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# TheWordWorks

Unleashing God's Word to do God's work

## The tools for 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 tools for One to One Bible Reading

- The Genre – what is that?
- The Three Musketeers
  - The Biblical Theology – The biblical storyline
  - The Systematic Theology – The topical library
  - The Exegesis – The studying and understanding of the bible passage
- Questions for the road

## **Recap**

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

# THE GENRE – WHAT IS THAT?

Genre<sup>1</sup> is a category of literary composition, often determined by the style of writing, tone, form, structure, literary technique, linguistic factors, content, etc.... different genres will require different approaches to reading.

A simple example will be the daily newspaper that contains local and international news, financial writings, sports, obituaries, comics and advertisements, all of which will require us to approach them differently.

The bible contains genres, which also require different approach to reading. The common list of genres within the bible include: The Old Testament narratives, the Law(s), the Psalms, the Wisdom books, the Gospels (including Parables), the New Testament Narratives, and the Apocalyptic. New Testament letters (also called the Epistles) are often a good place to start because of its length and structure. They *usually* begin by telling us about the author and the recipient, followed by greetings, prayer, body and final greetings).

The Gospels<sup>2</sup>, while written largely in narrative, may not be easy to understand<sup>3</sup>. Yet they are the most important accounts in the bible because the gospel is both central to the bible and to our human existence. The hope of all people lies on the historical account of the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

Thankfully, the Gospels are never exclusively for intellectuals. In a sense, it is shallow enough for a baby to sit in, but deep enough to drown a living Argentinosaurus (largest land dinosaur discovered).

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<sup>1</sup> A good resource to have is "How to Read the Bible for ALL Its Worth", Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart

<sup>2</sup> The capitalised **Gospel** refers to the specific book of the bible – i.e. the Gospel according to Matthew, the Gospel according to Mark... collectively the Gospels refer to the first four books of the New Testament. Meanwhile, the **gospel** in lowercase commonly refers to the great news and message "*that [our Lord Jesus] Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared...*" 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

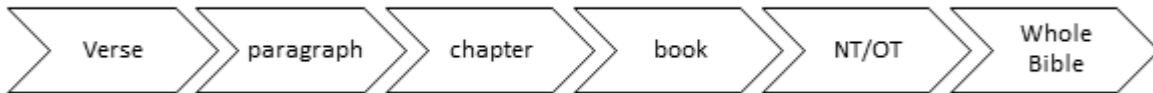
<sup>3</sup> because of the many OT references, quotes as well as parables, we will need to learn how to unpack the passage – see "The Three Musketeers".

# THE THREE MUSKETEERS

We have looked at bible handling skills in the previous materials. Here, I find it very helpful to keep these “Three Musketeers” in mind as we read and grow in our understanding of the bible. They are:

- 1. Biblical Theology - traces the big ideas and topics of the bible along the narrative timeline from Genesis to Revelation.**

When thinking about context, we may expand our thoughts by asking: What is this verse saying about this issue, how is it connect to the larger context of the bible?



As the saying goes, a text without context is proof-text.

*Additional resources: God's Big Picture by Vaughan Roberts, The God Who is There by D.A. Carson*

- 2. Systematic Theology <sup>4</sup> - a library of various topics/doctrines drawn from the bible and summarised to help us understand what the bible has to say about various topics/doctrine e.g. the Doctrine on God, Creation, Sin, Humanity, Gospel, Scripture, Salvation, Church, Last Days, etc...**

We do not necessary think about Systematic Theology in One to One bible reading, but during our investigation, integration and applications, we may be challenged by the passage on what we previously believed about certain issues.

*Additional resources: Concise Theology by J.I. Packer, The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way by M.S. Horton.*

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<sup>4</sup> A good study of Systematic Theology should involve engaging Historical Theology, which is an examination of how Christians over the past two thousand years have understood what the scripture says about various topics. We are always standing on the shoulders of giants from our church history.

