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Unleashing God's Word to do God's work

## **The nuts and bolts of of One to One bible reading**

One to One Ministry

[www.thewordworks.co](http://www.thewordworks.co)

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## **Aim for this module**

The Nuts and Bolts of One to One bible reading

- The WHO question: Anyone? Everyone? No one?
- The HOW question: “He/she said yes!” “Erm, what now?”
- The WHAT question: “Help! He wants to start with the book of Revelation!”
- The WHEN question: “Great! We’ve started One to One... now when do we stop?”
- The stuck question: “Oh no! I don’t know!”

## **Recap**

If you have not read “The role of One to One bible reading”, do review that before proceeding with this module to help you follow the materials better.

# THE WHO QUESTION: ANYONE? EVERYONE? NO ONE?

*“Are you F.A.T.?”*  
*“What?!” I can’t believe my pastor is calling me FAT! How is that relevant to me serving at the children’s ministry?*  
*“I mean, do you consider yourself to be Faithful, Available and Teachable?”*  
*“Oh...F.A.T.”*

A pastor used to say, look for the F.A.T. people. He meant people who were Faithful, Available and Teachable. There is some wisdom there, when it comes to getting someone to read the bible with you over a couple of months. If we have never done One to One bible reading before, it could be overwhelming to decide whom to approach. We wonder if it could be anyone, perhaps not everyone, though we might well end up asking no one. Who can or should we ask to read the bible One to One? There is no single method. Sometimes we already have a person in mind, other times we do not.

## Here are a few steps to help us:

1. **Pray.** Unless you are in certain seasons of life where you have the privilege of time, most people will only be able to meet One to One with two or three people a year, so you should prayerfully consider whom you will be investing your time to read the bible. Be prayerful as you consider who to read the bible with.
2. **Available and teachable.** Now, not everyone will be faithful, available and teachable. When you are thinking about a non-Christian friend or family, they will not consider themselves to be faithful to a God they do not know! Moreover, we do desire that they will come to know God. Nevertheless, it is wise to consider whether a person is actually willing to commit to meeting up for an agreed period (e.g. weekly/bi-weekly) and whether the person is open to learn and grow.

3. **Make a list.** Use the table below to make a list of people whom you might be able to invite. Who are the non-Christians and Christians that you know in your current circle of life? Whom can you engage, evangelise, establish and/or equip? What might be the focus of each One to One relationship? *(See The Role of One to One bible reading to understand the 4Es.)*

Category	People I know (which of the 4Es might this r/s be?)
<b>Non-Christians</b>	
<b>New Christians</b>	
<b>Christians to Establish</b>	
<b>Christians to Equip</b>	

4. **Same gender.** There is a certain level of vulnerability in spending extended time reading the bible with another person. So, unless the other person is your spouse, child or parent where meeting the person of different gender One to One may be considered appropriate, make a conscious effort to read only with someone of the same gender for the sake of blamelessness<sup>1</sup>.
5. **Being blameless<sup>2</sup>.** It is crucial to safeguard both parties' reputation, to avoid complications, and any temptations. With the unfortunate news of abuse and inappropriate conducts among some Christian leaders as well as our cultural shift in sexuality, it is important to take extra caution to be blameless in our bible readings. As such, it is highly encouraged to read One to One in a public setting. In some situations, it might be helpful to read as triplets. Remember to meet in a public space<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim 5:1-2

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim 5:1-2

<sup>3</sup> At the point of writing, we are facing COVID-19 pandemic. The implication is that sometimes the meeting will be through online technology such as ZOOM, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, etc. In such case, there is no physical location.

6. **Invite.** So how do we invite someone to One to One bible reading? When you have prayed and made your list and decided whom you would like to invite, it is time to take the bold step of asking. As the saying goes “If you never ask, you will never know”. You might be surprised to find that there are people who would love to read the bible with someone but had never been asked.

