size of the user, whether it's a desktop, laptop, tablet, or smartphone custom registration that allows users to set up

accounts to begin taking personal notes on, and color highlight, the Scripture verses they read easier navigation between pages designed presentation of Bible, devotional, and reference content synchronization of notes and highlights between a user's multiple devices a dropdown complete Bible book list on the homepage for easier browsing. [Bible Gateway](#) was visited 456 million times in 2013, generating 1.5 billion views spread over 76 million hours by individuals whose majority ages were between 18-34. People from 242 countries and territories used the site last year, including Vatican City, Israel, Palestine, China, Cuba, and North Korea. The top 10 countries using BibleGateway.com are USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Mexico, Philippines, Colombia, Singapore, and South Africa. [Bible Gateway](#) is the number one search result for Bible-related matters on Google, Bing, Aol., YAHOO!, and other global search engines.

About Bible Gateway

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, [Bible Gateway](#) is the original multilingual Internet Bible, offering Christian Scripture (including Apocrypha) in more than 70 languages and more than 180 Bible versions, along with supporting Bible reference dictionaries and commentaries. It also publishes more than 60 free email Bible reading plans and devotional newsletters. It's Bible Gateway App for iPhone, iPad, Android, and Kindle Fire, used by millions, is the winner of the Christian New Media Award for Christian Mobile/Tablet App of the Year (2013). C|NET says the Bible Gateway App "is one of the cleanest, most efficient apps for interacting with the Bible that you can find for your Android" and "can't be topped by other Bible apps."

“Click for Christ”: Evangelism via social media



Originally posted in [Christian Headlines](#)

Imagine the miles Saint Paul could have shaved off his sandals if he had owned a mobile device with built-in Wi-Fi.

Nearly 2 000 years after Jesus commanded followers to go into all the world and make disciples, an increasing number of gospel messengers are doing their missionary travels by way of social media. It is the latest trend: build a website by which, with the push of a button or click of a mouse, spiritual seekers from around the globe can hear and read about how to begin a personal relationship with Christ.

“We can spend how many millions of dollars to try to sneak someone into a country, and how many get led to Christ? Very few,” said John Essig, a pastor at Fellowship Church in Springfield, Ohio, who serves as part-time Ohio Director at Global Media Outreach, one of numerous international ministries with a goal of reaching the lost through the Internet.

“But by [them] having a cell phone you’re going to reach those who can’t otherwise get a missionary to come to them,” Essig said, adding that online/mobile outreach is effective in large part because it relies on response, not targeting. “We know they’re seeking us, so there is not as much opposition,” he

said, pausing. "It is amazing how God will find a way to find that lost person."

Staggering numbers reached

The numbers reported by GMO are staggering. "From 350 000 to two million people a day will read the gospel message, with about 15 percent of those clicking a button at the bottom of the page telling us they just gave their life to Christ," Essig said, explaining that GMO's vision is to give every person on earth multiple opportunities to hear about Jesus, with the goal of the Great Commission being fulfilled by 2020. "How do you do that?" Essig said.

Easy. Just "click for Christ." Those who do will receive from GMO an email that includes a note of encouragement and applicable Bible verse with a link to discipleship opportunities. From there, one of GMO's online missionaries connects with the seeker for what hopefully becomes more than a short-term discipling relationship.

"We're not trying to replace the church," Essig said. "But the idea is to get to them while they're young [in the Lord] and feed them with the word so they can grow." Essig said studies show that those who commit to Christ via the Web read their Bible more often than the average American Christian and also more often share their faith, "which shows a genuine experience with Christ." One such GMO study reported that half of people who made a decision for Jesus over the Internet have subsequently shared their faith with others. Of the more than 100,000 surveyed around the world, 51 percent said they shared their faith three times or more and 37 percent said they shared their faith at least once or twice.

Critics

Some critics, however, wonder just how genuine that sharing experience can be if it takes place via satellites and cell towers. Those leery of social media evangelism and discipleship say a huge difference exists between growing in

Christ via Facebook and using a face-to-face/by-the-book approach to relationship spiritual development.

