



READ. PRAY
GR  W

one-to-one discipleship

HANDBOOK

Welcome to one-to-one discipleship! In this handbook you'll find information and resources to help you get started in one-to-one discipleship. Our prayer is that as you meet together one-to-one, through the work of the Holy Spirit, you will together grow in faith.

What is one-to-one discipleship?

It simply means an older (or more mature) Christian coming alongside a younger (or newer) Christian to help them to grow in their love for God and in their understanding of who God is. Ever since the early church, the principle of 'coming alongside' someone to study the scriptures with them, to pray with them and to help them know God better has been central to what being 'church' is.

How does it work?

It involves two people meeting together at a regular interval and spending some time studying the bible, praying, wrestling with issues and being accountable to each other.

Generally people meet every two to four weeks for just one or two hours but there are no strict rules about how you should meet or even how often you should meet. You may choose to meet together over a coffee once a month, you may choose to meet once a week to read the bible and pray together, or you may do a training course together. The important thing is that you meet together - Read, Pray and Grow!

CONTENTS

1. What is Discipling?
2. Reading the Bible Together
3. Praying Together
4. Developing a Relationship
5. Encouraging in Ministry
6. A Typical Meeting
7. Appendices
 - a. Resource List
 - b. MTS Resources
 - i. Ministry to Individuals
 - ii. One to One Bible Reading and Prayer
 - iii. Ministry of the Pew
 - c. Mentoring Meeting Arrangements

WHAT IS DISCIPLING?

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*
(Matthew 28:19-20a)

A disciple is a follower of Jesus, someone who is committed to Jesus, to following His example by living His way and by loving and serving others.

“To disciple” then, is to encourage another person to be such a follower of Jesus. Other terms to describe the same idea include mentoring, coaching or one-to-one ministry. The following is a helpful definition of what this kind of ministry involves:

“One Christian taking the initiative with another individual to help them know Christ better and obey Him more fully, through studying the Scriptures, prayer (for and with them) and sharing one’s life with them – leaving the results to God.” *

Discipling will, therefore, involve a more mature Christian taking the initiative to meet with a younger Christian. The goal of the ministry will be to help the younger Christian grow in their knowledge of Christ and their obedience to Him. This will be achieved through regular meetings together which will involve four things:

- a. reading the Bible together
- b. praying together
- c. getting to know each other better.
- d. encouraging each other in serving the Lord

WHY IS ONE TO ONE DISCIPLESHIP IS SO IMPORTANT?

1. It is the biblical way of growing & equipping people so they are mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:7-16)
2. It is the biblical way of raising up leaders for the work of the gospel (including Growth Group leaders, Children's Church & Youth leaders, Elders, Ministers & Church Planters (2 Timothy 2:2)
3. By its very nature it grows the faith and practice of ordinary members and therefore raises the spiritual vitality of the whole congregation (body metaphor of Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31)
4. It is a way of establishing new Christians in their new-found faith, when the pressures of the world, the flesh and the devil are so strong.
5. It reinforces the Bible's approach to raising up workers for God's church – we need to be calling the trained, not training the called

READING THE BIBLE TOGETHER

*All Scripture is God-breathed
and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting
and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be
thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The Bible is the word of God. It is the means by which God speaks to us and it thoroughly equips us to be the men and women God wants us to be. The Scriptures, therefore, should be focus of our discipling ministry.

The feel of studying the Bible one-to-one will be quite different from a Bible-study group. You need to set the tone of being relaxed and informal and make studying the Bible fun and rewarding. It is helpful to think of the process as two people having a quiet time together. Together you are discovering what God's word says to you rather than doing a formal Bible study with a teacher and a pupil.

There are a number of tools that can help you are you explore God's word together:

- a. Use some broad questions, or categories, that apply to every part of the Bible to help you look more closely at the passage you are studying.

Example One

- i. What does this say about God?
- ii. What does this say about Jesus?
- iii. What does this say about me?

Example Two

Discuss what the passage teaches about:

- i. God
- ii. Jesus
- iii. Mankind
- iv. Salvation
- v. The Holy Spirit
- vi. The Christian life.

b. You could use the following steps to get into more of the detail of the passage. Pick a couple of the questions in step one to focus your discussion then work through answering, summarising and applying them.

i. Ask:

Some examples: what are your first impressions? What don't you understand? Who wrote it? To whom? When? How does the writer feel about the readers? What is the significance of the passage for the book as a whole? What would change if it were left out? -Write a summary of the main message of the book/chapter. Write your own chapter headings. What is the key verse of the book/section? What verse was weird? What verse was most interesting or stood out? What verse was "meaningful"? What are the main themes? What words are repeated? Write a list of difficult words/phrases. Who are the main characters, when and where does this take place? What are the clearest explanations of the gospel in the book? What do we learn about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and the relationship between them? Is there a section which seem to be irrelevant to us? What is its relevance? What verse/section would my non-Christian friends most disagree with? What verse/section would I most like them to know? For the New Testament, are there direct quotes or allusions to the Old Testament? For the Old Testament, is this passage quoted/alluded to in the New Testament? How are the themes in this passage developed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in Jesus? How does the passage apply to me?

ii. Answer

a. The detail

Cross-references and concordances; where is this word or idea used in other parts of the Bible?

b. The big picture

What is the flow of the argument? How do the main points fit together? Find the linking words and words which indicate time; draw a flow diagram; look at the context of the passage.

iii. Summarise

Look for a topic sentence, or 'catch-phrase'

iv. Apply and Pray

How does the main point change our understanding of God and the way we live? What are the implications for our doctrine, attitude, relationships, speech, ministries, dealing with sin, and so on?

Pray: thankyou, sorry, please.

- c. You could use a Bible study book together which will give you particular questions to answer. See the list of resources for some suggestions.

