



PRAXEIS

STARTING A DISCOVERY GROUP

A guide for making disciples through
Discovery Groups

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WHAT IS A DISCOVERY GROUP?

A Discovery Group is a small group of people who get together to explore the Bible and faith. The people in a Discovery Group might have little or no background in Christianity, and yet because of their openness and hunger, can hear from God through the Bible.

The group may be a family or friendship group, where one person (maybe a person of peace) has invited others along.

When a Discovery Group gathers, they will dig into the Bible through a Discovery Bible Study. This is a simple, self-discovery focused way to explore what it means to be a disciple.

The core ideas of a Discovery Bible Study



Simple
and reproducible
(and yet deep and
profound)



Expert free.
Everybody can
lead and share



Discover and hear
God through the
Scriptures



Prepares for
multiplication
from the
beginning



Best done with
a group of
people



You can run
one, no matter
where or who
you are



RUNNING A DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

When running a Discovery Bible Study (DBS), it's important to remember this time is not about preaching or teaching - it is simply about people discovering God through his Word. This means there is no one leader but a space where everyone can share from the very beginning.

We believe that to hear God, all we need is the Bible and the Holy Spirit. It is then the job of everyone in the group to respond and obey to what they hear.

Before you begin, it is a good idea to find a 'Scripture List' that is suitable for your group (we've included one at the back of this guide).

A Scripture List is a list of Bible passages that the group can explore over a period of time. These give insight into who God is and what he calls us to do.

Once you have your Scripture List or a chosen Bible passage, the Discovery Bible Study is an easy process you, or anyone in the group, can run. In fact, it is as simple as A B C.



DBS MAP

A

ASK

- What are you thankful for this week?
- What has been hard, bad or challenging?
- How can we help others?
- Have you obeyed what God told you last week? Have we shared? How did it go?

B

Bible

- Choose a passage
- Read the passage out loud
- Read the passage again
- Retell the story
- Ask these questions
 - What does this story show us about God?
 - What does this story show us about people?

C

Commit

- So what will you do in response to what we've just read?
- Who will you share this with?





ASK

Discovery Bible Studies always start with the same questions. Whoever is leading can ask the entire group:

- **What are you thankful for this week?**
Encourage people to be specific. This helps people learn how to praise and thank God.
- **What has been hard, bad or challenging this week?**
The group can learn what is going on in people's lives and what they are experiencing.
- **How can we help others?**
This moves the group into action - to help one another and the community.
- **Have you obeyed what God told you/us last week? Have we shared - how did it go?**
After your first Discovery Bible Study, reflect on people's commitments from the previous meeting.

Finish this time by praying. Pray simply and avoid religious jargon. Invite anyone who would like to pray to join in. It's important to teach people how to pray, with others and out loud.

As you pray for each other's needs, it allows God space to breakthrough and work in people's lives.

A

BIBLE

After you've spent time sharing and praying, it's time to dig into the Bible.

From the very beginning of the DBS, our aim is to have a space for people to read the Bible in a way they can discover God's truth for themselves. This means learning to understand the Bible through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, not relying on a teacher, pastor or facilitator.

Jesus used this idea of self-discovery in a lot of his own teaching. Rather than mapping everything out for his disciples, he asked them questions like, 'Who do men say that I am?' and 'Who do you say that I am?'. This type of learning helps ideas and experiences to become personal (not just head knowledge).

This might sound difficult, but it's not. It is actually freeing as the teaching is not reliant on you - but rather God doing the work in people's lives.

- **Choose a passage** (maybe from your Scripture List).
Make sure the passage is not too long or complicated. Stories are always great to dig into.
- **Read the passage out loud**
Ask someone to read the passage out loud. If the group is bi-lingual, read it first in their heart language. If there are members in the group who can't read, find a recording and listen to the passage together.





BIBLE

- **Read the passage again**

Ask a different person to read the passage again, this helps the group to 'mull' over the story. You could use a different version of the Bible or for people who are bi-lingual listen again in a different language. You can re-read the passage as many times as the group likes or needs.

- **Retell the story as a group**

Ask the group to retell the story without looking at the Bible passage. One person might start and others can jump in to help out. By doing this, the story is painted by the group, cementing it in their minds.

Be careful not to preach, apply the teaching or get distracted. We want to make sure we focus just on the passage and not the thoughts of others about the passage.

- **Ask these questions** to discover what is important or jumps out from this story:

- What does this story show us about God?
- What does this story show us about people?

The key to the BIBLE part of the DBS is not for any one person to jump in and teach. Let the group think and discuss what they see in scripture. Don't be afraid of the awkward silence - if the group wants you to explain, simply ask them, 'What do you think?'

If the group begins to veer off course, bring it back to the scripture by asking, 'Where did you see that in the scripture?'

COMMIT

Jesus described making disciples as, '... teaching people to obey everything I have commanded you'. But often in our culture, discipleship has become focussed on building knowledge, instead of action and obedience.

It is in obedience that transformation happens.

Obedience or responding to what we learn is the focus of every DBS. The challenge is always to transfer what we read and hear into goals and actions that we can live out.

