

DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY PROCESS

Begin this session by asking for Results from the MAN of Peace

I. PRACTICAL DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY — WHAT IT IS

A. An Indian Example

Persecution in North India areas is high, so is the faith of the church. They walk and talk with God. They see miracles every day. 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 do not*. There is no middle ground. 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.

People ask, "Why don't we see church planting movements in our country?" 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 Ukraine.

B. Read, obey, and share — (*these are the Key words*) this is the **discovery** process in a nutshell.

- a) 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.)
- b) Next, we write God's words into our own words as if telling another person what we read — just to make sure we really understand what it says.
- c) 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. 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.

C. Sharing — our Downfall or Victory

According to Scripture, if we read God's Word and disobey it we either don't love God (John 14:15-21) or we are a fool (James 1:22-25, 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. Inductive Bible Study is one process that encourages those behaviors. (*to be doers — not knowledge*)

Let's take a look at how Discovery Bible Study works for personal study and group study.

II. YOUR PERSONAL DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

With this Bible study we use a three step process. Lay a piece of paper on its side, or landscape. Then divide the paper into three columns. Label the first 'Scripture,' label the second 'My Words' and the third 'I Will.'

A. Scripture

Start in a short book with short sections. The length of the passage you chose affects how much time the study takes. Longer passages take longer to study. This isn't a bad thing, but you need to keep it in mind. Generally, try to keep passages between 5 and 8 verses. Break larger passages into several sections, spread out over several days.

In the 'Scripture' column (left column), write the passage: word-for-word. This takes time but you control how much time by choosing smaller chunks of Scripture. What is most important, however, is this — when you copy a passage word-for-word you actually read it through several (about five to seven) times. It is a form of forced meditation for those of us who can't sit and think about a passage without losing focus. This process also keeps me from skimming familiar passages. When you write it out you have to think about every word. (The Holy Spirit writes on your heart while you are writing it down on paper.)

B. My Own Words

When you finish copying the passage, **CLOSE** your Bible, then use the second column (center column) to write the passage in your own words. Write it as if you are telling a friend about it over a cup of tea. Don't move on until you can write the passage in your own words. You see, you don't really understand it if you can't tell it to someone in your own words. And you can't obey Scripture unless you understand it. It's that simple. Sometimes you have to stop on a passage, read it again, and think about it quite a bit before you can put it in your own words. When you start this process, you will find that there are several familiar passages that you can't write in your own words! You will simply not be able to believe how much you '**knew**' and how little you **understood**. (Have you ever had the experience that you could not explain a verse?)

C. I Will

In the third column (right column) you transition from *knowing* God's Word to **obeying** God's Word. In this '**I Will**' column you look at each part of the passage. In prayer you ask God to reveal things you need to add to your life, take away from your life, or change in your life in order for you to obey this passage. **You must be very specific.** The passage may say that God created the Earth, but you have to decide what that means in your life. How does your life change because you believe that God created the Earth? **What do you need to do differently?** What can you do in the next **24 to 48** hours to obey this passage? I believe every time we open God's Word, He invites us into a relationship with Him. We call His invitation 'grace,' because we can't do anything to deserve it. Obedience is how we accept His invitation. God lives with those who obey His Word. (John 14:23-24) When we study God's Word we have a choice: **We choose to obey Him or we choose to disobey Him** (read this phrase again!). It is really that simple. I see this third column as my response to God's invitation.

D. Share

As you finish this study, you have two responsibilities.

- First, you need to meet with a believer and share what you learned. You need to tell them your '**I Will**' statements. They hold you accountable and they figure out ways to help you obey God's Word.
- Second, you look for opportunities to share what God said to you with unbelievers. You try to work the phrase, "**God taught me something today**", or something similar, into your conversation and you wait for their response. (This is a key phrase to use in witnessing)

This creates an opportunity for conversation. If people are interested, they ask for **more information**. If it isn't the right time for them, they ignore you and you don't continue to share. But if they do ask, you share what God taught you. And you stop. If they are interested, and if it is the right time, they will ask more questions. (Make your answer personal not technical) Their questions help you understand where they are

in their spiritual journey. You don't want to move faster than the Holy Spirit wants you to, else you risk killing their spiritual interest by overloading them. (*Give only short practical answers.*)

E. Summary

To summarize the process:

Write the passage word-for-word in column 1.

Write the passage in your own words in column 2.

List the actions you must take to obey this passage in column 3.

Share what you learned with other believers for accountability.

Create discussion opportunities with not-yet-believers. Share with people who are interested.

!!! Do the 3 column activity sheet here and NOW, before going on to the next section!!! possibly use Isa. 49:1-7; or Isa 35:1-6.