Knowing where to start can sometimes be daunting. In some ways, it doesn't matter. Pick a book of the Bible you're interested in and start reading. But if this is new to you, and particularly if you are meeting with quite a young Christian, a good place to start is with a short New Testament letter like Colossians. These letters were written to Christians in similar situations to ourselves and it is often easier to see how they apply to us. Aim to read half a chapter to a chapter each time you meet.

PRAYING TOGETHER

*Do not be anxious about anything,
but in everything, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.*

Philippians 4:6

God is our sovereign and loving heavenly Father. He, therefore, is able to do more than all we ask or even imagine, but more than that He wants us to know Him personally and depend on Him in everything. For these reasons, and more, prayer is a vital part of a relationship with God and our ministry of discipleship.

Our prayer times should include praying about what we have learned from reading the Bible together as well as praying for our personal concerns.

It is also good to encourage each other to pray for evangelism. Keeping a record of each other's non-Christian friends and praying for them together can be very helpful.

Keeping wider concerns in our prayers stops us from becoming too self-focused. Books like "*Operation World*" by Patrick Johnstone give us information that can inform our prayers for other parts of the world.

Keeping a prayer notebook to pray for each other at times other than our discipleship time and to look back over to see how your prayers have been answered is very encouraging.

People often feel uncomfortable praying out loud but encourage them to start slowly and reassure them that it is God they are praying to and He doesn't mind if we stumble or repeat ourselves.

DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP

*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 Thessalonians 2:8

Our God is a relational God who loves and cares for His people. Our relationships with others should therefore be marked by love and concern. As we seek to love and care for those we are discipling we will also see that they will respond more to us. Discussion and conversation will become easier. Prayer will become more natural. And they will open up to us with their struggles and concerns.

We need to work at ways to help this rapport develop and to show the love and concern of God. We can spend some relaxed social time together, sharing a meal, going out for coffee or going bushwalking together. We can make our meeting at a coffee shop instead of at home. We can sit next to them at church and chat with them after the service. We can remember their birthdays. We can write them encouraging notes. Little gestures can mean a great deal and break down barriers.

Another way we can show love and care, however, is to care about how they are going in their Christian life. Some issues will come out as we study the Bible and pray together, but sometimes we will need to bring up subjects ourselves. Below is a list of some of the subjects we may want to talk about:

Issues of Understanding. For example: assurance, confession, God's sovereignty and predestination, Jesus' return, the Holy Spirit, faith, biblical manhood and womanhood, spiritual gifts, the Bible, the church, prayer, witness.

Issues of Lifestyle. For example: sex and relationships, family, career and money, prayer life, pride, gossip etc.

There are many books and resources that will help us address these issues with those we are discipling. So we need to be careful not to back away from these things because we don't feel confident ourselves. Addressing and struggling with these kinds of issues will ultimately help those we are caring for, and ourselves, to grow in our relationship with God.

ENCOURAGING IN MINISTRY

*For we are God's workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:10

Part of growing as Christians is growing in our service to God and to others. As we follow Jesus more closely we will want to work more and more to bring about His purposes and glory. This is what ministry is all about – working with God to bring about His purposes by serving others.

As we seek to disciple others, one area of growth we will want to see is in serving others.

Some people will already be involved in ministry. Our role, then, will be to support and encourage them in this. To ask them how things are going, to pray for them, to help them in the struggles and urge them to persevere.

Others will not be involved in ministry. A good place to start with people who have not thought about ministry is to read and discuss the paper "Ministry of the Pew" (see appendix). This should help them to start thinking about the little things they can do to serve others and help them have a more outward-looking focus. As they grow in this we can start to encourage them into more formal areas of ministry, according to their gifts, such as teaching, children's church, discipling others or helping on the welcoming team.

An area of ministry we should encourage with all those we disciple is evangelism. Praying for our non-Christian friends and encouraging each other to talk to them about Jesus is a great way to help each other grow in serving God.

To help those we are discipling in serving God, we may want to encourage them to do some ministry training, either by attending a training course or by working through some training material together. There are some suggestions in the Resource section.

As their faith and knowledge grows, they can begin to disciple someone else. We can provide the encouragement, training and resources required for them to disciple another believer.

A TYPICAL MEETING

*Let us not give up meeting together,
as some are in the habit of doing,
but let us encourage one another –
and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Hebrews 10:25

Getting started in discipleship can be a big hurdle. How do I go about asking someone to meet with me? What am I actually asking them to do?

For most of us, the tasks of choosing who to disciple and asking that person whether they are willing to meet with someone will have been done for us by the discipleship coordinators. This means that our job will be just to make contact with the person, confirm that they are happy to meet with us and work out what the particular arrangements will be for the two of you.

It is good to be up front about your expectations for what your discipleship arrangements will be and what commitments will be required. Articulate how often you will meet, for what period of time and what will happen at your meetings.

Your first meeting, then, will need to be one of discussing expectations generally, as well as working out what particular Bible study you will do. It would be good for you to have concrete suggestions both about what to study and what method of study you will use. At this first meeting, too, it would be good to get to know as much as you can about the person you are discipling, their Christian journey, their church involvement and so on so that you can start thinking about how best to encourage and spur them on.

A typical meeting would generally be about an hour long. You would start by chatting together and getting to know each other. You would then look at a section of the Bible together and discuss it, using one of the methods described earlier. It would then be good to spend some time in prayer. Pray about what you learned from the passage, any ministry your disciple is involved in, your non-Christian friends and any personal issues that you each feel comfortable sharing. This, of course, means that you will need to discuss these issues before praying and you may need to be quite directive in the conversation.

Just remember, the vital ingredients are Bible study, prayer and relationship and have the confidence to go for it!

APPENDICES

- Resource List
- MTS Training Resources
 - Ministry To Individuals
 - One-to-one Prayer and Bible Reading
 - Ministry of the Pew -
Discipleship Meeting Arrangements

RESOURCE LIST

Discipleship Training

"One to One: A Discipleship Handbook" by Sophie Peace

An easy to read book which goes through step-by-step how to go about meeting with someone one-to-one.

