

One to One:

Some people you know

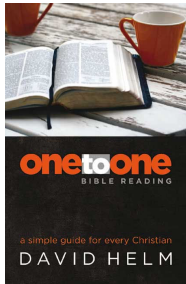
You probably know someone like “**Andrew**”. Perhaps he’s a co-worker or a neighbour. He’s not really a church person. Perhaps you’ve discussed religion with him; maybe you haven’t. You’re reasonably sure he’s not a Christian, but he seems curious about what you believe. He also seems to have some misunderstandings about what the Bible says, and you’ve never really had the time or opportunity to talk to him about them.

You probably know someone at church like “**Alison**”. She’s recently started attending your Home Group. She seems to be a relatively new Christian and doesn’t know much about the Bible, but is keen to learn more.

You probably know someone at church like “**Alan**”. He’s a keen, committed Christian. He helps supervising crèche once every couple of months, but that’s about it as far as ministry or leadership goes.



Imagine you’re asked to design a program for the spiritual growth and discipleship of all three of these people. Where would you start? Does each person need something different? Or a range of different things? What if there was some way all three people could grow in their knowledge of Jesus by the same means? It’s not a secret, and it’s not new, and it doesn’t guarantee incredible growth and change overnight. But it’s God’s method for growth and discipleship. It’s reading the Bible one-to-one.



Why should we read the Bible one-to-one?

Reading the Bible one-to-one with someone else involves meeting for a mutually agreed upon length of time, with the intention of reading through and discussing a part of the Bible. It’s a simple idea that can profoundly influence the growth of the gospel in your life, and the lives of your family and friends as well.

You don’t need to be theologically trained. “Any committed Christian is capable of initiating a good conversation on a Biblical text... Our proficiency in the Bible is not the final arbiter in seeing spiritual growth occur. The Holy Spirit can and does use timid people just like us...

God does his work in his way, and it is his word that accomplishes whatever he desires in the world!”
(*One to one Bible reading*, David Helm. p24.)

Here’s four reasons why we should read the Bible one-to-one with someone:

1. **Salvation:** You may know a work colleague, friend or family member who isn’t a Christian. Reading the Bible (something like Mark or John) with them would be perfect! James 1:21 says that the word planted in us is *able to save us*. 1 Peter 1:23 says that we are born again, of imperishable seed, by the living and enduring word of God.
2. **Building up:** All Christians, new and old alike, need instruction, encouragement, teaching and admonishing from God’s word. Paul encourages us to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom”(Col 3:16).
3. **Training:** Reading the Bible one-to-one is a great way to identify and train people for greater ministry responsibility. Lots of people in church love Jesus and are involved in areas of ministry where they feel capable. They are just waiting for someone with more experience and maturity to invest in them to identify, guide, mentor, nurture, train and set an example for greater effectiveness in God’s kingdom.
4. **Relationship:** Reading the Bible one-to-one develops true friendships of substance. It’s what God designed us for. People are hungry for connection, whether they are Christian or non-Christian.



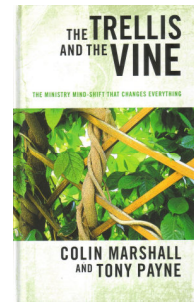
Imagine this?

“What we are really talking about is a Bible-reading movement- in families, in churches, in neighbourhoods, in workplaces, everywhere. Imagine if all Christians, as a normal part of their discipleship, were caught up in a web of regular Bible reading- not only digging into the word privately, but reading it with their children before bed, with their

spouse over breakfast, with a non-Christian colleague at work once a week over lunch, with a new Christian for follow-up once a fortnight for mutual encouragement, and with a mature Christian friend once a month for mutual encouragement.

It would be a chaotic web of personal relationships, prayer and Bible reading- more of a movement than a program-but at another level it would be profoundly simple and within reach of all."

The Trellis and the Vine, Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, p57.



It's an exciting thought! What would our church look like if this was happening? Can we do it? Can you help?

Read Ephesians 4:11-13

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

1. What are pastor/teachers meant to be doing?
2. As a result, what are God's people meant to be doing?
3. As a result, what should be happening in a church?
4. What are the implications for you and your ministry?
5. In our church context, what will "maturity" typically look like? What will be some concrete expressions of the abstract idea? Think hard about this before moving on. The overall goal might be 'Christ-likeness'. But try to break that down to a few more tangible points.

This maturity will be evident through...

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What would it look like?

Think and pray about who you could ask.

