



ONE TO ONE

ECCLESIASTES

What is *One to One*?

Most Christians believe that the Bible is important to spiritual growth and health, and yet most would also admit that regular Bible reading is an often neglected part of their lives. The Bible is essential to our relationship with God. Knowing God means knowing how he is revealed in the Word. Trusting God means trusting his word. Obeying God means obeying his word. *"All Scripture is breathed out by God,"* Paul says, *"and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Not only is the Bible central to our individual lives, but it is also central to the church. A church that is marinated in Scripture tends to stand out. The people have been shaped by the word and it shows up in all kinds of places: in the preaching, in prayer, in singing, in after-church conversations, and in their public witness. In every possible way, you can't help but notice that these are a people who are being transformed by the Spirit and the Word. This is what Jesus had in mind when he prayed, *"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth"* (Jn. 17:17)

The Bible, however, is a big book and sometimes confusing. Perhaps that's why so many don't read it. But the Bible is not a book just for professors, pastors, and missionaries. While there are deep truths that will occupy these sorts of people for a lifetime, the Bible was actually written for *all* of us. If we patiently give ourselves to reading it, we'll soon find that we're able to understand it. Over the centuries, the church has discovered that effective Bible reading happens best within community. *One to One* is a weekly Bible reading program that is designed to form relationships (one to one) that are centred on the word—relationships that will encourage godly habits, develop your ability to read and understand the Bible, and wrestle with its life changing message. It is our hope that *One to One* will help us as a church grow together in unity, knowledge, and maturity (Eph. 4:13).

How to Get Started

Find a Partner. Once you decide that *One to One* is for you, finding the right partner is important. Spend time in prayer and ask God to lead you to the right person, or to be open to meeting someone new. Perhaps you've never read the Bible before, it might be best if you found someone to read with who is a bit more experienced than you. If you are familiar with the Bible, finding someone less familiar is a great idea. Remember, you don't have to be a scholar to participate. Everyone knows someone who is more or less experienced with the Bible. You might want to use *One to One* as an opportunity to meet someone new. If that's the case, we'd encourage you to sign up on your own and we'll introduce you to someone.

Plan to Meet. After you find a partner you'll have to find a time to meet together that works for both of you. An hour is a good amount of time to work through a passage. Plan to meet somewhere private like an office, living room, or even a coffee shop. Beginning on September 24th we will be starting a series of 10 readings through the book of Ecclesiastes in conjunction with the sermon series, *Living on Purpose*.

When You Meet. At first, meeting together might feel a little bit awkward, but stick with it. You should begin with *prayer*. Ask the Lord that he would help you both to understand the text and that he would further help you to understand how to apply it to your lives. Once you pray, *read* the passage. One of you should read the passage aloud once through, and then you could read it again quietly and slowly before you discuss it. Once you've read the passage discuss it using the discussion questions provided. Close off by scheduling your next meeting, and praying for one another.

Ecclesiastes

The Lord created the world in wisdom, but the intrusion of sin plunged everything into futility. The poisoned atmosphere of life under the sun threatens to undo any sense of meaning or purpose. The unstoppable march of time and the certainty of death make it so that all the works of our hands and every fleeting pleasure are short-lived and finally forgotten—buried in the sands of history. Is there something worth living for—anything worth dying for? Is there any purpose that will lift us beyond the monotony, absurdity and futility of life under the sun? The Preacher develops the question in great detail throughout the book revealing the cruel wisdom of a world without God—a world without redemption. However, the good news of Ecclesiastes is that there is something more than what meets the eye—a wisdom that transcends the sin-cursed ground we live on and invades our lives with hope filling every square inch with meaning.

10 Week Reading Plan

Week 1 - (Eccl. 1:1-11)

- Who is “the preacher”?
- Who is the ultimate son of David, and how might that affect the way you read this book?
- How would you describe the problem that he’s talking about in these verses?
- How would you define vanity?
- In what ways do you see and feel the deep sense of futility of the world?
- Think back to Genesis 1-2; how was the world originally created and what was the purpose of life? What went wrong?
- What does it mean to be “under the son?”
- Is there anywhere in the Bible where it points to something “new” that is coming? What is it referring to?

Week 2 - (Eccl. 1:12-2:26)

- How many pursuits or different spheres of life does the preacher point to as being vanity in this passage? What are they?
- Why is the pursuit of wisdom vain?
- Why is the pursuit of pleasure vain?
- How does vanity plague the work of our hands?
- How have you experienced the unsatisfying and futile nature of these things?
- Romans 8:18-39 addresses the same futile situation as the Preacher, but Paul sets it in the hopeful light of the big story of the Bible. How is the futility of life under the sun finally overcome?
- How should we live in relation to these different spheres and why?

Week 3 -(Eccl. 3)

- What do vv.1-8 teach us about the differing allotments of time and diversity of seasons in life? Is there any comfort here, why?
- What does v.11 mean by “eternity” in our hearts?
- What joy is there in our work?
- Death is the great equalizer (vv.16-22), how does it intrude justice with vanity?
- There are a few allusions to the curse of Genesis 3 in this passage. How does the promise of Genesis 3:15 bring hope to this seemingly hopeless situation?
- The Preacher speaks of death with a cold sense of finality. Can you find any place in the Scriptures that gives us a more hopeful perspective? What then is the Preacher getting at in this passage?