**3. Exegesis - is the careful, orderly study of Scripture to understand its original intent for its original readers.**

This is followed by interpreting its application for the present readers<sup>5</sup>. Exegesis need to consider both the Context and the Content of the passage.

Do refer back to the previous modules such as “How to prepare for a Bible Study”<sup>6</sup>.

*Additional Resources: Dig Deeper by Nigel Beynon, Andrew Sach, Dig Even Deeper by Nigel Beynon, Andrew Sach, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth by Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart.*

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<sup>5</sup> The interpretation of what the passage means for us is also called hermeneutic.

<sup>6</sup> TheWordWorks, For the bible study leader: SGBS\_M1\_2\_How to prepare for a bible study <https://www.thewordworks.co/post/how-to-prepare-for-a-bible-study>

# QUESTIONS FOR THE ROAD

While we are almost reaching the end of the road... of this training module, we are only at the beginning of your One to One bible reading life-long journey! A good training always provide opportunity to raise questions, share ideas and pray. Here is your opportunity.

Some possible questions:

## 1. Do you feel overwhelmed?

- Is starting One to One too difficult? Why not start with short New Testament letters.
- Is it too tedious? Practice the bible reading skills in your own reading (e.g. use I.I.A.<sup>7</sup> or C.O.M.A.<sup>8</sup> for 10 mins).
- Peg it to your current routine – travelling... Before breakfast? Or even before going to bed?

## 2. Do you find it hard to get started?

- Is it hard to get the momentum going? Why not have someone from your church or bible study, or a good friend to give it a shot? E.g., meet once a fortnight to read Ephesians.

## 3. Are you losing motivation?

- Recall the 4Es. (See the module on “The role of One to One bible reading”)
- Remember to S.C.R.E.A.M.<sup>9</sup> (See the module on “The nuts and bolts of One to One bible reading”). The ‘loss’ of motivation normally happens before the One to One meet ups... but seldom after a fruitful One to One session. Remembering the 6-step process helps.

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<sup>7</sup> Investigate, Integrate, Apply – see previous modules.

<sup>8</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>

<sup>9</sup> S.C.R.E.A.M is an acronym for – Show up. Chat up. Read up. Engage. Apply. Meet again.”

#### 4. Should I use ready materials?

- There is nothing wrong with using ready materials. There are plenty off-the-shelves resources from Matthias Media (e.g. Back to Basics, Just for Starters...). Check with your pastors for recommendations if you are unsure.

#### 5. I am not sure which genre to begin! Should I read the Old Testament, the Psalms...how about Revelation?

- We may cover One to One bible reading for Old Testament narrative and Psalms in the future. However, learning the skills from previous trainings such as Small Group Bible Studies “How to prepare for a Bible Study”<sup>10</sup> are great ways to pick up more challenging genres.
- If you like to do the OT or the Psalms ask your pastors or leaders for recommendations to some good resources<sup>11</sup>.
- It will wise to keep each One to One bible reading series within a reasonable time frame (e.g. 8 sessions) so that you WILL finish the bible book/letter as planned.

**REMEMBER: Our goal is not to be perfect, but to take one-step forward in One-to One bible reading.** As you get into the practice of One to One bible reading, your church will begin to multiply “mini generators” that will power up your church community. It may start with just you and your friend. Over time, the momentum will grow exponentially in your church where more and more people will get excited to study the bible in pairs or triplets. Let’s give it a go!

#### 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.*

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<sup>10</sup> TheWordWorks, For the bible study leader: SGBS\_M1\_2-How to prepare for a bible study <https://www.thewordworks.co/post/how-to-prepare-for-a-bible-study>

<sup>11</sup> I have personally benefitted greatly from Proclamation Trusts books such as “Teaching Ezra, Teaching Daniel, Introducing 1 & 2 Kings...” and definitely the 2-volumes “Teaching Psalms” by Christopher Ash.