Preparing Just for Starters. (Matthias Media)

A course which takes you through the fundamentals of following-up new Christians and helps you prepare to use *Just for Starters*, a set of Bible studies to establish new Christians in the faith.

Bible Study Books to use One to One

Search the Scriptures (IVP)

A book designed to take you through the whole Bible in three years by asking 3 or 4 questions on each set passage. The questions can be a helpful starting point for our one to one Bible reading.

One 2 One: 24 Studies for Bible Reading Partnerships (John 13-17, Philippians and Psalms) by Andrew Cornes

A set of Bible studies specifically designed for one to one study.

Matthias Media Bible studies are a great place to start. For example:

The Complete Christian (Colossians)

The Path to Godliness (Titus)

Full of Promise (OT Overview)

The Blueprint (Christian Doctrine)

Bold I Approach (Studies on Prayer)

Books on Prayer

Operation World

Lists statistics and prayer points for every country in the world.

A Call to Spiritual Reformation by Don Carson

Goes through the prayers of Paul and challenges us by his concerns. Also has a great first chapter on the practicalities of prayer.

Books to Read and Recommend

Christian Living

Transforming Grace by Jerry Bridges
Trusting God even when it Hurts by Jerry Bridges
How Long, O Lord by Don Carson
Holiness by J C Ryle

Evangelistic (to read and give a way)

A Fresh Start by John Chapman
A Sneaking Suspicion by John Dickson
Basic Christianity by John Stott
The Case for Christ by Lee Stroebel

Evangelism

Know and tell the Gospel by John Chapman
Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God by J I Packer

Prayer

A Call to Spiritual Reformation by Don Carson

Relationships and Sex

Pure Sex by Phillip Jensen and Tony Payne
What Some of You Were edited by Chris Keene

The Bible

Guidance and the Voice of God by Phillip Jensen and Tony Payne
Is the NT History? by Paul Barnett
Gospel and the Kingdom by Graeme Goldsworthy
The Faith of Israel by W Dumbrell
Postcard from Palestine by Andrew Reid

Christian Truth

Knowing God by J I Packer
Desiring God by John Piper
The Cross of Christ by John Stott
Know the Truth by Bruce Milne

Ministry Training Courses

Preparing Just for Starters (following up a new Christian)
Growth Groups (Leading a Growth Group)
Two Ways to Live (Evangelism Training)
Their God is so Big (teaching Sunday School)
No Guts no Glory (leading a youth group)



MTS Training Discussion Paper 6.02

Ministry To Individuals

Most Christian ministries today are exercised at three levels:

- The large public meeting
- The small group
- Individuals

Frequently the large public meetings are the shop front of the Christian movement. There, people perceive what Christianity is and does. It is important that these ministries are conducted in a way that is attractive to the outsider and faithful in their representation of the gospel. For many of us the power-house of Christian growth lies in the ministry of small groups. Here we learn and teach and are cared for and we care for others. However, the care for individuals outside of a group context is important both in evangelism and in nurturing Christians. Unless the structure of our Christian ministry is that of 'pyramid selling' we tend to be very haphazard in the organisation of individual ministries.

Different Strategies

Some Christian ministries commence with individuals and build towards groups. The individual evangelist finds another person who he teaches and encourages until the two of them go out evangelising to make further contacts. When the pyramid has slowly developed the whole membership comes together to form a group. Most ministries start the other way by establishing a public meeting where a group can be formed. From this group, individuals are cared for. Both strategies are right and effective, each having its advantages and disadvantages. However, to conduct ministry without caring for individuals is to fail to provide for the membership adequately.

Advantages of ministry to individuals

Each person has different questions, problems, background, interests, and gifts that need to be cared for. While group meetings, both large and small, do provide some ministry of the gospel that is applicable to each individual, ministering privately to people enables the work of the gospel to be applied directly to their situation. It is impossible to anticipate in a public meeting the varied situations of the individuals who are forming the group; thus the importance of meeting with



people privately to share with them in the truth of the gospel. However, this work is more threatening in order to care for them properly.

Warnings

The most common ministry amongst individuals is that of solving problems. Problem solving ministries have the advantages of people wanting help and we know we can help in many ways. However, problem-centred ministries create problems because the only way in which people can relate to us is by discussing their problems. Therefore Christians are always perceived as people with problems and ministry is always perceived in terms of sharing problems. Consequently, people have to create problems in order to have a relationship with each other. Furthermore the best we can ever hope for is that Christians may become problem-free, we cannot hope that they will grow in strength or ability or make any progress in their Christian life. Ultimately, this reduces Christian ministry into Christian counseling.

Because so much of the ministry to individuals is that of modeling, it is important to seek to minister to people of the same sex. People of the same gender relate to each other differently than those of the opposite gender. To most of us ministering to people of the opposite sex is easier and more attractive. However, this does not come from a spiritual perception so much as from our created sexual instincts. That is, while it is easier for us to establish a warm, caring relationship with someone of the opposite sex, we are not better at truly understanding each others growth in godliness. Especially when we are single we have the likelihood of other agenda than purely Christian encouragement. If we do not have hidden motives in our relationship we still cannot be sure that the other person has no hidden agenda. This is particularly the case with evangelistic ministry. If a person is unwilling to talk to some of the same sex about the gospel it is highly unlikely that they are genuinely interested in the gospel.

Ultimately the goal of Christian maturity is that of Ephesians 4 where the person can stand firm, not tossed to and fro but growing in Christ-likeness of character. Without going as far as the ungodly self reliance of our modern society it is true that our aim is to produce independence. This needs to be remembered in personal ministry for there is a tendency to try and produce dependency. To develop other people's lives so that they are dependent upon you is not to encourage them into Christian maturity. It is an example of sinful



egocentricity. We want to see self starters: people who will seek to go on growing in godliness; Christians who will look for the opportunities to minister the gospel wherever they go.