Week 4 - (Eccl. 4)

- There are a number of problems that plague human relationships that only add to the vanity of life under the sun. How many can you see in this passage?
- Sin along the horizontal plane makes life hard. We often find ourselves both receiving or perpetrating evil in relationships, why?
- Are relationships still worth it? Why?

- The word “better” seems to point to a few things that bring some measure of relief to the difficulties of life under the sun. What are they and what help do they bring?

Week 5 - (Eccl. 5:1-6:12)

- What does it mean to “fear God” (v.7)?
- How does the fear of God show itself in how we approach God?
- How does the fear of God show itself in how we treat others?
- How does the fear of God show itself in how we treat money?
- What’s wrong with the “love of money” (v.10ff. cf. 1Tim. 6:6-10; Heb. 13:5-6)?
- Where do wealth and power ultimately come from and how should that affect the way we think about them?

Week 6 - (Eccl. 7)

- How often is the word “better” repeated in vv.1-13? What is the significance of what’s better given the futility of life under the sun?
- In what way is the wisdom of vv.1-13 different from the wisdom of vv.14-29?
- What are some principles of wisdom that really speak to you from this passage, and why?
- What does v.29 tell us about humanity?

Week 7 - (Eccl. 8:1-9:10)

- What does this passage teach us about our obligation to earthly kings?
- How does the principle of futility relate to the idea of political authority?
- What is the difference between the wicked and those who fear God in vv.10-13? Why does the preacher still commend the fear of God?
- How does vanity confound this contrast in vv.14-15?
- Why is it impossible to understand the works and ways of God (vv.16-17)?
- What does 9:3 teach us about sin?
- How does
- defy the distinction between living righteously or wickedly?

- Is living still better than dying? Why?

Week 8 - (Eccl. 9:11-10:20)

- How do “time and chance” seem to thwart wisdom and make our giftedness useless?
- Are we in control of our successes or fates? How does the answer to that question make you feel?
- What are some of the benefits of wisdom?
- How is wisdom described in this passage?
- How is folly described?
- What principles of wisdom really stand out to you and why?

Week 9 - (Eccl. 11:1-12:8)

- How would you summarize the wisdom of 11:1-4?
- How does coming to terms with the limitation of your knowledge affect the decisions that you make?
- What blessings belong to those who are young?
- What blessings belong to those who are old, and what trials?
- Life is short, how do you want to live it?
- Why do so many in our world try to avoid growing old?
- Why do so many avoid the subject of death?

Week 10 - (Eccl. 12:9-14)

- How does the epilogue bring clarity to the whole of the book?
- In a sense, the book of Ecclesiastes is a lengthy and profound repentance. Is that perspective helpful, and why?
- Who is the “Shepherd” (v.11; cf. Eze. 34:32; 37:24; Jn. 10:11, 16 see also Lk. 11:31; 1Cor. 1:24, 30)? How does this point to Christ and shape your understanding of the book?
- What does vv.11-12 teach us about the doctrine of Scripture?
- What is the whole duty of man?
- What does it mean to fear God?
- In what way does the reality of the final judgement affect what you’re living for today? What hope do you have for that day?
- How many times does the word “vain” show up in 1 Corinthians 15? How does Paul’s perspective inform your reading of Ecclesiastes?

Tips For Better Bible Reading

All of us should desire to not only read the Bible more but to become better Bible readers. Here are a few tips to get you started in the right direction. It's helpful to think about careful Bible reading as a process with various steps involved. We'll use the acronym COMA to help us remember these four basic steps.



Context. Each text has a context because each text has a place in the book you are reading, and is somehow connected to the big overarching story of the Bible as a whole. Ask questions like:

- Where does this text fit in the flow of the book? What comes before? What comes immediately after?
- Are there any clues in the text that tell me about the circumstances under which it was written?
- Are there geographical or historical markers?
- How does this text relate to the big story of the Bible?



Observations. Besides context, there are a few other things you're going to want to observe:

- Who is the author? To whom is it written?
- What type of literature is it (Poetry, Historical Narrative, Prose...)?
- What is the structure of the text? Can you discern a plot or logical flow? Can you break it down into smaller pieces? How do the pieces fit together? Where are the transitions?
- Are there any key terms? Are there any important contrasting words, repeated words, or action words?
- What is emphasized in the text?
- Do you see any literary devices (Metaphor, Simile, Irony)?
- Do you see any important names or places?



Meaning. When we integrate everything that we've observed, it's time to figure out what it means:

- Can you pick up on the mood of the text? What is the spirit of the author?
- Why did the author write this?
- Do you see any figurative language in the text?
- What truth does the passage teach about God, Jesus, humanity, and the world?
- What is the main point of the passage and how does it relate to everything else the author has said? How does it relate to the big story of the Bible?



