

One-to-One Bible Reading Plans

All of Scripture is equally the Word of God. This means all of Scripture is helpful to us as we seek to know God and be changed into the image of Christ (2 Tim 3:16). But some parts of the Bible are more directly and easily applicable than other parts.¹ What follows are some suggested Bible reading plans for reading one-to-one with others.

And while it is best to normally read the Bible as God gave it—namely, one book at a time—there are times when it is helpful to consider key passages on a given subject. Both kinds of plans are included here for your benefit.

Reading Plans to Evangelize Non-Christians

Mark

The first Gospel was written by Mark who relied heavily on Peter. Though any Gospel would be helpful for evangelism, we especially recommend this one. It's the shortest and most straightforward. The action is quick-paced and Jesus stands out clearly. St. Helen's Bishopsgate has a helpful resource called "Reading Mark with a Friend" which can be downloaded from our resource portal in the One-to-One Bible Reading section. We also recommend reading Mark's Gospel with three basic questions to be answered after each chapter: *Who is Jesus? Why did he come? How should I respond to him?*

Mark 1	The kingdom is at hand
Mark 2	Authority in healing and teaching
Mark 3	God's new people
Mark 4	Parables and power
Mark 5	Deliverance
Mark 6	Kingdom and adversity
Mark 7	More than traditions
Mark 8	Predicting the passion
Mark 9	The glory of Christ
Mark 10	Hard hearts and humble faith
Mark 11	Jesus enters Jerusalem
Mark 12	False leaders condemned

¹ David Helm, *One-to-One Bible Reading* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2001), 49.

Mark 13	Anticipating the end
Mark 14	Love and betrayal
Mark 15	The cross
Mark 16	Triumph through resurrection

John

John's Gospel was the last to be written. Combining simple writing with deep theology, he explains Jesus' person and work so that people will believe in him. By the time he is writing false doctrines had arisen which threatened the church. Thus, John wants to be abundantly clear that Jesus is both the promised Jewish Messiah and God in the flesh. Like Mark, we suggest you read John with Jesus in mind. At each discussion, ask: *Who is Jesus? Why did he come? How should I respond to him?*

John 1	Word of God, Son of God, Lamb of God
John 2	A new temple promised
John 3	Believe in the Son
John 4	Taking the gospel beyond the Jews
John 5	The authority of the Son
John 6	The bread of life
John 7	Divisions about Jesus
John 8	The light of the world
John 9	Blindness and sight
John 10	The good shepherd
John 11	The resurrection and the life
John 12	Anointed, rejected, commanded
John 13	Humble love
John 14	The way, the truth, and the life
John 15	The vine and branches
John 16	Take heart
John 17	The prayer of the Savior
John 18	Arrest and betrayal
John 19	The cross
John 20	Resurrected that you may believe
John 21	Reconciled and commissioned

Reading Plans to Establish Believers

1. Plans for New Believers

Note: Care should be taken when reading with new believers to help them learn *how* to read the Bible as you read it. For this reason, we always recommend starting with reading straight through a book as your first one-to-one experience with a young Christian. This helps set the tone for normal Bible reading. Also, be sure to highlight information about the author, situation, or purpose of the book (if stated). You should also help them to make connections to earlier sections they read to teach them about context. Finally, help learn how to make observations, compare Scripture with Scripture, identify theology, think about application, etc. If you would like a refresher on these basics of reading of the Bible, a short guide can be found on our website.

Ephesians

Ephesians is one of Paul's prison letters. Unlike other letters which were sparked because of specific circumstances, this letter is more general in nature. Paul had spent considerable time in Ephesus proper, but it is likely that many people were coming to faith in the outlying villages. This motivated Paul to pen a letter that would lay out the essentials of salvation in Christ and how believers should live because of it. This letter provides a "basic training" for the Christian life, which makes it ideal to work through with new believers.

Eph 1:1–14	Praise God for salvation
Eph 1:15–23	Praying to know God
Eph 2:1–10	Remember the gospel
Eph 2:11–22	Unity with other believers
Eph 3:1–13	God's plan for the nations
Eph 3:14–21	Praying to live for God
Eph 4:1–16	Living with the church
Eph 4:17–32	Living in holiness
Eph 5:1–21	Living wisely in the world
Eph 5:22–33	Marriage
Eph 6:1–9	Children and work
Eph 6:10–23	The gospel and spiritual warfare

1 John

Written by the apostle John to combat certain false teaching that was becoming common, he is insistent on the deity and humanity of Christ and how these core truths empower new life and give us assurance. This book is wonderful for younger (or older) believers because of its doctrinal depth, lifestyle instruction, and pastoral care. One thing to keep in mind is the Ancient Near Eastern mindset of John's writing. He does not move through themes in a straight line. Rather, he interweaves and repeats several themes in a more cyclical fashion.