Getting Started

The first fundamental of personal ministry is establishing relationship. It is important to be in a warm, friendly, faithful and committed relationship with somebody in order to minister to them. While it can be a deliberate choice to establish such a relationship it must also be a deliberate choice to be a faithful and loving friend. To relate to people only in order to minister to them and therefore to break the relationship when there is no ministry is to treat them impersonally. The warmer and closer the relationship the more profound is the effect of one upon another. Thus a certain amount of time and energy must be given to establish and build relationships. This will almost invariably involve spending time and efforts outside of the context of specifically Christian ministry. It may mean going to concerts or helping in study. It can involve visiting or writing letters.

The second key element of personal ministry is the willingness of the person to share in Christian ministry. For those people who do not want to hear the things of God and who are resistant to what the Bible has to say there can be little ministry offered other than the example of a godly life. Genuine relationship and friendship will continue with such people but ministry will be curtailed.

However, with people who are willing to be ministered to and who are willing to minister we can develop our relationship in a way that will be mutually helpful. It is important that the helpfulness be mutual. No one person has a monopoly on all that can be learnt about godliness. It is important for us to be able to be ministered to by the people to whom we wish to minister. De-professionalising the relationship is essential for genuine Christian ministry. The Scriptures speak of "iron sharpening iron" as the parallel to man sharpening man. Likewise James tells us that we must confess our sins to one another. Individual ministry needs to be mutual ministry.

For many of us starting a friendship is not a particularly difficult task as we have learnt it in pre-school days. However, creating a context of positive Christian ministry seems to be a step beyond reach. We need to take courage in both hands and initiate Christian fellowship by conversation. It is important to engage our friends in discussing the things of the gospel. This can be done after a sermon or Bible study



when we can try and pick up the issues discussed with our friends. Usually people are more willing to discuss these than they are to initiate the discussions. They are often thankful that somebody has taken the trouble to try and engage them in serious conversation. However, we need to go further and suggest the possibility of meeting for prayer or to discuss a matter further or to do some Bible study together or to engage in some activity together. Making such an offer always involves risking ridicule or friendship. The inhibition is very powerful. It is here that Bible study and ministry training tools are helpful in initiating a ministry relationship. It is not hard to ask a member of your church whether they would like to go through particular Bible studies with you. They don't need to be a new Christian for you can go through them for your mutual benefit as Christians or you can go through them as a way of preparing yourselves to follow up new Christians when the opportunity arises. They give a framework for meeting regularly with each other and discussing the things of God.

Another way of initiating is to invite people into prayer partnership. It is important to invite people to share your vision rather than become part of your institution. Thus it is easier to invite people to join with you in prayer for 'X' (Beach Mission or our church pastor or Sunday School) than it is to join a prayer meeting which has no particular agenda. Once people start meeting regularly to undertake such an activity keeping the momentum rolling is much simpler.

Different Goals

There are several goals in Christian ministry that are applicable to ministering to individuals. Sometimes we minister in order to evangelise, on other occasions it is to establish Christians, and at other times it is in order to equip people for ministry. Meeting with individuals for evangelism is a very powerful form of preaching the gospel. In it we are able to answer their real questions in their specific situation. They are also able to see a real Christian at close quarters and to understand what a difference it makes to our life. Frequently when we see a person converted to Christianity we need to stay with them to establish them in the Christian faith. All too often people have made the step of commitment to Christ but are then left to flounder for themselves. In churches everywhere you will find Christians, people committed to Christ, who are continuing in babyhood. The need to encourage Christians to growth and stability is enormous. Part to this work of establishing Christians is to challenge them to minister to others. To grow like Christ is to grow into other-person centredness.



To grow like Christ is to be concerned for the salvation of other people. Therefore people need to be challenged to look to others and their needs and salvation. However, to challenge people to ministry without equipping them for the task is to ask a lot. Thus part of Christian ministry has to be in helping people learn how to minister to others. This equipping phase of the work of ministry is again something that is easier to do in individual ministry than amongst groups.

Thus in our ministry to individuals we need to look at people's understanding, at their obedience and at their personal development. A lot of the problems that non-Christians and Christians face is a lack of understanding and knowledge of the word of God. Part of what we need to do as we share with people is to teach the word of God. This can be done in structured patterns using Bible study tools or reading through a book of the Bible together or in the unstructured pattern of conversations about the word of God, answering questions, discussing sermons. However, some element of our Christian ministry will be a sharing in the understanding of the word of God. Of course, true understanding of the word of God always involves obedience. As we meet with people sharing the gospel of Christ and teaching his word we will be facing together the issues of obedience to that word. Christians, especially young ones, are faced with many decisions in life that involve choosing the way of God. Having a friend who cares for them and shares in their life is an enormous assistance at making godly decisions. These decisions can range over ethical issues, over work, over home, in the way we drive our car or control our temper. As we grow in our understanding of the obedience to the word of God so we develop as Christians. We develop in a pattern of life that brings glory to Christ. We develop in our concern and ministry for other people. It is this growing maturity that we wish to encourage in others.

What do we do when we meet?

So what are we to do when we meet with individuals? There are many elements and ways in which we can minister in these personal relationships. Sometimes it can be in teaching. It can be going through passages of the Bible and explaining them to people. Sometimes it is in sharing our vision, struggle, our obedience, our disobedience, our lives. Frequently it involves praying with the other person and in prayer sharing our understanding of the word of God and our hopes and aspirations in life. Frequently it involves doing things together. It is as we do things, in particular as we do Christian ministry things, that we teach and model and share and pray with our friends. Modeling is a



key element of Christ's ministry to individuals. Paul says to Timothy, "you, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings.." (2 Timothy 3:10-11). Sometimes we can meet with someone just to read together or to share in discussion with each other the things that we are reading in Christian books and /or in the Bible. The easiest way of conducting this kind of relationship profitably is to do things together such as praying or sharing the gospel door to door or preparing Sunday School lessons.

