



# **STUDYING THE BIBLE**

## **ONE-TO-ONE**

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# INTRODUCTION

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‘One-to-one reading’ is a highly important and effective mean of teaching and encouraging people to grow in their understanding of the gospel and in their commitment to Christ.

This booklet is designed to help those who are involved or would like to be involved in reading the Bible on a one-to-one basis. It explains something of the Biblical basis for one-to-one work, as well as giving lots of practical advice as to how to go about it.

## THE BIBLICAL BASIS

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Reading the Bible one-to-one sits within the context of all Christians’ responsibility to meet together to spur one another on in faith, love and good deeds (*Hebrews 10:24-25*) and it is an example of the teaching and ‘word’ gifts uniting and building up the body of Christ and bringing it to maturity (*Ephesians 4:11-16*).

In the New Testament, the model of concentrated teaching to individuals is evidenced both in the ministry of Jesus to his disciples and in particular to Peter, James and John, and also in Paul’s ministry to Timothy.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF ONE-TO-ONE

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What is distinctive about one-to-one work?

What makes it an important area of ministry beyond group study or good Christian friendships?

Two areas stand out:

# 1. PERSONAL COMMITMENT

The effectiveness of one-to-one work stems from the concentration on the individual. In a talk, even in a Bible study, teaching can only be applied generally.

With the individual, however, everything can be tailored to that person's particular experience, understanding and circumstances. It is also much easier to remain faithful in prayer to one person.

The other important factor is that someone gets to see the gospel lived out in friendship as it is taught.

# 2. STRATEGY

Although it cannot be guaranteed, it is our prayer that those with whom we read may one day read the Bible with others. This is an application of Paul's instruction to Timothy.

“and the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2)

Personal work of this kind, therefore, is strategic and can be very significant in the long-term as it multiplies ministry.

## THE AIM OF ONE-TO-ONE WORK

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The goal is that which Paul describes generally in his letter to the Colossians, and specifically in 1:28:

“We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.”

Ultimate perfection in Christ will, of course, only be achieved in heaven, but the apostle tells us his immediate desire for the Colossians Christians is to enable them to make their final destination.

This should be our desire for ourselves, and for those with whom we meet one-to-one.

Paul mentions many details, so we will group them broadly according to the New Testament trio found in vv.4-5; that is **faith, love, and hope**.

## 1. FAITH

**A life worthy of the Lord (1:10).** We want people to trust Jesus as their Saviour and Lord, and to know Jesus better and better (2:2-3) so that they trust him more (2:7). Faith in Christ should lead to a desire to obey him and to live one's life in his service.

We want to enable Christians to bring the gospel to bear on and shape every aspect of their lives, including their ambitions, what they want to accomplish with their lives and their hopes for this life.

**Thankfulness (1:12, 2:7).** A great antidote to dissatisfaction in the Christian life is to grow in thankfulness for what God has done for us in Christ. When we understand His immense generosity to us, we will not chase after the prizes of this world.

**A concern for the truth (1:9-10).** Paul prays that they may grow in their knowledge of God. We want people to thirst after understanding of God and His word; not so they puff themselves up with pride, but they may live in accordance with what God has revealed about who he is and what he is doing.

Furthermore, Paul is concerned that the Colossians are not taken in by false teaching (2:8, 16, 18), but rather that they continue to trust Jesus and follow Jesus as they did when they started as Christians.

We, therefore, want to teach people and ourselves such that they are equipped to distinguish between sound and false doctrine.

## 2. LOVE

**For Jesus** first of all. It will grow as we understand and meditate on what he has done for us and how little we deserved it (1:12-13, 21-22). It will be seen in a devotion to prayer and the careful attention they pay to his word.

**For Christians** (1:5). Christians should be concerned for the faith and welfare of fellow believers around them. Our love is to be wholehearted, practical and self-sacrificial, and is therefore to be directed not only to those with whom we naturally 'get on'.

We want to see people in a commitment to building each other up to make church one of their highest priorities, and a willingness to serve one another which goes beyond a weekly meeting.

**For non-Christians.** This is rooted in a love for Christ, a concern for his glory, an understanding of God's purposes for his world, and recognition of the peril facing those who do not know Him (1:13,21).

We want to encourage people to see friends, colleagues and family in the light of the gospel and to take every opportunity to witness by word and in practice (4:2-6).