Application. When we encounter God's word, we are meant to be changed. Ask yourself:

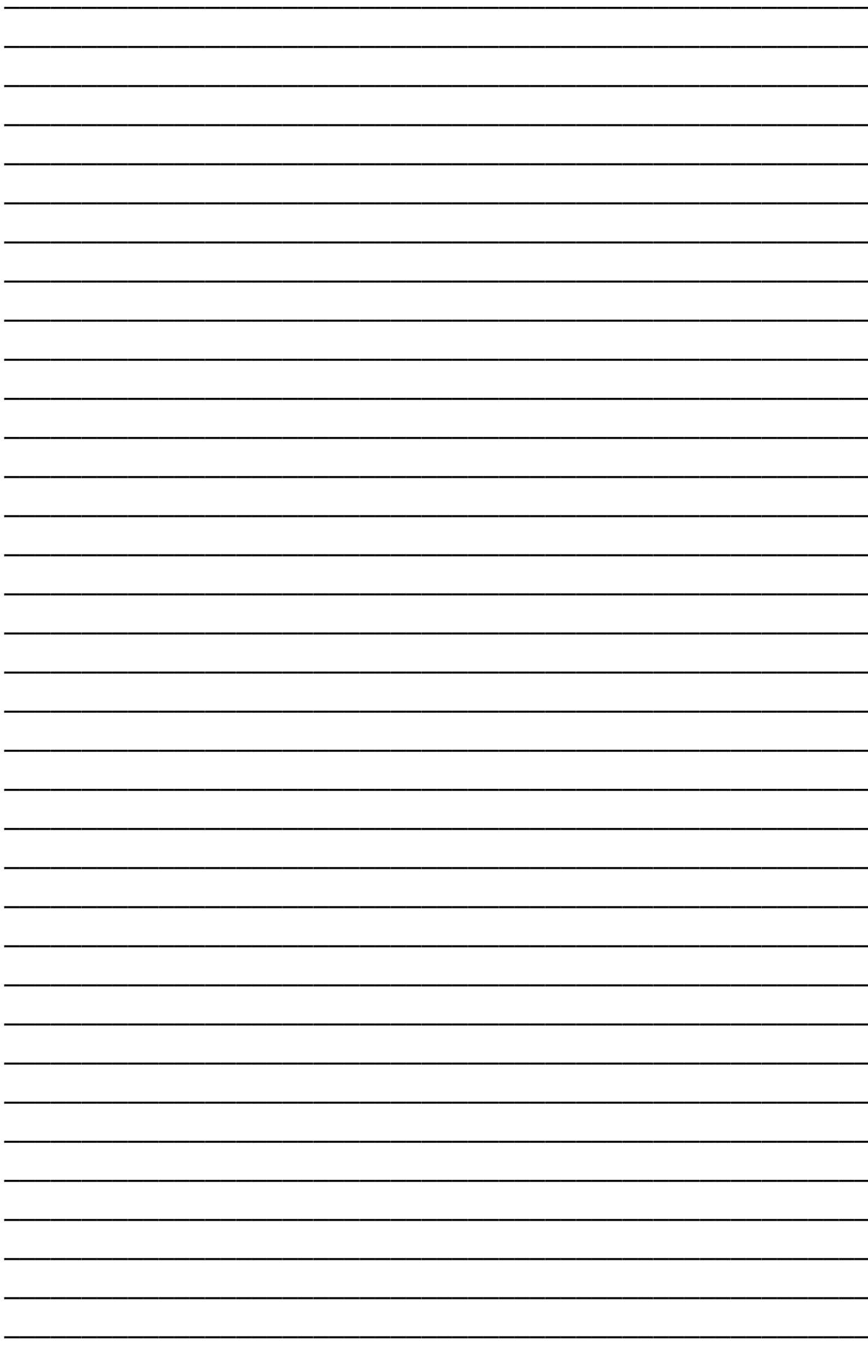
- Is there a *sin* for me to forsake?
- Is there a *promise* for me to claim?
- Is there an *example* for me to follow?
- Is there a *command* for me to obey?
- Is there a *truth* for me to embrace?
- In what way does this text either *conflict* with or *confirm* my previous beliefs?
- How should this text affect my worship of God? How does this passage move my emotions or affections?
- Is there any culture-specific language or ideas? what is the universal truth embedded in it?
- Is there a parallel between me and someone in the passage? How is my situation similar to or different from the text?
- Are there goals, or resolutions, that need to be set today?



Miscellaneous Tips:

- Check your Bible's footnotes and cross-references (if you have a Bible with margins).

- Read a couple of different translations.
- Try to paraphrase the passage in your own words
- Pray through the text as you read (focus especially on your applications).
- Meditate on the text throughout the day. Read it again and try to think through its implications for your faith and practice.
- Make a list of unanswered questions and try to track down some answers.
- Keep a journal with answers to various questions and notes. Revisit it as you make your way through the book.
- Find some helpful resources *AFTER* you've already wrestled with the text yourself.





HIGH RIVER
BAPTIST
CHURCH