Value of long term ministry

Most relationships which have contributed to your life have been long term friendships. Friends who see you in many different contexts for a long period of time seem to have the most profound influence. One or two long, deep, heavy conversations do not seem to have the same impact. There is a tendency in personal ministry, especially if it is problem-centred ministry, to try and achieve too much in too few contacts. The light touch of a casual word here, a perceptive comment there, a piece of friendly advice on another occasion, built over years of friendship is more likely to have a deep effect upon the lives of others. Sometimes people limit their ministry by seeking to establish deep and meaningful relationships which will consume enormous amounts of time. It is unlikely that you will do as an effective job with any one of these relationships as you would with more relationships and a lighter touch. Frequent small chats over morning tea after church, in the car on the way home, down the street at the shops, on the telephone or by letter can have an enormous impact on other people.

Asset for a life-time

Learning to undertake this kind of ministry is a valuable asset for a lifetime. This kind of ministry is transferable to any context in which you find yourself. It does not require structural institutional approval. It requires no ordination, examinations or qualifications. Whenever you join a new church you only need to look around for like-minded people who would be open to you offer of Christian fellowship. As you work with them, building them up, encouraging and challenging them so they will learn to likewise look after people to whom they can minister as you have ministered to them. Thus slowly but surely you can build a whole pyramid of ministry.



Discussion Starters

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of the three levels of ministry:
 - The large public meeting
 - The small group
 - Individuals
2. What Christians do I nurture? In what direction am I encouraging them? Why?
3. What priority does this work of building up individuals have in my life?

How?



One-to-one Prayer and Bible Reading

By Colin Marshall

^ Matthias Media (*The Briefing* #143; www.matthiasmedia.com.au/briefing). Used with permission.

The following is a true story. Last Friday, two friends met to read the Bible, pray and drink coffee, like they do every week for about an hour. They go to the same church and decided they needed some accountability in their lives as Christians. Last week they were up to Philippians chapter 2 in their reading programme. They read the chapter out loud, then talked about its implications for their thinking and prayers. They are doing detailed Bible study in small groups so the focus of their time was on application and encouragement. From Philippians 2, they talked for a while about Jesus priority of service over status and their struggles to help others when there is no recognition involved. They confessed their tendency to complain and argue, and the conversation moved to wider issues of status-seeking in the church. This gave them plenty to pray about and they concluded their prayers by remembering two missionary families. Next week they will read chapter 3.

So what?!

This doesn't exactly grab you as one of the great stand-out events of last Friday. Even within the Christian world, on a scale of 1 to 100, it doesn't rank more than a 0.01 in importance.

But think about the long term effects of meeting like this. The two friends will know the Bible better, pray regularly and deepen their friendship. They will encourage each other to deal with God and his Word with integrity. As they open their lives to each other before Gods Word, they will spur one another on towards love and good deeds (Heb 10:24-25). They will strengthen each other to resist sin and remain faithful to Christ.

Factotum is designed to equip us as slaves of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each edition provides a new piece of equipment for ministry to others. This time we look at One-to-One Bible Reading and Prayer.

WHY DO IT?

At the core of all Christian ministry is Bible reading and prayer. We are united with Christ by hearing His Word and responding in faith and that is how we remain in Christ. We can never progress beyond these basics - teaching each other the Word of God, calling upon each other to believe and repent, bringing our lives, our churches and the world before God in prayer.

But we can do all this in three broad contexts: large groups, small groups and one-to-one. We choose different contexts on totally pragmatic grounds. There is a certain efficiency of gathering people together and various educational advantages in each context. However, all ministry is ultimately to individuals even when we are dealing with groups. Our concern is for the salvation and growth of each one.

So what are the benefits of reading the Bible and praying one-to-one? It is:



Convenient arranging to meet one Christian for one hour weekly is realistic even in the busiest lives. Its easy to get started with minimal organisation required.

Personal the discussion and prayers can address particular individual concerns. In groups it is impossible to deal with everyone's issues and questions.

Accountable meeting one-to-one is an ideal way of holding each other accountable to read and obey the Bible. It is hard to meet each week and pretend to be serious about submitting to Christ whilst playing around with secret sin. In our perversity this is not impossible, but its hard to sustain the performance.

Strategic this is a basic ministry to master and will be useful in many contexts. Wherever we go in church life, we can find a Christian with whom we can read and pray. Sometimes at work we will find a Christian who would love to meet with us. In some ministry contexts, such as the military and educational institutions, it is almost impossible to gather Christians into groups and personal ministry is the only option. For some Christians, the only opportunity for fellowship is with individuals, due to family restrictions and persecution.

WHY WE DONT

If I had to hazard a guess as to how many Christians engage in one-to-one Bible reading and prayer, I would say less than 1%. I have no data on this, just a hunch. This seems strange if it is such a simple and convenient way of spurring each other on in the faith. Why dont we do it?

We are too busy in Christian service

The old cliché is true: the good is the enemy of the best. One reason we don't read and pray with each other is our devotion to other Christian activities.

There are limitless opportunities to serve Christ and his people and Christ has given a diversity of gifts to edify his church. However certain ministries, such as prophecy, have priority over others, because they are more useful for edifying the church. Whatever else Paul means by prophecy, fundamentally it is speaking the Word of God and we are to excel in gifts that build up the church (1 Cor 14:12). Speaking the Word of God to each other is the way we are strengthened, encouraged and comforted and the church is built. One-to-one Bible reading and prayer is therefore a very high ministry priority.

Most of us have little discretionary time, where we are free to choose how we use it. We have fixed priorities which absorb most of the 168 hours in the week. Sleeping, eating, travelling, working, family responsibilities, chores and personal things take around 140 hours, if you have anything like a normal life. The 28 hours remaining is your discretionary time which you can divide between leisure, study, socialising, hobbies and so on. Christians will devote some of these 28 hours to specifically Christian activity. This will include private Bible reading, prayer and study of Christian literature as well as service to others. When we look at it realistically, there are only around 5-10 hours per week available for Christian activity with others, and most of this time is taken up with church meetings, a Bible study group or committees. And, as the years roll on, there is even less time at our discretion, with increased family and work responsibilities.

