

# LEADING BIBLE DISCOVERY

A Guide for Small Group Bible Study Leaders







This manual is an updated and combined version of three earlier manuals written to help those involved in the Global Coffee Break Bible Study ministry. We thank Diane Averill and Betty Wieland for their contributions to prior revisions.

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# INTRODUCTION





Maria (*not her real name*) called me on my cell phone as I was leaving to run errands. She was a member of my Global Coffee Break small group but rarely called me. I heard the distress in her voice. She told me that her husband, Ken, had packed up and left. “I don’t know where he is,” she told me. “He left a note and a list of debts he can’t pay. He says he won’t be back.” I told her I would be right over.

As I drove to Maria’s house, I pondered the ten-plus years she had been in my small group. Ten-plus years of her angry protests about how unfair God was and how he was cold, hard, and impersonal. Ten-plus years of simply loving her, listening to her, and talking about the Bible around my kitchen table with three other friends. Sometimes she shut down in stony silence until the discussion was over. Sometimes I wanted to give up on her. But a nudging in my spirit kept me staying the course. God was not letting me off the hook.

Maria met me at the door, teary-eyed but calm. “I’m not mad at God for this,” she told me. “God didn’t do this. Ken did.” I was astounded. Who was this new woman, and what had she done with Maria? What happened to all her anger about the unfairness of life? Where was her anger at God? Was this change real?

The short answer is yes; the change was real. Picking up the broken pieces of her life was hard, but Maria had a newfound strength, one that came from God’s stubborn love for her, a love that never let her go, a love that broke down the wall she had set up to keep him away. Her week-after-week exposure to the truths of the Bible and the power of God’s love, as we sat around my kitchen table and talked, had seeped into her soul. I was seeing the proof of God’s promise in Isaiah 55 that his Word does not return to him empty but accomplishes his purposes.

Some months later, as she moved toward a place of healing, Maria told me she wanted to share her story. I will admit I was a little leery. “What do you want to tell them?” I asked her.

“I want to tell people about God,” she said, “and about how he—and you—never gave up on me.”

Maria’s story is true. It is the story of the power of love, of God’s Word, and of the Bible discovery method used in Global Coffee Break. We want to tell you more about it, hoping it may encourage you to reach the Marias in your life. And although this manual was originally written for leaders of Global Coffee Break, a small group program that has hundreds of Maria stories, it contains information that applies to many other small-group Bible discovery formats as well. We hope it can be a resource and encouragement to those who, like Global Coffee Break leaders, have a vision and calling to share the story of Jesus’ love through a Bible discovery group.

 *What excites you about Maria’s story?*

## Global Coffee Break and Bible Discovery

Maybe you have never heard of Global Coffee Break (GCB) small groups and the Bible discovery method that is changing lives around the world. In 1970, members of a Christian Reformed church in a Chicago suburb started praying about how to reach out to their community. Since very few preschool options were available in their area, they believed God

was leading them to fill that gap. They began a weekly program, Story Hour, for preschoolers. Through crafts, songs, and Bible stories, young children were introduced to Jesus and the story of the Bible. Soon leaders realized that the kids' parents were also a captive audience. Again they felt God's nudge in answer to their prayers. They responded by inviting the parents to learn about the same Bible their children were discovering.

And Coffee Break (now Global Coffee Break) was born. The name was chosen in order to convey an informal, casual setting for discovering what the Bible was about. From the beginning, GCB's goal was to reach people who had never studied the Bible before. Discover Your Bible (DYB) materials were written specifically for that purpose. In a low-key, small-group setting, many women came to know the God of the Bible for the very first time. They were encouraged to ask questions about what they were reading and to share their observations and insights. With the gentle, loving guidance of a caring leader, they discovered for themselves the truths of God's Word. They not only *learned about* God's love; they *experienced* it through a community that cared for one another and prayed for each other as they shared their lives together. As they were encouraged in their first steps of faith, they began a journey that led them to a vibrant relationship with Christ. Some eventually became leaders and even directors of GCB programs.

Eventually the enthusiasm for GCB led to the development of a men's program. Materials for preschool children (*Little Lambs*) were also developed. These Bible study materials are used by men and women in a variety of settings today: cafes and college dorms, libraries and living rooms, and of course churches, the setting in which this Bible discovery ministry began. Time frames vary, organizational details differ, and group sizes and numbers fluctuate, but the low-key, informal discovery process of learning about the Bible stays the same.

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*What outreach do you or your faith community do?  
What similar values do you see?*

### ***The Method***

The Bible discovery method has been the essential part of what makes GCB successful in reaching people for Christ. It is a way of asking questions about a Bible passage that acknowledges the different levels of spiritual maturity group members have and values the insights each person contributes to the discussion. The study guide questions give shape to the group conversation, like a "skeleton." Leaders "flesh out" that skeleton with follow-up questions of their own. They are not teachers but facilitators of the conversation. Leaders use questions to guide the group to discover what the biblical authors have in mind in their writing.

They also use questions to discover what God is revealing to those in the group—not only about the Bible, but also about their own lives. Although the leader guides provide additional background information, they are not so much an "answer book" as an aid to navigating the flow of the discussion and the text.

Part of that effective navigation is setting a comfortable pace—not too fast or slow and not too deep or shallow. As in any comfortable conversation, the goal is not to exhaust every possibility of a Bible passage, but to capture the “aha” discoveries and the exhilaration of learning a new concept or gaining a new insight. Participants should gain a sense of “tasting” God’s Word and hungering for more. Individuals should feel so comfortable and accepted in the group that they are free to ask any questions without fearing judgment or feeling stupid. They should be free to disagree and still be respected and included, wherever they are on their spiritual journey. You will learn more about creating this environment in later chapters.

### ***Prayer Is Foundational***

Foundational to the Bible discovery process is a deep commitment to prayer. Connecting to the heart of God is essential for discerning his leading and experiencing the freedom of trusting him to guide the conversational setting of Bible discovery. Leaders need to *be*, and to be *supported by*, God-dependent pray-ers. Being in communion with God is key to experiencing God’s blessing. Prayers for group members, prayers for people who do not know Christ, prayers for the Holy Spirit’s wisdom, prayers for ways to be more outreaching—the list is endless. Without prayer, we dare not proceed.

As prayer connects leaders with God’s heart, leaders need to connect with those in their small groups. GCB is all about relationships. It is not a support group, but it should be a supportive environment where people are accepted, loved, and prayed for. It is the place they experience the truth of the good news of God’s love and grace.

Where God’s Word is honored, he blesses. GCB has expanded from one small group in one local church to a global mission movement. It includes over 100,000 Global Coffee Break groups in twenty countries, including Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Korea. And Global Coffee Break continues to expand and grow.



*Underline something that impressed you. Put a question mark by something that makes you wonder, or that you have a question about.*

### ***Discovery by Means of Questions***

As you read this manual, we pray that you will be aided in the small group Bible study ministry you are currently leading or hope to lead in the future. This book is arranged in terms of questions; each chapter begins with a question and has questions throughout to best help you engage. Like our DYB materials, we know questions are a powerful tool to learn and explore! You can read the entire booklet or only the chapters that will be helpful to you at a particular time. The chapters address the following questions:

- What is the Bible discovery method?
- What part does prayer play in a Bible discovery ministry?
- What are good discovery questions, and how are they asked?
- What do I need to know to become an effective Bible discovery leader?
- How can a Bible discussion be used as an outreach?
- What are the best materials to use?
- How do we choose a study?

- How can I create an environment for optimal growth?
- In what ways can leaders be developed?
- What's next for you?



*What questions do you have? What do you want to learn?  
We hope it is answered in this booklet; if not, we'd be glad to answer!  
Feel free to reach out to us at [info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org](mailto:info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org)*

# 7

## WHAT IS THE BIBLE DISCOVERY METHOD?





## A Definition



*Think about the various ways you have learned something. What elements helped you learn and apply it eagerly?*

As Maria's story illustrated in the introduction, God is using the Bible discovery method to transform lives and to reach people with his love. This method provides a way of developing a conversation about the Bible by asking questions. In a small group setting, a Bible discovery leader uses a set of study guide questions as a "skeleton" to shape the discussion. Together the group explores the details of a passage and discovers its main ideas and basic truths by answering simple who, what, when, where, why, and how questions. In this way the Bible is taken in manageable sections, and each passage is discussed in its context.

This method acknowledges people's different levels of spiritual maturity and values the insights each person contributes to the discussion. Anybody anywhere in the world can use this method, whether they know a little or a lot about the Bible. Most answers can be found in the Bible passage itself. Even the most familiar Bible stories can be explored with fresh eyes and an open and inquiring mind. People who know the Bible well are challenged to set aside their preconceived ideas and wrestle with the Bible passage before checking any other resources. Newcomers to the Bible do the same.



*"Hey, honey. Welcome home! How did it go?" Anthony's wife, Anne, welcomed him from the kitchen. He was returning from his first time at a new Bible study group. She knew he had been hesitant to attend. He already knew the basics of Christianity, so why go? He had grown up in church, although he hadn't stepped into a church since high school. But his neighbor, Mark, had invited him. As he was trying to learn how to parent his one-year-old son, he thought he might check out the religious thing again.*

*Anthony reflected, "It was good. I was surprised."*

*"Surprised?" Anne said. "In what way?"*


*"The group was friendly, and welcoming. We opened up with just a friendly way to get to know each other. But the leader didn't . . . didn't, you know, just teach and preach and tell me what I should do."*

*"What did they do then? Was it not a Bible study?"*

*"Oh, yes, it was a Bible study. We focused on the Bible—although it's funny, we certainly talked about our lives plenty too. When we read the passage from Exodus, I wondered, what in the world does this have to do with me? What's going on here? I pulled out the study guide they gave me and was ready to sketch plans for our new garden in the corner. But the leader just asked questions, and wow, we really got into it."*

*Anne put the plate she was drying down. "We?"*

*"Yeah, uh, me too. Since some of the questions were just based on the passage, I could answer some of the questions. And I found out that Exodus really does have something to say to us, to me."*

-  *What factors helped make this a pleasant "surprise" for Anthony?  
With which character in the story do you most identify with?  
What was that like for you?*

## Questions that Shape the Bible Discovery Process

The study materials contain four types of questions. *Warm-up* questions are casual conversation starters. Anyone can answer these questions because they are based on life experiences and personal preferences. Three additional kinds of questions are based on the Bible passage itself. *Fact* questions are basic, asking, "What does the text say?" They observe the culture and setting in which the Bible was written. *Interpretation* questions, also called "thinking questions," dig deeper to get at "What does it mean?" These questions too are answered in the context of Bible times. *Application* questions can be personal to individuals as they ponder, "How do I respond?" They can also apply to the entire group (and the wider community of believers), challenging group members to ponder together, "How might God be calling us to live more faithfully?" These questions are answered in the light of experience, the surrounding culture, and what each person has internalized from the discovery process. (You can read more on questions in Chapter 3.)

-  *What are the unique aspects of the Bible discovery method?  
Which of these appeal to you?*

Anybody anywhere in the world can use this method, whether they know a little or a lot about the Bible.

## The Leader's Role in Bible Discovery

The leaders do not teach, chase tangents, or compare the merits of various opinions; they guide the conversation with questions. The Bible and the Holy Spirit are the true teachers. The Word of God is central to the Bible discovery process. Those in the small group not only read the Bible, but it also reads them, while the Holy Spirit teaches them what he wants them to know.

This method does more than collect information. It identifies recurring themes, notices relational complexities, listens to others' insights, and "hears" what God is revealing to each person. Discovery includes thinking, feeling, and experiencing the Bible—"putting on the shoes" of the people in the story.

