

## For the Harvest Podcast #5 - Filling Up Your Discovery Group

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This week we'll be talking about how we actually make the group so that it's filled with the faith beginners. And a couple of principles we'll be talking about throughout our talk is Ministry before meetings in a sense that you want to have meeting people, have contact list, prayer list and have some ministry before you actually start the meeting so you have people to invite.

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Another thing is make sure you're inviting faith beginners and not your best Christian friends.

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Thanks for joining us again on the "For the Harvest" podcast, where we have conversations around accelerating evangelistic growth globally. We're here at podcast #5 . By the time this episode drops, we are into the 2025 New Year. And before we get into the subject today, I want to just give you a little update on the whereabouts of myself and John.

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Over the last couple of months, we've had a pretty exciting itinerary. We returned from India, at the end of November, early December. We got to spend a couple of weeks there with a just amazing group that's in the middle of a church planting movement. There's house churches that are just multiplying rapidly across some of the hardest to reach places in the world.

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And just a quick snapshot of that in February when we went, this group had about 4500 house churches, in a period of about six years from start to that point. And then when we returned in November, they were at around 7300 house churches. It's just multiplying so fast. And we've got to do some training with that group.

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And John's going to share a little bit of the experience doing that training.

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Yeah it was just it was just wonderful to see these guys are so teachable and open. And one of the things they say is that the things that we're teaching about how to harvest like Jesus are the principles that they have been practicing, but they hadn't had the information from that angle.

And so it's really helping them to take some new steps and to do some other things.

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So we appreciate that. Another kind of interesting thing that they're doing is that they are engaging 87 unreached (or unengaged) people groups at this point out of that. And so that's probably the exciting thing that we're looking at too. So anyway, that's a pretty exciting thing. We're going to keep going back a couple times a year and we might have to take some trips back.

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So some of you guys might want to keep and keep that in mind and touch base with us. We can go back and start to kind of help them to develop ministry to some of the younger people there. These groups have young people in them, but they're not having groups, particularly for older high school, college students, and young adults.

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So maybe doing some of that.

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One of the interesting things we found when we were there the first time this last year was when we taught about the new wineskins, and you can see one of the earlier podcasts we've done on New Wineskins. That's really what the beginning stages and the later stages of a house church is. And so when we saw that and saw how well it was working there, we were really aggressive and interested and making that happen here in the US.

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And so we've put a major emphasis on discovery groups. Because of that, we get to learn a lot from them. And, a discovery group. Just a reminder, we talked about that last podcast, episode four. We did a deep dive into what a discovery group looks like, from the beginning to the end and how to make it happen.

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And today we're going to do a deep dive. And probably the question that came to mind while you were listening, I know it comes to my mind is how do I get a discovery group started? Because the idea of sitting around a scripture with some lost friends and reading it and talking about it, that's like a dream for many people in ministry, it's just what they crave.

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But it's getting it to happen, getting the people to a relational point where you can make the ask and how to make the ask. Those are all big question marks and a lot of our minds. And so I'm excited to sit down with you three today and ask some of those questions, because I know you've got some experience on that.

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Yeah. Great. Good, good. Stephen. Yeah. Just a reminder, a discovery group is like a new small new wineskin. It can be anywhere from 1 to 4 people we talked about last time. This is a meeting that's designed for faith beginners, those who are unsaved, those who are not sure if they're saved yet, or just brand new believers.

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And so that's kind of who the target is. And so we talked about designing for that last time, but this time I'm going to talk about how to fill it up with faith beginners. Because one of the things that gets to be a problem, in a lot of Bible studies that are being started up, is that we know Christians mainly.

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A lot of the Christians know Christians. They invite their Christian friends, they fill their group up with a bunch of Christians, and then all of a sudden the ratios are off for getting the non-Christian and the new person to kind of feel comfortable with the group. We talked about that a lot and showed some diagrams in the other podcasts.

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I hope you will look at that. But this will be talking about how do we actually make the group so that it's filled with the faith beginners and a couple of principles we'll be talking about throughout our talk is ministry before meetings in a sense that you want to be meeting people, have a contact list of prayer list and have some ministry before you actually start the meeting.

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So you have people to invite. And another thing is, make sure you're inviting faith beginners and not your best Christian friends. Yeah. And that becomes pretty crucial. Who you invite? Basically, who's going to come? And then the third thing is anybody who's coming, those that are coming, you want to encourage them and equip them to invite their friends to come.

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But one thing you have to watch out for, even the new non-Christian, will sometimes invite the most Christian person he knows to the Bible study, and so he even can mess it up.

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So you want to help them? Yeah, we have a good design for him. We have. We had our neighborhood group. We had one of the guys. It's not even a Christian yet. He invited a guy from work that happened to be a pastor. So he invited him to our group.

