REDEMPTION HILL CHURCH

Guide to One-to-One-Bible Reading

We hope that this guide will help you better understand RHC's One-to-One Bible Reading (OTOBR) initiative.

Why OTOBR

One important aspect of OTOBR is discipleship for and with believers. While discipleship can take place through many different channels, we highly encourage OTOBR within the community of believers, so that we can:

I. **Multiply** God's Word in the church beyond the Sunday sermon.
II. **Apply** the Word with greater directness to one another's lives.
III. **Instill** greater confidence in one another to read and apply the Word.
IV. **Build** relationships with fellow believers, especially across community groups.

OTOBR is for all believers - at any stage of your journey with Jesus - as well as pre-believers.

Getting Started with OTOBR

Option 1

Pray and indicate your interest online and wait for the Deacon of Discipleship to pair you with someone.

Option 2

Initiate a 1-1 Bible reading relationship with someone:

Pray
Who would you like to read the Bible with?

Invite the Person
"Would you be keen to explore reading the Bible with me over the course of a few weeks? I think that will give us a chance to learn God's word together."

Plan to Meet
After an invitation is accepted, plan to set up a first meeting to get started.

Tips for a Fruitful OTOBR

The table below offers a summary of recommendations and things to look out for.

What	How
Before reading together	
What to prep (logistically)	• Get to know each other. • Decide on what you want to read together. • Share and set expectations of the OTOBR. • Plan your schedules. • Decide on a tentative end date based on the length of the book of the Bible. • Consider taking turns to facilitate the study.
What to prep (personally)	• Read through the entire biblical book (e.g. an epistle) at least once. Try to list the main emphases of the book on your own. • Prepare at home with your resources (optional). • Pray for fruit from your meetings.
When reading together	
How to read	• Refer to the COMA method (see page 3) for Bible reading.
When encountering hard questions	• Set it aside to discuss at a future meeting(s). • Consult study guides, commentaries. • Ask your CG leaders or pastors.
What is encouraged	• Exercise mutual understanding. • Be a good listener and acknowledge doubts. • Be comfortable saying 'I don't have an answer'. It is all right to do so. • Work hard on applying the text to your life and ministry.
What is discouraged	• Monologues instead of dialogues. (Tip: Ask questions.) • Dismissing each other by listening poorly. • Chit-chatting. • Pushing your own personal agenda (E.g., winning an argument, rather than listening).
How to end the session	• Pray for God's help to make application of the Word a reality • Confirm details for the next meeting.
After reading together	
What's next	• Connect with a CG if you are not already with one. • Consider being a walker[1]. • Start reading with someone else.

[1] A walker is someone in church who has volunteered to walk with others, while a walkee is one who has expressed interest to read the Bible with someone in a 1-1 setting. The relationship is not unlike that of a discipler-disciple, except that using the latter nomenclature often suggests an asymmetrical mentor-mentee relationship, which we would prefer to avoid.

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Suggested Bible Reading Method: COMA[2]

Acronym	Examples of things to look out for

C: Context	• **Literary context.** How does this text relate to what comes before and after?
	• **Historical context[3].**
	  ○ What are the circumstances under which the Bible passages were written? E.g., prison, persecution
	  ○ What are the attitudes of the author/recipients? E.g., divided, delighted, discouraged

O: Observation	• **Repetitions**. Look out for repeated words or ideas for emphasis. • **Connectives.** Observe words like 'for', 'so that' to follow arguments. • **Clarifications.** Instead of reading our ideas into the text when we encounter a word e.g., 'wisdom', look for how the word is used within the book. • **Annotations.** Use **(!)** for something striking and **(?)** for something puzzling. Discuss both the **(!)** and **(?)** and try to find answers *from the text* or *from within the book*.
M: Meaning	• **Fallen condition.** What sinful or suffering conditions can I find in the text that echo my own? E.g., disunity (sin) and affliction (suffering). • **God's gracious provision.** What promises or resources does God give to His people to enable them to live for Him? (E.g., power, grace)

A - Application	• **Getting to Christ.** How does the text point to Jesus?
	  ○ **Jesus as substitute**: How has Christ lived the life that I ought to live but couldn't, and died the death that I ought to die?
	  ○ **Jesus as enabler**: How does Christ's death motivate or enable me to live for God? (E.g., gratitude, resources found in Christ because of our union)
	• **Call to action.**
	  ○ What is God calling you to do/think/feel/believe?