## 3. HOPE

Paul says that the Colossians' faith and love ***'spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven'***. Hope in the Bible is not vague, but a firm conviction that through Christ, heaven is a certainty as well as the understanding that the purpose of this life is to prepare for our future there.

This involves nothing less than the orientation of the whole of one's life. It means sitting loose to what our contemporaries value most highly and the ideals of our world.

It also means being ready to make sacrifices and to suffer for the sake of the gospel because of our confidence in the glory ahead.

**Endurance (1:11).** We want to help ourselves as Christians to persevere in our hope when faced with temptation, and all kinds of suffering, so that hardship causes us to trust more, rather than give up.

These things are not the characteristics of the spiritual elite. The New Testament sees them as the mark of every true Christian. So our prayer is that faith, love and hope – in their many aspects – may be nurtured in ourselves and in all those with whom we meet.

## WHO SHOULD I DO A ONE-TO-ONE WITH?

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There is no Christian for whom meeting one-to-one would fail to be beneficial but we would suggest that there are two broad categories that you should consider, and some sub-divisions within the second category.

### 1. NON-CHRISTIANS

There are always people at Carey who are investigating the Christian faith and – for those who are willing – meeting one-to-one is a great environment for them to consider the claims of Christ and the implications for their lives.

### 2. CHRISTIANS

**New, or less mature, Christians.** When somebody first professes faith in Christ, it makes the world of difference if someone can meet with them as they take their first steps as a believer. We would aim to encourage new, and less mature, Christians to be sure of their

salvation, to understand the importance of growing in obedience, prayer, Bible study, fellowship and evangelism.

**With a 'peer' Christian.** There can be great encouragement and development in doing a one-to-one with someone who is roughly the same level of Christian maturity as you. This can either be with a good friend or perhaps even someone who has a very different temperament to you. Often these types of one-to-ones can last for many years.

**With a more mature Christian / mentor.** You may be quite a mature Christian yourself, but there is often great wisdom in meeting up one-to-ones with a Christian who may perhaps be older and wiser than you, and can act as a mentor.

## HOW DO WE REALISE OUR AIMS?

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In three ways – by studying the Bible, prayer, and fellowship.

### 1. STUDYING THE BIBLE

It is notable that Paul does not expect the Colossians to produce these effects in themselves, but that he sees them coming from an understanding of the gospel:

**1:4-6** Their faith and love have come from the hope that they heard about in the gospel.

**1:9-12** A life worthy of the Lord will come from God, filling them with the knowledge of His will.

**1:24-2:4** Their understanding and unity, as well as their ability to resist false teaching, come from the apostle's efforts in presenting the word of God in all its fullness.

This is one instance of a consistent pattern throughout the Bible. God reveals Himself to people and leads them by His word:

Jesus says...

...his sheep follow him because they know His voice (John 10:4)

...it is by the word of God that the Holy Spirit does his work (Eph 6:17).

...it is the Scriptures which are able to make us wise for salvation, which are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training in righteousness, and equip for every good work (2 Tim 3:15-17)

## **2. PRAYER**

Whilst Paul aims to teach the Colossians God's word (1:25), he also asks God to fill them with the knowledge of his will (1:9).

All that we hope to achieve is only ultimately done by God himself, so we must pray that He would bring glory to his name by teaching us, convicting us and changing us as we learn from His word.

We should ask that God would make us faithful students (and where applicable, teachers) and good examples to those with whom we meet.

## **3. FRIENDSHIP**

We must not see other people as 'ministry fodder'! We have our own Christian responsibility to love them and that will be seen in listening to them and in our self-sacrificial commitment to them.



Paul set an example when he said to the Thessalonians: “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.” (1 Thes 2:8)

In as much as we are able, we should share our time, resources and lives with those we meet up with.

# PREPARATION FOR DOING A ONE-TO-ONE BIBLE STUDY

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## 1. PRAY!

## 2. CHOOSE THE PASSAGE

**For non-Christians or new Christians** it may be best to select a variety of passages and to study one each week – at the end of this booklet is a list of suitable passages and other suggestions. With any passage, however, try to study a natural unit in the text.

With all Bible study at whatever level, we want to model good habits, and understanding the context is one of the most important.

**For more mature Christians** it is probably best to go through a whole book so each passage is studied in its right context. Again, see suggestions at the back.