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But, you know, just not thinking about these things. So anyway, we'll talk more about that. All the things we talk about go back to and are coming from what Jesus did and starting his ministry in John 1-4. And, we see how he went to where he thought he could find ripe, repentant type people.

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He looked for signs of interest, and he began to move with the movers. He asked questions that kind of discerned where they're at and to develop some dialog with them. And then he invited them to a small gathering at where he was staying. And that was the first what I call discovery Bible study. And why do I call it a Bible study?

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I don't know if they had a Bible there. You know, they might ask you, he might have pulled a scroll out. Probably not. But when Jesus is speaking is the Bible. He's the word of God. So that's, you know, getting pure, you know, whole food, whole biblical food. And in that meeting and of course, they came away believing.

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So that's what we're gonna be talking about today.

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That's good. Yeah. One thing that I always teach collegiate leaders and just other leaders is to think about it in terms of affinity groups. So think about your community or your college campus or whatever. You're in different niches or people groups or, you know, you know, another term a lot of missiologists use this Oikos thinking about these small groups and so breaking it down and thinking about what are the fishing pools like, where are good places where I can go fishing for people that might be open to the gospel?

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And really, then you're looking kind of like in Luke 10 persons of peace. And so that discovery evangelism is the way to discover persons of peace in order to start these discovery Bible studies. So talking with lots of people, you have to talk to a lot of people. You have to start a lot of conversations.

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You pray for open doors, but you also jiggle handles. So you start a lot of spiritual conversations. You take initiative. This is not a passive like God's just going to drop someone in my lap type of thing. If you want to start a discovery Bible study, make that like a prayer goal like God, help me start a Discovery Bible study this year or this semester, or whatever it is, and pray every day.

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And then, have a list of non-Christians that you're praying for every single day. And so I have guys that I surf with, you know, in the water. I got a lot of guys like that. We're kind of at the same level in surfing. So I'm praying for those guys every day, praying for Dennis, praying for Ryan.

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And it's just amazing when I'm consistent, praying I end up in the same location with them all the time. It's almost crazy and I forget about that. So praying every day for the same people in those Oikos', in those fishing pools. And, you know, some people call it the Holy Ghost hit list. You're praying specifically for those people and you're trying to get it.

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And so that's just a few ideas. I got a bunch of random ideas about getting that going.

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Yeah. And I think the principle is to look at what are your circles of influence? And so whether that's your work or your neighborhood or your campus or family that doesn't know Christ or, you know, your kids sports or hobbies, and things like that. So thinking about that and even your church, there's opportunities there.

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And so, I think that's kind of what Stephen's getting at is like, maybe in those examples, Dad, I know that you've started a group in your neighborhood. We'd love to hear about it, like. Yeah. How do you do that with your neighbors around you?

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Well, I've been building some relationships. Just friendship, going for walks and seeing them, and I said hi to him and did a little serving thing here and there for a couple of years. My wife's really good at that stuff. And, but they knew we were going to go to India. And so we came back from India.

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We told them we learned about some stuff there. That's really cool. So, I'd like to try it out here in America. So would you be willing to give this meeting a try? With us and, just try it one time and they said, "okay!" Well, we go to our two neighbors, one completely non-Christian neighbor, another one that is we're not sure where they are exactly, but they both decide to come.

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They liked it. They start to come and even meet. Now, we've been meeting for the last, you know, seven months, 6 or 7 months. We're through John chapter 15 now, and they're getting really close to committing their lives to Christ. The other couple is making some good steps as well.

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Anyway, it's pretty exciting, but it's so inviting. Yeah, but that's kind of our little Oikos that we had here close by in our neighborhood. So the neighborhood is one of the ways or like a dorm room if you live in a college dorm

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And I think one of the other ones that people often overlook. Again, is the church opportunities, like there are people inside of our churches that are not connected yet, and a lot of them are not yet believers. And so, if you're in a ministry role, it's easy because you get the connect card and you can see who they are.

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But then even if you're not in ministry you can kind of see, like who those disconnected people are and just start to meet them, start to get to know them. That's what you did at Compass. And you, you compiled this group of they call them the compadres. They name themselves this

group of guys, young guys, and, was it four of them have received Christ so far?

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Have gotten baptized, gotten baptized.

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Four out of six in the last few months. And they're really excited about the Lord. And really walking with God.

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So yeah they're trying to think about how they can reach out and...

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One of them started a group. And two other ones who were praying about starting a group and that's kind of my application we want to start seeing happen.

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So I think that's an untapped potential is like, you know, even within your church there's people that are disconnected. I mean, for me, you know, I've been able to use the discovery Bible study method. We even use it for pre-marriage counseling. We have people where it's like, just open the passage Ephesians chapter five, let's see what the Bible says about it.

