

## A Simple Guide for Doing One-on-One Bible Study

- **Why do this?**

Because the Bible tells us so! Seriously! The Great Commission (**Matthew 28:18-20**) is a call for all followers of Jesus. We are all tasked with the mission of making disciples of Jesus. Disciple-making involves *teaching them to observe all that [Jesus] has commanded us (vs. 20)*. The New Testament church consisted of followers of Jesus speaking God's word to other followers of Jesus to build them up and spur them onward in the gospel. In their groundbreaking book, *The Trellis and the Vine*, Colin Marshall and Tony Payne write: "Simply by virtue of being a disciple of Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit of the new covenant, all Christians have the privilege, joy and responsibility of being involved in the work God is doing in our world, the "work of the Lord." And the fundamental way we do this is by speaking the truth of God to other people in dependence on the Holy Spirit." In **Colossians 3:16**, Paul writes: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." In **Romans 15:14**, Paul writes: "I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another." In **Hebrews 3:12-13**, the writer of Hebrews states: "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Whether it was to unbelievers (see **Matthew 28:18-20**), new believers or more mature believers, the New Testament church consisted of followers of Jesus speaking the word of God to others for the growth of God's Kingdom! This was the norm then, and it should be the norm today! The Bible is God's means of shaping and molding His people more and more into the image of Christ! May we be a church committed to reading and studying God's word with others for gospel growth!

- **Who is it for?**

I'm glad you asked! Ha! As mentioned above, one-on-one bible study is not merely for unbelievers. It is actually more valuable for believers to meet one-on-one to read the bible together. Doing this will result in our churches being more outreach focused. Why? Because the Bible is outreach focused! Jesus, who is found in Scripture, is outreach focused! God's word, when read and studied one-on-one by believers, will help to equip God's people to better give an answer for the hope they have in Christ (**1 Peter 3:15**) and will help to bring their lives more in line with Christ so that they shine more brightly before the watching world as a gospel witness (**Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12**). Doing one-on-one bible study is a great way to introduce a non-Christian friend to the Christ of the Scriptures, but don't view this as something that can only happen with unbelievers. Our churches should be full of followers of Jesus getting together every week throughout their communities to study the bible one-on-one for mutual edification and growth in godliness! Recall the instruction provided by the writer of Hebrews for preventing *hardening by the deceitfulness of sin*. He calls believers to *exhort one another!* "With what," you may ask. With God's word! Our word has no power! Only the word of God (**Romans 1:16**)!

- **What does it look like?**

Now let's get practical! We've answered the questions of "Why" and "Who," and now must conclude with the final question of "What." It's clear from Scripture that one-on-one bible reading is necessary, normative and fruitful, but how do we do it? It's a simple equation. Are you ready? 2 bibles + 2 people

+ 1 location + good coffee (well, this is not absolutely necessary, but it helps) = one-on-one bible study. Ok, it's not that simple, but it's a start. Christian, find another Christian that is teachable and of the same sex. I think it's best to probably start with a fellow follower of Jesus. Once you've found that person, ask them if they'd be willing to get together once a week for an hour to read and study the Bible and pray. Yes, prayer is included (and thankfully so). Next, find a time and location that works for both parties. After this, agree on a book of the bible (or topic from Scripture) to discuss. For example, rather than studying Romans (verse-by-verse), you may wish to study the topic of prayer in Scripture. If so, be sure to find a dozen or so biblical passages that speak on prayer to read and study. Now that you have a person, a place, a time and a book or topic, what does the actual meeting look like? Before we look at a sample meeting, there's one more element to discuss. As the one initiating the study, it's up to you to provide the passages and questions for each gathering. Focus on no more than 1 chapter (and maybe less) and write out 5-8 questions that deal with the meaning and application of the passage. Before you meet, both of you need to read the passage (at least 2X) and answer the questions. Here's what I recommend for a 1 hour meeting:

- Start your time together with prayer. Ask God to open both of your eyes to behold wondrous things in His word (**Psalm 119:18**).
- Read the passage aloud.
- Work through the questions. Take about what you observed, the intended meaning of the passage and how you might apply God's word in your own life. Make sure that the person you're studying with is grasping the meaning of the text. If they miss the meaning, be sure to correct them gently and in love. Help them to see where they got off track and encourage them for next time. As you prepare for each meeting, be sure to apply the **RIP** method, or something similar, and take time each week to teach this method of bible reading/study to the other person, if they don't already know it. These one-on-one bible studies serve as great opportunities to teach bible reading/study method to another believer.
- Take some prayer requests. Weave in some accountability questions (e.g., How's your relationship with the Lord; How's your marriage; Are you struggling with any sin, etc...).
- Pray!

And you're done! It's pretty simple! Be sure to discuss the amount of time you wish to meet at the outset. You shouldn't meet for an indefinite amount of time. Why? Because the goal of discipleship is multiplication. Once the other person has gone through one-on-one bible study, and has learned bible study method, encourage them to find someone to meet with for one-on-one bible study. A reasonable amount of time for one-on-one bible study is 8-12 weeks. Of course, you can go longer or shorter. That's up to you! But do think multiplication and keep at it! Alright, get started!