- Men meeting with men, women with women.
- What's your **purpose**? It could be for mutual encouragement, support, accountability, mentoring or evangelism.

Ask someone, and then start meeting

- It might seem scary to ask, "Would you have any interest in reading the Bible with me for a few weeks?" But it may be less scary for your non-Christian friend. They may be more threatened when asked to attend church, or a program where lots of people are present.
- You can meet weekly, fortnightly, monthly. You can meet for coffee, breakfast, lunch, or in the evening – whatever works for the two of you. It just needs to be a **regular commitment**.
- At your first meeting agree on the length of time you will meet for, when, what book you will read together, and whether you will prepare beforehand or not.



- Based around **the Bible and prayer**. Why? Because the Bible is the way God's Spirit does his working of maturing. Doesn't matter how much or how little you read. Whatever works for the two of you.
- **Spend some time catching up**. Be specific – cover areas of personal spiritual disciplines, godliness, family, work. Are there any goals to be worked on? How are these going? Ask how you can support the other person. Listen.
- **Read the Bible**. You don't need to use specific material. But read a passage. Talk about it;
 - How does it fit into the larger context of the chapter/ book/ Bible?
 - What do you learn about God?

- What do you learn about yourself?
 - Is there an instruction to follow, a rebuke to heed, or an encouragement to hear?
 - Can you respond with thanksgiving, confession, praise or requests?
- **Pray** for specific things from the passage and your catch-up.
 - **Organise** your next meeting.

The Swedish Method

One simple method that gives some structure to your time together involves each person reading the passage, and then recording (either separately or by drawing symbols in their Bible) at least one point for each section below. Each person then shares in turn what they have discovered for each section.



- What shines out in the passage and draws your attention? What's important in the passage?



- What might be hard to understand, what would you like to ask the author about, or find out more about?



- Anything that has a direct or implied application to my life.

As you gain confidence, you may like to expand the range of things you look for in a passage. You could look for;



- What is the central idea of a passage?



- Who might benefit from this passage if I shared it with them?

Read 2 Timothy 1:3-14:

Paul – The Trainer, Challenger, Encourager & Model

3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. 5 I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. 6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. 8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. 13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.



1. List some ways Paul is being a trainer, challenger, encourager and model to Timothy in this passage.
2. Think of someone in your life that has been a coach to you in some way. What did they do and how did it help you?
3. Can you think of someone you could ask to meet with? Pray about it now. _____

Passage: _____

Date: _____



- *What shines out in the passage and draws your attention? What's important in the passage?*



- *What might be hard to understand, what would you like to ask the author about, or find out more about?*



- *Anything that has a direct or implied application to my life.*

Passage: _____

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- *What shines out in the passage and draws your attention? What's important in the passage?*



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- *Anything that has a direct or implied application to my life.*

One-to-one prayer and Bible reading

From "The Briefing" | 20 September, 1994. Col Marshall

The following is a true story. Last Friday, two friends met to read the Bible, pray and drink coffee, like they do every week for about an hour. They go to the same church, and decided they needed some accountability in their lives as Christians. Last week, they were up to Philippians chapter 2 in their reading programme. They read the chapter out loud, then talked about its implications for their thinking and prayers. They are doing detailed Bible study in small groups, so the focus of their time was on application and encouragement. From Philippians 2, they talked for a while about Jesus' priority of service over status and their struggles to help others when there is no recognition involved. They confessed their tendency to complain and argue, and the conversation moved to wider issues of status seeking in the church. This gave them plenty to pray about, and they concluded their prayers by remembering two missionary families. Next week they will read chapter 3.

So what?

This doesn't exactly grab you as one of the great stand-out events of last Friday. Even within the Christian world, on a scale of 1 to 100, it doesn't rank more than a 0.01 in importance.

But think about the long-term effects of meeting like this. The two friends will know the Bible better, pray regularly and deepen their friendship. They will encourage each other to deal with God and his word with integrity. As they open their lives to each other before God's word, they will "spur one another on towards love and good deeds" (Heb 10:24-25). They will strengthen each other to resist sin and remain faithful to Christ.

Why do it?

At the core of all Christian ministry is Bible reading and prayer. We are united with Christ by hearing his word and responding in faith, and that is how we remain in Christ. We can never progress beyond these basics—teaching each other the word of God; calling upon each other to believe

and repent; bringing our lives, our churches and the world before God in prayer.