Try this: “Hey X, I was wondering if you are interested in reading the bible with me over coffee for a few weeks?” While we may not always be sure if another person is F.A.T., it is important that we seek to be F.A.T. ourselves, otherwise we might fail to let God’s word teach, rebuke, correct and train us<sup>4</sup>. So take time to consider - do I prayerfully desire to be faithful before the Lord? Am I available to read the bible with others? Have I been teachable whenever scripture confronts me?

Lastly, I would not recommend that you rock up to anyone and say, “Hey, my pastor thinks you are FAT and suggest I should ask you for One to One bible reading. What say you?”

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Tim 3:16-17

# THE HOW QUESTION: “HE/SHE SAID YES!” “ERM, WHAT NOW?”

Okay, so you have asked and the other person said yes, what now? Get ready to “S.C.R.E.A.M.” at each other. Well, not literally. These are 6 steps to help you navigate your One to One Bible Reading.

1. **Show up!** - Once you have agreed to meet, decide that you will show up rain or shine for each other unless the sky has fallen.
2. **Chat up** (on life)! - It is important to catch up with each other on what has been happening in life. Please do! However, do agree beforehand how much of your time will be spent on chatting (e.g. first 10 minutes of a 1-hour session).
3. **Read up** (on the passage) - You should pray beforehand if you are both Christians, asking God’s Spirit to help you understand his word. Note: you might choose not to pray if one of you is not a Christian. You can of course offer to pray for them about their concerns.
4. **Engage** (the passage) - Use the agreed bible reading approach (go back to the “How to Prepare Bible Study” Training materials) and engage with the text (do not look away from the text and take your own journey). Two good questions you can always ask each other are: “What do you think?” and “Where in this passage can we affirm our understanding?” Do not worry if there are unanswered questions. You can decide to research the answers and share at your next meet up.

Do not be afraid to say “I don’t know.” If it is an important question, take time to come back to it the next meeting.

5. **Apply** (the passage) – After engaging with the passage, take some time to ask “What are the applications for me?” If you are Christians, take some time to pray for each other. It will be valuable to “Chat up!” these applications at your next meet up. Again, do leave time to pray, especially if you are both Christians.

Some notes:

- Good applications spring out of the text.
  - Are there changes we need to make?
  - Are there commands we need to heed?
  - Most commands would require that we understand the context.
  - Write down each other's prayer points and conclude with prayer:
    - ✓ Thank God for what you have understood in the passage.
    - ✓ Thank God for how this passage has challenge you.
    - ✓ At least some prayer requests should be responding to the text.
- 6. Meet Again** –Finally do not forget to whip out your calendars to plan for the next meet up(s). From experience, lock in the next two dates so that if one date fails, you will not be lost in the sea of busyness.

**Your First Meeting:**

Now it is important to set the right expectations for your meetings as well as the practical stuff like duration/frequency/location/approach/etc. Do take time at your first meet up to work through all of that.

**First Session**

My expectation(s) & hope(s) for these meet ups are:

My commitment to making the above happen:

The duration (e.g. 60/90mins?) for each meeting is:

The frequency (weekly/bi-weekly) of our meet up is:

<i><b>Total Time</b></i>	<i><b>Show up</b></i>	<i><b>Chat up</b></i>	<i><b>Read up</b></i>	<i><b>Engage</b></i>	<i><b>Apply (&amp; Pray)</b></i>	<i><b>Meet: Calendar!</b></i>
<i>Mins</i>						

The approach we will use is:  
(e.g. “Investigate, Integrate, Apply”, C.O.M.A.<sup>5</sup>, Mathias Media resources, etc)

Other Matters:

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<sup>5</sup> C.O.M.A refers to Context, Observation, Meaning, Applications.



# THE WHAT QUESTION: “HELP! HE WANTS TO START WITH THE BOOK OF REVELATION!”

Do not be too ambitious at the beginning; learn to practice good bible reading skills before getting into more challenging genre. Perhaps start with Paul’s letter to the Colossians/Philippians, or with a seeker, start with the Gospel accounts e.g. Mark.