Maybe we need to rethink our ministry responsibilities and withdraw from some tasks in church life in order to read and pray with others.

We put structures before people

If we are asked about the ministries of our church, we usually answer in terms of structures and programmes: men's fellowship, Sunday School, Youth Club, women's Bible study and so on. If our pastors ask us to be involved in ministry, they usually mean taking on a particular task to keep the programme running. These kinds of programmes are often good - some may be essential - but our thinking is back to front. The reason we run ministry activities is for people - their salvation and maturity in Christ. After a while, the programme



attains a validity in itself: the means becomes the end. We run a drop-in centre because we have always run a drop-in centre.

If, instead, we start with people and ask how we can win them for Christ and establish them in the faith, we might end up spending our ministry time differently. We might cancel some programmes and start meeting with individuals for Bible reading and prayer. Or we might build this one-to-one ministry into our existing programmes.

We seek recognition for our ministry

There is no kudos or notoriety in private meetings with individuals reading the Bible and praying. There is a type of career path in churches: from pew sitter to welcomer to assistant Bible study leader to Bible study leader to board of elders to chair of the board. Just adjust the titles for your particular church. One-to-one ministry doesn't advance our career at all.

We don't feel qualified

This is one of the advantages of one-to-one Bible reading and prayer: it is simple; everyone can do it. We are not taking over the ministers job to teach the Bible and we don't have to have all the answers. We can wrestle together with understanding Gods Word and changing our lives. We are not setting ourselves up as the fount of all knowledge and virtue. All we need is the heart to know God better and to encourage one another.

We never thought of it

Now you have!

HOW TO DO IT

Here are some tips to get you started. You will develop your own patterns along the way.

Decide to meet for a specified period of time, say six months, so it is easy to stop if you need to.

Give priority to reading the Bible rather than Christian books.

Try a variety of methods for Bible reading:

Verse by Verse read the text verse by verse and work out what it is saying. Using a Bible with marginal notes and cross references will deepen the discussion.

"QUIT" Look for *QU*estions that need to be resolved, *Implications* for life and major *Themes* in the passage. *Interactive Bible Studies* prepared studies, such as those published by St Matthias Press. You can do some preparation before meeting or just work through the material together.

Leave plenty of time for prayer. Pray about the implications of your Bible reading and the current concerns in your lives. But also pray beyond your own horizons for unbelievers, your church and gospel ministries around the world. If you cant work out who to pray for, ask your pastor or get some newsletters from evangelists and church planters in Australia and overseas.

WHO TO MEET WITH

The possibilities are only limited by your imagination.

Christian friends for mutual encouragement at church, work, school, college, university or in the neighbourhood anyone who is spiritually hungry.

Young Christians to build foundations in the faith.

Potential leaders who need nurturing and training in Bible reading and prayer.

Christians who want to do some deeper Bible study.

Your pastor who would love to read and pray with someone.

A friend going through a crisis.

Christians who are struggling with faith.



Non-Christians who want to work out systematically what the Bible is saying.
Christians who are restricted in some way from attending church or groups.

SOME WARNINGS

The priority of Gods Word, not our problems

Have you ever noticed how people with problems absorb your time and energy? You can feel the energy drain out of you as they enter the room. In groups, they dominate the discussion. We all have problems, but some people become problem-centred because of the severity of their needs. One mistake in personal ministry is to be dominated by such people. They are so needy that, in our compassion, we feel guilty if we don't give them all the energy they demand. We end up visiting them again and again, or meeting them regularly at the expense of others.

It sounds harsh at first, but there is a better way. Firstly, if you do meet with such a person, set a different agenda. Instead of starting with his or her problems, start with Bible reading and prayer. He or she will then start to see how God views their life and problems, and thus they will make some progress in dealing with life under Gods Word. Secondly, give priority to training others in ministry. Meet with a spiritually hungry, problem free person who will mature and begin to serve others. Then you can give better care to those with problems, because there are more carers. Investing time in training others in service multiplies the workforce in the church.

The spiritual guru syndrome

We don't want to become spiritual guides for people and make them dependent on us rather than God. Meeting regularly with someone and drawing them into close relationship can be highly manipulative. Some have never had such close attention from anyone and they will agree to anything to protect the relationship. You can reduce such dependency by deciding to meet for a specified time period and by ensuring they relate to other Christians in church and small groups.

The cults have deliberately exploited the power of personal discipleship to control their members and movements. We need to ensure our personal ministries are characterised by freedom and flexibility. Some people should never be invited to regular personal meetings because of their insecurities.

GENDER ISSUES

One-to-one ministry tends to suit women better than men. Women enjoy the intimacy and are more articulate, which is a boon to conversation.

In general, men find it difficult to start these one-to-one meetings. They are more comfortable doing something together like sport, fixing things or watching TV. Men don't just sit down and bare their souls to each other. Some men will find it easier to meet in threes or fours to reduce the intensity and feel less threatened and exposed. Meeting in a familiar context, like a club or McDonalds, may work better. For many men, they will learn more by having a healthy argument over the Scriptures, and they will let down their guard once they get drawn into the fight! You may not like these cultural stereotypes, but men do need to work out their way of meeting one-to-one.

PEPPER THE EARTH

If you meet with a Christian for Bible reading and prayer for the next 12 months, what will happen? You don't know exactly, but you can have certain hopes and prayers. Both of you will grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Perhaps you will encourage others to start meeting one-to-one. Perhaps you will both continue to meet with different Christians for the next forty years. Just imagine what could happen if it was common place for Christians to



meet for one-to-one Bible reading and prayer? What would happen if our society was peppered with thousands of such meetings? What growth in godliness might we see?