But we can do all this in three broad contexts: large groups, small groups and one-to-one. We choose different contexts on totally pragmatic grounds. There is a certain efficiency of gathering people together, and there are various educational advantages in each context. However, all ministry is ultimately to individuals, even when we are dealing with groups. Our concern is for the salvation and growth of each one.

So what are the benefits of reading the Bible and praying one-to-one? It is:

- convenient: arranging to meet one Christian for one hour weekly is realistic, even in the busiest lives. It's easy to get started, with minimal organization required.
- personal: the discussion and prayers can address particular individual concerns. In groups, it is impossible to deal with everyone's issues and questions.
- accountable: meeting one-to-one is an ideal way of holding each other accountable to read and obey the Bible. It is hard to meet each week and pretend to be serious about submitting to Christ while playing around with secret sin. In our perversity, this is not impossible, but it's hard to sustain the performance.
- strategic: this is a basic ministry to master, and will be useful in many contexts. Wherever we go in church life, we can find a Christian with whom we can read and pray. Sometimes at work we will find a Christian who would love to meet with us. In some ministry contexts, such as the military and educational institutions, it is almost impossible to gather Christians into groups, and personal ministry is the only option. For some Christians, the only opportunity for fellowship is with individuals due to family restrictions and persecution.

Why we don't

If I had to hazard a guess as to how many Christians engage in one-to-one Bible reading and prayer, I would say less than 1%. I have no data on this; it's just a hunch. This seems strange if it is such a simple and convenient way of spurring each other on in the faith. Why don't we do it?

WE ARE TOO BUSY IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE

The old cliché is true: “the good is the enemy of the best”. One reason we don't read and pray with each other is our devotion to other Christian activities.

There are limitless opportunities to serve Christ and his people, and Christ has given a diversity of gifts to edify his church. However, certain ministries, such as prophecy, have priority over others because they are more useful for edifying the church. Whatever else Paul means by prophecy, fundamentally it is speaking the word of God, and we are to “excel in gifts that build up the church” (1 Cor 14:12). Speaking the word of God to each other is the way we are strengthened, encouraged and comforted, and the way the church is built. One-to-one Bible reading and prayer is, therefore, a very high ministry priority. Most of us have little discretionary time where we are free to choose how we use it. We have fixed priorities that absorb most of the 168 hours in the week. Sleeping, eating, travelling, working, family responsibilities, chores and ‘personal things’ take around 140 hours, if you have anything like a ‘normal’ life. The 28 hours remaining is your discretionary time—time that you can divide between leisure, study, socializing, hobbies, and so on. Christians will devote some of these 28 hours to specifically Christian activity. This will include private Bible reading, prayer and study of Christian literature, as well as service to others. When we look at it realistically, there are only around 5-10 hours per week available for Christian activity with others, and most of this time is taken up with church meetings, a Bible study group or committees. And, as the years roll on, there is even less time at our discretion, with increased family and work responsibilities.

Maybe we need to rethink our ministry responsibilities and withdraw from some tasks in church life in order to read and pray with others.

WE PUT STRUCTURES BEFORE PEOPLE

If we are asked about the ministries of our church, we usually answer in terms of structures and programmes: men's fellowship, Sunday School, Youth Club, women's Bible study, and so on. If our pastors ask us to be involved in ministry, they usually mean taking on a particular task to keep the programme running. These kinds of programmes are often good—some may be essential—but our thinking is back to front. The reason we run ministry activities is for people—their salvation and maturity in Christ. After a while, the programme attains a validity in itself; the means becomes the end. For example, we run a drop-in centre because we have always run a drop-in centre.

If, instead, we start with people and ask how we can win them for Christ and establish them in the faith, we might end up spending our ministry time differently. We might cancel some programmes, and start meeting with individuals for Bible reading and prayer. Or we might build this one-to-one ministry into our existing programmes.

WE SEEK RECOGNITION FOR OUR MINISTRY

There is no kudos or notoriety in private meetings with individuals reading the Bible and praying. There is a type of career path in churches—from pew sitter to welcomer to assistant Bible study leader to Bible study leader to board of elders to chair of the board. Just adjust the titles for your particular church. One-to-one ministry doesn't advance our career at all.

WE DON'T FEEL QUALIFIED

This is one of the advantages of one-to-one Bible reading and prayer: it is simple; everyone can do it. We are not taking over the minister's job to teach the Bible, and we don't have to have all the answers. Together, we can wrestle with understanding God's word and changing our lives. We are not setting ourselves up as the fount of all knowledge and virtue. All we need is the heart to know God better and to encourage one another.