[2] This table aims to provide a generic framework for COMA. Should you wish to learn how COMA can be applied to different genres in the Bible, please see David Helm's COMA questions. Alternatively, Helm recommends the Swedish method who less experienced readers which comprises 3 questions: i) a light bulb (anything that shines out in the passage), ii) a question mark (anything that is hard to understand), iii) an arrow (anything that applies personally); followed by sharing and discussion of each category.

[3] Before you reach for the bible commentaries, you can find plenty of clues within the book itself. E.g., the word 'afflicted' happens throughout 1 Thessalonians, suggesting that the believers were undergoing persecution. Look out, too, for matters that might have occasioned the author to write the letter. E.g., 1 Thess. 3:1-7 suggests that Paul was concerned that they may be tempted in their suffering.

	○ How can I apply the text if I were sinning vs suffering?

FAQs

1. Why should I engage in 1-to-1 Bible reading, especially if I am already connected to a CG?

Both OTOBR and being a part of a CG are both means for Christian discipleship and relationship building. However, there are some differences in terms of their focus and functions. E.g.,**:**

- CG focuses on community living and its meetings would typically take place in a larger group setting. Also, CGs typically engage in discussions about the applications of the Sunday's sermon.
- On the other hand, OTOBR provides an intimate platform (with its limited group size) and is intended for in-depth Bible/book studies, sharing of lives, and more pointed applications of the word.
- The CG is part of, but does not make up the church. We are called to love the church beyond those in our CGs.

2. Must I read the bible? Can I read other books instead?

- We would encourage reading the Bible as first priority because God's Word is powerful in transforming His people.
- Other books and resources are welcome. However, find a good one! Any other good Christian books must be built on the foundation of the Bible. Here are some recommendations of books and online resources.
- Our Training & Equipping (T&E) team has also developed some materials for 1-1 reading purposes. Please visit the RHC webpage to download the resources.

3. What can I do if I feel inadequate to facilitate a "Bible study"?

- Part of the process of reading the Bible together is learning to read the Bible better! Do not feel like you have to be perfectly equipped or know a lot to read the Bible. Everyone begins at ground zero at some point.
- We can trust the Spirit to guide us into truth and to keep us from serious error.
- Our Training & Equipping (T&E) team has developed some guided material that may help you ease into facilitation. Please visit the RHC webpage to download the resources.

4. What do I have to prepare each week before the Bible reading?

- Read through the Bible passage at least once to prepare your heart for it.
- Pray for God to shed light on his Word for both of you, so that you may live for Him.
- If you are a pre-believer, read the passage with an open mind and note down all questions you may have.

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5. I am quite busy. How frequent must the Bible readings be?

- It is really dependent on the availability of both parties. Just bear in mind that consistency helps to keep up the momentum. We recommend fortnightly to monthly.

6. Can the reading be done with more than just the two of us, as I'd feel awkward otherwise?

- Yes! Feel free to merge social circles, e.g., connect those in your congregation who don't know each other.
- Bear in mind that the number of people in the group may affect the depth of sharing.

7. Can I read with someone of the opposite gender?

- Unless you and your reading partners are a married couple, we highly encourage you to read the Bible with someone of the same gender, as it creates a safe platform for deeper sharing.

8. How long should each reading session be?

- Anything between 1-1.5 hours. Try to allocate at least 45 minutes to study the word together. You can then use the remaining time to talk about the application of the Word to your lives, and your struggles. Be sure to allocate time for prayer at the end.

9. How long should the OTOBR last? What if I can't commit half-way through?

- We encourage you to discuss with your reading partner and adjust the frequency of meet-ups accordingly to make things work. Aim to start with the goal of ending well. We suggest meeting not more than 6 months.

10. What is the relationship between discipleship and OTOBR?

- One-to-one Bible reading is one part of discipleship. It is a great avenue for intentional discipleship around the Word.
- It also serves as a platform for trust and relationship building, so as to encourage deeper conversations and accountability in future.

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