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And then we did, you know, other things, like as a church, we're using it for our kind of our digging deeper questions like, you know, people write their own questions were like, we're going through the book of 1 Peter, let's just all go through and use the discovery Bible study method to do that as well.

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So there's different ways to apply it I guess to different situations.

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Yeah. And you can start a group. It doesn't have to be with a complete non-Christian. Sometimes it can be a brand new believer that has a network of relationships. And so you set up... actually yesterday, at church or the day before, I met a guy that came to Christ kind of on

his own in a supernatural way.

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And now he's moved to Hawaii. He wants to grow in his faith, and he's working at this farm, and there's all these non-Christians it's kind of this work kind of exchange for living on the property type thing. But there's all these non-Christians around him. So he would be now, just as we're talking about it, man, I need to set up a meeting with him and maybe start discipling him, but also, maybe there's a potential to start a discovery Bible study for his farm and help him.

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And that's what I encourage Ministry leaders. A lot of times we don't have as many networks of non-Christian relationships. I call it the invite yourself over principle.

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We had some staff that were, you know, full time staff, you know, trying to reach a campus. But there was a freshman that just came to Christ and was living in the dorms, and the freshman wasn't quite ready to lead the Bible study, but the staff sure were. And so the staff invited themselves over and said, hey, can you host the Bible study?

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And who of your friends would be most interested? And what would be a good time for you and your friends? And they started this really cool evangelistic Bible study, right in that students study lounge. And you ended up seeing people come to Christ and great conversations happening. But it was because we had a new believer, and they became like a person of peace that opened up a whole network of relationships.

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Yeah, that's really good, because, I mean, that's what Jesus said is like, you find almost the definition of the person of peace is the one that welcomes, welcomes you in. And you know, you may not stay there overnight. It might be kind of weird in this culture, but maybe you would. But inviting yourself over and moving with the movers, like move and where God's opening doors.

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Yeah. That's really cool.

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There have been so many good examples shared here. I want to try to like, recap what I heard. Just like for the newbie that's interested in starting a discovery group that is just looking for that first step, like what I'm hearing here is like we need to think through our circles of influence.

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Then we talked about some examples of that work: neighborhood, campus, family, your kids play, even your own hobbies and that kind of thing. But what I also heard is if maybe if that doesn't do it, if you don't have much of a list. I know for myself, I had a season where I was living, I had a whole bunch of Christian neighbors in the neighborhood I lived in, and I was on staff at a church, and I hardly have any non-Christian friends.

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And so I got this kind of feeling, longing for some lost people. I ended up joining a kickball recreational kickball league for adults. But sometimes you just need to get a hobby or something. But you. Paul brought back the discovery evangelism, which was actually our discussion in episode one. So if somebody is hearing that for the first time and go check out episode one on Discovery Evangelism.

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So we build our prospect list and pray. I heard prayer being a huge emphasis here, asking God and I wanted to ask on that probe a little more like, what kinds of things are you praying as you're trying to build a prospect list?

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I mean, literally just have a list of everyone's name. I just have it on my phone, and I got about ten or so people that are either in my different networks and I just pray specifically for them by name. And usually it's just that God would draw their hearts or God would give me an opportunity to engage with them.

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And then I love the prayer for B.O.B. Burden for the lost, Opportunity to share, and Boldness, because a lot of times you have conversations or opportunities that aren't the people on your little list. Sometimes it's a random encounter that the Lord brings. And so we need to be looking for those and kind of starting those conversations wherever we go.

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And you never know. I think sometimes we can be almost overly strategic about where we're

like, we're going to reach this campus or we're going to reach this group, or we're going to reach this apartment complex, and the Lord will bring someone completely that we didn't have on our radar at all. But there could be an open door to a whole new network, so don't leave the God part out.

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I've said this before, but you know, let the Holy Spirit guide and direct and sovereignly put people in your path. And if you're praying for it and looking for it, it's likely to happen. Actually, it's more likely than not to happen, I would say.

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Yeah, I have an example of that. There's a guy that I surf with, and he was already on my prayer list. But then one day I was going out and he wasn't going surfing. I was just like, oh, aren't you going out? And he's like, I have like an autoimmune disease thing.

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And I was like, well, all right, I'm going to put you at the top of my prayer list. I just told him. He didn't know I was praying for him as an unbeliever. But, I mean, like, you're going to be at the top of my prayer list. And then the next time I saw him just a few days ago, I was able to tell him, all right, I've been praying for you.

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And like, you know, who knows, he may not have anyone else in his life that's actually praying for him. So that's just one example of just those little things that you can that you can do.

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Yeah. That's great. That's I love what you said, Paul, about over strategizing or else I think I just made up that word over strategizing. That's the word I'm looking for. But I remember my son's baseball team a few years ago. I had this list of names, and I kind of identified a couple of dads as the ones that I thought would be the most responsive.