III. GROUP DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY DYNAMICS

A. Prayer

When you meet with a group for **Discovery Bible Study**, (A) go around the room and have everyone share one thing they are thankful for. Each time the leader needs to bring God into it. You do this by having a prayer of thanks for *each* item. (B) Next ask for one thing that is stressing them out. Then bring God into it again by having a prayer for each need. Eventually, point out to the group that prayer in its simplest form is telling God the things they are thankful for and talking with Him about what stresses us out. (C) Transition this interaction from a group share time to an open, interactive prayer time. In this form of prayers everyone participates. It is very interactive and gets the quietest people involved in group prayer. (*Your prayers should be one minute or less so the others can imitate it.*)

B. The focus on community

Our focus is to be on others – what are the needs of the people in your community? At each DB meeting solicit comments from group members as to how they helped someone. Then proceed to ask about new possibilities. As imitators of Christ, we need to develop servant's hearts. Weekly, regularly have the group identify people in need and commit to meeting those needs. A wise man will cultivate a servant's spirit, for that particular attribute attracts people like no other. As believers, each individual in your group needs to Cultivate the Servant's Spirit. God's purpose in our lives is to make others successful. "My life doesn't belong to me; it belongs to others. So I will give it to others." Make helping others a priority of your Discovery Bible Meeting!

C. The Holy Spirit

After discussing the 'Community Needs', ask the group to share ***what spiritual things happened in their life.*** Did God speak to them while reading their Bible? Asking this question just prior to the Bible study 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 openings 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.

D. Scripture

After everyone has a chance to share comes Scripture reading. (In addition to the Scripture reference referring to page numbers can be very helpful)

- a) Have someone read Scripture out loud
 - Everyone follows along reading in their own Bible.
- b) When they are done, have someone else read the same passage out loud again.
 - This time all people close their Bibles and have everyone *listen* to the reading.
- c) When they are done, ask for one or more volunteers to retell the passage in their own words.
- d) When they finish, ask the group to fill in any points they feel were left out. ((Any individual may challenge any other individual in the group about an incorrect statement or tangent. The challenge to correct an error is one simple question, "Where does it say what you are saying in this passage of scripture?"))

This 4-fold method is called the "self-correcting" process. This process keeps scripture understanding pure. It eliminates tangents. Through such a self-correcting method the group avoids heretical tendencies.

!!! Do this 4-fold reading activity here and NOW, before going further with this lesson! !!! possibly use Matt 9:14-17; or John 9:1-11?

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 listen and 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. Reading the passage several times helps MEN to grasp the authority of God's Word. It emphasizes the priesthood of all believers (1Peter 2:9). Reading God's Word several times diminishes the importance of the group leader- the 'priest' of the group - and lifts up God's Word as the primary source of information. Not what man says, but what God says. Instead of going home talking about the good teacher, they go home thinking about what God said. So the authority of the group leader diminishes, but the authority of the Word of God goes up.

This may be somewhat humbling for the leader but it is a lifting up of Almighty God.

E. Discovery Study

After your group retells the Scripture, you can study the passage. Your discussion must be question driven. Questions facilitate the discovery process. Questions allow your group to wrestle with Scripture and grow spiritually. To enhance discussion a good rule to follow is for the group leader to ***talk less than all others*** in the group.

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?

*(The leader does not **teach** — through questions attendees **discover**)*

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 discovery leader, need to work hard to limit the discussion of extra-Biblical or other Biblical materials. Do your best to keep the discussion focused on the Scripture which is before you now, that is the focus of this present study. Do not use other Bible passages. At each session use only the one Bible passage that is before you!

F. Commitment

Knowledge of God's Word must translate into **obedience** or it is wasted.

- a) This next step begins with a statement and a question: "Since 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.

- b) After everyone shares how they are going to obey Scripture, have these unbelievers identify someone who needs to hear what God said to the group. Encourage these unbelievers to share what they learned with that person. (*For witnessing done by unbelievers see Mat. 4:24, Mat. 9:31, Mat.14:35, Mark 1:28 and Acts 19:10*)
- c) 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. (Ask yourself — how did you feel inside when you helped someone?)

The purpose of this commitment time is creating workers — not being passive members.

To do this the leader needs a total different doctrinal perspective.

Finally, close in prayer.

G. Summary

To summarize group ***Discovery Bible Study***:

Share one thing you are thankful for — and follow with prayer of praise & thanks.

Next share one thing that is stressing you out — and follow up with a group prayer process.

Ask the group about possibilities they had to meet some needs in the community.

Ask the group to share what God told them through His Word since the last meeting.

Ask them to share how they were obedient to the previous week's Scripture.

Read Scripture out loud while people follow along in their Bibles.

Have someone else read the same passage out loud while the group listens.