It is very fruitful to simply print out two sets of the books/letters (e.g. Colossians) in the bible and work through them together over 6-8 weeks.

You may choose to print out the passage to be preached in the coming Sunday and work out the big idea together.

There are also materials off the shelf that you can get that will guide you through the passages, e.g. “The word one to one”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theword121.com/> or Matthias Media guides <https://matthiasmedia.com.au/>

# **THE WHEN QUESTION: “GREAT! WE HAVE STARTED ONE TO ONE... NOW WHEN DO WE STOP?”**

Always provide a way out for... both parties. Make it clear at the expectation stage. Non-Christians often need to know the commitment is an agreement not dictatorial. Those who have never done One to One need to know there is an existing plan. For the seasoned bible readers, you may encounter people who are not F.A.T. and really just want attention. This provides an exit for you!

# THE STUCK QUESTION: “OH NO! I DON’T KNOW!”

The good thing about One to One bible reading is that you do not have to be the know-it-all. It is a journey of learning from God’s word together.

If there are questions that you cannot resolve within the session, allow both parties to go back and read up commentaries, or ask your bible study leaders or pastors.

At times, the answer can be found in the later passages if we just hold out and persevere.

Having attempted to work through the passage, we may be more attentive to how commentators answer the doubts we have. We may realise that we do not always agree with every commentator (in fact it is impossible to because commentators sometimes disagree with each other and we cannot agree with both parties).

## **To prep... or not?**

Now this sounds like a weird topic. Of course, we need to prepare! Or, do we? What are the advantage and disadvantage of preparing / not preparing for One to One?

### **1. Prepare –**

#### **a. Advantage**

- i. Maximises the effectiveness of your discussion together.
- ii. Possibly more insights to the passage and more confidence for the next meet up.

#### **b. Disadvantage**

- i. Overprepare and it becomes a teaching session.
- ii. If you are time-poor, you may struggle to prepare and meet up regularly.

## 2. Not Prepare –

### a. Advantage

- i. Expectation – not a teaching session.
- ii. Expectation – simply to meet up to read, share lives and pray.
- iii. Simply read and learn from the bible together.

### b. Disadvantage

- i. Level of experience: If both parties are not experienced in reading the bible you might feel lost or worried.
- ii. Get lazy and the sessions become less fruitful.

## 3. If you are preparing –

### a. Establish the amount of time you will spend preparing **and not more.**

- i. 30-60mins?
- ii. Make it sustainable. It should be a time of encouragement and not a burden that overwhelms you.

### b. Pray for understanding and that God will make your meetings fruitful.

### c. Read the assigned portion of the bible at least twice.

### d. Write down your impressions after reading the text each time – use the method you've agreed to use together when you meet up:

- i. Investigate, Integrate, Apply
- ii. COMA<sup>7</sup> – Context, Observation, Meaning, Application
- iii. Others

### e. Pray through what you have read and for your forthcoming meeting.

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<sup>7</sup> Note: The COMA Method is very similar to the bible reading method that we learnt in "How to prepare for Bible Study", with slightly different terminology and less details. E.g. the questions asked under Observation is very similar to questions that we explored under the section "Investigate". <https://www.matthiasmedia.com/Samples/otobr/OTOBRSheets-for-copying-US-letter.pdf>

**4. If you are NOT preparing.**

- a. Establish some level of expectation (e.g. Give enough time during your meet up to actually read and engage with the text.)
  - i. This might work if both are Christians who are able to meet easily and just want to keep reading and working out as much passage as their allocated time allows.

**5. From experience, a balance will be good.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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*Andrew is married to his best friend Linda and they are blessed with two lovely children, Joanna and Jonathan. Andrew is struck by the amazing grace and love of God revealed in Jesus Christ and wants to tell more people about Jesus. He is a slow reader, but enjoys reading. He also enjoys listening to podcasts and telling stories to his children.*