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And actually, neither of them really have gone very far with anything. But the coach who I had kind of ignored, he's the one that started coming to stuff and became a Christian and got baptized. So yeah, you can't just, like, use your own brain to do that. God will draw who he draws. That's great. One more follow up question on this prospect list.

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You know, eventually we're going to get to ask, like, what kind of questions do we ask people to join us? But, what level of a relationship do you think needs to be established with someone before you try to get them to come to a group?

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I think just one keyword in the whole thing is trust. Do you have enough trust with them that they'll try out something with you? Okay. And so, I don't think it has to be a long, long time relationship. It might be a family member you live with. It might be a brother or a sister, or something like that.

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But it might be somebody you just met a few weeks ago, but, you know, you kind of got some rapport. There's a little bit of trust there, and it's enough trust to try these questions that we're going to come up with here in a second. So I just say that kind of gauge, who do I have some trust with?

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Who do I know, who do I think might respond?

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And again the principle of move with the movers. If someone's expressing interest and they're asking questions about the Bible and things like that, then you know you don't even have to know them. You can just be like, oh yeah, I'd love to study the Bible with people and let them learn about it.

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And so again, it's like the, you know, there's two there's how much trust you have, but also how much interest or curiosity does the person have? Is another, because Jesus and Andrew and John, they're like, oh, where are you staying? And Jesus is like, come and see.

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And immediately he kind of grafted them in. We don't know. He may have talked to them before that, but we don't know, you know.

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I would say most people need encouragement to start taking initiative sooner rather than later, you know? And sometimes we can wait too long and get into the paralysis of analysis like, oh, you know, how have I built enough trust or, you know, this or that and yes, have trust. But at the same time, there's some people you can start that conversation with and if it goes well, yeah, spiritual conversation generally.

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And then you say, hey, this is really interesting, man. I've learned this really cool new Bible study. Way to look at the Bible. Have you ever read the Bible? And we're now getting into how to make the ask. But you kind of bring that in. And if they're like, no, I've never read the Bible, really. And then you can kind of have that conversation and invite them in.

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So it could be at the first conversation To be honest.

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I agree with that. Even though I said the thing on trust, I agree that sometimes God just opens the door and sometimes you just throw out some question that has something... just toss some bait and you find out things, like that neighbor that's not a Christian yet is coming to the one. We were just talking about some of the political shenanigans and stuff that were going on in the country and he just made some off the cuff statement.

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I was kind of surprised. Oh, this country just needs God, you know.

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Okay. Yeah. That's an open door here. Let's start a new conversation.

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We're there. I was going to say go ahead. If you want to talk about the invites and asks, let's jump into that too.

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Yeah, yeah, yeah. I kind of jumped the gun.

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Well, I like the question. Have you ever read the Bible? It's kind of a loaded question, but it's really interesting to see if they have. And a lot of people still have this sense still, you know, in a lot of countries that it's something they should do or that at some point, like maybe I should check that out or, you know, and so that's a great question. Have you ever read the Bible?

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Yeah. And yet, you know, most people know it's the most popular, most printed book in the world. So in asking I usually add the word "personally" too, have you ever read the Bible personally. And that kind of adds a little twist to it. And then whatever they say to that, you can also say after that, well, have you ever read it with others?

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You see now you're getting into the group thing and with others. And though most of them won't, even though they said they really read some or something like that, they'll probably say no to that. They haven't really read it with others. And then, yeah, then you ask. Then the third question is that would you like to try it one time and that's one of the keys and try it one time is a lot easier.

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Now, you know, I want to go to this Bible study we're doing in six weeks or its ongoing Bible study. Just try and get them in there, get them, experience it, get them. Do a good passage that's really impactful. Like John 1:1-18 or one of the stories, Nicodemus' story or something. And just ask them at the end, do you like that? Do you want to do this again?

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And I've had great experiences with that. People say, yeah, this is good, let's do it again. So we've done it. So we've been doing it. It's good because those are the three questions "personally" "others" And then "try it one time."

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One perk of using the Bible kind of as your bait so to speak. One kind of perk is actually a Wall Street Journal article that just came out. So the Bible sales in the United States are up 22%. So there is this general growing hunger for God's Word, across the nation. And so you see these people like Jordan Peterson, and others are selling Bible courses online, like through the Gospels and they're like, you know, and say what you will about all that.

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But really it's incredible. There's this. I think there is a spiritual hunger that's out there, that man, we don't have to kind of earn the right to ask those types of questions. You know, there's a percentage of people that are already, maybe they just bought a Bible and they would like to learn how to read it.

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And so maybe if we go into that with that sort of a mindset, conversations and you never know, God might open some doors there.

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So yeah. Yeah. And I think that's the mindset that you're getting at is like just believing that there are people out there that are hungry for it. And I think that that affects the way that we ask the question, too. Like if we're kind of tentative, like, you wouldn't want to like, study the Bible, would you, with me?