QUESTIONS

Use these questions as starters for group discussion or personal reflection

1. What are the unique advantages of one-to-one ministry?
2. Is there anything which makes you hesitant about doing it?
3. What changes might you have to make to your 'Christian' program to do one-to-one Bible reading and prayer?
4. Think of someone with whom you could do this.



Ministry of the Pew

By Col Marshall

The 'Pew Prayer'

Some years ago a pastor, Ray Ewers, instructed me in the finer art of how to walk into church. To most people, this might appear to be a rather basic accomplishment requiring little or no tutelage. Perhaps a family with five toddlers would appreciate some advice, but most of us would never give it a thought. Ray's instruction was very brief: "Pray about where you sit".

Praying seemed like a great way to walk into church, better than grumbling about the full car park or feeling annoyed that the first hymn, Tell Out My soul, was sung to Tidings and not Woodlands. But most of all the things to pray about, why should I be concerned with seating position? After all, I sit in my pew every week.

Ray's advice was based on a particular view of church. He saw church as a place where Christians go to work. Church is a gathering of God's people to hear his word and respond in faith and obedience. In this gathering, we are in fellowship with each other, through the blood of Jesus, and, because of our fellowship, we seek to serve each other. We use our gifts and abilities to strengthen one another and build Christ's church – 'edification' is the word often used to describe what goes on in church. All believers are involved in building the church. Because of this, we aren't to see ourselves merely as part of an organisation called 'St Hubert's Church', but as servants of God's people, eager to meet the needs of others even if it means sacrificing our own.

Ray's view of church was spot on. With this perspective, his advice to pray about my choice of pew makes perfect sense. If at church we are working to strengthen our fellow believers, where we sit becomes important since part of our work will be talking to our neighbour in the pew, welcoming people, helping each other understand God's word and praying with each other.

The 'Pew Prayer' was a significant turning point in my understanding of what church is all about. It changed my reasons for going to church. The shift was made from being the 'helpee' to the helper, the served to the servant. Church is where we seek spiritual food and encouragement in order to become more godly; but church is also where we go in order to feed other people and encourage them. In God's mercy, we become more Christ-like in the process, as like him we deny ourselves for the sake of others. But our purpose in gathering with God's people is to strengthen them and build the body of Christ. We look for opportunities to assist the growth of the church in practical ways.

There are numerous ways in which we can carry out the ministry of the pew. In this paper, we'll look at some of them.

Bring others to your meetings

One of the obvious ways we can build the church is to invite others. The minister or the evangelism committee only has limited opportunities to attract others in to your church meetings. The members in the pew, however, are in touch with hundreds of people in the community.



There are several reasons we balk at inviting people to church:

1. We think church is for Christians not unbelievers

Our understanding of church as a gathering of God's people to hear His Word tends to make church inward-looking and create a ghetto-like mentality which excludes people. We can easily think that church is only for the faithful. However, church is about growing in godliness and the God whom we serve is outward looking and concerned for the salvation of all humanity. The Word, which we meet to hear, is a message of salvation for all people and so we must seek out others as God has found us. Paul expected unbelievers would be in the church (see 1 Corinthians 14:22f).

This gives us the happy dilemma of making church work for Christians and unbelievers. Over the years many churches have run separate services for believers and outsiders – a 'regular service' and an 'evangelistic service'. However, this solution is often based on the false premise, that preaching to Christians is fundamentally different to evangelising non-Christians.

But all Biblical preaching should be gospel preaching. Any and every part of the Word of God is ultimately instructing us in the gospel of Jesus. It is a too limited view of the gospel to think that it is only preached in a sermonette from John 3:16. To preach the Bible without being Christ-centred is to mis-preach the Bible. To preach the Bible in a Christ-centred fashion is to evangelise as you teach. If we preach the Word of God, the gospel of our salvation, the church will be edified in both the conversion of sinners and the godliness of believers. So church is always a scene of evangelism.

Our personal evangelism with friends and contacts is strengthened by this church-based evangelism. It is easier for new converts to commit themselves to church if they have already attended. The preacher can be more direct and confronting than in personal relationships. Through expository preaching they learn how to read the Bible and see the grand sweep of God's purposes in Christ. They see the unity and historicity of the Scriptures, which are impressive evidences for authenticity. They see the lives of other Christians, reassuring them that you are not a freak and removing prejudices against Christians and church, thus enhancing gospel communication. They also see, in concrete terms, how being a Christian will effect them. We can also capitalise on the teamwork of our church. Some are good at making friends with non-Christians, others at explaining the gospel, others at following-up new Christians.

2. We are embarrassed by our church meetings

We will only invite our friends to church if we are enthusiastic about what happens there. If the gospel is not being preached, there is no point bringing outsiders. We have to do all in our power to make sure our church preaches the gospel, or find one that already does. There are too many churches in our land that are not preaching the gospel and there is no reason for a Christian ever to be supporting one.

If our church is preaching the gospel but doing it poorly, in a way that is inaccessible to non-Christians, the members in the pew can often provide the motivation for improving things by their commitment to bring other along. Those who are gospel-minded will want to re-examine traditional service styles, if they see that these are a hindrance to newcomers. But sometimes they won't recognise the problem until unbelievers are actually sitting in the pews. Only then do we start to see our meetings through the eyes of outsiders and we feel the healthy pressure to change what is alienating to newcomers.



When we find church dull, boring and irrelevant, there is no way we will invite friends. If they do happen to turn up, we are desperately embarrassed, cringing over every fault and flaw in the meeting. On the other hand, if we find church challenging, exciting, enjoyable, meaty and worthwhile, we will want to invite our friends and neighbours to share with us.

3. We assume people won't come to church

As I write this, a Telstra technician is doing some work in our house. I should invite him to church to hear the gospel, but I can't imagine him coming. He wouldn't fit in; he probably lives too far away; he'll be suspicious of my motives; he's so frustrated with the job he would probably hit me - I've just talked myself out of making the invitation. I'm a pessimist.