The leaders' job is to "flesh out" the study guide questions with follow-up questions based on what they hear in the conversation, keeping one ear on the group members and one tuned to the Holy Spirit, praying diligently to hear his voice in guiding the group. People's

backgrounds, life experiences, and levels of spiritual understanding are different, so their discoveries and questions will differ too. Attentive leaders tailor their questions to the needs of their group members by:

- **clarifying the discussion**—“Does everyone know who we are talking about here?”
- **probing responses**—“What do you mean by that?”
- **drawing out insights**—“What else can you tell us about that?”
- **giving affirmation**—“That’s an excellent observation.”
- **“hearing” the desires of people’s hearts**—“It sounds like you’re drawn to know/trust/believe what Jesus is talking about.”
- **guiding them to discover the God who loves them**—“How is God reaching out to his people here?”

Leaders set a comfortable pace for the group and are sensitive to time constraints and the particular needs and interests of the group. Conversations can spill over into individual meetings or the following session—your time together cannot possibly exhaust all the wisdom and insight of the passage. Leaders must carefully discern the right pace through listening to the group and the Spirit in prayer. (You can find more on prayer in Chapter 2.) When you set a good pace, you leave room for participants to ask questions and engage the passage, learning from one another and the Word. (You can find more on leadership in Chapter 5.)



*What skills might be needed to lead Bible discovery well?  
What strengths do you bring? Which might you need to grow in?*

## Benefits of the Discovery Method

The discovery process works well because, like good conversation, it involves an easy give-and-take, with people both contributing to the discussion and listening to what others have to say. This is a method for today’s skeptics. People own what they discover themselves, whether it is in a discovery group or on the Internet.


They do not want someone else to tell them what to believe. The more people get involved in asking questions and finding answers, the more they enjoy and benefit from the conversation.

## Pitfalls and Possibilities in the Discovery Process

For many seasoned Bible study participants, this approach will be new. Those who have been taught the Bible by others will be tempted to learn the Scripture using others’ ideas. They may want their answers to be “right,” as if the study were a spiritual competition. But it is not. Yes, commentaries and study Bibles can be helpful and provide insight. Biblical scholars know the original languages and the customs of the Bible. However, when we depend on the discoveries of others, we miss the thrill of hearing God speak to us through his Word.

Sometimes we forget that the Bible was written for ordinary people with ordinary lives, not just Bible scholars. The Protestant Reformation affirmed that the Bible is for everyone. Not only clergy can understand and rightly interpret the Bible, but, by the power of the Holy Spirit, every believer can understand the main message of God's Word.

The discovery method requires time and effort. Learning to ask questions about the text is a discipline that most people will not forget. It will change their understanding of the Bible. It enables group members to feed themselves with God's Word for a lifetime.


 *How has your personal discovery, or personal feeding yourself from the Word, shaped you? Spend a moment and thank God for how he has worked in your life.*


## The Discovery Method Changes People's Lives

People long for authentic relationships and meaning in their lives. Bible discovery groups provide that. In a relaxed setting, with no pressure for a personal response, people talk about the Bible together. Often doubters are turned into Christ followers simply by coming into contact with the Word of God. It is life-changing.

As people dig into God's Word together, they discover how relevant it is to their needs and problems. They meet people who care about them. They understand grace because they experience it and see it in the lives of others. They realize that even mature believers need God's grace daily. Everyone in the group, including the leader, is called to live in humility and to "become an imitator of Christ" personally as they grow in their faith. (You can find more on outreach in Chapter 4.)

The inspired Word of God has power. Consistent, sustained contact with it changes those who discover its power. Learning together allows people to see things they might not see on their own. Those who struggle to answer hard questions are bound together as they learn from one another. They practice humility, and Bible discovery becomes more than just an intellectual exercise. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that "the Word of God is alive and active." The discovery method confirms just how true that is.

 *How might this method open up the Scriptures to people who are new to the Bible? Are there other benefits you might list? What might be the benefits in your specific context?*

 *What might be one thing that God is laying on your heart, or stirring in your imagination as a result of this? Jot it down. Either  
(1) What might be a next step God is calling you to? Or  
(2) When will you spend time in prayer asking God about this?*

## 2

WHAT PART DOES PRAYER PLAY  
IN BIBLE DISCOVERY MINISTRY?





*When has God powerfully answered a prayer in your life?  
Spend a moment and appreciate him for hearing, responding, and moving!*



*“How many new members would you like to see this year?” asked a leader in the Global Coffee Break coaching cluster. Marcia, a GCB group leader, hesitated a bit. “Five,” she said. “No, I feel led to pray for ten!”*

*Marcia brainstormed a list of ideas on how their Global Coffee Break might invite more people, then settled on a few next steps. She asked the Global Coffee Break leadership team and church council members to pray for ten new people. They created a very nice business card and invitational packets with a coffee sample. The cards and packets were passed out by leaders and at a community event. They prayed. They connected with former attendees. They prayed.*

*At the next coaching cluster meeting, each leader reported back on what had happened. Marcia did not offer to go first. Was she disappointed? Yet, when Marcia began to share, the excitement was visible. They had ten new people at their first meeting! In addition, there were more children in Story Hour and new babies in the nursery. They reflected, “How come we were amazed?” They stopped and praised God together. Seeing God at work has encouraged everyone—the coaching cluster, the leaders, the council and the congregation.*

*(adapted from the CRCNA Network blog post, November 10, 2018)*

## Prayer Precedes Everything

The Bible discovery method by itself is not enough. Prayer comes first. It came before the development of the Bible discovery method; it comes before we learn how to ask good questions and love even the unlovable. Before everything, we pray. It is essential for God's blessing. We highlight it in a separate chapter as a reminder to keep it central in our lives and leadership. But this chapter is short, because prayer is vital while we are pursuing those things as well. So we will integrate prayer into every chapter and every step.

Through prayer we connect with God's heart. Prayer is not a ritual; it is a life-giving relationship with Jesus, who holds together everything in our lives, including the wonder of Bible discovery. We must nurture our relationship with Jesus through prayer first. It is how we get to know him and discern his leading so that our walk with him will reflect him and draw others to him too.

Prayer changes us. It strengthens our relationship to God. It increases our awareness of him. We grow in love, understanding, and godliness as Christ is formed in us. We become sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting as we pray. We hear God's voice and listen to him through prayer.

## Perfection Is Not Required

A perfect prayer life is not required for being a Bible discovery leader. In fact, prayer shows us how imperfect we are. Anne Lamott says in *Help, Thanks, Wow* that she prays “out of weakness and inadequacy and desperation.”

When we ask for God’s help, we acknowledge our dependence on his guidance and provision. When we see how much we need God’s help, we make prayer a priority. Leaders pray for themselves and ask others to pray for them too. The challenges that come with an outreach ministry are too important to try to meet with our own strength. When we claim the power of God through prayer, we can be assured he will answer and use us. Jesus himself depended on time in prayer. How can we do less?

## Prayer Makes Us God-Dependent

God is behind everything, from the leadership gifts he gives us, to those who participate in each small group, to the discoveries we make together. So we put God and a strong, personal prayer posture first. Look for prayer pointers in the chapters that follow. Only in nurturing our relationship with God can we expect to know his heart and lead others to know him. He will answer above and beyond anything we ask or imagine. Count on it. Pray.



*What is most convicting to you about the importance of prayer?  
What do you find most challenging?*

*Return to the story of Anthony or your experience at the beginning. Are there other factors that you see now after reading this chapter that helped make it a pleasant experience for Anthony?*

*Is there something from your experience that could have been done differently to make your experience—good or bad—better?*



*What is one thing you will do to grow integrate prayer into your leadership?*

# 3

WHAT ARE GOOD DISCOVERY QUESTIONS,  
AND HOW ARE THEY ASKED?





*What has been the power of listening and questions in your own life? How have they helped shift a perspective, or lead you to a change?*



*“Sure, we can do that!” So started a new adventure—Global Coffee Break leaders had been asked to modify their workshop for international English as a Second Language (ESL) class students. Invitations were given at the ESL classes. One woman approached them, a practicing Hindu. “My name is Bhavna. May I come?” She was warmly assured she was welcome, and the GCB team began to pray!*

*The day of the workshop, participants from fourteen different nations gathered. So, too, did Bhavna. They carefully worked through the various exercises, including a sample discovery Bible study from Genesis 16. Together, they explored the story of God and Hagar. Observation questions allowed everyone to look at the Bible passage with fresh eyes. Interpretation questions helped them discover the meaning, what God wants to say to people. Finally, application questions helped them see how it impacted their lives today. Bhavna’s body language said she was engaging, bent over with a borrowed Bible open and her pencil poised over the sample study guide.*

*As the day wrapped up, and we said our final greetings, Bhavna came up to the team. “Thank you,” she said. “Today I learned that God hears us when we cry.” She smiled broadly. The Word had spoken. She put it in her own words by the Spirit’s help. She had discovered an aspect of the living God, the God who sees. The team beamed, knowing that the Word had helped her make an important step closer to the God who does hear us.*



*What difference might it have made in Bhavna’s life to study the Bible herself, and learn that God hears her, versus having someone tell her that God hears her?*

## Questions Are “Digging Tools”

Questions are the “digging tools” that distinguish discovery from teaching. In teaching, someone tells the group what the Bible passage says; it gives the leader control and ownership. In discovery, the group talks about a Bible passage, discovers answers together, and applies to their lives the truths they find. Discovery gives control and ownership to the group. They discover the truth in the Bible for themselves. Giving information is easy, but when we guide others to wrestle with a Bible passage, they become invested in the conversation they are a part of and remember it much longer. Wordy introductions and spoon-fed information can make people tune out, but asking questions involves them and sparks their interest.

## The Purpose of Asking Questions

Questions help unlock the meaning of a Bible passage and aid understanding of what the biblical writers said and meant and how it affects our lives. As the group probes the Word, the Holy Spirit probes the hearts of group members. What an incredible variety of insights results! The Bible is the inspired Word of God, written by human authors with differing backgrounds and personalities. God uses those differences, and he also uses the differences of those who read what they have written. We can read the Bible individually using this method, but discussing it in a group setting brings greater depth and variety of insight. The discovery method honors the Word and enriches those who read it.

## Conversation Building around the Text

The purpose of the leader's questions is to build a conversation that is focused on the text and enhances the group's discovery about God, about life, and about themselves. Good discovery questions involve the mind and the soul and promote belief and spiritual growth. They lead into the passage and not to a tangent or side-tracking issue. They use the language of the passage and get at basic truth, the "big ideas" rather than minor details.

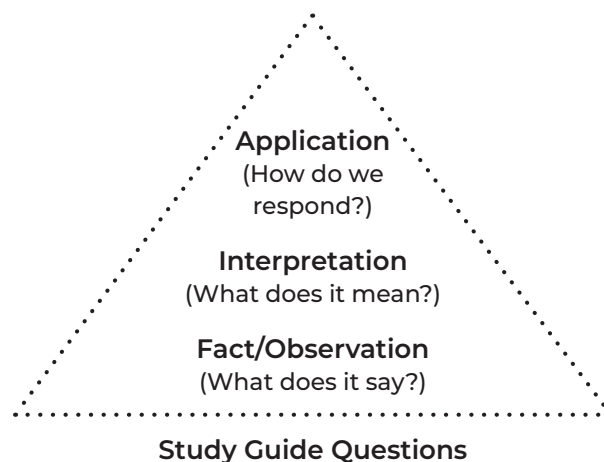
## Questions in the Study Material "Skeleton"

If you are using materials specifically written for a Bible discovery group (see Chapter 6), you already have a skeleton of questions to begin a group conversation. The leader material suggests additional questions to flesh out that skeleton. However, as you get to know your group, you will want to tailor extra questions to meet the interests, personality and spiritual maturity of your group. Learning to develop those extra questions is what this chapter is about.