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Or you're like, no, it's you know, if you make it weird, it'll be weird. But if you're not awkward about it and you're confident, hey, I love studying the Bible with people. Would you want to do that? You know, just being very natural and confident about the way that you share it is really important.

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And having faith, really, the attitude of faith that God has people that are already ready and just throwing it out there.

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That's right. That's good. God sees your faith, but people also read your faith. Yeah. They can kind of tell. And so you have to believe that God can help you and give you the boldness, help you to be able to make the ask to say something. But you have to believe that God is preparing their hearts and that he could work there.

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And then you have to believe that, if they don't just read the Bible with you, they don't have to study, but if they'll just read the Bible. The Bible is alive and active, sharper than any two edged sword. It's powerful. If you pick a passage that explains the gospel, you got the power of God

right there at your hand.

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And so God, we got to believe that. And I think we got to believe that more than we generally do. And then we're much more motivated to get out there and try this.

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Yeah. You almost even have a very confident, not cocky attitude and deal with certain types, like if you're dealing with an alpha male type guy, you know, they'll be like, hey, do you even lift weights or whatever. You're like, hey, do you even read the Bible?

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Like you got to have this, you know, it depends on who you're dealing with. But sometimes the bro guys, you can just be like, so you like, you read the Bible. Oh you don't oh, man. You got to get into this like! You have to adjust it to the type of personality of the person.

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Yeah. Like throwing down a little challenge

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Or like, of course you should be reading the Bible like you know. Yeah.

00:28:13:01 - 00:28:38:12

You know, one of the other benefits I think it's starting with the Bible question directly. You know I learned these three questions a few months ago. And I know in my past I've taken a long time, I've tried to understand someone's experience with church, their religious background, and tried to, like, ease my way into spiritual things only to find out they have no interest at all in Jesus.

00:28:38:14 - 00:28:54:00

And so when I asked the guy, there's a guy I've been praying for in my workout group, and I wanted to do a discovery group with them. And so I use these three questions. While we were playing a round of disc golf one day, and by the time we got to the end, it was only nine holes.

00:28:54:00 - 00:29:20:17

So pretty sure about 40 minutes I got to the last question. He was like, no, I don't want to read

the Bible. And I was actually really grateful for that because I could have invited him to ten more rounds of disc golf before I got to that. If I took my old approach. So it also helps kind of find the real interested people more quickly.

00:29:20:17 - 00:29:44:18

So we've talked about building a prospect list. We've talked about how to make the ask, a lot of gold there. I think that we can use it, what about the logistics? Like when you finally find one, you catch the fish and they're interested. How do you actually get them to do a meeting? And I know one meeting is the start, but we want to keep it going.

00:29:44:18 - 00:29:50:11

So what are some kinds of pro tips to enable that to happen?

00:29:50:13 - 00:30:08:19

I'd say one of the principles is don't think about yourself so much. Think about them. What's most convenient for them, what will work for them. The college group that I met, I met the guys after the Compass church service. You know, I don't live on campus, but I was there and they're there...

00:30:08:19 - 00:30:12:19

I said, why don't we just try this after service?

00:30:12:19 - 00:30:36:10

We didn't even eat lunch. We skipped lunch and we just did it after service, right outside the building that we meet in. And eventually we just kept doing that for when they wanted to do it some more, and that was a very convenient time. So that got them to church, got them in the study and that developed some really good things in the neighborhood, cause, you know, we just picked an evening that we thought worked best for them.

00:30:36:12 - 00:31:02:00

Yeah, that's a good principle because. I remember back in the day, Paul and I did "The Spot", in college, I think we started it, it was like at 10 p.m. or 9 p.m. Yeah, it was like it was really late. And we had free pizza and we did it in the dorm of the place that we were trying to reach people and you know, it wasn't exactly a discovery group, but I think the principles apply that you just said.

00:31:02:00 - 00:31:14:10



Yeah. Again, you do it based on what they need. Go to them and do it so it works for them rather than you. So yeah, you just got to be a servant in that way, I guess.

00:31:14:12 - 00:31:36:11

And you want to create a level of buy-in from the start. So let's say you do that first meeting with one guy and you're like, hey, if they're into it and you're like, hey, this would be really fun. Maybe we could invite 2 or 3 of your friends and let's think of the best time that could work for them.

00:31:36:12 - 00:31:54:19

And like, how could we go invite them? And maybe I could help you think about how to invite them and what would be a good time. And it would be fun to have some snacks or what would be the best kind of setup and get them thinking like a leader from the very beginning, and even them doing the recruiting of their new friends and you're there.

00:31:54:19 - 00:32:16:14

Maybe you're there just to facilitate the conversation, but slowly but surely, you're kind of like easing yourself out of a job. And then maybe that group runs itself and then you go help start another one. So that's like recruiting. People not just to join and keep doing the meeting, but also to get their friends around.