### 3. STUDY THE PASSAGE

Preparation for leading one-to-ones should be no different from preparing to teach/study the Bible in any context. Ask yourself all the important questions:

**What does the passage say? (Observation)** What are the main events the author describes or stages in his argument? How is the passage structured? Do you understand all the technical words? Are there any surprises?

**What does it mean? (Comprehension)** What point is the author making? Why does it come at this stage of the book? Why does he make this point to these recipients? Understanding what the passage means is vital to Bible study.

**How does it apply? (Application)** Application falls into two types. First, ask whether there are any direct applications from the passage. Are there any commands to obey? Are they for the original hearers only or are they for all time?

Are there any implications from the main points? How should this passage change our thinking about God, you, life, others, the church, etc.?

In particular, do you believe what God is saying here? How would it affect your life if you really believed it? Always apply to yourself before thinking of the person with whom you are studying.

### 4. SUMMARISE THE MAIN POINTS

Here you move from comprehension to communication. Write in a sentence the main points you want the person to go home understanding and believing from the passage. Make sure this summary is the same as what the passage teaches. You may also

want to note down some of the ways in which someone should change as they understand and believe the main points. We are aiming for changed thinking which results in changed lives.

This is the single most important step and often the most difficult. If you don't aim at a target, you are unlikely to hit it!

## 5. DEVISE QUESTIONS TO TEACH AND APPLY THE MAIN POINTS

There are broadly 3 types of question and they correspond to the questions you asked yourself before...

**Fact finding (Observation).** These are designed to familiarise someone with the basic content of the passage. Try to be more creative than just asking '*What happened next?*' or '*What did Jesus do then?*' For example, 'Imagine the events in the passage are in a film. List and give a title to each scene'.

**Meaning (Comprehension).** These are the most important questions. They are designed to help the person see why and how the passage says what it says.

**Implication (Application).** These ask the vital question '*so what?*' Beware of getting there too early. We must understand the point of the passage before we can apply it. Ask questions that invite discussion without being too personal.

Good questions will...

...be understandable

...make the person look at the passage

...enable discussion ('how' and 'why' questions do this better than 'what' questions)

...lead them to the aim of the study

NB It is often good if your opening question gets them to engage with some of the issues that the study will raise.

## WHEN YOU MEET

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The first time you meet, the person you are reading with may be anxious, so you must remember to explain exactly what you are going to do and how long it will take. Then make sure you stick to it! If you have never met before, it may be good to make your first meeting purely social.

After that, it is good to meet regularly. Once a week, or once a fortnight, is ideal. As for your time together, the following guidelines have been tried and tested!

### **1. START WITH TEA/COFFEE**

This is a good brief opportunity to see how the person is and enable you both to relax a bit. Don't, however, let this take away your study time.

### **2. OPEN IN PRAYER**

We are dependent on God for understanding, and we want to model this. Keep it brief. Remember that prayer is often caught not taught. If working with a new or less mature Christian, ask them to pray after a few weeks.

### **3. READ THE PASSAGE OUT LOUD**

As a general rule only share the reading if it is very long, or if it naturally falls into sections.

### **4. STUDY THE PASSAGE**

For a new Christian, or someone new to Bible study, 20 minutes might be plenty. We want to leave people wanting more. Unlike a group, one-to-one study is more intense and, even for a mature Christian, 30-40 minutes is enough.

Other things to remember:

Don't answer your own questions (ask another)

Don't lecture

Put red herrings aside (graciously) and come back to them at the end

Be as encouraging as possible – but if they are wrong, make sure they understand why?

### **5. IDENTIFY THE MAIN APPLICATIONS**

Near the end of the study, ask what point or which verse from the passage has struck them as being particularly striking. It is important to ask why they found it helpful, and how they think it will affect their life. Isolate one such thought yourself.

### **6. CLOSE IN PRAYER**

Like the opening prayer, this is best kept short and simple. Pray simple, honest prayers relating to the passage. If the person you are studying with is happy to pray, make sure you leave them something to pray about! Then talk about one thing to pray for one another and pray again.

## 7. ARRANGE THE NEXT MEETING

Time, place and also give them the next passage to read or prepare in advance.

