

Why Discovery Bible Study?

In the last 15 years, over 40,000 churches sprang up in an area in North India known as the graveyard of missions and missionaries.' Some of these churches are tenth generation church plants and studies show that the tenth generation is as mature and Biblically sound as the first. While persecution in this area is high, so is the faith of the church. They walk and talk with God. They see miracles everyday. They share their faith. They plant more churches. They pray for the sick. They take care of the widows and orphans. Although many are illiterate, they study the Bible inductively. They believe we have a choice – we read or listen to God's Word, believe, and obey Him or we don't. There is no middle ground

People ask, "Why don't we see church planting movements in the United States?" It is because we read God's Word, but are not obedient. We amass knowledge about God, but we don't do anything with our knowledge. We say we read God's Word inductively but we usually stop before we get to the hard part: obedience. Until we read God's Word and obey it, we will not see church planting movements in the United States.

Read, obey, and share – that is the discovery process in a nutshell. We read God's word out loud (if we are in a group) or write it word for word (if we are studying on our own.) Next, we put God's Words into our own words – just to make sure we really understand what His Word says and to make sure we can share it in informal situations. Finally, we commit to two things: to change our life to obey God's Word and share what God taught us with at least one other person. Obedience and sharing must happen within the next 24 to 48 hours. If too much time passes between reading God's Word and obeying it, people disobey God and establish a habit of negligent disobedience in their lives.

According to Scripture, if we read God's Word and disobey it we either don't love God (John 14:1-21) or we are a fool (James 1:22-2, Proverbs 10:8, 14:9, 14:16). If we don't share God's Word, we don't love others. (John 14, Matthew 22, 1 John 3:13) If we know what to do, but choose not to do it, we are disobedient. (James 4:17) But we often follow a religious system that does not require obedience (which makes the religion disobedient.) We judge spiritual maturity by what someone knows rather than if they obey what they know. If we judge spiritual maturity by obedience to God's Word, there are new Christians in North India who are more spiritually mature than many people who chose to follow Christ years ago. If we want to grow spiritually, we need to adopt a system that encourages behaviors that lead to spiritual growth. Discovery Bible Study is one process that encourages those behaviors.

Prayer (Connect)

When you meet with groups for Discovery Bible Study, go around the room and have everyone share one thing they are thankful for and one thing that is stressing them out. Eventually, point out to the group that prayer in its simplest form is telling God the things we are thankful for and talking with Him about what stresses them out.

Transition this interaction from a group share time to an open, interactive prayer time. This form of prayer is very interactive and gets the quietest people involved in group prayer.

The Holy Spirit (Review)

Right after you pray, ask the group to share what God said to them in their personal time with Him since your last meeting. Asking this question at the beginning of every meeting encourages group members to have a personal time with God. It also reiterates every member's ability to hear God's voice.

Giving them an opportunity to share allows room for the Holy Spirit to take the group study in a completely different direction than you planned. Be sensitive to the group and make sure they have this time.

Scripture (Discover)

After everyone has a chance to share, have someone read Scripture out loud while everyone follows along in their Bible. When they are done, have someone else read the same passage out loud again. This time have everyone listen to the reading. When they are done, ask for a volunteer to retell the passage in their own words. When they finish, ask the group to fill in any points they feel were left out.

Reading, listening, and retelling Scripture is more important than you might think. This pattern allows different learning styles to engage Scripture. Everyone has time to think about the passage and ask the Holy Spirit to speak through God's Word. Retelling the passage allows them to think through sharing this passage with someone outside the group. Allowing the group to add to the retelling encourages everyone to think about the main points in the passage. Even though going through the passage multiple times seems repetitive and time consuming, the process helps develop reproducing disciples.

Discovery Study (Discover Cont.)

After your group retells the Scripture, you can study the passage by asking the same questions each week. Study must be question driven. Questions facilitate the discovery process. Questions allow your group to wrestle with Scripture and grow spiritually. Below are some sample questions to encourage interaction with Scripture:

- **Did anything in this passage capture your attention?**
- **What did you like about this passage?**
- **Did anything bother you? Why?**
- **What does this passage tell us about God?**
- **What does this passage tell us about Man?**
- **What does this passage tell us about living to please God?**

Keep discussion focused on Scripture. If you or someone else in your group is well-read, it will be hard to avoid introducing outside materials into the study. You, as the facilitator, need to work hard to limit the discussion of extra-Biblical or other Biblical materials. These materials are not bad, but they don't facilitate interaction with Scripture. In most cases extra-Biblical materials underscore the intelligence of the one introducing the materials rather than keeping Scripture at center stage. Sometimes this is not the case, but those moments are rare. Do your best to keep the discussion focused on the Scripture that is the focus of the study.

Commitment (Obey)

Knowledge of God's Word must translate into obedience or it is wasted. This next step begins with a statement and a question:

- **If we believe God's Word is true, what must we change in our lives to obey God?**

Everyone in the group must answer this question before they leave. If they already obey this Scripture, have them share how they obey it. Ask them if there is anything else they need to do to increase their obedience to God's Word in this area of their life.

Keep this part of your time focused on specifics. For example, realizing that there is only one God is awesome, but that realization needs to become action. In this case you might encourage them with a follow up question: "Now that you believe there is one God, what do you need to change in your life? What will you do differently?" Encourage your group to identify specific things to do to obey the passage.

Share (Multiply)

After everyone shares how they are going to obey Scripture, have them identify someone who needs to hear what God said to the group. Encourage them to share what they learned with that person.

Before you wrap up, ask the group to identify people they know who are in need. Ask the group to identify ways to meet those needs in the next week.

Finally, close in prayer.