00:32:16:14 - 00:32:25:23

That's where I think personally, that's what makes me most excited about this strategy. Is the one person kind of getting a whole group of people.

00:32:26:00 - 00:32:46:16

And the question that you ask on that is probably what you do, Paul, is do you know anybody else that might be interested in this? Simple. You see, even with Andrew and Peter, you know, they had their friend Philip and they've had a conversation with Jesus about that.

00:32:46:16 - 00:33:04:04

And then they decided to go and found Philip, and Philip had a friend. They went to find Philip. And, you just see Jesus modeling this so well in his way of building his first group of followers.

00:33:04:04 - 00:33:28:07

Yeah, And it kind of brings up this trend that I'm seeing even among Gen Z and Gen Alpha. Is

that this generation more than others, they tend to flock together, you know, birds of a feather flock together, but a lot of them have social anxiety. They're not extroverts, but they have their little bubble of friends that they almost like to glom onto in an unhealthy way.

00:33:28:09 - 00:33:49:06

And actually, I've been challenging collegiate leaders and others to pray not only for individuals to come to Christ, but to start praying that whole friend groups come to Christ. Praying for this entire little group of friends. And, man, if you can reach one, you can sometimes reach a whole group at the same time.

00:33:49:06 - 00:33:55:04

And so just kind of an idea there that could be, you know, helpful in this conversation.

00:33:55:04 - 00:34:17:01

So, yeah, that's really good. And, you know, I think the other thing to avoid is it was inspiring for the Field of Dreams, but it doesn't work in real life. If you build it, they will come. And I think that a lot of times with Bible studies, people think, well, we're just going to meet Tuesday night at 7:00 and if people want to come, they can come and we'll announce it at church and people can come.

00:34:17:01 - 00:34:36:02

And that's just not going to happen. You have to personally invite people and again, don't just say, oh, I'm doing it this time because it works for me. It just, you adjust to the people and you personally invite it. Personal is always more powerful.

00:34:36:02 - 00:34:54:01

That's what we always say. The more personal, the more powerful. And so don't rely on announcements. I think that applies to all small groups. But specifically discovery groups, it's like you don't know anyone else is going to get these people for you that you have to feel like, you know, you got to go get them yourself, you know?

00:34:54:03 - 00:35:17:19

Yeah. Even though you asked the members of your group to go invite their friends to like that, they oftentimes won't do it. So you really go with them. You make it easy for them to go and see their friends and encourage them on it and some of them will, but some of them won't, but you're really the one responsible for trying to keep that group going.

00:35:17:21 - 00:35:24:18

What you're saying, Paul, reminds me of something that Stephen and I use in our training, we call it the hand in the sand principle. Yes.

00:35:24:18 - 00:35:43:12

Yeah. And you can all picture a beach. You see a hand on the beach sticking out of the sand. You know, the whole body is buried. You see the hand, you go and you rescue the hand and you pull it out. You get the arm and the chest and the rest of the body. So you get the whole body when you get the first one because they're connected.

00:35:43:14 - 00:36:15:08

And this is this the whole oikos (sphere of influence) approach to evangelism. So after discovery evangelism comes the oikos evangelism, which is really the secret to the fast growth there in India. They're going home after they accept Christ from intermediate, they go home and they share the simple gospel presentation and stuff with their family and their friends, and they invite them and it just spreads from relationship to relationship.

00:36:15:08 - 00:36:32:15

And that's the second step, the first pickle out of the jar through the discovery evangelism. It takes a little more work. But once you get one now you can begin to really capitalize on that. So that's part of the way you develop this.

00:36:32:17 - 00:36:56:02

So if you're a church planter and you're going into a new city or something, you're not necessarily wanting to start just one small group, centralize and get as many, maybe you will. It's kind of a core team or whatever, but maybe you would also want to spin off and decentralize your evangelistic approach and start lots of little discovery groups.

00:36:56:02 - 00:37:08:13

Maybe you and your team are leading 4 to 5 to 10 of these discovery groups before you even launch your Sunday service. Is that kind of a good approach?

00:37:08:15 - 00:37:22:21

Definitely, Paul, that is really important. And you don't have to limit yourself to just doing one. You can do several if you're full time or part time or whatever, even if you're not, you know, I'm very part time and what I'm doing in that because I'm doing other stuff.

00:37:22:23 - 00:37:42:11

But, you know, I'm doing a couple groups and you can do more than one at a time, because they only take an hour. There's not a lot of preparation for them. So, yeah, I would say start as maybe little fires, little brushfires, little campfires. Hopefully one will take off into, into, the forest fire.