Have someone in the group retell the passage in their own words.

Then allow the group to add to the retelling, if necessary.

Use discovery questions to encourage the group to engage the passage.

Challenge the group to obey God's Word.

Have each person share what they are going to do to obey the passage over the next week.

Have the group members identify people they will share the passage with during the next week.

Have the group identify people in need and commit to meeting those needs.

CLOSE WITH A PRAYER OF BLESSING – BE SPECIFIC.

IV. CORE VALUES OF THE DISCOVERY BIBLE MEETING

Mental Memory Picture: Read, obey, and share

Methods & Values — for meetings with Persons of Peace — Seekers

Core Value One — The Authority of God's Word

The best approach for a Discovery Group is an *inductive* approach to scripture. An inductive approach is objective and impartial. It demands that we first examine the particulars of the Scriptures and then make conclusions based on those particulars. It begins with the plain text of scripture, and encourages participants to read the passages and draw conclusions directly from what the text itself says. Inductive reasoning, by its very nature, is very open-ended and exploratory. It uses questions asked by a discovery leader in order to elicit thought and learning. The inductive Bible study *is a highly effective learning method, especially in the self-correcting Discovery group process.* Ask your group what “self-correcting” means – see III-C above. Discovery group leaders using the inductive study group are trained to ask questions, **not provide answers**. People are trained to study the scriptures. They are taught to ask questions which help them understand what is going on, what is being said, and how that relates to the rest of the passage. Inductive Bible study on the basic level is simply careful instruction in the meaning of the Biblical text. It produces students of Scripture rather than students of doctrine.

Core Value Two — Sharing

The Discovery Bible Study (DBS) with MEN uses the oral variant of the 3-column approach. This is a new method of evangelism. This method includes using unbelievers to share the gospel. The Core element is for the MEN to actually **read** and **interact/obey** with Scripture themselves. Obeying means using, or sharing and applying what was read. Other methods of evangelism use a Bible study only to reveal Christ to non-Christians, and then seek to teach them. **The DBS is designed so that each individual takes an active part in passing the Gospel on to others.** Each DBS is very discussion-oriented (all members participate). It is important for the MEN of peace to learn to talk about spiritual things. (We noted unbelievers at Jesus' time and around Paul in Turkey sharing about Christ.)

C. Core Value Three — Simplicity

1) Observation of the scripture (what does it say?)
2) Interpretation of the scripture (what does it mean?)
3) Application of the scripture (what will I do in response?)

The purpose of **Discovery** Bible Study is **not** to build doctrine. Rather, it is textual in nature, demanding careful examination of the Biblical texts in order to know what they mean and how we should **apply** them to our lives. *The primary purpose of the discovery approach is to lead students into a knowledge and understanding of scripture that moves them towards practical application* (2 Timothy 3:15-17) (**A practical CHANGE**). The ultimate goal of a faithful Bible discovery group leader should be to raise his students up to his level of understanding and obedience, so that they may eventually instruct and correct him (Ephesians 4:11-16).

D. Core Value Four — Three Rules

A simple set of rules have helped us to keep the Discovery groups faithful to the discovery process. These 3 rules guide the group discussion.

Rules for a Discovery Group	
1)	The passage preaches, not any person. Stick with the passage of scripture in front of the group — no “hyperlinking” to other passages!
2)	No individual or leader may impose his or her “insight” on others — stick with the plain and simplest meaning of the passage in front of the group.
3)	Any individual may challenge any other individual in the group with one simple question, “ <i>Where does it say what you are saying in this passage of scripture?</i> ”

E. Core Value Five — Scripture Only

It is vital that the group leader has a deep understanding of the inductive process.

The lesson cannot be scripture-based — ***it must be scripture-only.***

(not a lesson or explanation about a Bible verse – but the verse explaining itself)

The meaning must flow from the simplest interpretation of the passages. Application is often personal, but the interpretation should be consistent. Properly leading a Discovery group is something that is only arrived at through careful research, practical testing, intensive review and a dynamic process of continued self-correction. Ask your group: “What does it mean “*Bible only*?”

(And yes, people with a Western church background have by far the most difficulty in managing this process!)