Four kinds of study guide questions form the skeleton that shapes the group conversation.

- *Warm-up questions* asked before the Bible discussion begin to build safety, and perhaps bridge to the Bible passage.
- *Fact questions* identify basic information and answer, "What does it say?"
- *Interpretation questions* build on the facts and answer, "What does it mean?"
- *Application questions* personalize the information and answer, "How do we respond?"

One visual for this study guide skeleton of questions is a triangle.



A good quality Bible discovery study guide has an appropriate balance of three types of questions: fact, interpretation, and application. Typically, there are more fact questions than interpretation or application questions in a lesson, as illustrated by the triangle diagram. Study guide fact questions are always asked first and form a base for the group discussion. Interpretation questions build on the facts, and application questions contemporize and personalize the facts and interpretation. Introductory questions serve to start the conversation.

### ***Warm-Up—Getting to Know You***

Warm-up questions help us make discoveries about each other and relax those in an outreach group who may not know each other well. They also form a bridge to the text. For example in a chapter that shows God's victory against his enemies, you might ask about the group's favorite hero or hero movie. Or if discussing our inheritance, you may ask what is the best thing they have been given. Warm-up questions are answered in a word, phrase, or sentence rather than in a paragraph. The leader needs to share too, of course. In time, as the group gets to know one another, these questions may not be needed, but remain an option if the group is distracted, or needs to ease into a difficult chapter, or if a newcomer arrives.


 *When have you seen a good warm-up question that got a conversation going?  
How did the leader use it well?*

### ***Just the Facts—Laying a Foundation***

Christians may be new to the discovery process. The first time they use it, they may find that in the past, they have overlooked significant details in very familiar stories. In an outreach Bible discovery group, leaders use extra fact questions to prompt observations about important details in the text. Those facts are the basis for interpreting and applying.

Leaders should dig out basic biblical facts without assuming everyone is familiar with the Bible. Guide graciously with your questions. Point the group back to the passage itself with a redirecting question like "Are we all clear on who the person in verse 5 is?" Focus on facts that support the main point of the passage rather than extraneous details. Once the facts have been laid out, the group will see patterns and themes and be able to draw conclusions and identify general concepts.

In Bible discovery, the leader is not the expert. The Bible is the expert. Everyone can access the Bible. When leaders guide the group to discover, rather than teach, group members own their learning, gain skills to study the Bible on their own, and are given respect.

 *Why might it be important to not assume that everyone knows?  
How can you grow in your awareness?*

### ***What Does It Mean?—Interpreting the Text***

Facts are important, but they affect only the mind. Interpretation questions aid in understanding the facts and engaging hearts and souls. The answers cannot always be found in the passage, but they are based on the passage. Examples of interpretation questions are

“What does that mean?” “How is it significant?” “How are they alike or different?” “What is the cause or result?” “What is the connection?” “Why would this be important?” The answers relate to Bible times, not today’s culture, and foster the beginning of application as well.

Study Bibles and notes give us quick interpretations; someone else has done the digging. But even experts who know the original languages of the Bible sometimes disagree on interpretation. Wrestling with a difficult concept before checking other sources is a good discipline for us. Encourage your group to do that. If experts disagree, we can accept a variety of perspectives too, particularly when they are based on biblical evidence. In fact, agreeing to disagree can be a healthy thing. Leaders must safeguard those who are vulnerable in sharing an insight, ensuring they are not belittled or ignored. There is not always one right answer. This does not mean that the truth in the Bible is relative or ambiguous; rather it can be multifaceted. It is a “living” Word. The Holy Spirit will guide us to the truth, which often meets us where we are here and now, especially as we move into application.



*How might a variety of perspectives be beneficial?*

*Why might we like having someone else do the digging?*

*How might it stunt our spiritual growth?*

### ***Application—Personalizing Makes It Real***

Application questions naturally follow interpretation. When we struggle to answer “How do we respond?” we acknowledge that the Bible, through the Holy Spirit, is doing something in us. We read about people who ignored what God said and went their own way, and these examples will remind us of ourselves. We too are imperfect people and need God’s grace.

Application connects with our everyday lives and is the ultimate goal of Bible discovery. Questions like “What timeless principles do you see?” or “What responses do you think people today would have?” are good general application questions. As you get to know your group, you may ask more personal application questions like, “What changes is God prompting you to make?” “What will be the ‘cost’ of change?” No one should be put on the spot, but when the Holy Spirit is working in the group, these questions will naturally follow. We need to find the balance between respecting a person’s privacy and nudging them to respond to God’s leading. We do our group a disservice if we do not challenge them with personal growth questions.

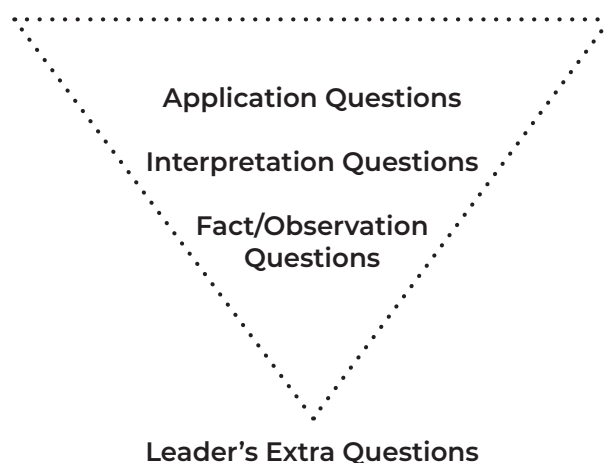
Study guides include application questions to wrap up or summarize each lesson, but leaders should ask extra application questions throughout the discussion as well so that application is interwoven throughout. A group usually is only willing to be as vulnerable as the leader is, so be sure share your personal convictions and failures, as appropriate, for the benefit of others.

Leaders need God’s grace too; growing in our faith is a life-long journey. Without application, studying the Bible is just an interesting intellectual exercise. When leaders ask themselves questions like “What is God teaching me in this passage?” or “How do I need to change after learning this?” they are better equipped to help group members do the same.

? Think back on your own Bible study experiences.  
How has application been encouraged in a way that felt “safe” and “respectful”?  
What will we miss if we do not encourage application?

## Fleshing Out the Skeleton of Questions

Again think of a triangle, only this time apply it to asking extra questions to facilitate the group conversation. Now the triangle is upside down. Most of the facts will be discovered via the study guide, so few extra fact questions should be needed. Use them only if something vital has been missed. More interpretation than fact questions will be asked. Application, how the discoveries are personally and communally affecting people, should be interwoven through the entire conversation, and therefore should be asked most. Application leads to life change.



The study “triangle” becomes personalized as leaders dig deep into the text and design questions tailored to their own small group. They put themselves in the place of their group members and “think in questions.” *What will the group be curious about? How might they experience the text? What questions will aid the group's discovery without “leading the witnesses” to parrot the leader's discoveries?* God may give different insights to different people, so good questions are open-ended in order to include all observations, not just the leader's. Leaders who practice this method guide their group to ask questions too. Eventually they will spontaneously ask questions like “What is the author talking about here? Why is he saying this? To whom is he speaking? What does he want them to know? Where is this taking place? How is this connected to my life?” The discipline of thinking in questions can also enrich personal devotions.

? Why do you think asking questions has been so effective in leading a group?

## Hindrances to Discovery

Not all contributions lead to discovery, however. Conversation “stoppers” include the following:

- Questions asked like a “test”
- Questions that have simple yes or no answers
- Judgmental, demeaning, or manipulative questions
- Confusing questions
- “Fill-in-the-blank” kinds of questions
- Long-winded explanations and additional leader information
- Commentary-laden references
- Summarizing everything

Good supplemental questions are faithful to the intent of the text and respectful of those in the group. Leader guide questions can be a helpful resource, but only use the ones that are helpful for your group. Feeling obligated to cover every single additional question can hinder the flow and curiosity of your group conversation. Aim for balance. Too many fact questions will make the conversation shallow. Too few application questions will minimize the life-changing power of the Word and miss the life-changing work of the Holy Spirit. The natural ebb and flow of conversation and a balance of all three kinds of questions give room for the Holy Spirit to work. As you gain experience as a leader, you will learn to develop your own questions, and the leader guide will become just that—a guide.

## Encourage and Affirm the Group’s Discoveries

The best way to affirm discovery is with positive feedback like “Oh, that’s so good!” or “I never thought of it that way.” Make eye contact, smile, and nod your head in encouragement. Leaders can draw out discoveries with simple comments like “I wonder why . . .” or “Very interesting—tell me more about that,” or “I’m not sure I understand what you mean; can you clarify?” Admitting you do not have all the answers builds unity and mutual responsibility for the group discoveries. As you and your group grow in discovery, you can encourage your group to ask their own questions of the text. What are their observation, interpretation, and application questions? Their contributions will enrich your discussion greatly.

## Learn to Think in Questions

Give yourself time to grow in the skill of asking questions. It does not happen overnight. Pray constantly for God’s guidance. Practice. Write down your own questions in response to the passage you have read. Over time it will become natural. Occasionally, a discussion may veer off course, but that is part of the learning process. You can avoid difficulties by anticipating questions and formulating possible answers, always keeping the focus on the text rather than on personal opinions or a particular church stance. As you learn to think in questions and depend on the Holy Spirit’s guidance, you will be able to discern the right question and the right time to ask it. The more you trust the Spirit rather than your own abilities, the more likely lives will be changed rather than minds informed.

## The Holy Spirit Guides the Leader

God promises to guide what we say when we share our faith with others. He assures us that no exposure to his Word is ever wasted. God does accomplish his desires whenever his Word is read (Isa. 55:8-11). We claim those promises with a strong foundation in prayer. We ask God to show us how we need to change so that we can be effective in leading our group and are not a hindrance to the discovery process.

The Holy Spirit sharpens us as we pray for guidance. We become more compassionate toward those in our small group and develop a burden for them. We sense God's leading as we ask questions, and we become more effective leaders as we listen to his voice. Leaders of some Bible discovery programs meet weekly to pray together and also go over the lesson for the coming week, sharing their questions with one another as well as their personal discoveries. The more we pray, the more we discern what questions to ask to aid the group's discovery process. We can trust the God who guides us.

God will guide those in your small group too. When people who are unfamiliar with the Bible see for themselves what it says, they are often turned from doubters into believers in Jesus. Many others experience deep spiritual growth. Asking questions draws GCB participants into the text. They discover that the Bible is God's love story, not a book of oppressive do's and don'ts. They get to know a personal Savior who shows them how to live a fulfilling life. They learn how to feed themselves spiritually for a lifetime. God's Word changes lives.

Ask the Holy Spirit to make you sensitive to those who are studying the Bible for the first time. Encourage newcomers to Bible discovery by creating a climate in which people feel comfortable to ask questions and make mistakes. After all, we are all learners, no matter how much or how little we have studied the Word. So keep digging. Keep discovering.



*What are some of the biggest challenges in using the Bible discovery method? What will be the rewards?*

*What are specific ways the simple process of observation, interpretation, and application questions might have helped Bhavna engage with the Bible herself, and allow her to participate in a group discussion?*

*Why might it be important to have a good balance of observation, interpretation, and application questions for newcomers like Bhavna, and for mature believers?*



*What is one thing you will do to grow in your ability to ask questions?*

# 4

HOW CAN A DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY  
BE USED AS AN OUTREACH?