WE NEVER THOUGHT OF IT

Now you have!

How to do it

Here are some tips to get you started. You will develop your own patterns along the way.

- Decide to meet for a specified period of time—say, six months—so it is easy to stop if you need to.
- Give priority to reading the Bible rather than Christian books.
- Try a variety of methods for Bible reading:
 - Verse by Verse: read the text verse by verse, and work out what it is saying. Using a Bible with marginal notes and cross references will deepen the discussion.
 - QUIT: look for *Q*uestions that need to be resolved, *I*mplications for life and major *T*hemes in the passage.
 - Interactive Bible Studies: prepared studies, such as those published by Matthias Media. You can do some preparation before meeting, or just work through the material together.
- Leave plenty of time for prayer. Pray about the implications of your Bible reading and the current concerns in your lives. But also pray beyond your own horizons for unbelievers, your church and gospel ministries around the world. If you can't work out who to pray for, ask your pastor or get some newsletters from evangelists and church planters in Australia and overseas.

Who to meet with

The possibilities are only limited by your imagination.

- Christian friends for mutual encouragement at church, work, school, college, university or in the neighbourhood—anyone who is 'spiritually hungry'.
- Young Christians to build foundations in the faith.
- Potential leaders who need nurturing and training in Bible reading and prayer.
- Christians who want to do some deeper Bible study.
- Your pastor who would love to read and pray with someone.
- A friend going through a crisis.
- Christians who are struggling with faith.
- Non-Christians who want to work out systematically what the Bible is saying.
- Christians who are restricted in some way from attending church or groups.

Some warnings

THE PRIORITY OF GOD'S WORD, NOT OUR PROBLEMS

Have you ever noticed how people with problems absorb your time and energy? You feel the energy drain out of you as they enter the room. In groups, they dominate the discussion. We all have problems, but some people become problem-centred because of the severity of their needs. One mistake in personal ministry is to be dominated by such people. They are so needy that, in our compassion, we feel guilty if we don't give them all the energy they demand. We end up visiting them again and again, or meeting them regularly at the expense of others.

It sounds harsh at first, but there is a better way. Firstly, if you do meet with such a person, set a different agenda. Instead of starting with his or her problems, start with Bible reading and prayer. He or she will then start to see how God views their life and problems, and thus they will make some progress in dealing with life under God's word. Secondly, give priority to training others in ministry. Meet with a spiritually hungry, 'problem-free' person who will mature and begin to serve others. Then you can give better care to those with problems because there will be more carers. Investing time in training others in service multiplies the workforce in the church.

THE SPIRITUAL GURU SYNDROME

We don't want to become spiritual guides for people and make them dependent on us, rather than God. Meeting regularly with someone and drawing them into close relationship can be highly manipulative. Some have never had such close attention from anyone, and they will agree to anything to protect the relationship. You can reduce such dependency by deciding to meet for a specified time period and by ensuring they relate to other Christians in church and small groups.

The cults have deliberately exploited the power of personal discipleship to control their members and movements. We need to ensure our personal ministries are characterized by freedom and flexibility. Some people should never be invited to regular personal meetings because of their insecurities.

Gender issues

One-to-one ministry tends to suit women better than men. Women enjoy the intimacy and are more articulate, which is a boon to conversation.

In general, men find it difficult to start these one-to-one meetings. They are more comfortable doing something together, like sport, fixing things or watching TV. Men don't just sit down and bare their souls to each other. Some men will find it easier to meet in threes or fours to reduce the intensity and so they feel less threatened and exposed. Meeting in a familiar context, like a club or McDonald's, may work better. For many men, they will learn more by having a healthy argument over the Scriptures, and they will let down their guard once they get drawn into the fight! You may not like these cultural stereotypes, but men do need to work out their way of meeting one-to-one.

Pepper the earth

If you meet with a Christian for Bible reading and prayer for the next 12 months, what will happen? You don't know exactly, but you can have certain hopes and prayers. Both of you will grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Perhaps you will encourage others to start meeting one-to-one. Perhaps you will both continue to meet with different Christians for the next 40 years. Just imagine what could happen if it was commonplace for Christians to meet for one-to-one Bible reading and prayer! What would happen if our society was peppered with thousands of such meetings? What growth in godliness might we see?

Questions

Use these questions as starters for group discussion or personal reflection:

1. What are the unique advantages of one-to-one ministry?
2. Is there anything which makes you hesitant about doing it?
3. What changes might you have to make to your Christian programme to do one-to-one Bible reading and prayer?