00:37:42:12 - 00:38:01:19

Yeah. And that goes with the principle of ministry before meetings. So many people try to just announce a service. We're gonna have a service and people will come. But if you only do that, most likely it's just going to be believers that come to that. But you have to till the soil in order to reap fruit and you have to plant the seeds in order to reap spiritual fruit.

00:38:01:19 - 00:38:08:10

And so that's really the principle that you're kind of getting out there.

00:38:08:12 - 00:38:09:19

That's good.

00:38:09:21 - 00:38:28:23

So if I can kind of take it even further to the next step, you know, I've heard we talked a lot about getting started, and it sounds like, you know, initially it may be a one-on-one discovery group that's happening with you and another person, but our goal is to grow that through oikos, you know, asking the question, who else do you know?

00:38:29:01 - 00:38:45:17

But once you've got a group like that going and it maybe it's you and 4 other faith beginners and you're having the meeting. What's next? Does that go on forever or like how do you move from there?

00:38:45:19 - 00:39:09:03

What they're doing in India. And what we're working towards here is they start to discover a group and it grows and it grows into more of what they call a house church type of thing. It's a little bit of a medium sized group. Hopefully the people in that are still spinning off and learning to do the discovery group of that a little bit bigger group that they begin to bring them into.

00:39:09:05 - 00:39:30:07

I don't jump right into that, kind of build it, build it from the ground up. But that's what they're doing there. And then, they put the leadership training into people who are helping to lead these groups. And we talk about the over 7000 people in the group. So those are groups, and they have, you know, leaders in that they're not a number of people.

00:39:30:07 - 00:40:01:15

And so that's who they put the training into and ongoing training to keep them one step ahead. So there's a way to do that. And we have our traditional ministries or churches that we have a part of. And they can be plugged into that. Sometimes, I have found though, for new believers, if your church is a kind of older church and a little more traditional and stuff like that, very Christian-y, then you almost have to kind of build them up a little bit before they're able to, you know, incorporate very well into the larger church.

00:40:01:17 - 00:40:16:17

So give them some background, give them some knowledge, give them walking with God. And then sometimes I've done these groups and brought them back into a very traditional church. But by the time they brought them back in a couple months later, they're going in sort of as missionaries.

00:40:16:17 - 00:40:30:00

You know, I mean, really they're thinking how can I get these people more fired up, they not only incorporate but they develop. So help develop the ministry in that church. So anyway.

00:40:30:02 - 00:40:56:20

Yeah, even within your own little discovery group, over time, naturally you'll discern which ones have more leadership gifts or the ones that are the most interesting. And you spend more time with them personally discipling them, giving them opportunities to maybe to start a new discovery group with you. And rather than just, like, launching them out, say, hey, I'm starting this new one, man, come with me and we'll start this together.

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And you're modeling exactly how to do that.

00:40:59:06 - 00:41:16:22

And even before that. You can kind of give them parts of the meeting. Sometimes you give the

whole meeting, sometimes you deliberately or not deliberately. You have to be away and you let them lead a meeting. I've been gone for the last three weeks at Compass Church, and some of the guys have been stepping up and leading the group while I'm not there.

00:41:17:00 - 00:41:25:22

And now there's not any equipper kind of person there. They're learning how to lead. And it's sort of like people will step up the leadership when there's a leadership vacuum. Yes.

00:41:25:22 - 00:41:47:20

And so sometimes that's what Jesus did. That's what Paul did. They went and started things. And then he left them oftentimes before they were ready for him to leave them. But then they stepped up and took over. What was going on was so simple that young Christians could do it as long as the old timer was not there, you know what I mean?

00:41:47:20 - 00:41:57:20

If there's a leadership vacuum, then people with leadership gifts, not everybody, but the people with leadership gifts will step up to fill it.

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You can come back and see who those are and those are the ones you kind of put the extra time into and help them develop.

00:42:04:17 - 00:42:27:20

Yeah. What I've learned in leadership, is sometimes the most strategic thing you can do is not be there. So I call it the ministry of absence. You know, you're delegating whatever it is and you're letting the front line people deal with it and figure it out on their own. You're still helpful behind the scenes, but there's a lot of ministry that can happen by others.

00:42:27:20 - 00:42:37:20

And so being a hero maker rather than the hero, all the time. And Dave Ferguson wrote a great book on that called "Hero Maker", which is a good philosophy of ministry there.

00:42:37:20 - 00:42:39:17

You need to have a whole session on that.

00:42:40:14 - 00:42:58:14

Yeah, have a whole session on that whole kind of thing where sometimes the best way I teach them to swim is throw them in with the alligators and they have extra motivation, you know, in their lives. So, you know, why did I do that? So they can learn.

00:42:58:15 - 00:43:23:10

I mean, I bring up another book that I've enjoyed, Steve Addison's book, "Movements That Changed the World". His first book, one of his Five Keys to Movement, was Rapid Mobilization. So turning a new believer or, you know, a potential leader rapidly mobilizing them, talking about the movements of Methodism. You know, and how that spread through the circuit riders.