## OTHER ISSUES TO ADDRESS

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The gospel has implications for the whole person and leaves no area of life untouched. As we get to know the other person, we want to encourage them to be consistently Christian in every area, and after the study it may be a good time to ask about one of the issues listed below. Young Christians in particular need slots of encouragement to think through their discipleship, but there is no Christian who is too mature to be (graciously) asked about the following areas:

**Doctrine.** The following are just some of the most important topics. The nature, character, and sovereignty of God; the cross and atonement; grace; assurance; God's plan for eternity; the nature of discipleship. Are they developing their understanding? Is there a good book you could be encouraging them to read?

**Devotional Life.** Whilst not wanting to be legalistic about quiet times, are they seeking to spend regular time in prayer and in understanding the Bible? Is it an important enough priority in their life?

**Fellowship.** Do they see the importance of regular fellowship? Do they see they have a responsibility to serve others using the gifts God has given them? Are they committed to a home group?

**Evangelism.** Do they have a heart for evangelism? Do they show that concern for God's glory and for their friends? Do they use church events wisely? Can they clearly explain the gospel? Could they lead someone to Christ using appropriate Bible verses? Are they able to answer some of the common apologetic questions (reliability of the Bible, other religions, suffering etc.)?

**Relationships.** Do they understand and accept the Bible's teaching on sex and marriage? Are they learning to trust God for a partner at the right time? If they are in a relationship, are they seeking to please God in this area? Are they clear about Christian/non-Christian relationships? Would they consider remaining single for Christ?

**Home and family.** This will depend on whether they're from a Christian or non-Christian home. Regardless, are they honouring their parents? Are they in danger of preaching to parents or ignoring them? Do they consult parents about their plans? Do they use home as a hotel?

**Use of time.** Are they modelling good use of time? Do they see their time as theirs to do with as they wish, or always an opportunity to serve God? What about holidays: could they use some vacation to serve God on a short-term project, or to be involved in some cross-cultural work, or go on a summer camp?

**Career and money.** Is the gospel their clear priority when it comes to their career plans? Are they aware of what it means not to conform to the world in their own working environment? Do they work diligently for their employer? Are they seeking to use opportunities at work to reach people with the gospel? Regarding money, is their attitude right? Do they understand the Biblical principle of generosity (2 Corinthians 8-9) and are they practising it?

In all this, we remember that grace is the controlling principle. If they need to grow in any of these areas, we must take them back to the gospel and pray that God would bring them to further repentance and faith.

# HOW LONG SHOULD I DO A ONE-TO-ONE WITH SOMEONE?

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Usually we recommend meeting with someone for approximately 6-12 months. After that, make sure you don't abandon someone to whom you have previously been very committed. Keep in touch, maybe meeting informally or just to pray every other month. If they are then able to meet with someone else, you could help train them as they begin.

## RESOURCES

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### BOOKS OF THE BIBLE TO STUDY

**Mark** (a particularly good gospel for new believers – could use Christianity Explored booklet to help work through it),

**Colossians**

**Titus**

**1 Peter**

**Philippians** (could use Discipleship Explored to work through it).

### STUDY GUIDES

**The Good Book Company** offer a wide range of study guides on Old Testament books, New Testament books, and topical series.

[www.thegoodbook.co.uk](http://www.thegoodbook.co.uk)



## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

**For non-Christians:**

***Turning Points*** (Vaughan Roberts)

***A Fresh Start*** (John Chapman)

**For Christians:**

***The Cross of Christ*** (John Stott)

***Knowing God*** (Jim Packer)

***A Call to Spiritual Reformation***  
(Don Carson)

***Guidance and the Voice of God***  
(Philip Jensen/Tony Payne)

***Pure Sex*** (Jensen/Payne)

***Know and Tell the Gospel*** (John Chapman)

***Distinctives*** (Vaughan Roberts)

***The Pursuit of Holiness*** (Jerry Bridges)

***Gospel and Kingdom*** (Graham Goldsworthy)

***One-to-One*** (Sophie De Witt)

## PASSAGES ON BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

**Gospel Assurance**

Luke 15:11-24; Eph 2:1-10; John 3:16-21

**Sin / Forgiveness**

Psalm 32; Psalm 51; 1 John 1:5-2:2

**The Cross / Atonement**

Mark 15:33-39; Rom 5:1-11

**Prayer / Sonship**

Matt 6:5-14; Luke 11:1-13

**Evangelism**

2 Cor 4:1-7; 5:14-21

**Godly Living**

Col 3:1-14; Eph 4:20-5:2

**Growth / Hindrances**

Heb 12:1-11; Mark 4:1-20

**Holy Spirit**

Gal 5:16-26