F. Core Value Six — The Meeting Process

Read, obey, and share

Introduce yourself with short testimony & introduce each other to newcomers = Focus on people

Method & Value

#	<i>The Meeting looks like this:</i>	<i>Core Values that are learned — instilled in the group</i>
I 1	Open by introducing yourself.: Express your gratitude to the host for inviting you. Express appreciation to each one present for coming — Share names — Share gift — food — be generous	Focus on People
2	What good things have happened to you this week?	Thanksgiving and Praise
3	What difficulties have you experienced, or needs do you have?	Intercessory Prayer
4	What are the needs of the people in your community? (one Person/individual Ministry)	Ministry — Becoming a contributor
5	Is there a way that we as a group can help one another meet these needs?	Ministry — caring for others
6	What did we talk about last week?	Accountability in scripture
7	With whom did you share what we studied last week?	Accountability in Evangelism
8	How did you apply this week what we studied last week?	Accountability in Obedience
II 9	Let's read several times / listen this week's scripture passage.	Bible Study — Scripture is Primary (not man or tradition)
10	How do we say this in our own words? Let's summarize it as (individuals and as) a group.	Understanding of God's Word (and preparing for Evangelism)
11	If we misstated anything or included something from outside the text, let's correct that together. We ask one another where that came from in this passage.	Self-correcting with God's Word - the Authority

12	Discuss passage: Use discovery questions to encourage group to engage in passage. ((What did you like about this passage? Did anything bother you? Why? What do you learn in this passage about God? Man? Life. What does this passage tell us about <u>living to please</u> God?))	Knowing God and <u>his Desires</u>
13	How can you / will you apply this to your life? If we believe this passage is from God, how must we change? How will we be obedient to what we've learned today? We don't read the Bible for knowledge only. Let's be specific, so that we can follow through, and hold one another accountable. Self-correcting(Discovery/Scripture/Obedience/Priesthood of Believers) Scripture only.	Obedience and Accountability Practically – “how” and “when”
14	With whom will you share what you've learned this week?	Evangelism (and Accountability)
15	Have <u>the group</u> identify people in need and <u>commit</u> to meeting those needs. (!write activities down or remember this until next week!)	Outreach — touching people's lives — Meeting needs — Helping others to be successful
16	Departing prayer of blessing for each individual	Giving a gift from God

You can see how, in time, the DBS becomes a time for Christians to meet together in order to praise God, encourage one another, study God's word, minister to one another and their community, prepare for evangelism, hold one another accountable, etc.

G. Core Value Seven — Obedient Followers

It is powerful to have God involved in their life.

The Discovery process is a powerful method for leading people to become ***obedient followers of Christ***.

Followers — doers — obedient — not listeners only

But it only works with an inductive approach to scripture. Discovery group leaders must stay engaged through a dynamic process of testing and self-correction. Coaches and training personnel must ensure that the approach to scripture remains inductive. When every person in the process becomes a guardian of the inductive process, it never leads to heresy, but rather releases the life-transforming power of the gospel.

H. Core Value Eight — Life Transformation

The Leader's Assignment: (Everyone in the group must answer the last 3 questions 13, 14, 15 from the chart before they leave.) (Knowledge of God's Word must translate into obedience or it is wasted. Steps 12 & 13 begin with a statement and a question: “Since we believe God's Word is true, what must we change in our lives to obey God?” If they already obey this Scripture, have them share how they obey it. In this case you might encourage them with a follow up question: “You believe God knows what is best for you, 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.

((Trainer of Leaders: have your group read this section at least twice! And discuss.) (If “New Life” group leaders do not hold the attending MEN accountable they will quit. Without some action, some participation, the purpose is lost and MEN loose interest.))

V. USING THE THREE COLUMN BIBLE STUDY FOR SERMON PREPARATION

Personally using the Three Column Bible Study for sermon preparation has proven a terrific help to many of our deacons and preachers. Using the 3 column method of preparation provides focus and purpose for your message. These 3 columns move a person from theory to actuality. It brings the ancient Word spoken by God to a vibrant vital practical application for today's situations. (*After this study add illustrations, show a physical object, and share personal stories with your message.*)

A good way to begin is for church leadership to do this as a group together for 30 minutes following a regular service like a prayer meeting. We suggest to do this several weeks and discuss the results as a group (*see method in next section*). Once this vibrant method has been learned, preachers can do it privately home. Such sermon preparation should take place early in the week. This provides for spiritual guidance and addition of illustrations. In many of our churches pastors weekly hold preachers accountable to make vibrant purposeful presentations.

VI. A GROUP DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY USING THE 3 COLUMNS

Have each group member work through the three columns on their own. After a pre-determined period of time, have group members come together and share what they learned. This is a great way to teach the Inductive Bible Study process. This adaptation also works great in seminar settings where you distribute several different passages on a specific topic to group members. Each person reads a different passage and together the group determines what the Bible says about the topic and what they need to do to be obedient.

VIII. DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY IN ORAL CULTURES

In oral cultures the inductive process is similar to the group process outlined above. Since they can't read, you need to use an audio Bible like those provided by "***Faith Comes by Hearing***" (www.fcbh.org) or you need to have someone who can actually read the passage through for the group. Allowing the group to retell the passage is even more important in oral settings because repetition helps them remember the passage.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!