*Think about what you know of God's character. You may flip to Luke 15 and revisit the parables there. What might give you the courage to invite a seeker to a Bible study?*



*Ji-Yoo welcomed Min-Jun, and they sat down together. After several years of friendship, Min-Jun had agreed to study a single DYB lesson called, "The Cross." It was near Easter, after all. Ji-Yoo had shared many times about his Global Coffee Break group. Min-Jun made it clear he was not a Christian, but he was willing to look at a study because he knew how important this group was to his friend Ji-Yoo.*

*Min-Jun was a university professor, and expressed his skepticism at a vicarious death, and the resurrection. Ji-Yoo listened, and directed the attention back to the text. "What does this say? If this were true, what difference would it mean for our communities? Just consider the implications of what this passage is saying. How might this offer an answer to some of your questions if it were true?" Ji-Yoo knew enough of Min-Jun's story, his desires, and his big life questions and challenges to help tailor the conversation to him. He was careful to keep it as a relaxed conversation, centered around the Bible and life. Min-Jun continued to look at the text, discuss it with Ji-Yoo, and ask his own questions.*

*Min-Jun sincerely thanked Ji-Yoo as they wrapped up. As Ji-Yoo waved good-bye to his friend, he breathed yet another prayer.*



*Is there something that stands out to you from this story?*

Have you thought about how people come to faith in Christ? Can a Bible study really be used as an outreach? If so, what would make it different from other Bible studies? How can we communicate God's love to those who do not know him? How do we build trust? Finding answers to these and similar questions is the passion of those involved in Bible discovery ministries like GCB. People too often assume that only Christians will be interested in studying the Bible. Because of this, most published Bible study materials are written for committed Christians and use terminology that only insiders would understand.

In Bible discovery, however, the focus is on how God works through his Word to draw all kinds of people to himself—active believers, those whose faith has become lukewarm, doubters, and even those who know nothing about the Bible and may be resistant to its message. The individual parts of the Bible discovery method—prayer, supportive relationships, and the Word of God—come together as God uses them to draw individuals into a relationship with him. We have touched on outreach Bible discovery already, but this chapter explores it further.

## Prayer Changes People


You have probably heard the expression “Prayer changes things.” But prayer also changes people, especially in outreach Bible discovery groups. This belief guides our actions and determines how we minister to people who are hearing the gospel for the first time. The beginning point in outreach is always prayer. We ask God to be present in our preparation, in our personalities, and in the lives of our group members.

We may say that we cannot change anyone, believing that only prayer, the Word, and the power of the Holy Spirit can do that, but our actions and attitudes often do not match our talk. Sometimes we have preconceived ideas about how people should act in a Bible study. We expect heart and life change much faster than God does. We forget that God is in control, and we begin to trust our abilities, not God’s power. We begin to think it is our personality or sensitivity to others that draws people to faith, that our leadership skills and winsome words change people. God does use gifted leaders and winsome personalities, but it is always his Word and his Spirit that do the changing. We are simply the vehicles God chooses to use.

This is both humbling and freeing. It is humbling because we know even our best efforts will fail unless we trust in God, and it is freeing because we know we will not jeopardize a person’s salvation because we said or did something wrong. God’s grace covers a multitude of sins. We pray that God will make us the best leaders we can be, and that with his help we will live out what we are saying, but it is never about us. In fact, sometimes it is in spite of us that people come to faith.

Many in today’s culture do not understand the gospel. Some have had a bad experience in a church or believe a negative stereotype about Christians. What will they expect from us? A judgmental spirit? A holier-than-you attitude? Legalistic hypocrisy? We surprise them when we graciously and lovingly accept where they are on their spiritual journey, even if they test our hospitality. We create a safe place for newcomers to *belong* before they *believe* in Jesus. This fits the pattern that mission scholars have discovered. They have found that most often people belong to a Christian community and then begin behaving like others in the community before they believe. In a Global Coffee Break group, non-Christians may read and explore the Bible as literature, and they may participate in the discussion and life of the group before they accept the Bible as truth. So it is important to create a safe environment for our friends to explore who Jesus is. We want them to see how much Jesus loves them and desires for them to love him too.

We depend on prayer because of people’s misperceptions about Christianity and the Bible. Only God can give those who are new to the Bible the eyes to see grace in us and in his Word. Grace—receiving by faith the gift of God’s love that we have not earned and do not deserve—prompts us to reach out to others. In prayer, we ask God not only to change others but also to continue to change us too. From time to time, we all struggle with the enticing promises of our hedonistic culture, but our identity is shaped not by the culture around us but by God’s Word and Power. We live as new creations saved by grace.

 *No matter where you are at in your journey—whether you are just considering about offering an outreach Bible study, or making plans to do so, already doing so, or leading a Bible study in which you would like to see seekers attend—what are specific things you can be praying for?  
Whom can you be praying for? Whom can you invite to pray with you?*

## A Gracious Environment

So how do we provide an environment where the gospel is clear? What do people long for? Do they know something is missing in their lives? What voids need filling? We begin where they are and evaluate the messages our culture is giving them. We put ourselves in the mindset of those whom we invite to our Bible discovery groups. What would nudge them to come? What would make them feel welcome? People often live busy lives, so why would they spend time at a Bible study?


Hospitality and personal contact reach people readily. Ask yourself, “What do I communicate by how I act? Do I make eye contact and smile? Do I initiate an introduction? Do I offer to help? How would I like others to treat me if I were a stranger?” Our body language—smiling, making eye contact, introducing ourselves to newcomers—speaks volumes. Some individuals find it easy to come to a group on their own, particularly if it is meeting in a home, coffee shop or restaurant. A larger church program can be intimidating for someone who hasn’t been in a church before. If you invite someone in either setting, offer to pick them up so that they do not have to walk alone into a strange place.

Church ministries show love when they provide clear signs, give explanations of where a group meets, and have parking lot attendants available to assist parents and their young children. Using nametags can make people feel welcome. Asking questions like “Where are you originally from?” shows we are interested in others. Even a refreshment table can attract people.

When we are welcoming, people relax. One woman finally got the courage to walk through the door of a church to attend a Global Coffee Break meeting after months of seeing a billboard invitation on the church lawn. She said that when she entered the room, she felt like she was in heaven. The women were so welcoming that she immediately felt she belonged.

## A Family Affair

We can extend hospitality to families by offering Global Coffee Break in conjunction with children’s activities, which allows busy parents to participate. A well-run children’s ministry shows that we are concerned about family needs. Parents who read or watch the news know that some church leaders have abused young children, and they want to protect their little ones. When we provide background checks and do team ministry, we reassure them their children will be safe and cared for. Even home groups can provide a trusted babysitter so that mothers feel comfortable leaving their children in a room nearby while they focus on a small group Bible discussion.

 *What are other specific ideas you have to make it a welcoming environment, and make sure all can attend comfortably?*

## Hospitality

Ask God continually to help you see through the eyes of someone new. An individual walking through the door for the first time may look confident and relaxed on the outside but may be anxious on the inside. These strategies contribute to an environment in which visitors feel at home:

- **Communicate expectations clearly.** Tell people up front that they do not need to read aloud or pray or even talk. Make sure you have Bibles available for anyone who may not have one. Give page numbers or show where a Bible passage is located to help someone who is not familiar with the Bible's contents. Never assume that newcomers have Bible knowledge. That does not mean they are unintelligent; they simply lack experience. Today's culture is increasingly biblically illiterate, so although someone might have heard of Noah, King David, or John the Baptist, that doesn't mean they know much about them or where their stories are found in the Bible. Provide information in a simple, direct way that does not insult or demean anyone.
- **Create an environment in which any questions and answers are accepted.** Many outreach groups have had members who resisted coming to faith for years, but leaders who graciously and patiently waited have seen the Holy Spirit change lives. Be patient and trust God's timing; he is much more patient than we are.
- **Apologize when Christians offend.** Those who have experienced the love and warmth of a caring small group readily extend that love and warmth to others who are new. Sometimes, however, people are insensitive to newcomers, using language that excludes them and forming cliques. We soften the effects when we apologize for our own insensitivity or the insensitivities of others. In effect, we are asking those we offend to extend grace to us. Our humility and vulnerability can help to combat any stereotypes they may have about Christians.

If group members talk about church activities or sensitive topics, assuming that everyone is on the same page with their thinking, they may drive newcomers away. We do not need to compromise our convictions, but we do need to provide a supportive environment where we accept people who do not believe as we do. We trust the Holy Spirit to change people's hearts in his time. Since we have been accepted by God, we, in turn, accept others. We do not need to "win" arguments. We can kindly accept someone's disagreement without feeling we have to argue them to belief. Erring on the side of grace is always a safer place to be. We can kindly say why we believe what we do and gently suggest that they investigate further. But if someone is insistent on a particular stance, we may simply need to smile and say, "I hear what you are saying," and let the matter drop, trusting the work of the Spirit and the Word. We do not need to defend God or his Word. He is perfectly capable of defending himself. If someone rejects Christianity, we do not want that to be because of the way we have communicated the gospel.

- **Respond to newcomers' offenses with grace.** Leaders and other Christians in a group should create an environment in which people are accepted where they are, not where we want them to be. Group members may be difficult, opinionated, or rude. They may express opinions with which we disagree. But we are called to treat them with love and respect,

trusting and praying that the Word will breathe life into them and change their hearts as well as ours.

- **Make newcomers a priority while affirming established Christians.** This is not easy. Tell people before you begin that the conversation will be focused on the Bible itself, not a lot of commentary digging and gathering of information. We want to close the eighteen inches that separates our heads from our hearts and discover what God has to say. We must be sensitive to those who are still on the faith journey. Consider how you can create a welcoming group through equipping other group members, structures, setting, materials, and other factors. The needs of newcomers come first, because Christians have other small group Bible study options that newcomers may not.
- **Be a supportive group, but not a support group.** A Bible discovery small group is not a support group, but it is a supportive environment in which people are loved and accepted. A supportive environment is essential to an outreaching group. However, participants dealing with grief, divorce, addictions, or abuse may need more help than we are qualified to give. Being supportive occasionally means referring someone to a professional counselor or another kind of support group where more specialized help is available. The Bible discovery method affirms that the Word of God can transform the lives of people who may never have opened a Bible before. Support groups may help those dealing with trauma or difficult life changes, but transformation happens when we help people open the “living Word” and the Word changes them.

## The Word Changes Lives

Many people today want to check things out for themselves, rather than to merely accept what others say. Bible discovery groups encourage that. Anyone can look at a passage and ask what it says, means, and how it can be applied today. Most people new to the Bible are surprised by how interesting and practical the Bible can be. When we help individuals realize that they can read the Bible themselves, we are giving them a wonderful gift. We then trust that God will make it come to life for them.

The discovery method is not a simple Bible study but a basic Bible study. It helps to make the Word accessible by asking questions at the level of the members in the group. Some types of Bible studies target those who are the most knowledgeable, but the discovery method is for those who are newest to the Bible as well. Knowledgeable members have all kinds of resources and opportunities to learn more. People reading the Bible for the first time need to feel comfortable and supported in their understanding.

When we use Bible discovery for outreach, we assume no prior knowledge. We ask questions based on one primary passage rather than many. We treat people new to the group with dignity and respect. We create a safe place for asking any question. We provide an environment in which everyone learns and is challenged. Most importantly, we create an environment that is about “belief” first rather than “behavior.” That means we do not expect Christian behaviors from unbelieving people.