After reading and discussing the Bible passage, ask the group:

- **So what will you do in response to what we've just read?**

People might say something like 'I need to respect people more' or 'I need to be thankful', or it may be something really specific. Whatever it is, it needs to be listened to and respected.

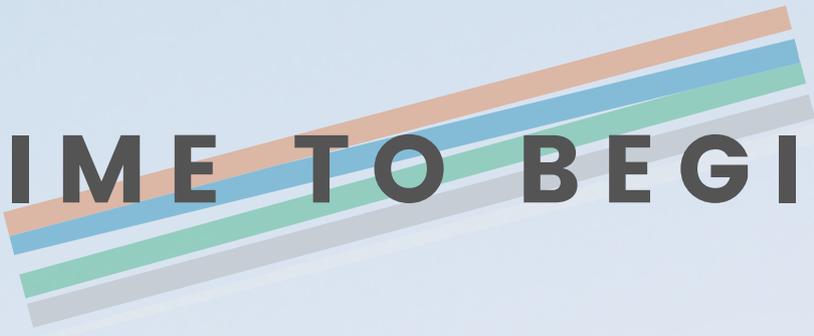
Finally ask:

- **Who will you share this with this week?**

Sharing with others is part of 'committing to obey'. In this way, sharing and multiplication is part of discipleship from the very beginning - even before a person might consider themselves a follower of Jesus. This is key to seeing a movement spread through the people's relationships.

C





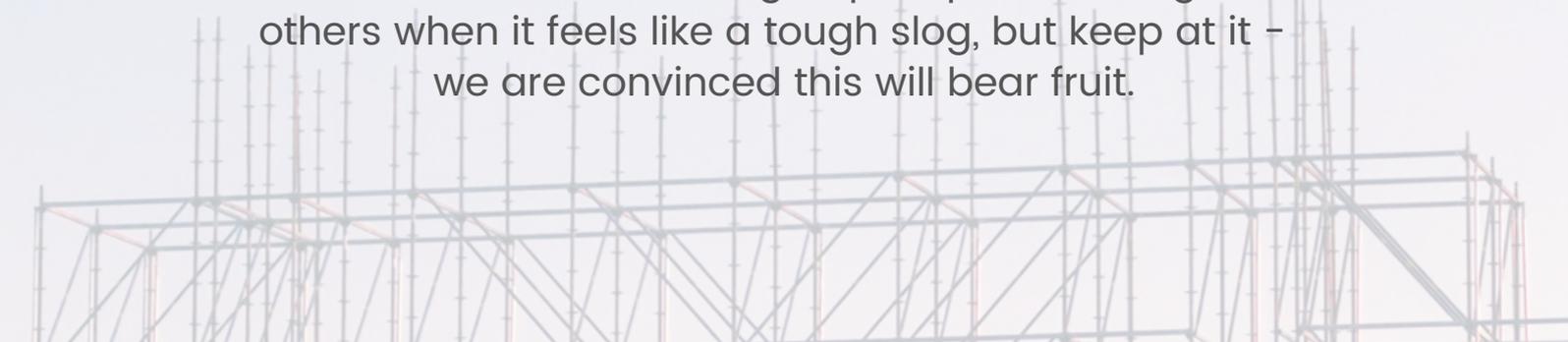
TIME TO BEGIN

The Discovery Group and Bible Study is a simple and powerful tool. While it is not the only way we can make disciples, it is the most effective thing we have found, appropriate for a whole range of people, contexts and cultures.

A Discovery Group holds all the essentials of church. As the group comes to faith and are baptised, they don't need to change anything. They simply continue to engage in the process as they have been doing all along.

Thousands of churches, all over the world, have been planted through Discovery Groups and Bible Studies. It's worth giving DBS a go a few times and not give up too quickly.

There will be times when the group responds and grows and others when it feels like a tough slog, but keep at it - we are convinced this will bear fruit.



What next?

- Start praying
- Invite people who are open and hungry to be part of a Discovery Group
- Check out our other resources
Following Jesus: Simple steps to change the world
- Contact us if you would like coaching around Discovery Groups.

SCRIPTURE LIST

Below is a list of scriptures you can use with your group as you do a Discovery Bible Study. While there are many passages in the Bible you can focus on, these are a good place to start.

These passages will help you and your group start the discovery process (they don't have to be studied in any order). From these scriptures, you and your group can begin a discipleship pathway to discover God's plan for your lives.

John 2: 1-11 - Jesus turns water into wine

Psalms 139: 1-18

Luke 10: 25-37 - The good samaritan

Mark 2:1-12 or Luke 5:17-26 - Paralyse man healed

John 4:1-42 - The Samaritan woman

Luke 5:29-32 - Levi & his party

Luke 15:11-32 - The prodigal son

John 8:2-11 - The adulterous woman

Luke 7: 36-50 - Forgiven much

Matthew 25:14-30 - Parable of the talents

Matthew 6:26-34 - Do not worry

Mark 4:1-20 - Parable of the Sower





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