Actually, Australians are far more willing to go to church than Christians are willing to invite them. It's harder for strangers like my Telecom man to accept, but those who share in other social events with us - our friends, colleagues, neighbours and relatives - will often come to church.

But we have to be optimists, not pessimists. Seligman, author of *Learned Optimism*, produces evidence that successful salespeople are optimists. However, the reason for their success is not that optimists have better skills in selling, but that they don't give up. Unlike pessimists, they keep knocking on doors and making phone calls because they believe in the product and that people should have it. If we are optimistic about people joining us in church, we will keep making invitations on the assumption that some will come. If we invite people often enough we are sure to get some along. My problem is that I become a pessimist after a few knock-backs.

Thinking Through People Work

However, the ministry of the pew goes far beyond advertising and inviting people to hear the gospel. Once we make the attitude shift from passive pew sitters and receivers to active workers and givers, there is no end to the difference we can make to others and to the running of the meeting. All the suggestions below are of the informal type – things we can do at our own initiative. They are types of involvement that every congregation member can have. The key to people work is to observe what happens around you and respond to people's needs.

Think through your church meetings chronologically. What can we do before, during and after the meeting?

Before

Preparation

One of the great contributions is in our preparation. The minister should not be the only one preparing for church. We prepare by praying for the preacher, the musicians, the service leader, the Bible readers and the newcomers. We prepare by studying the Bible passages so that we maximise this learning opportunity by being sensitised to the issues and questions in the passages being taught. Such preparation has other benefits. We are better equipped to enter into discussion with others if we have looked at the passage beforehand.



It is also a great encouragement to the preacher to know that the congregation is eager to understand the Bible and willing to put in some effort. Preaching is hard work, both for the preacher and the listeners. An intelligent question, comment or observation upon the sermon is an enormous motivating factor for the preacher who, week by week, has to try and engage the congregation's minds and hearts in the Word of God. Those who sit in the pew can make a great contribution to those teaching from the pulpit.

Meeting visitors and newcomers

We enjoy meeting our friends at church, but we need to develop a nose for new people. We need to sit with them and help them feel comfortable in this strange place by introducing ourselves and explaining what is going on. We should greet the non-Christian friends of other members and introduce our friends to others.

It's all about genuine hospitality. The way we welcome and look after people when they visit our homes should be a model for the household of God. And genuine, relaxed hospitality will slowly evaporate some of the prejudices held by outsiders.

Arriving early

All of this requires that we arrive not on time, but early. That may be the greatest miracle of all.

During

Active listening

People in the pews have an enormous impact on those who are teaching and leading. Communication is always a two way process. Energetic listening through taking notes, making eye contact with the preacher, sitting at the front, laughing at jokes (even old ones) will spur on the preacher. It is very hard to preach enthusiastically to a sleepy, distracted, fidgety group.

Our active listening will also infect others with enthusiasm for learning, just as our fidgeting will discourage them. Unbelievers will also pick up that these ideas are worth listening to if they see rows of regulars eagerly soaking up the Bible.

Singing

Similarly, those in the pew can be a great help to the singing and leading of music. It is everyone's responsibility to share in the corporate singing of the congregation. The music may be well chosen and played but if it is poorly sung it is disheartening. Our enthusiasm and gusto in singing the great anthems of the faith is of great help to those around us and those leading the music, even if we can barely hold a tune. Just pretend you're under the shower.

Logistics

Each member in the pew also has an important part to play in the smooth running of the meeting. The devil will use anything to distract people from hearing the Word of God. We mustn't rely on ushers to fix things. If the window needs to be opened, get up and do it. If the microphones are not right, signal to the speaker so the problem can be fixed before they continue without being heard.



Newcomers

Keep attending to newcomers' needs. If they can't find their way around the Bible or the service outline, or they don't have a Bible, or they need to find the creche, help them yourself. It is your meeting, not the minister's. It's all about being observant and outward looking.

After

Discuss God's Word

We have just heard the Word of God and we spend all of morning tea talking about last night's video. It isn't right and we know it, but many of us are just uncomfortable starting up 'spiritual' conversations. If you get the ball rolling, others pick it up. During your preparation and the sermon, think up some comments or issues to raise with others. Asking "What did you think of the sermon?" will usually put your neighbour into a coma, but making a specific comment like "I didn't know Abel was a prophet. What makes someone a prophet?" may generate a fruitful conversation. Even if the conversations don't always get off the ground, your enthusiasm for learning the Bible will be contagious and non-Christians will see that church is not dull and boring but fascinating and life shattering.

Pray with others

Use the suppertime to meet others and find out their concerns and pray quietly with them. This will look a bit weird to newcomers with pairs of bowed heads all around the building, but they will know that we love each other and trust God's providence.

Newcomers

Newcomers tend to leave fairly quickly so we have to move fast by identifying the visitor in our pew and offering them conversation immediately as the service ends. It's all very purposeful: making sure they are welcomed properly by meeting you and your friends, maybe introduce them to the minister and help them see how they can fit in the congregation. You may have to postpone catching your friends until after the newcomers have been cared for.

Stay late

Once you catch this vision of church you are always the last to leave because the opportunities to minister don't end until the last person leaves. Gone are the days of fitting church in between breakfast and brunch. Ministry of the pew takes time.



Training outline

This outline can be used to discuss *Ministry of the Pew* in a small group to work out how to implement these ideas in your church.

1. Why think about where to sit in church?
2. How would your church members express their reasons for attending church?
3. How do these reasons affect what they do in church?
4. Who in your church is actively engaged in the ministry of the pew? How can you encourage and support them?
5. What is the attitude of your members toward bringing others to church?
6. What practices in your church meeting last Sunday would have alienated non-Christians?
7. Next Sunday carefully observe who in church is 'left out' in some way.
8. What are your plans for your ministry from the pew?