We trust the power of the Word and share the gospel in ways that will help, not hinder. When people are nudged by the Holy Spirit, they will often ask us questions that show they are wondering about faith. Our prayers for them will sensitize us to these “God moments” and help us to see where they are in their faith. We ask him to show us opportunities for sharing the gospel message. Often just asking a question like “What do you think God is saying to you?” or “What have you learned about Jesus through our study?” will give us a clue as to where a person is spiritually. We may then have an opportunity to speak to that person about their faith.

Remember, people are often “reading the gospel” in our lives. If we give the impression that Christianity is about “grace” at that moment when we trust in Christ, but the rest of our lives is about being good by our own efforts, we miscommunicate the truth of the gospel. Our whole life is about grace; growing in our faith—sanctification—is also God’s grace working in us. When we understand grace, we stop comparing ourselves with other people and other churches. We do not talk about them in a negative way. The unique aspect of Christianity is that it is not our goodness that saves us. People of other faiths may be nice people, but only Christianity frees us from the tyranny of having to be perfect on our own strength. It is the difference between do and done—we are saved not by what we do but by what Christ has done. We can admit our imperfections and sins, because Jesus has accepted us and changed us. When we study the Word together with this in mind, we can admit that we do not know something in a Bible passage. We can suggest that everyone look for the answers. The convincing and convicting power of the Word trumps any clever or forceful arguments.

We saw this power in India. Jeong-sun Lim, the wife of Missionary Gwang-ho Song, has been working in North India since 2009. She recently told her story to our Korean Coffee Break members. She works in some of the poorest and most violent areas. She shared, “When I first arrived in India, I didn’t know where to start. On God’s leading, I began a Global Coffee Break small group Bible study with other missionary women. It was in this small group where we joined hearts to receive refreshment, recover from challenges and breathed new life into each other. The scent of the Global Coffee Break Bible Study gave the missionaries courage to continue God’s work in the communities and neighborhoods where they were called. Soon, the study expanded to include their neighbors and church members. The Global Coffee Break ministry spread to many parts of India. There was now a need to translate the Bible study books into Hindi. It was a scent of life bringing souls alive, like flowers in a wasteland.” (Shared also on the CRCNA Network, June 9, 2021). This same God is working in your neighborhood.

As you contextualize the study to your neighborhood, ask your group members what mutual agreements they would like to use as guides for the Bible discovery discussion. Often they will express the same ground rules that you as the leader might suggest. We can learn from groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, in which acceptance and confidentiality are two important principles. Other principles might include not discussing other churches and making sure that everyone has the opportunity to talk. (See Chapter 5 for more on ground rules.)

An outreach group is based on prayer and nurtured in a supportive environment where people who are new to the Bible can discover its truths. Leaders are not alone in guiding the discovery process. The Holy Spirit is working in the lives of everyone in the group. Other Christians in the group can be our allies in creating a gracious and accepting environment for Bible discovery

conversations. Encourage them to pray and assist in creating this “safe” place for newcomers to learn. Ask others outside of your group to pray as well. Pray for each individual in your group by name as often as you can. Then enjoy the excitement of seeing others come to faith as you study together. It may be the most rewarding experience you will ever have.



*As a leader, what have you been most challenged by in this chapter?  
Think back to the story at the beginning of this chapter, and your response there.  
What has helped build courage?*



*What is God calling you to do as a response to this?  
Is there someone particular that God might be laying on your heart?  
What is your next step?*

# 5

## WHAT MAKES A BIBLE DISCOVERY LEADER EFFECTIVE?





*Think of a person whose presence just makes you feel safe. What do they do? What is it about them that helps you feel safe?*



*Yamilet smiled quietly at the group as she gathered her Bible, study guide, and pencil. She had once again really enjoyed listening to the conversation. But once again, she had not shared. She was shy, and she was not like Mateo, who knew so much about the Bible. Nor was she like Isabella, who was very talkative. As she got up, Luna, the leader, approached her.*

*"Yamilet, thank you for coming. I am glad you showed up again!" Her warm smile said she meant it. "I was wondering, would you be willing to read the passage at the beginning of next week's lesson?"*

*"Me?" Yamilet stuttered.*

*"If you do not want to, that is fine. But I would welcome you to do it if you would feel comfortable! I would love you to read it, but I didn't want to put you on the spot."*

*"I think, I think I can do that." Yamilet said.*

*The next week, Yamilet read the passage. When she looked up, she saw Luna, Alejandro, and the others smiling at her. Later, as Luna let silence linger for a moment, Yamilet felt comfortable enough to share. And it actually felt good.*



*Which character in the story are you most like? Why?*

## **"Being" = Who We Are in Christ**

Love makes a Bible discovery leader effective. Who we are—our character—is far more important than the abilities we have. Long after people remember their leader's abilities, long after they remember who was in their group, they will remember they were loved. Jesus made clear that love is primary: we love God first, and we love others as ourselves. Love for God, lived in deep, personal gratitude for his gifts of forgiveness and grace, must be embedded deep in the leader's soul and spill over into love for others. The Spirit's work in us should produce a spirit of grace and humility.

We need not be Bible experts, but we must be a conduit of God's love. Are we loving? Kind? Accepting? Caring? Forgiving? Encouraging? Do people see our love for them and for God's Word? Is the group enjoying the conversation? Love compels us to guide others to discover the God who loves them.

Together, leaders and group members encounter God's love in his Word. Leaders ask, "God, what do you want me to discover about this passage?" Even if our discoveries are not part of the group conversation, we are still fellow discoverers on a spiritual journey. We confess that we mess up from time to time, but our group should also see God's presence in us.

Leadership is a commitment that begins on our knees. We pray for sensitivity, wisdom, and love, asking, “Lord, help me see this person through your eyes. Show me how to love as you love.” It takes time to invest in the lives of our group members, to pray for them, to “be there” when they need us, and to be like Jesus to them. It also takes time to prepare for leading the group.

The rewards are well worth the time and love we give. Guiding a group to become open to the claims of the gospel and seeing them accept Christ and mature in their faith is seeing God at work. Yes, it takes time, but what God gives us in return is far greater!



*What characteristics of leadership do you see from the story and from these first paragraphs? Quickly draw a symbol for each.*

*Why are each of these characteristics important?*

## “Doing” = Putting Love into Action

Our doing, the details that put love into action and facilitate a good conversation, flows out of our being. We need to be sensitive to the cultural expectations and adapt to the norms of the group, whether it is part of a formal church program or an informal gathering in a home or coffee shop. Some groups are casual and wear jeans; others dress up. Some take their shoes off when they enter a home. Take note of differences and ask questions if you are unsure of expectations.

## Organizational Group Dynamics

- **Seat everyone comfortably.** As much as possible, each person should be able to see and make eye contact with everyone else in the group.
- **Get started on time.** Complete your own preparation well in advance so that you can begin on time. Starting promptly shows respect for people’s time commitments. Cultural norms will vary, of course, and people may be dependent on bus schedules or other issues they cannot control. We still want them to come! Never shame someone for being late. Keep a chair empty to allow a latecomer to slip in without disrupting the group.
- **Take time to get to know one another.** Use nametags so that you do not embarrass visitors or people who struggle to remember names. Use “icebreakers” to learn about one another (see Chapter 3). Brief introductions with basic personal information—name, where they are from, hobbies or jobs, favorite pastime, etc.—rather than a litany of previous Bible study experiences puts everyone on equal footing. Be careful not to pry. Some may be going through a painful situation they are not prepared to share. Respect the person who wants to remain in the background.
- **Establish group “ground rules.”** Have the group design a “group covenant” for ensuring the conversation goes well. How do they need to “be” together in order to have a good conversation? What expectations do they have for participation? How should they handle sharing personal and confidential information? When the group designs an agreement together, they own it and commit to keeping it. They also can hold each other accountable for positive responses when challenges threaten the harmony of the group. The leader too can use it to remind them when violations occur.

- **Encourage a response from everyone.** If people talk in the beginning, even if it is just a word or phrase, they are more likely to share their discoveries.
- **Open the conversation with prayer**—not a wordy, flashy prayer that intimidates others, but a simple, sincere prayer that encourages those who are new to prayer to desire to pray too. Model the priority of prayer in your life. Prayer formats will vary, depending on spiritual maturity and closeness of the group, but all prayer requests should be kept confidential.
- **Let group members read the Bible passage aloud.** No one should feel pressured to read, but sometimes reading a passage can be a bridge to sharing an idea or thought. You can ask, “Who wants to read first?” or “Would someone like to read this next section?” Read your group’s body language too. Someone may hesitate to volunteer, but if he or she is making eye contact and leaning forward in anticipation, you might ask that person to read.
- **Stick to the assigned passage.** Occasionally you may need to refer to another passage to clarify a point. That is okay. Newcomers learn that the Bible is an integrated, unified book that repeats important biblical truths in a variety of ways and settings. But do it sparingly, or it will set the leader apart as an expert and may inhibit discovery.
- **Wrap up the discussion at the end.** Ask the group, “What will you remember about this conversation? What big ideas did we uncover?” Wrapping things up will give closure to the time you have spent together, and remind the group of the significant takeaways of the passage.
- **Manage your time, and end promptly.** People may have commitments after you meet, so keep an eye on the clock so that you finish on time. Find a happy medium between belaboring a point and skimming the surface. Cover the main ideas in the passage, but do not worry about covering every detail. You are giving participants a “taste” of the Word, but you may offer to linger afterward for those with questions or needs.

## Relational Group Dynamics

The above-mentioned mechanics give structure to the group’s conversation. Leaders build on the structure to ensure the group’s enjoyment of Bible discovery by pondering, “What are the characteristics of a good conversation? How can I facilitate it?”

- **Keep the group atmosphere relaxed.** This is a conversation more than a study or class. Create a warm, accepting atmosphere to encourage engagement. Relax. Lean back in your chair rather than sitting on the edge of your seat. Smile. Use humor. Make eye contact to reassure the timid. Call people by name. Admit any nervousness you might have. Keep the emotional climate low-key. When you relax, the group relaxes. Ask for God’s help. He will honor your desire to create calm and warmth.
- **Manage the group dynamics.** Conversations are interactive; leaders can ensure that things go smoothly by affirming one person’s opinions without diminishing an opposing view. This can be tricky. Lovingly but firmly acknowledge differences and redirect difficult situations. Trust God to guide your words.