1 John 1:1—2:6	Walking in Christ, the Light
1 John 2:7–17	Loving the right things
1 John 2:18–27	Abide by the truth
1 John 2:28—3:10	Living as God's children
1 John 3:11—4:6	Believe in Christ and love his people
1 John 4:7–21	The assurance of God's love
1 John 5:1–12	Faith to believe and obey
1 John 5:13–21	Confidence in prayer and faithfulness

Colossians

Colossians has been called a miniature version of Romans—a letter that delves into the depths of the gospel and its effects on how Christians should live. Yet, it has its own distinctiveness as well. Since Paul is writing to believers who are tempted to give into false teaching which adds something to Christ, this book would be good for those with legalistic backgrounds.

Col 1:1–14	Thankful for faith in Christ
Col 1:15–23	The centrality of Christ
Col 1:24—2:5	Striving to make Christ known
Col 2:6–15	Spiritual resources in Christ
Col 2:16–23	Christ over traditions
Col 3:1–17	Raised with Christ
Col 3:18—4:1	New life in Christ
Col 4:2–18	Fellow servants for Christ

Psalms

Expressing the full range of human emotion, the Psalms help us see how God's people should respond to the good, bad, and ugly of life in prayer and praise to God. It's recommended that this plan be taken up *after* reading one of the New Testament books listed above.

Psalm 1	Two ways to live
Psalm 2	Serve the Lord and kiss the Son
Psalm 3	Prayer under pressure
Psalm 4	Confidence in God (evening prayer)
Psalm 5	Advance the kingdom (morning prayer)
Psalm 6	Praying from Pain
Psalm 7	Facing injustice
Psalm 8	The greatness of God's majesty
Psalm 9	The grace and glory of a just and righteous King
Psalm 10	When God seems absent

3. Plans for Growing Believers

Nehemiah

Nehemiah was one of the Jews who remained faithful to God during the exile. This book is an example of a spiritual journal—Nehemiah not only records the events he lived through, he also shares his prayers, thoughts, materials lists, and more. This book shows how God rebuilds his people through the power of his Word, mediated through leaders who call people to faithfulness.

Nehemiah 1	Preparation of a spiritual leader
Nehemiah 2	Strategy for rebuilding
Nehemiah 3	Partners for the work
Nehemiah 4	Battling opposition
Nehemiah 5	A godly response to sin
Nehemiah 6	The preservation of God's leader
Nehemiah 7	From city to community
Nehemiah 8	The power of God's Word
Nehemiah 9	The cleansing of God's people
Nehemiah 10	Renewing the covenant
Nehemiah 11—12	A call to serve
Nehemiah 13	Loving God more than the world

Hebrews

Hebrews was written as a sermon or “word of exhortation” to Jewish believers who were tempted to flee to the sacrificial system of the old covenant to avoid persecution. The author opens up the types and shadows of the old covenant to show that, in every way, Jesus is better. Thus, they should remain faithful to him.

Heb 1:1–4	Jesus brings a better Word
Heb 1:4—2:18	Jesus has a better name
Heb 3:1–6	Jesus reveals better glory
Heb 3:7—4:13	Jesus gives better rest
Heb 4:14—5:10	Jesus serves as a better high priest
Heb 5:11—6:12	Jesus is worthy of better endurance
Heb 6:13—7:28	Jesus serves through a better priesthood
Heb 8:1–13	Jesus establishes a better covenant
Heb 9:1–10	Jesus serves in a better temple
Heb 9:11—10:18	Jesus provides a better sacrifice
Heb 10:19–39	Jesus offers better confidence
Heb 11:1–40	Jesus provides a better certainty of faith
Heb 12:1–29	Jesus reigns in a better kingdom
Heb 13:1–25	Jesus deserves better worship

Psalms 119

Psalms 119 is a psalm extolling the beauty and power of God’s Word in the life of his people. Rather than an extended thought like many of the other psalms, here the author (unknown) considers the same subject from different angles. Three questions should be answered for each reading: *What is God’s Word? What does God accomplish through his Word? How should I respond to the Word?*

Ps 119:1–16	Walking the Lord’s way
Ps 119:17–32	Freedom amidst difficulty
Ps 119:33–48	Protection and confidence
Ps 119:49–64	Comfort from covenant love
Ps 119:65–80	The good news of affliction
Ps 119:81–96	Hopeful patience
Ps 119:97–112	Wisdom in perseverance
Ps 119:113–128	The longings of loyalty
Ps 119:129–144	Grace for an afflicted life
Ps 119:145–160	Praying from promises
Ps 119:161–176	Hope for the Lord’s salvation

1 Peter

How do God's people live among the sinful peoples of the world? This is Peter's key concern in his first letter. He shows that Christians should understand themselves to be elect exiles among the nations—living distinctly as God's people, yet engaging the world with the gospel.