Cynthia Ware, a noted Christian technology expert, cautions against turning evangelism/discipleship into a cast-the-nets exercise, because often those nets have holes. "With the Internet, the gospel can be effective in a peer-to-peer way," said Ware, adding that many of the social media outreach ministries she encounters are more about appealing more to the masses than the individual.

"It sounds like a broadcast modality," she said. "It is the same mindset people took to broadcast media before the Internet. I think the Web should be used by Christians not so much for broadcasting but for listening. People are looking for answers ... and you have to take on a more conversational tone rather than spouting a message as someone might do on the street corner in 1900." That is not to say Ware is opposed to mixing social media with Christianity. "How it can become something [effective] is if people go in with a predetermined idea of how to evangelize," she said, citing the example of how her sister posted her adoption story online.

Finding common ground

"The goal was not her story, but to see how many other like-minded people would show interest, so she could engage in the gospel with them," Ware said. "The key is finding common ground, then letting Christianity spread by its very nature." That method, however, takes more time to reach more people, a luxury the unsaved world may not have, according to some online evangelistic ministries. Plus, connecting by cell phone or home computer can be done in a personal, one-on-one manner that makes the seeker feel cared for, Essig said.

"Our system will generate a template for us, and we'll guide them through it," he said. "They may say, 'I'm having doubts.' Or their marriage is breaking up or they are depressed, so we send them to a spot on the site that meets their immediate

needs.”

Finding sites that share the gospel is not a problem; dozens if not hundreds exist; but finding a specific site can be challenging, which gets to the financial end of Internet sites. The more money a ministry spends with a search engine, the higher its site moves to the top of the page where more seekers will see it. For example, type “Jesus Christ” into Google and the first entry might be a Wikipedia article. Click Google again and a Catholic Encyclopedia reference site might pop up on top. It all depends on the contract terms between the search engine company and the site owner.

“It is bizarre reality that the more money GMO spends to promote its [125 different] sites the more people come to Christ,” Essig said, adding that Godlife.com is GMO’s most popular site. “When we spend \$120 000 we can get more hits. If we don’t spend, people will go to other sites. That doesn’t mean you can’t go to other sites and give your life to Christ, but there may not be the follow-up. PeaceWithGod.net (affiliated with Billy Graham) does a great job. GMO does not have to be the only fulfillers of the Great Commission. The big-picture thought is there is a huge wave of people (online) giving their lives to Christ right now.”

Essig said there are elements of Internet evangelism that still need to be fine-tuned, including working with language barriers. Many Internet ministries offer different sites in multiple languages. Then there is the general skepticism that stretches from one side of the world to the other. “A big concern everyone has is ‘Is this real?’ Despite the giant numbers, is this really happening? The other suspicion is, ‘How are you going to reach people who don’t have a desktop computer or electricity?’ But GMO is in the early stages of developing its own cell phone that is solar powered, which will have applications in it.”

Some might see such technology as tearing at the essence of

personal, “human touch” evangelism and discipleship. Essig does not. He turns to the Bible (Habakkuk 1:15) for assurance that God’s wonders have no limit: “Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.”

Stars light up as world reads of birth of Jesus



YouVersion, the leading Bible app that is on more than 70 million smartphones and pads, has created a fun live map that allows viewers to watch the world reading about the birth of Jesus.

The so-called [Christmas Story Tracker](#) lights a star on the reader’s country when she or he reads about our Saviour’s birth on the app. A counter on the top right shows the total number of readings from the YouVersion since December 1.

Curious, I opened the birth of Jesus account in Luke 2 on my smart phone, and watched the tracker map: sure enough after a minute or two my little star appeared on the south eastern tip of South Africa!

The Bible app which was developed by Life Church features 400

Bible versions in more than 200 languages. It is totally free and according to Life Church lead pastor Craig Groeschel it will remain free. To download a copy of the Bible on your mobile device, visit <http://www.youversion.com/download> .