- **Use language that is easily understood.** Christians sometimes lapse into a lingo that is confusing for people who are new to Bible study. Avoid Christian terminology, or define it. Words like fellowship or sister or brother in Christ or even saved or lost can isolate group members who are just beginning to investigate Christianity. Even the word Christian may need to be defined.
- **Balance the good of the group with care for each person.** The leader needs to be sensitive to the whole group. If someone needs extra care, you may need to meet with that person outside of the group.
- **Involve everyone.** Although some people are more reserved than others, try to involve everyone in some way. Give encouragement through smiles and eye contact. Ask God what to say. Enjoy responding to your group's needs as he leads you.
- **Read body language.** Your group often tells you more by how they act than by what they say, so maintain as much eye contact as you can. What do you see? Eagerness? Shyness? Discomfort? Curiosity? People communicate without saying a word. A bowed head and folded arms are requests for privacy and space. Someone who leans forward and makes eye contact is eager to contribute. Your body language communicates too. A nod, a smile, eye contact, and relaxed body posture tell your group that you enjoy being with them. Respect those who pull back from physical touch, but squeeze a hand or shoulder or give a quick hug to those who are open to it, if it seems appropriate.
- **Give people time to answer.** Do not expect people to jump in immediately after a question, especially in the beginning. People need time to think. Remember—read, reflect, respond—all of it takes time. Relax while you are waiting. Count to ten. Look down at your Bible so that others will speak first. The wait time will seem longer than it is. You may need to rephrase, explain, break the question into parts, or ask, "Is this question unclear?" Use humor—"Let's not all talk at once now!"—but do not answer the question for everyone else. Silence may be uncomfortable, but it creates space for people to respond.
- **Give positive feedback.** Affirm people's discoveries with a smile, a nod, and a simple "That's helpful." Receive all contributions to the conversation. When we encourage people, we gain their trust and assure them that they will not be criticized in front of others.
- **Clarify, clarify, clarify.** Make sure unclear words, issues, and contributions are understood. Use the glossary as an aid. Ask, "Could you define that further for us?" or "Tell me more about that." Draw out what you observe in others: "Mary, you look puzzled; does what I said make sense?" or, "John, it looks like you have an idea you want to share." Correct obvious errors gently but firmly if they would mislead the group, always using the Bible as your source (for example, "There is a verse that clarifies that, David. Let's see what it says"). Not every misstatement needs correction, but do follow up after the discussion if someone looks troubled.
- **Pray for your group members.** The more you pray for your group, the more you will love them as God does and become attuned to their needs. Some leaders keep a record of prayer concerns with accompanying dates. They keep prayer notes in a handbag, on their phone, or in another convenient place. When they have spare time or are waiting in line, they scroll through the notes and pray for each person. God loves to respond to our prayers.



*Which of these relational dynamics is easiest for you?*

*As you lead, how might you mentor an apprentice leader in this strength?*

*Which of these relational dynamics are most challenging?*

*Brainstorm a list of ideas on how a person could grow in that dynamic.*

## Facing the Challenges

The preceding relational dynamics help a conversation about the Bible to go well. God is pleased when we share his Word with others. But Satan is not. Do not be surprised if the devil meddles with your group and tries to discourage you. Leading a small group can be challenging and sometimes messy. We will sometimes deal with opinionated people, nitpicky people, and argumentative people, as well as people pleasers, “fixers,” conflict-avoiders, and peacemakers. The leader’s challenge will be to create a safe, positive environment so that the group members—yes, all such kinds of people, including us—feel safe to ask questions and grow spiritually. It is not an easy task!

But with God’s guidance and a whole lot of grace, it can happen—because God wants it to happen, and he is in control of all things. He will take our efforts to serve him and work things together for our good and for his glory (Rom. 8:28). Do not let Satan dampen your enthusiasm! Remember that “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). See the devil’s interference as a challenge and a compliment. What you are doing bothers him. Good! Use these guidelines to deal with difficulties:


- **Pray for wisdom.** Ask God about it first. Then ask a trusted prayer partner.
- **Pick an appropriate time and place.** Most conflicts are handled privately, outside of the group setting. Use “time and place bracketing” to decide when is the right time and where is the right place to address an issue—perhaps it needs to take place outside of the group time when everyone has had some space from the situation.
- **Assume the best.** Assume that an offender’s intent was to help, not hurt—unless you have proof otherwise. For example, you might say, “I’m sure you did not mean to be hurtful when you asked someone outside our group to pray about Ashley’s marital problems, but it was hurtful to Ashley. Remember our commitment to keep confidences inside the group.” Offer to reconcile the two parties if their relationship becomes strained.
- **Apologize when necessary.** You are the spokesperson for your group. If someone in the group offends another member, and the two are unable to resolve the issue, you are responsible for apologizing as a representative of the group.

These are some common difficulties in a Bible discovery conversation:

- **Chatty group members.** An overly talkative person can monopolize a conversation and shut out everyone else. You might need to say, “Let’s hear from someone else. What do others observe?” Use humor. “Come on, everyone! Don’t make Frank do all the talking!” If necessary, you may need to talk privately with someone who talks more than they should. Affirm the person’s contributions and ask them to pace what they share so that others can contribute too. Ask the person to wait until another person responds before jumping in with an answer.

- **Negative and critical responses.** Some people are loud and opinionated; others are easily hurt and will shy away from conflict. Your role is to make sure no one belittles, embarrasses, or dominates. For example, if someone seems intent on church bashing, simply acknowledge that there are imperfections in churches and people, and try to redirect the conversation in a way like this: “Churches are not perfect because people are not perfect. But we are here to study the Bible together. Let’s look at the passage and see what its focus is.” Do not take the bait if someone is looking for an argument. If you refuse to argue, they will probably stop. In some cases, however, an offender may need to be confronted. Gently suggest that you will be glad to talk with them after the group study time so that everyone can focus on studying the Bible together. Then, when you can talk with them privately, offer some guidance along these lines: “I know you feel strongly about this, but others in the group do too. We need to respect everyone’s convictions and focus on the passage we are talking about and what unites us.”
- **Commentary compilations.** Occasionally people try to impress by giving lots of commentary input. Neutrally acknowledge it and restate your goal—to discover what the passage itself says. Ask, “How would you express that in your own words?” Use background information only as the group desires or needs in order to clarify the passage. Extra material will often confuse the conversation. Sometimes you may suggest additional reading that people can look up at home.
- **Chasing tangents.** Some people sidetrack on every issue, because they have a particular interest or because they are not prepared. To bring a group back on track, a leader must have a good grasp of the essential truths of the lesson. Gently but firmly bring the conversation back on track by reminding everyone that your goal is to investigate the main points of the passage.
- **Problematic answers.** Never convey that a comment is unappreciated or unnerving. Lovingly manage difficult or challenging comments with a neutral “That’s interesting” or a simple “Thank you.” Follow up with “Can someone build on that?” or “Does anyone have another thought?” If the response is confusing, you may say, “I’m not following you—could you explain that?” or “I’m confused about where you found that answer.” Sometimes a person can misunderstand a question; sometimes we might misunderstand an answer.
- **Needy group members.** Some people need more personal attention than others. Be kind and affirming of the person’s needs, but use “time and place bracketing” to handle the situation—this is not the time or the place to talk about these needs. Try to steer the discussion back on track by saying, “I know this is hard for you. Would you like to talk about this afterwards?” If the person is obviously distressed, you might suggest that another trusted participant leave the group with the person to listen to and pray with them. Or, if a coleader or apprentice leader is present, you might ask them to lead while you leave to spend time with the hurting person.
- **Betrayed confidences.** If one of the group’s agreed-on ground rules is to keep personal sharing confidential, the group may become divided if one person betrays another’s confidences. Remind everyone of the ground rules they agreed to. Empathize with the offended person, apologize on behalf of the group, and pray for healing and restored trust. Confront the offender, but talk to God first. Ask a trusted prayer partner to support you in

prayers for a humble heart and a gentle spirit as you express your concern to the person involved.

 *If you have led or participated in a group before, what additional ideas can you add to help manage these challenges lovingly?*

## Positive Praying

Always pray before you speak about or deal with a challenging issue. Seasoned leaders have found that when they prayed before trying to solve a problem, they could sense God's direction because things often worked out more easily than they would have expected. In some cases, the situation changed without a confrontation or a solution arose before the leader could deal with it. Qualified and experienced leaders are available to talk if you want to speak with someone about a specific concern. Call or contact someone at [info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org](mailto:info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org).

## In Conclusion


Engaging in a lively conversation with people we love is deeply satisfying. The passage we talk about is the pool into which we dive, not the springboard from which we jump. When different interpretations arise, resolve them on the basis of the passage. When different opinions arise, let it happen. Agree to disagree.

Imagine a large, open Bible lying in the middle of the table. All our conversation is about that Book and how it connects to our lives. Then imagine the conversation like the ball in a game of catch. The leader throws out the ball (representing a question or answer), and a group member catches it. The object is not to throw it back to the leader, but to freely throw the ball around the group. Think of the ball as a hot potato. You do not want to hang on to it, so you toss it to someone else. In a free-flowing discussion, the communication is among all group members, including the leader. That is conversation at its best.

If this feels a little overwhelming, that is okay. Like the apostle Paul, we ask, "Who is equal to the task?" None of us! Not without God working in and through us. He is equal to the task, and we partner with him. God does not call where he does not equip. Effective leadership is a process. Trust God to lead you; be patient with yourself. Prepare and pray continually. When you do, you can trust the results to God. He will use you.

 *What have you learned about being an effective leader? Summarize one of the most important points for you.*

*Think back to the story at the beginning. Whom did you most identify with? What specific points from this chapter might have resonated or helped?*

 *Based on this lesson, choose one thing you sense God is prompting you to grow in. What is that? What is one way you can grow in it? Be specific about what steps you will take. When will you start?*

# WHAT MATERIALS BEST SUPPORT THE DISCOVERY PROCESS?





*When has God provided the right tools at the right time? Spend some time appreciating him for his wisdom and provision, and thanking him for that gift.*



*Kiara sat and wondered what she had gotten herself into. She had agreed to come to a Global Coffee Break group at the invitation of her friend, Deja. She sat with her Bible, and a study guide on Isaiah in front of her. There was an Old Testament? What was a prophet? Was she supposed to know this? She kept her eyes down. Maybe if she looked busy reading and writing, no one would know she did not know. . . .*

*But the leader, Shanice, started out with a warm-up question she could answer, and laugh with the others. Shanice then directed the group to the introduction, and each group member took a turn reading it. Now, Kiara understood who Isaiah was. A man with the name tag DeAndre said, "I found the word prophet in the glossary. That helped me understand." To Kiara's relief, she found the glossary, and a map of ancient Israel.*

*Then they turned to the passage, and Kiara's chest tightened up again as they read the first few verses. What was this saying? But Shanice just asked questions, focusing on words there in the text. Kiara could find answers there. She felt a little bit of triumph—she could find that answer! Other group members also asked questions. Kiara took a deep breath—she had a lot to learn, but perhaps she could.*



*Put yourself in Kiara's shoes. What did she find challenging? What other things might she have found challenging?*

## Begin with the End in Mind

Choosing the best materials will need care and prayer. What kind of help do you need? Ideas for starting a conversation? Help in asking questions? Do you wonder if you even need a written study or leader guide?



*What help do you need?  
What questions do you have about materials?*

Hopefully you will find some answers in this chapter.

Materials written specifically for Bible discovery realize that Bible discovery starts with your group, the Bible, and the Spirit. Good materials must allow you to tailor the conversation to your group. The materials must not assume prior knowledge, but allow the group to start where they are at in their spiritual lives. Group members must be invited to come as they are, bringing their own lives, and an open and inquiring mind. The materials then give space for the Spirit to draw their life into God's story as the leader guides the conversation.

Not all materials work well with this method. Some teach too much, presume too much background knowledge, or press for a specific outcome—all of which can inhibit discovery. A Bible-centered study is a launch pad for conversation about God's Word and how God calls us to live in his world. Materials can be designed to specifically aid in the process of Bible discovery. It is not just a secondary factor, but is an essential part of Bible discovery.

## The Discover Your Bible Series

The Discover Your Bible (DYB) series is designed specifically for Bible discovery, and has been honed by over fifty years of experience. The books continue to be updated and revised. The lessons supply a series of questions based on specific Bible passages. That is it. No lengthy readings or outside materials to research, nothing to memorize, no “test” to see if you got it right. Just the joy of discovery. This series covers entire Old and New Testament books or major portions of them. There are also thematic books that trace biblical themes such as prayer, the fruit of the Spirit, and Easter. Each lesson focuses on chunks of Scripture so that discovery happens within the context of how the passage fits in the story of God's relationship with his people. This also allows for contextualization and inclusion for a variety of voices, cultures, and communities. Each study in the series has both a study guide and a leader guide.