1 Pet 1:1–12	Exiled but not forgotten
1 Pet 1:13–2:3	Gospel holiness
1 Pet 2:4–12	New people in Christ
1 Pet 2:13–3:7	Godly relationships
1 Pet 3:8–22	Suffering for righteousness
1 Pet 4:1–19	Perseverance by grace
1 Pet 5:1–14	Humility and responsibility

Amos

Amos was not a vocational prophet, but was nevertheless given a prophetic message for Israel before the exile. God's lion-roar of judgments against the nations soon becomes his judgments against his people as they have become like the nations. They have moved far from God, but he provides hope of restoration—for Israel and the nations.

Amos 1:1–2:5	Judgment on the nations
Amos 2:6–16	Poor response to grace
Amos 3:1–15	Who will not fear?
Amos 4:1–13	Stubborn hearts
Amos 5:1–17	Seek the Lord and live
Amos 5:18–6:14	False confidence from prideful hearts
Amos 7:1–17	Interceding for mercy
Amos 8:1–14	A rejected people
Amos 9:1–15	Restoration through David's tent

3. Topical Plans for Struggling Believers

Unassured Believers

This plan is meant to provide a concentrated overview of the salvation we have in Christ. It begins with some Old Testament patterns that anticipate the complete redemption we have in Christ. We hope believers will better see how God has provided *everything* we need in Christ.

Exod 12:1–32	The Passover Sacrifice
Lev 16:1–34	The Day of Atonement
Isa 52:13—53:12	The Suffering Servant
Eph 1:3–14	Chosen by God
John 3:1–15	Made alive
Rom 3:1–23	God’s wrath is satisfied
Heb 9:1–15	Redeemed by his blood
Rom 4:1—5:21	Declared righteous apart from works
Col 1:15–23	Reconciled to God
Rom 8:1–39	Adopted as sons
Rom 6:1–23	Made holy
1 Pet 1:1–9	Guarded by God
1 Cor 15:35–58	Glorified forever with Christ

Prayerless Believers

Many Christians struggle to know how to pray. This reading plan includes passages that explain the nature of prayer and show examples of prayer.

Matt 6:5–18	Jesus’ instructions for prayer
John 15:1–17	Jesus-driven prayer
Luke 11:5–13	Boldness before our loving Father
Luke 18:1–8	Do not lose heart
John 17:1–26	Jesus’ prayer for his people
Jonah 1:17—2:10	Praying with thankfulness
Psalms 13	Praying in sorrow
Eph 3:14–21	Praying for others (and ourselves)
Acts 4:1–31	Praying in persecution
Eph 6:10–20	An apostolic prayer strategy

Wordless Believers

Can the Bible be trusted as God's Word? What does the Bible say about itself? Why should I regularly read the Word and how should I respond to it? These readings seek to answer these questions by reviewing the nature and power of Scripture.

Psalms 19:1–14	Transformed by the Word
1 Peter 1:3–12	More than myths
2 Peter 1:3–21	Scripture surer than experience
2 Timothy 3:10–16	Scripture is God's Word
Luke 24:1–49	Scripture is about Christ
Psalms 119:1–16	Treasuring the Word
Matt 4:1–11	God's promises in the face of temptation
Jas 1:19–27	Doers of the Word

Suffering Believers

Suffering believers need hope. This reading plan is meant to help someone process their suffering. It will not answer all of their questions. But it will direct their thoughts and confidence to God and his Son who also suffered in their place.

Psalms 121:1–8	God, my help
Psalms 91:1–16	The shadow of the Almighty
Psalms 37:1–40	Wait for the Lord
2 Cor 1:3–11	God's comfort in affliction
2 Cor 4:1–5:10	We do not lose heart
2 Cor 11:16–12:10	God's grace is sufficient
Phil 1:1–26	The priority of the Christ
Phil 1:27–2:18	The example of Christ
Phil 2:19–3:21	Hope in Christ
Phil 4:1–23	Faithfulness to Christ

Defeated Believers

Sometimes sin overtakes us. In those moments, we may repent, but also need someone to come alongside and encourage us to press on in killing sin. This reading plan is designed for such times. It includes readings on repentance, a reminder of the gospel, and practical steps towards holiness.

Ps 51:1–6	Confessing our sin
Ps 51:7–12	Seeking restoration with God
Ps 51:13–19	Living in light of forgiveness
Rom 6:1–14	Freedom from sin
Rom 6:15–23	Slaves of Christ
Col 3:1–17	Putting off Adam, Putting on Christ
Jas 1:12–15	Understanding temptation
Matt 18:7–9	Getting serious about sin
John 15:1–11	Fruitfulness through fellowship

Anxious Believers

When our circumstances overwhelm our view of God in all his glorious sovereignty, we can easily become anxious about our lives. This plan ends by reading through Philippians. Here Paul recounts many difficulties and priorities that allow him to not be anxious (4:6–7).

