# Understanding Cursed to Bless

## Resource Purpose

We want to help oral, rote-educated christians in developing countries to see how the whole Bible fits together into a single story of salvation, with Jesus and his gospel of grace at its heart. There are five key challenges that call for a different approach: poverty, scale, rote education, orality, and prosperity teaching.

Cursed to Bless is a Bible teaching audio drama. It helps pastors teach God’s whole story of salvation to their church, with Jesus as the central *character* and the gospel of grace as the main *message*. It uses a format that addresses the five challenges above. It’s an entertaining drama about characters like the people in their church. It covers the Bible’s whole story of salvation through the experiences of the characters. Each episode presents a key point in the Bible. It doesn’t require high levels of education.

Producing a contextualised version of the drama in your local language would make the drama much more effective. Cursed to Bless relies on the power of drama to reach the audience’s hearts and deeply-held worldviews, and this is best done in the audience’s “heart language”. We have produced a production pack with a set of guides and resources to help partners produce Cursed to Bless in their own context. This production pack distils all the lessons and refinements we’ve made through the initial production, so you can benefit from them. The *Production Guide* document guides the local producer through this process.

## Setting

The story is set in a city in South East Asia. However, the script is intentionally fairly ‘neutral’ regarding the characters’ context, to allow easier adaptation into different contexts. However, we’ve tried to represent the lives of low-income Christians in developing countries. Production partners can adapt the scripts in consultation with the project, as we understand that contexts can vary considerable across the world.

The main characters maintain a living with odd low-skilled jobs, and have little financial security. While they can generally feed themselves, there is constant uncertainty about the future.

The city they have moved to is filled with scooters and bicycles, and a few cars. There is typically lots of rubbish on the ground. The area is densely populated, with small dwellings. There is a lot of crime violence (muggings, gangs) and limited policing.

## Characters

Below is a list of main characters in the series. The characters in each episode are noted at the top of the script.

**Sam**: Main character. Late teens, has just finished high school/matriculation. Came to the big city from his childhood village in search of work. He’d call himself a Christian and is fairly regular at his church, but he’s often confused. He especially struggles to understand why his life is so hard, when God is meant to be so loving and powerful. He’s often looking for work.

**Ben**: Late teens, has just finished high school/matriculation. He’s a faithful and godly Christian who understands the gospel well. He’s keen to learn more about the Bible. His life is often hard, with sickness or poverty. However, he continues to trust in God’s goodness, and perseveres in obeying as well as serving others. He might sound a bit feeble, but he’s content, at peace, and full of trust/faith. His faith is not shaken by setbacks. It’s important that Ben is portrayed as a ‘real’ person that the audience can look up to.

**Pete**: Late teens, has just finished high school/matriculation. Pete would call himself a Christian and regular at church, but he has a rather proud heart. He sees God as a means for what he wants (money, posessions, status), and a somewhat fickle deity who cannot be trusted. Deep down, he believes his own works are what will make him presentable to God, and he’s rather confident of making it. He sees Bible stories as illustrations for how he can get ahead. If hardship falls on an acquaintance, he suspects they’ve dropped their giving to church or they’re under a curse of some sort. He sounds very confident, but there’s a hollowness to him - he’s easily unsettled. Because he’s trusting in his own strength, his world can crash down easily. He shouldn’t be portrayed as a villain, however. Sam would call him a friend, and would actually agree with Sam’s worldview often, especially at the start of the series. Pete’s character often brings a comic element to the scripts. He loves eating and football. He’s impressed with powerful people, big buildings, fast cars. He hates waiting. He likes Ruth, and tries hard to impress her - often to comic extents. His father was unfairly jailed when he was a child.

**Pastor**: Late 30s or so. He’s named Job, but the young friends call him pastor. Became a Christian in his late teens, and leads a medium sized church. He has gone through significant suffering in life, but he’s remained joyful. He loves teaching the Bible to the young friends, and is keen for them to ask questions.

**Ruth**: Late teens, has finished high school/matriculation. She’s the pastor’s daughter. She loves music and signing. She’s a mature christian who loves the gospel. She knows the Bible well, but is keen to learn more.

**Kate**: Late teens, she’s in her last year of high school. She hopes to go overseas for better paid work once she finishes. She’s a friend of Ruth’s, and loves watching dramas and movies. She is very sensitive to suffering in the world.

There are several minor characters involved in the ‘full’ version of the scripts with the life situation. These will be noted in each script.

