

Discovery Bible Method

By Pastor Alan Utting



'DBM is a simple, structured way of opening the Bible with someone so that they encounter God directly through His living Word.' Crossway.org.au

(A summary of DBM)

The Discovery Bible Method (DBM) is a simple 'inductive' approach for reading the Bible in a small group to discover God's truth for themselves, rather than relying on a commentaries and leader's interpretation. The method involves reading a short passage, retelling the story from memory, and then discussing four key questions about what the passage reveals- about God, about people, how to apply it, and who to share it with. The goal is to empower participants to hear from God directly, encourage personal application, and foster spiritual growth and discipleship along with reproducing groups.

Background to DBM

This recent move of God in studying the Bible in this 'inductive' way has its roots in North India. In recent years people in this region were particularly resistant to the gospel, and several evangelists were killed for sharing their faith. A missionary from United States who was working with these evangelists before their deaths, was soon afterwards expelled from the country so he then relocated with his family to Singapore. For the next couple of months he cried out to God for answers as to how this people could be brought to Christ. It was a heavy burden he carried and through this time God directed him to study Matthew chapter 10 and Luke Chapter 10 where he discovered a new and yet old approach to evangelism. He later returned to North India and long story short, he trained up one evangelist on the approach God had showed him in winning people to Himself. For the first year or so in praying together and studying scripture not a lot happened. However once people started coming to know the Lord through DBM approach the movement grew rapidly with thousands of groups formed. From there Iranian Christian leaders after some reluctance also embraced the strategy and in time thousands of groups were formed there with people coming to know the Lord. This approach has now spread around the world with great success.

In summary, from Matthew chapter 10:5-14 there is the commissioning of the 12 disciples, while Luke chapter 10:1-12 is the commissioning of the 72 disciples. There is much overlap between the two commissioning. Notice these three things:

1. The harvest is ready

Jesus speaking: 'He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field' (Luke 10:2). We need to work *with* God rather than *for* God. The difference is that in working *for* God we decide what needs to be done whereas in working *with* God means we find out from Him what He wants us to do.

2. The person of peace

Definition of a Person of peace: 'Is a nonbeliever who is willing to gather a group of nonbelievers to go on a journey of discovery with them'. *

Look and pray hard that the Holy Spirit will lead you to this person of peace and seek to build a friendship with them even though that may take time. Don't spend your time on those who are not ready to hear God's stories as the need is great. Even Jesus in his wider ministry would move on from those not willing to listen to him for example the rich young ruler Luke 18:18-30.

In DBM, it is suggested that you need to 'go slow to go fast'. For example, it is often wise not to disclose your religious beliefs too quickly, as this may negatively affect the way others respond. From my own recent experience with two new friends, I discovered that early disclosure of being a believer and pastor changed the course of our interactions. At first, they were very open to having coffee with me, but after learning my background they weren't so keen.

3. Share the message and heal the sick

'As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give' (Matt 10:7,8). Learn to let God lead you to the person of peace even though it may take a while.

Observation

1. Don't overlook needy people, as sometimes cast aways from society have a hunger for truth to help them get out of the hole they are in. In India and Iran that is often the case.
2. Let the person of peace decide on the location where you will meet. It could be at a café or home etc. It's good to have food and drink while having conversations. Let the person of peace take the lead.
3. It is a process which may take a long time to effectively learn.

Steps in a Discovery Bible Study:

1. Connect (Check-in):

Start by checking in with each other about your week, often through questions like 'What are you thankful for?' and 'What are you stressed about?'.

2. Read the Passage:

Read a short passage of scripture together, perhaps 5-10 verses, using the same Bible translation.

3. Retell the Story:

Have one or more participants retell the passage from memory to ensure everyone has the story.

4. Discover the Truth:

Discuss the passage using open-ended questions such as:

- What does this passage say about God?
- What does this passage say about people (or us)?
- How can we apply this truth to our lives this week? (e.g., "How does this change how I view God or myself?")
- Who can we share this truth with this week?

5. Apply and Obey:

Commit to taking a concrete step of obedience based on what was learned.

6. Accountability (Follow-up):

In the next session, discuss how you followed through on your commitment and who you shared the passage with.

Key Principles:

- **Discover for Yourself:**

The aim is for each participant to discover God's truth directly from the Bible, not from an external leader.

- **No External Leader:**

There is no single leader with all the answers: the Holy Spirit is seen as guiding the group.

- **Simple and Reproducible:**

The method is designed to be simple enough for anyone to use, regardless of their background, and can be easily replicated to form new groups.

- **Focus on Application:**

The emphasis is on applying the scripture to daily life and sharing what is learned with others, moving from Bible study to discipleship.

Resources

Phil Moore, *The forgotten manifesto* *

You Tube clip, *Sheep Among Wolves*

<https://youtu.be/yl6td0OjqAA?si=7Z0rAHNms3WfujJh>