

## Hitting the Wall



In the movie *The Truman Show*, Truman has been trapped in a fake world from birth. This artificial world, including all the people in Truman's life has been manufactured for a reality TV show. Truman gradually works out the truth and determines to escape.

Late one night he steals a yacht and sets off across the (fake) ocean. After surviving a fierce (artificial) storm Truman thinks he's escaped when suddenly the front of his yacht pierces an artificial wall painted with sky and clouds. Truman has hit the wall. He can't get through and pounds it helplessly with his fists.

But just when we think he has been thwarted, a determined look returns to his face, he rolls up his sleeves, walks along the water's edge ..... until he find stairs and a door through the wall and into the real world. On the other side awaits his true love and a new life.

## Hitting the wall in our personal evangelism

Do you feel like you've hit the wall in your personal evangelism at work? Maybe you know the people in your office reasonably well and make the effort to go to work socials when you can. Maybe occasionally you enjoy a deeper conversation which

gets on to spiritual things and the bigger questions of life. Maybe you've successfully invited a work colleague along to a Christian event. But does it ever progress to the point where your friend is investigating Christianity in a serious way (getting into the Bible)? Have you hit the wall?

## Through the wall to joy

I want to suggest that a way through the wall is to *determine* to try to find someone from work who is willing to read and discuss one of the gospels with you one to one (see the Appendix for the advantages of reading a gospel one to one).

And like Truman, there's nothing more joyful than getting through the wall - and actually reading the Bible with someone who wants to learn. Here's a quote from Phil who invited his workmate to read with him after a deep and meaningful pub conversation one night after work:

*Over the following year my friend and I completed all the 11 books in *The Word One to One*. At the end he read the sinner's prayer and confirmed his belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

*I too have grown closer to God and increased my knowledge of Him through reading *The Word One to One*. I have been following Jesus since I can remember but aside from when I committed to serve Him all my life, I have experienced no greater joy in my walk with God than sharing the Word of God with my friend. (from [theword121.com/stories](http://theword121.com/stories))*

Yes but ...

“Yes”, but you say, “I can see the benefits of reading a gospel one to one with a work colleague, but as I said earlier, I’ve hit the wall, my progress is thwarted, how can I make it happen?”

## How to break through the wall

Here are two things which might help you break through the wall.

### Determination

If we set ourselves the goal of trying to find a non-Christian at work to read with then it’s more likely to happen. This determination will need to be fueled by prayer and encouragement from others.

Do you belong to a small group (at church or work) who can pray for you to find someone to read with? Or maybe you can find an ‘Accountability Partner’ to meet monthly to pray for each other and compare progress? (I’ve heard that consulting firms use this technique of Accountability Partners as a tool to make sure stuff actually gets implemented after training courses.)

To stay determined we also need to stay positive and feed our brains the right messages eg. “There are more people out there who are positive and open to the Christian message than I think”. And ... “God wants me to find someone to read with”. These statements are of course true, both statistically and theologically!

### Statistically

In a 2017 McCrindle survey 86% of people gave a positive response to the question “Is Jesus important to the culture of the world?” (53% “extremely or very”, 33%

“slightly or somewhat”). 63% of people also answered positively to the question “Is Jesus life important to you personally?” (31% said “extremely or very”, 32% “slightly or somewhat”). So people are more positive towards Jesus than we often think.

I’m told that on average if you ask five people to read the Bible with you, one person will say “yes”. (See also the *Appendix* for the best people to ask to increase your chances of a “yes”).

### Theologically

Our belief in a God who is actively working to save a people for Himself before his Son returns should also give us confidence to invite people to read the Bible with us.

In Acts 18 the apostle Paul is feeling discouraged and afraid as he waits in Corinth - so the Lord reminds him of two great truths.

*<sup>9</sup> One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. <sup>10</sup> For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” <sup>11</sup> So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God. (Acts 18:9-11)*

We don’t know which of our work colleagues the Lord is calling. But if we determine to find someone to read with, and we keep asking, we *will* break through the wall to effective evangelism.

### Preparation

The other thing that we need to break through the wall to effective evangelism is preparation. Having a simple structure / method means that you are ready to go.

There are many good one to one Bible reading tools available. Here are two that I've found helpful.

**The Word one to one** \*1

The Word One to One is a resource designed to walk you and your friends through the good news found in John's Gospel.

Everything you need to read the Bible with your friend is contained in the resource.

On the left hand page is John's Gospel in plain clear English. It's broken up into manageable chunks, so that it isn't overwhelming.

On the right hand side page are questions and comments. These can be used however you like - perhaps interactively with your friend, or rhetorically.

Either way, all the answers are on the right hand side, meaning your friend isn't embarrassed if they don't know the answer - and so you can have confidence in explaining what the bible passage means.

