



Mourning Elizabeth

**Christianity and the
Bible in the funeral of
Queen Elizabeth II**

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Executive summary

In September 2022 Britain mourned the death of a reigning monarch for the first time in over 70 years. At their heart, these elaborate royal rituals were deeply indebted to long-standing Christian language, Scripture, and music, resulting in an enormous and unprecedented public Scripture event reaching tens of millions in Britain alone. Taking place in the context of a country that is no longer majority Christian, the prominence of these overtly religious events presented fascinating questions for the role of religion in modern Britain. In the weeks following the events, Bible Society commissioned YouGov to survey 3,000 adults across England and Wales to understand the response to these events that so prominently featured Christianity and the Bible. Here's what we found:

A faithful and popular monarch

The Queen's deeply personal Christian faith was prominent throughout her life and was reflected in her memorial and funeral events. While she was particularly popular among Christians, this spread beyond those who shared her faith.

- 68% of the population said they were favourable towards the Queen, with only 10% being unfavourable
- 62% support Britain remaining a monarchy, with 27% in favour of a republic. Among 18-24-year-olds, support for remaining a monarchy is much lower, at 43%
- Across age groups there is greater warmth towards the Queen and the monarchy among churchgoers than their non-churchgoing peers. Nonetheless, even among non-religious people, a majority support remaining a monarchy
- The Queen's public faith was very influential, particularly among churchgoing Christians. Over half of churchgoers said the life of the Queen positively influenced how they saw Christianity – and these perceptions were further improved among approximately a third of churchgoers through the mourning events

A unique Bible moment in history

The mourning events following the death of Queen Elizabeth were moments of extraordinary reach and exposure of the Bible, with modern media making it an unprecedented event in global history. Throughout the events, Christian ritual, liturgy, and Scripture were central, and these were largely viewed warmly – but opportunities remain for Bible communicators.

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- If someone watched all of the official mourning events they would have heard 3,923 words of the Bible, forming 198 verses, drawn from 13 books of the Bible, in three languages – English, Welsh and Gaelic
- 70% of respondents engaged with the funeral, with 29% saying they heard parts of the Bible they'd not heard before. This rises to 40% among 18–24-year-olds
- One-third said they found the Bible passages moving (with 15% disagreeing), while 31% said they were relevant to their feelings at the time, compared to 18% who disagreed
- However, one-quarter said they were boring, while around a quarter (25%) of young people (18-34) and those from other faiths said they found the Bible difficult to understand

Christianity has a place in royal events

Christian ritual and Scripture were a persistent and prominent presence throughout the funeral and mourning events. In both this specific case and looking to royal events more widely, we found widespread support for retaining this Christian focus and little interest in the events becoming wholly secular – even among those from other religions and non-religious backgrounds.

- Overwhelmingly, those who engaged in the funeral events believed the presence of Christianity was appropriate. 79% agreed it was appropriate given the faith of the Queen as an individual, while 72% said it was appropriate for a British royal event
- 55% of respondents said they were happy that the events were wholly Christian, with only 12% saying they found this prominence alienating and fewer than one in ten (9%) saying they should have instead been wholly secular. Even among the non-religious, 36% said they were happy the events were wholly Christian, with only 12% saying should have been wholly secular.
- Overall, people are more likely to agree (31%) than disagree (21%) with keeping state royal events wholly Christian in the future. Likewise there is little appetite for the events becoming wholly secular with 15% agreeing. Among non-religious respondents this is only slightly higher at 18%
- 37% of adults agree a state royal event should feature the Bible, two-and-a-half times more than those who disagree (14%)