Rev 1:1–20	God's supremacy and salvation
Job 38:1–41	God's knowledge and governance of creation
Job 39:1–30	God's providential care of creation
Job 40:1–24	God's justice and power in creation
Job 41:1—42:6	God can do all things
Matt 6:19–34	The care of God our Father
Phil 1:1–26	The priority of the Christ
Phil 1:27—2:18	The example of Christ
Phil 2:19—3:21	Hope in Christ
Phil 4:1–23	Faithfulness to Christ

Downcast Believers

Many believers can become downcast (depressed) for many reasons. These readings are meant to turn people away from wrong thinking about their life and circumstances and focus them on God—his character and provisions. Each passage shows someone downcast or tempted to be downcast and the hope they ultimately have in God.

Ps 42:1–43:5	God’s love amidst despair
Ps 73:1–28	God’s goodness despite bitterness
Ps 77:1–20	God’s strength for trouble
Ps 142:1–7	God’s care in loneliness
Lam 3:1–42	God’s faithfulness during affliction
Ps 32:1–11	God’s forgiveness of my sin
John 14:1–31	God’s assurance for our doubts
2 Cor 4:1–18	God’s grace for our faith

Believers with Marriage Problems

This reading plan represents a foundational level of instruction and encouragement. It lays out the essentials of who we are (not God!) and how we should live as married believers. There will likely be more to discuss—practical matters of communication, expectations, showing affection, serving one another, and more. But this plan seeks to lay a foundation for such things.

Isaiah 6:1–6	God is Holy
Gen 1:1—2:6	Our place in the story
Gen 2:7–25	The creation of marriage
Gen 3:1–24	The birth of sin
Col 3:1–17	New life in Christ
Eph 5:1–21	Imitate God
Eph 5:25–31	Godly husbands
Eph 5:22–24	Godly wives
Eph 5:32–33	Marriage is for the gospel
Rom 12:9–21	Relationship bootcamp

Reading Plans to Equip Believers

Sharing Your Faith

This reading plan covers the essentials of the gospel, the nature of salvation, and the basics of how to share our faith. Those reading to train others can add practical advice and techniques from their personal experience as issues come up.

Rom 3:1–26	The greatest news in the world
Matt 4:18–22	Disciples make disciples
1 Pet 2:1–12	Declaring the gospel as God’s people
1 Pet 3:8–18	An authentic life
2 Cor 3:4–18	New covenant gospel ministry
2 Cor 4:1–18	We preach Christ, God opens blind eyes
2 Cor 5:11–21	A message of reconciliation
John 4:1–45	Jesus the evangelist
Acts 17:16–34	Paul the evangelist
Col 4:2–6	Disciple-making lifestyle

Caring for Others

Christians are called to care for one another. Because of sin or personality, this can be difficult for some. These passages are meant to soften hearts and motivate believers to be concerned and care for one another.

Phil 2:1–18	Jesus’ example of humble service
Matt 25:31–46	Serving Jesus by serving his people
Mark 10:17–34	Our role in the hundredfold
Acts 4:25–37	Willing, radical generosity
Gal 6:1–10	Bearing burdens and doing good
Rom 12:3–21	Members of the same body
Heb 10:19–39	Hope, help, and holiness
1 Cor 13:1–13	Motivated by love

Counseling the Word

The Bible expects that God's people will be admonishing, encouraging, and counseling one another in regular, informal ways. This reading list covers the basics of biblical counseling—why it is needed, what it looks like, and how it is done.

Rom 3:1–26	Humanity—fallen and redeemed
Ps 36:1–4	The deceitfulness of sin
Psalms 19:1–14	Transformed by the Word
2 Pet 1:3–21	Spiritual resources for change
Prov 18:1–24	Humble questioning and listening
Col 3:1–17	Put off and put on
John 15:1–11	Depend on Christ
1 Thess 5:12–19	Unique problems and specific solutions
Gal 6:1–5	Bearing the burdens of others

Teaching God's Word

Teaching the Bible to others is more than a collection of skills. Underlying the practicalities are the foundational beliefs of what the Bible is and why God has given it to us. This reading plan tries to marry belief and practice, highlighting the character and attitude of the teacher as well as examples of how to handle God's Word when teaching. The person training should be an experienced teacher and draw on their experience to make clear the theological and practical issues drawn out from these passages.

Ezra 7:1–10	Study, do, teach
2 Tim 3:10–16	Scripture is God's Word
Luke 24:1–49	Remember Jesus
1 Cor 2:1–16	Understanding by God the Spirit
2 Pet 1:3–21	Scripture surer than experience
Neh 8:1–12	Teach for understanding
Acts 17:1–4	Handling the Scriptures
Heb 3:1—4:13	Applying the Scriptures
Psalms 119:1–16	Living by the Word