The questions are clear and easy to understand without being too simple. In places there's even extra information given, to help you and your friend understand the historical context or the tricky bits.





**Pros.** Anyone can use it (minimal training required). More comfortable for your friend. Doesn't put them 'on the spot'. I.e. answers are already provided, non-religious looking workbook. Custom designed for the non-Christian enquirer to understand the Christian message.

**Cons.** Costs money to buy the printed booklets. Requires some organisational skills to make sure you've got the right book at the right time (but a good investment). Limited to John's gospel.

[\*1 Most of these notes explaining the Word one to one have been taken directly from the Word one to one website. See [theword121.com.au](http://theword121.com.au) for more detailed instructions on how to use the Word One to One and for where to order printed booklets and download free studies.]

**The Swedish Method**

The Swedish method is a simple, four part tool to analyse any Bible passage. Here are the four questions to guide your discussion.

 <p>What stands out</p>	 <p>Questions</p>
 <p>Main point</p>	 <p>Application</p>

1. What are your **lightbulbs**? I.e. Anything, a word, phrase, or idea that stood out to you.
2. What **questions** would you like to ask God or the author?
3. What is the **main point**?
4. What is the relevance / **application** to us / society?

The strength of the Swedish method is the question section which reveals and addresses what is on the mind of the person you are reading with. Don't worry if you can't answer a question. Say you'll research it and get back to them next time you meet.

**Pros.** Simple, easy to use structure. Minimal preparation. Method can be used for *any* book of the Bible. Also good for small group studies. No cost. Both sitting under the authority of the Bible and learning together.

**Cons.** Enquirer feels a bit more put 'on the spot'. Relies on the Christian host having a good general Bible knowledge and skills to answer questions and also to be able to work out the main point and application of the passage.

See the Appendix for more detailed instructions about how to run a meeting using the Swedish method.

### [Ready to break through the wall?](#)

I'm hoping you now feel determined and prepared to break through the wall and find someone to read the Bible with you. Great joy awaits you there.

Please contact me or one of the City Bible Forum staff if you'd like further coaching or encouragement on this topic, both for yourself or for your workplace group.

We would also love to hear any encouraging stories of you or your members reading the Bible one to one with someone.

**Craig Josling**

## Appendix

### Why a gospel

Our ultimate aim in personal evangelism is to introduce people to the person and work of Jesus Christ and to invite them to make a response. While the epistles (letters) in the New Testament provide this information, the four gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John present Jesus 'in action'.

These gospels are an amazing and compelling narrative of Jesus' life and teaching, including how people around him reacted (better than any Netflix series). On every page of the gospels we see the Lordship of Jesus over disease, demons, nature and people. Ultimately we see his power over death as he rises from the dead on the third day. The gospels also show God's love for people as he heals, teaches, feeds, rebukes and ultimately goes to the cross to pay for our sins. The gospels also communicate that Christianity is rooted in real historical events and places.

### Why one to one

Reading the Bible with someone one to one has many advantages. It's a joy to *get to know people* better. A man I'm reading with at the moment recently had his first child and it was a joy as he shared this life changing event with me.

One to one is also *flexible*. You work your way through the material at their pace, rescheduling when something unexpected comes up. Sometimes it's slow, but you get there in the end.

One to one is also a good context for people to be *real and honest* about what questions and struggles they have with the material. It also provides a trusting relationship for you to gently challenge the person to *respond* appropriately to God's word.

### How to run a meeting using the Swedish Method

1. Remind of the *context* (where are we up to).
2. *Read* the Bible passage, either out loud or quietly to yourself. Be aware that some people find it embarrassing to read out loud.
3. Spend 3-5 minutes *writing down* or circling some 'light bulbs' (anything that stands out) and any questions (underline).
4. Both *share your 'light bulbs'*. Ask them if they came up with anything to share (don't assume).
5. Both *share your questions* (you write these down).
6. Try and *work out the answers* together to some or all of the questions. Try not to give away the answer too quickly but get the other person to try to work it out from the passage if possible. Don't worry if you don't know the answer to a question. Say you will find out and discuss at the next meeting. Make sure you leave enough time for sections 7. & 8.
7. Spend a few minutes *writing down the main point and applications* to us. Applications can also change in attitudes, beliefs and convictions, as well as actions.
8. Share these and *discuss* applications.
9. Say a short *prayer* to close if your friend is comfortable with this.
10. *Organise* your next meeting.

### Who is most likely to say "yes"

A church in Melbourne found that the following people in your relational network are more likely to accept an invitation to read the Bible with you one to one:

1. Someone who likes you.
2. Someone who listens to you.
3. Someone who looks out for you.