### *Study Guide Content*

The study guide lessons contain a set of discovery questions and some space to write answers. There are “conversation prompts” that directly invite participants to wonder and add their own questions. The main questions given focus on specific verses to guide the reader's search. The guides seek to resource the entire group so that all can participate. Each aspect of the study guide is designed to do so.

- **Introduction, historical snapshot, maps**—are not given just for information's sake, but provide necessary information to understand the original context. New group members are not left without the information they need to fully engage, and for correct interpretation and application.
- **God's Story**—a chart that helps newcomers see how this book fits in the big biblical story.
- **Glossary**—gives definitions for words or persons in the biblical passage that seekers may not know; verses are usually given for those who want to go more in-depth, and so that seekers realize it is the Bible, not just a person, defining a word.
- **Study notes**—a few study notes give necessary, key information to support discovery.
- **Questions**—a balance of fact, interpretation, and application questions.
- **More to Discover**—additional verses to invite further discovery, and connections with other passages of the Bible when helpful.
- **Invitation and prayer of commitment**—these resource every individual and leader with a simple invitation to know Christ, so it is there for all with no assumptions and no pressure.

### *Leader Guide Content*

A leader guide accompanies each DYB study as an aid for facilitating the conversation, but this is not an “answer book.” It contains some interpretive guidance and extra questions to help the leader flesh out the discussion. Sometimes the leader guide alerts the leader to difficult passages or gives suggestions on how to deal with sensitive topics. It helps mentor

a leader in how to lead, awareness of group dynamics, and how to navigate complexities of the text. Both the extra questions and information are intended for use only as needed by the group. To lead is to keep one ear on the Spirit and the other on the group!

DYB is actively investing in and writing more studies, and translating them into Korean, Spanish, and other languages. For more info and a list of titles in these series, see [GlobalCoffeeBreak.org](http://GlobalCoffeeBreak.org).



*Think of the material design described in this section. How might these support a group in your community?*

## Preparing for a Group

This series encourages the group to prepare prior to a discussion in order to enrich the conversation, but preparation is not mandatory. Knowing that God works by his timing, not ours, leaders welcome input from group members whether they have prepared in advance or share off-the-cuff insights. Over time, participants discover that when they read and reflect before meeting with the group, they enjoy the discussion more.

Leaders prepare by becoming familiar with the passage in order to facilitate a conversation, especially thinking of questions that would draw out the group's discoveries. They do not teach, and this may call for exerting self-discipline to hold back their own discoveries while directing questions to the group such as "What do you think? What do these verses tell us?" In that way, the group invests in the process and owns what they discover.

## Adult Learning Principles


The adult learning principles by Jane Vella are helpful to guide the discussion. They are carefully incorporated into the DYB series. The first principle emphasizes *needs assessment*, or understanding your group, their needs, life questions, and goals. Another, *immediacy* reminds us that material must be relevant; group members must be able to connect the text to their here and now. Discover Your Bible introductions and leader guides help leaders understand how to make those connections.

*Safety* takes into account the entire context. *Sound relationships* and *clear roles* remind the leader that their job is to guide the conversation, and the mutuality and equality of the participants and the leader. DYB materials help the entire group own the discussion and participate. This also draws on the principle of *respect for learners as decision makers* and participants.

For transformation, for learning to have deep impact, the discussion and questions need to be dynamic. *Teamwork* and *engagement* are key principles of the DYB materials. *Praxis* invites reflection with healthy *accountability* as seekers begin exploring truth and taking small steps of faith, and mature believers deepen their walk. The leader is also accountable in his or her preparation, and humble facilitation. The DYB questions are designed to draw out the *ideas, feelings, and actions* of the group members, engaging their whole self. Good *sequence and reinforcement* helps both the group and content. The materials help the leader pace the

group on their own spiritual journey. They also help connect the passages to the previous chapters, building on and reinforcing what has been learned. The beautiful theme of the gospel and our Lord is woven throughout, reinforcing his glorious grace!



 Highlight or underline one thing that stood out to you.  
Put a ? next to something that makes you wonder.

*Pick one that intrigues you, or you are most unfamiliar with.  
How might that enhance a learning experience?*

## Evaluating Bible Study Material

Other materials can also be used, of course. In fact, you can even write your own lessons. The following criteria will help you evaluate whether other materials or the lessons you write are suited for Bible discovery:

- Is the Bible itself, or someone else's opinion about the Bible, the main focus of the lessons? Bible discovery works directly with a Bible passage.
- Do the lessons presume biblical knowledge and Christian maturity that a newcomer to the Bible might not have? Bible discovery material should include spiritual seekers as well as mature believers.

- Are Bible passages used in their context or taken out of context? True discovery happens within the context it was written.
- Do the materials merely teach, or do they emphasize discovery? Teaching may undermine discovery and participant's ownership of their learning.
- Do the materials get at basic truth, or do they lead to a predetermined conclusion?
- Do the questions consistently point to God and his work, or do they encourage a works-oriented, legalistic approach?
- Do the materials themselves foster belonging, safety, respect, and other adult learning principles?
- Do the materials give adequate support to the leader to facilitate—not to teach, nor leave him or her under-equipped?
- Are the materials easily contextualized in different cultures, settings, and communities?

Whatever materials you choose, be assured that the Holy Spirit will bless your efforts to lead others to know God through his Word. Be patient. Listen a lot. Love and respect the people with whom you are sharing God's Word. You will be blessed as you bless others. God's Word never returns to him empty. Count on it!

## Further Resources

DYB has free samples and free standalone lessons on our website at [GlobalCoffeeBreak.org](http://GlobalCoffeeBreak.org). Some of our training elaborates on how to maximize the use of our leader and study guides. Training is not necessary to use them, but leaders new and experienced always come away with new insights!



*In summary, why is choosing the right material to use in a discovery Bible group so important?*

*As you think about Kiara's story, how might the DYB materials help a newcomer learn to read and study the Bible?*

*What impact might a group study have on equipping group members to study the Bible in their own private devotions as well?*



*How have you evaluated materials in the past?*

*What criteria have you used?*

*What changes will you make in your evaluation of materials?*

# 7

## HOW DO WE CHOOSE A STUDY?





*Think of a time when a book, a video, conversation, or a word of encouragement came at just the right time. What was the effect on you?*



*Akinyi sat down across from Makena. She pushed a list of DYB titles across the table. "Here are all the studies that have 8 lessons that we can choose from this semester. They will fit in our schedule."*

*Makena glanced at the list. "Thank you for compiling that. But I wonder, how do these studies fit within the bigger picture?"*

*"The bigger picture?" Akinyi queried.*

*"Yes. We want to reach out to our community. Our community has gone through a lot of changes lately. We have had a lot of new people move into our neighborhood. They've started on a new season in life in this area. How can we keep them in mind as we choose? Who has said they will come to the group already? What do we know of their needs?" Makena responded.*



*What criteria did Akinyi and Makena use?  
What did each consider?*

*How do you think Makena's observations might impact their selection of a study?*

Perhaps you are just beginning to use Discover Your Bible (DYB) studies in a Global Coffee Break (GCB) group. Or perhaps you have been using them for years. The question will always arise, "Which study?"

## Begin with Prayer

Prayer is a part of our decision! The Holy Spirit searches the hearts and minds of the group members, and those who will be here. He knows what your group needs. Have there already been signs of his direction? How has he been working in your group members lives? In your community? In your church? Is there a study that would align itself?



*Pause and thank our Triune God for his wisdom and his intimate knowledge of each member of your group, and those you do not yet know but will come. Ask him for his supervision over this process.*

## Know Your Purpose

An outreach Bible discovery group keeps their eye on their goal: reaching out, welcoming, building safety. Groups can choose studies based on who they hope will come. What are their questions and needs? However, this does not mean that one sticks to "easy" books of the Bible. Sometimes, people may think some books of the Bible are "harder" than others. There is a certain truth to that. Some books of the Bible draw on prior biblical knowledge to a greater

extent. Others include genres that are very distinct from what we are familiar with. However, each biblical book has an important message. DYB studies are designed specifically to help the leader adapt for newcomers and provide information to make the book accessible to all. Each study draws points of relevance for application, and guide the leader in contextualizing. Each study points to the gospel, from Genesis to Esther to Revelation.

The following may be helpful questions as you consider which study to choose.

**Who:**

- Whom are you trying to reach out to? Who do you hope will come to your group?
- Who comes to your group?

**Context:**

- What is going on in your community? Is there a book of the Bible or thematic study that would intersect with some of the concerns and questions from the community?
- What is your church or faith community studying? Can a DYB study enhance the sermon series?

**Goals and Needs:**

- What are your group's goals? Needs?
- What would bring energy and excitement?
- Is there material that an apprentice/emerging leader would be eager to or more willing to participate with? How can you use the upcoming study to grow others?

**Rhythm:**

- Do you have a good balance of Old Testament, New Testament, and thematic books?
- What is your schedule? While important, this is not the most important question. Many times, a group can go through a lesson slower, or use standalone lessons (there are some freely available at *GlobalCoffeeBreak.org* in our store) to adapt a study to their schedule.



*Are there other questions or criteria you would add? Why?*

*Are there books of the Bible you have been hesitant to use in an outreach Bible study? Why or why not?*

*Returning to the story of Akinyi and Makena, would you add anything to Makena's advice?*

## Fresh Eyes

Groups that have had consistent attendance for years often find going through a study they did years ago refreshing. The leader may be able to go deeper. If there are many newcomers in the group, their new eyes will bring fresh insight to all. People's lives have changed; it can be rewarding to see how the Spirit has shaped each one during the years that have passed.

DYB is actively writing new materials, and revising old studies. Our materials are for groups all over the world, and we are committed to writing them in diverse groups. If you are interested in joining a writing team, please reach out and contact [info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org](mailto:info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org) for more training.

You can visit [GlobalCoffeeBreak.org](http://GlobalCoffeeBreak.org) "shop" to see a list of current studies.



*How will you and your team use this list?*

*Put together a specific plan: Who will meet to choose? When?*

*How will you include prayer?*

# 8

## HOW DO WE GET STARTED AND DEVELOP LEADERS?





*Has there been someone in your life that has mentored or encouraged you to take on a new challenge? What was that like for you?*



*Dimas and Irvan put a few last things away after the last of their group members had left. They had just finished their study from Discover Joshua.*

*“Dimas, you did a great job leading the study these past few weeks. I still remember that first day you came to my group,” Irvan said.*

*Dimas laughed. “Yes! I couldn’t have imagined this day back then. I didn’t even know Christ, and here I am having led my first group!”*

*The two of them paused and just praised God together for the work he had done in Dimas’ life. As they wrapped up, Dimas added, “Thank you also for all that you invested in me. I didn’t think I could lead, but you saw it in me, and encouraged me. This past study has been the most encouraging for me too. I realized I learned even more from preparing, leading it, and listening to others. Thank you.”*



*What might have been specific ways that Irvan might have helped mentor Dimas? Write down some initial ideas on how to develop new leaders.*

So what is next for you after reading all of this? Some of you are highly creative and already know what you want to do next. Just reading this manual has gotten you pumped about the possibilities of using the Bible discovery method. Great! Go for it! This manual will help you get started.

Some of you are more methodical. You want more how-to’s, structure, and organization. Here are some ideas on how to begin.