## Episode Overview

|  | **Title** | **Reading** | **Main Idea** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **0** | Series Introduction |  | Introduces the characters, tells how they come to join a Bible study, raises series’ overall question and theme, and explains the format. |
| **1** | God Blesses People | Genesis 1-2 (in two sections 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-25) | God is our supremely powerful and good Creator and Ruler who has blessed us abundantly. |
| **2** | People Sin and God Curses | Genesis 3 | Our disobedience against God was a terrible act of rebellion and unbelief which brought God’s curse upon us. God removed us from his place (the Garden) so we are no longer his people enjoying his rule. Life is now hard and then we die. |
| **3** | God Promises to Bless People Again | Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 15:1-7 | God promises Abraham that he will again bless the world through him. Abraham trusts God and God considers him righteous. |
| **4** | God Blesses His People Israel | Exodus 19:1-6, 20:1-3 | God creates his own new people, Israel, rescues them from their enemies and gives them the Law so that they can live lives of love in his presence. |
| **5** | God Blesses Israel and the World! | 1 Kings 10:1-13 | God establishes his people in his promised land, gives them his King to rule over them and abundantly blesses them and the world. |
| **6** | People Sin Again and God Curses Again | 1 Kings 11:1-13 and Deuteronomy 28:58-63 | Solomon’s (and the people of Israel’s) disobedience against God shows just how stubbornly sinful people are and how deserving of God’s curse we are. |
| **7** | God Promises to Bless People Yet Again! | Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:24-28 | God speaks through the prophets a message of hope that he will fulfil his promises, remove the curse, soften hard hearts by his Spirit and bring eternal blessing to his people. |
| **8** | God Curses Jesus to Remove the Curse from People | Matthew 27:27-54 | God himself, in Jesus, came to pay the death penalty of the curse on us so that it could be removed from us. |
| **9** | God Blesses Jesus to Bless the World | Acts 2:22-39 | The resurrection of Jesus exalts Jesus above all powers and proves that God has removed the curse and has brought blessing to his people. We join God’s people and receive the Holy Spirit by repenting of our sins and putting our faith in the Lord Jesus. |
| **10** | God’s People Declare the Gospel of Jesus to the World | Luke 24:36-53 | The risen Lord Jesus confirms God’s purpose revealed in the Scriptures that through Him salvation has been achieved and this Gospel news must be declared to the world in the power of God the Holy Spirit. |
| **11** | God’s People Live for the Glory of God | 1 Peter 2:9-25 | Just as Jesus lived a perfectly good life yet suffered for us, we too must live good lives and be prepared to suffer to show others just how glorious God is. |
| **12** | God Blesses His People Forever | Revelation 21:1-5, 21:22-22:5 | Through Jesus the curse has been removed and the blessings that God originally intended for his people will be restored and increased! God will live with his people, in his place and ruling and blessing them forever. Now, while we wait, we bless each other by generously sharing our lives and our possessions to meet each other’s needs. |

## The Scripts

This section describes how each episode script works in general. The annotated script document gives a concrete example of how the typical episode script works, with comments on the side. The *Theological and Educational Framework* gives a description of all the scripts in the series, with their theological and educational goals.

We have written the scripts in a ‘modular’ way, allowing two versions of the script:

* A full version, which includes a life situation that the characters go through.
* A short version, focused on the Bible study discussion and without the characters’ life situation.

The short version is quicker to translate and produce given it has fewer words. More significantly, it is *simpler* to produce because it’s mostly set in one, simple setting: the bible study in the pastor’s house, with the same set of main characters. The full version, on the other hand, has a richer educational value because it includes life situations of the main characters which help the audience know the protagonist and thus connect with him more deeply, which helps them learn and grow as the protagonist does. These situations illustrate the passage and provide a concrete situation to apply its lessons.

As of mid 2024, only the short version of the scripts is available. We hope to have the full version released soon. Due to our modular approach, we envision that only the new ‘life situation’ segments might need to be produced, with the bible study scenes reused. Some additional lines from the host is also likely required. This guide will generally refer to the short version of the scripts.

The full version has these sections:

* Intro: the host introduces the main idea and previews.
* Life Story Setup: the protagonist finds himself in a difficult situation, and is faced with some kind of situation. This ‘life situation’ parallels the bible passage in the episode, and will help the characters (and audience) understand the pasasge better.
* Friends Discussion: the friends discuss what Sam should do about his problem.
* Bible Study: the friends attend their Bible study group with pastor, and discuss the passage.
* Questions to Pastor and Application: the friends ask the pastor their questions. These often include explanations about how the passage relates to the Bible’s big story and to Jesus. The group also discusses how the passage applies to their lives.
* Interactive Questions: the host asks the audience interactive questions to help them learn. These questions include pauses in the audio so that the audience can say their answer out loud.
* Life Story Resolution: we hear what Sam decides to do about his life situation, and what the outcome is.
* Outro: we hear Sam pray about the day, then the host highlights the main idea of the episode, and ends by prompting the audience with a question about how the passage applies to their lives.

The short version has these sections (sections relating to the life situation are removed):

* Intro
* Bible Study
* Questions to Pastor and Application
* Interactive Questions
* Outro

The series introduction has a slightly different structure, although it follows the same pattern broadly. The short version includes a brief introduction to the characters’ life to help the audience know them.

Word styles are used in the scripts to help in formatting and distinguish the different types of content. Each scene has a heading and starts in a new page. The character that says each line is bolded at the start. ‘FX’ and ‘ATMOS’ lines are notes for the audio editor to include some special effect, and should not be spoken. The lines have extra space between them to allow highlights and notes.