- **Pray.** The first step in beginning a Bible discovery group is prayerful creativity. Ask God to show you a place to meet and people to join you.
- **Compile a list of potential participants.** Think of family, friends, coworkers, fellow students, and neighbors with whom you want to share the Word of God. Remember that sometimes people you never thought would be interested may be prompted by the Holy Spirit to join you. People who initially were indifferent—or even hostile—may be willing to join a relational Bible study. In many cases such individuals come to faith after reading the Bible. If someone seems hesitant when you invite him or her to a Bible discovery group, suggest that they try it once or twice; if it is not for them, they don’t need to continue. Often one experience will encourage them to want more.
- **Decide on a time and place to meet.** Once you have used prayerful creativity about whom to invite, turn your creativity to the time and place. The main criteria should be a convenient time and a place where conversation can easily take place. Groups can meet at all times of the day. An early morning breakfast group can meet in a restaurant or home. Church-based

programs often meet in the morning or afternoon. Many churches include childcare and a children's ministry called Little Lambs or Story Hour. For more information, contact [info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org](mailto:info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org). Some churches piggyback a Bible discovery group with an exercise class, parenting class, or evening children's ministry.

- **Learn from others' experiences.** One church group reached working mothers at 3:30 in the afternoon, when they arrived home for their school-age children. This 3:30-5:00 p.m. Global Coffee Break took advantage of a children's music ministry that the church sponsored in that time slot. While older children participated in the music program, toddlers and infants were watched by available high school students.

Another church provided a Bible discovery ministry in the evening. Many single moms attended this group. Dinner was also provided, and volunteers from the church supervised homework and tutored children while their moms discussed the Bible. An urban program in an inner-city neighborhood offered Bible discovery groups in both English and Spanish. Many young moms attended, and a lunch was provided by church volunteers three weeks out of each month; the women attending made lunch on the remaining weeks. Baby clothes and equipment were also donated. Another Bible discovery group met right after an early morning Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. This group was for anyone from AA who was interested in studying the Bible. Some ministries have a Bible discussion following some type of sporting activity. A Saturday morning venue reached men and women who were unavailable during weekdays.

A program does not need to be as large or structured as some of the ones previously mentioned. Some people find it easier to meet with just a few others at a coffee shop. These smaller groups can also become effective accountability groups. These are just some ideas from other groups; you may have others. God will lead you to the people and the places where his Word can be explored. Invite a friend or two to pray for and assist you in your outreach adventure.

- **Start with a special event.** Some church programs offer a special activity as an entry point. A neutral event with a speaker or demonstration gives a person the chance to meet those who will attend the Bible discovery. They will also get a preview and be invited to come to the next meeting.
- **Promote.** If you invite your community as a whole, make sure your promotion is clear and appeals to someone who is new to Bible study. State that no prior knowledge of the Bible is needed and that this is a basic study that will look at the contents of the Bible and explore Christianity. Be clear about the location and length of the study. Place any advertising—flyers, newspaper ads, etc.—where people you are trying to reach will see them. Laundromats, children's consignment shops, grocery stores, and libraries often allow you post flyers. Include a phone number so that people can call for information. However, word of mouth works best. The most effective way to invite someone is by asking them personally.
- **Ask for help.** Support is available if you are interested in knowing more about the Bible discovery method or the ministry of Global Coffee Break. This manual is written as a

resource to help you get started. If you would like further coaching or training, contact us at [info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org](mailto:info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org) and someone will connect with you personally to answer your questions.

## Starting New Groups from an Existing Group

Perhaps you already have a Bible discovery group. Maybe it has attracted so many people that not everyone can participate well. Are you dreaming of starting another group? Have you thought of a different location? Do others want to get involved? Great! What a wonderful challenge.

Be sure to include your group in the process of starting a new group. Groups who grow together spiritually sometimes resist change. Prepare them weeks in advance about the possibility of starting a new group. Ask for their input. Do not force the division, but paint a picture of blessing others by including more people. *Is not this too good to keep to ourselves? Who might want to come?* If the group decides to divide in half, ease the transition by meeting together occasionally. If a coleader and a couple of others venture out and start a new group, bless them and pray for them. Multiplying is part of God's plan. He will affirm our obedience with his blessing.



*As you think about your community, which ideas might work best for you and your potential group?*

*What other ideas have you learned from others to add to this list?*

## Developing Leaders

Developing new leaders is necessary for Bible discovery groups to grow. Be proactive in determining who should lead a group. What kind of person should you look for? Someone with the “gift of gab”? Extroverts who find it easy to make conversation? Yes, some good leaders are extroverts and make conversation easily, but if we only consider those traits, we will miss some excellent leaders.

Author and small group leadership trainer Dave Stark points out the value of different personalities and temperaments. Introverts can be good listeners who really hear what others say and naturally encourage them to participate. Is education and teaching ability helpful? Possibly, but it may also impede discovery because teaching is so innate to the leader. The most important qualifications for a Bible discovery leader are a loving heart, a humble spirit, and a commitment to prayer. So if you or someone you know is a little on the shy side but loves and cares about others, you may be the person God is calling to leadership. (See Chapter 5 for more on being an effective leader.)

Where do you find these few good men and women?

- **Another group member.** Consider whether someone in your group might make a good leader. That person already has had the benefit of learning about leadership from the group leader.

- **A qualified new believer.** Another possible choice would be a person who came to faith through Bible discovery in recent years. Care should be taken in putting a new Christian in a position of leadership, but often these individuals remember how they felt when they first joined a discovery group and will be very sensitive to newcomers.
- **Leaders from other churches.** If your church leadership allows this, leaders from other churches who fit the criteria we have outlined, especially if they have had experience in a discovery group, are an excellent choice.

## Identifying New Leaders

Start by asking God. When he brings people to mind, approach them, tell them what you see in them, and ask them to pray about whether they also feel God calling them to lead a group. Give them several days to pray, and then check back. If current circumstances lead them to say “no,” ask if you may approach them again in six months or a year.

If a potential leader is interested but intimidated, extra training can move them toward readiness. Let people practice via apprenticing. People often learn through experience, so invite a potential leader to lead a lesson. This will give the person an opportunity to lead while you are there to lend support. Apprenticing in this way is helpful. Again, it will be important to remember the qualities of a leader expressed in Chapter 5. Continue to give support in prayer and with regular contact. Be available if questions or issues arise.



*What qualities will you look for in a potential leader? List some possibilities.*

## Preparation and Prayer

Once you identify new leaders, equip them for leadership. Have them read this manual. Encourage them to prepare carefully and prayerfully for each conversation about the Bible. Instill a dependency on prayer. When we develop a praying posture, we crave it and hunger to pray with other leaders. Many do so weekly or monthly, either on a separate day or prior to or after their discussion. They share answered prayers to encourage one another. God uses prayer to change people's lives.

When we put prayer first, we need to face our fears of praying aloud. Do not worry if your heart pounds, your voice quavers, words come out wrong, or you break out in a sweat. Just do it! Remember, you have an audience of One. Picture yourself as a small child crawling onto Jesus' lap. He will receive you gladly. Share your concerns about praying. Some have felt exactly as you do. They will be your cheerleaders. But God, who longs to commune with you in community with others, will give the biggest “amen.” Use one or more of these ideas:

- **Pray with a partner.** You may be leading alone at home or in a coffee shop or other setting, but make certain you are not alone in prayer. Walk with a friend in the neighborhood in which you are meeting, praying for those in each house you pass. Pray together by phone if you cannot pray face to face. But pray with a partner. It is a must.

- **Pray in community.** Ask people who are devoted to prayer if they will pray for you and your group members. Though some of them might not be able to attend a group, their intercession will reap results.
- **Pray specifically.** God honors our prayers and brings people to our groups who need his love. We hear their stories. When people have specifically and persistently asked God to bring the spiritually hungry and those who are new to the Bible, they have come. When they asked God to give them twenty new people, believing he would answer, over time twenty new people came. As people prayed specifically, they saw countless individuals come to faith in Christ and become disciples. As those new believers grew spiritually, many became leaders. Prayer makes a dramatic difference.
- **Pray for specific events.** Outreach events and seasons need concentrated prayer. Pray at the beginning of a season or an outreach event or when a new person joins. Sometimes results are not immediately visible, but God answers in his time and in his way.
- **Pray to prevent Satan's attacks.** The devil wants to discourage this ministry. Do not let him. Pray! The more you pray, the less influence he will have.
- **Pray with other leaders.** Leaders who pray together can share what would be inappropriate to share in their group: personal needs, leadership issues, and the needs of their group members insofar as that is possible without betraying confidences. Write out a list of prayer requests prior to meeting together so that the group can spend time praying rather than sharing.
- **Pray for your group.** Be creative about when and where to pray. You may wish to keep notes on prayer requests, as suggested in chapter 5. One leader prayed for her group every day as she commuted to work. Another person prayed in the shower. A jogger prayed on his morning run. Specific places and times prompt a pattern of prayer. Develop a habit that fits you. There is no one right way, but praying is non-negotiable.
- **Pray in your group.** Group members will learn from you and will value your prayer support. Use simple words and short phrases as you pray with group members. You want people to see that prayer is a relationship, not a ritual. That will make it easier for them to dare to pray too. Another way to encourage your group to pray is to "pray the text back to God" after your conversation is finished. Choose phrases from the Bible passage they talked about and repeat them back to God in prayer. That is easy for even the most timid pray-er.

A Bible discovery ministry requires commitment. Seeing people come to faith in Christ through Bible discovery is the peak of joy. We have begun and concluded this manual with prayer. We have laced each chapter with suggestions about prayer. Remember that all of this prayer is for Bible discovery, which is what leaders will spend most of their small group discussion time doing. Manage this process well so that God has the time to work through his Word. Expect to be blessed! Like Paul, we can continually ask that whenever we speak, we will "fearlessly make known the ministry of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19).



*Where, when, and how will you start? Whom will you invite?*

## NEXT STEPS TO CONSIDER





What is your vision? What has God laid on your heart? Global Coffee Break is here to help.

- Attend a conference.
- Host or attend a workshop or training, from an introductory equipping, to effectively using the leader and study guides, evangelism, and more.
- Become a member on our online portal with equipping videos and book discounts.
- Read stories at [raiseupglobal.org/stories](http://raiseupglobal.org/stories)
- Join the community on Facebook at [facebook.com/CoffeeBreakGroups](https://facebook.com/CoffeeBreakGroups)
- Explore samples and materials at [GlobalCoffeeBreak.org](http://GlobalCoffeeBreak.org)
- Email with any questions! [info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org](mailto:info@GlobalCoffeeBreak.org)

Let us close in prayer for you:

Our Father, we praise you that you are our Father, and that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. Your Word will not return to you empty, but it will accomplish what you desire, and achieve your purpose—a purpose of joy and peace, that is for your renown. We are amazed at you, for you have made salvation to be your everlasting sign that will endure forever (Isaiah 55:11-13). We pray for your Word to work mightily in us, and through our groups, to our communities, and to our world. May each individual reading this booklet be equipped by your Spirit to have a boldness of faith to be your witness in their circles of friends, town, community, and around the world (Acts 1:8). May you strengthen each one out of your glorious riches through your Spirit in their inner being. May they be rooted and established in love to welcome others to know you. May they together grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. May they, as they study together, know this love that surpasses knowledge—that they may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. You are able to do more than all we ask or imagine, according to your power that is at work in each and every new and seasoned Global Coffee Break leader and group member. The glory is all yours, Father, in the Global Coffee Break groups, and in the church, and in our Lord Savior Jesus Christ! (Ephesians 3:14-21). In the name of our precious Jesus, the Living Word, amen.



“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth,  
that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created”  
(James 1:18). We know the power of the Word of God.  
But how can we introduce our neighbors to the  
Word of God? Can a Bible study really be used as an  
outreach? If so, how? What would be the steps?

Here is a practical guide from Global Coffee Break  
ministries, drawing from over fifty years of experience.  
How might God work through his Word in your  
community?