00:43:23:10 - 00:43:39:20

or even Baptists kind of spread through just laymen starting those churches. The sooner we can get a new believer moving towards the mission. That's a key to movement I think.

00:43:39:20 - 00:44:02:06

Yeah. And I was just thinking like the heart attitude that's required for that is humility and not caring about...I've got my little people that I'm the leader over. And a lot of people get their identity from being like the leader of whatever group they're a part of and so just not worrying about that, like working yourself out of a job is the goal.

00:44:02:06 - 00:44:24:09

And if you do that regularly and you kind of see yourself as you just come back and every once in a while you're spinning the wheel, you just keep the wheels spinning. As long as the wheel's spinning, you're good to go and then you're going there creating other wheels to spin. And so that's kind of a good picture of it.

00:44:24:09 - 00:44:39:01

Well we've covered a lot of great stuff. I know, John, you've said something that I've heard in the past, the four B's. Pertaining to the obstacles that people commonly run into for doing this kind of ministry. So could you share those briefly with us?

00:44:39:01 - 00:44:57:23

So yeah, the first B we talked about sometimes in our training is the bubble. And that Christians get in the Christian bubble and they don't have non-Christian friends. And that's what we talked about there. You got to get yourself out. You got to be meeting people and you got to build your funnel. Every ministry starts out with a wide funnel at the top, and you find people that come

down through it.

00:44:57:23 - 00:45:16:20

So you find yourself in a Christian bubble. If you've been a Christian for very long, you've got to find some ways to bust out of that. The second one is that people just get busy and we are all busy with lots of stuff, everybody's got a full life. They're doing something. It may be internet games or something, but it's for something.

00:45:16:22 - 00:45:41:05

And you've got to eliminate some things to add some things. And so we just get busy and we get distracted. So that's what we find out, you know, people that are going to start a group like this, we find it's very helpful to them to be getting together with a few other people who are also committed to starting a group we call this the harvest team, and they kind of encourage each other to get these things going.

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And so we can talk about that sometime and how you develop those. And we're going to be doing some kickstart harvest teams in the future ourselves as harvest teams, ministry. And we can do those online. We've got some going. We're seeing some good success with that in different places around the country just getting started with those.

00:46:00:14 - 00:46:19:00

So there's a way to do that. But we need that cause people are busy. So the first one was a bubble, the second busy. Sometimes you're just baffled. People just don't know what to do. You have to keep things simple. You have to simplify to multiply. And so you've got to really kind of help people see this is all you do.

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These are the same questions you use for every Bible passage. The Bible is the teacher. This is how you can do it. And they see it 2, 3, or 4 times and they can do it. So they're not baffled by the process. And then the last one is belief. And we've already mentioned that a lot. You've got to believe that God is in you, that you have the Holy Spirit, that you can do this.

00:46:39:19 - 00:46:58:21

And God has prepared some people ahead of time for you. He's got some ripeness. Open your eyes. The fields are white for harvest. Jesus says in John 4, and you got to believe that. And then you got to believe that the Bible and the gospel is powerful. So belief becomes the other.



And so you gotta, gotta deal with all four of those B's.

00:46:58:23 - 00:47:24:18

Yeah. And I think as ministry leaders if you have others that you're trying to get going towards evangelism in this type of ministry, sometimes people think that less is more you don't want to overburden them with too many things, like a harvest team or like, okay, they're going to do a harvest team and they're going to start a discovery group that's like too much, you know?

00:47:24:18 - 00:47:58:14

But I think actually the opposite is true. Sometimes when you just give them something very minimal, when you give leaders or others some kind of minimal challenge, you get minimal investment. But when you give real training to people, when you're there, they end up wanting to do more. And because it kind of snowballs your commitment to Christ, your vision for doing ministry and then when you start seeing fruit, you're like, oh, why was I not living this way before?

00:47:58:16 - 00:48:30:19

And so you want to create that spiritual snowball effect. And actually, I don't know any better way than having a decently high but not unrealistic, but a decently high bar for what it means to be a leader or a laborer in your ministry and like calling people to that commitment, not guilt people to it, but inviting people in and casting vision, leading with vision, not just expectations and rules, but there's a certain amount of people that will step up to that plate, and those are going to be your laborers.

00:48:30:19 - 00:48:48:00

Those are going to be the people that start leading these groups. And so you'll see a movement if you kind of keep that standard high. You know, I don't think we should apologize for asking too much of people. We should apologize when we're not asking enough, because that's really what God has called us to.

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Think about Jesus. "Follow me" he said to the masses. You know, take up your cross daily and follow me. I mean, and you know it. He makes a serious ask. Even becoming a Christian let alone, following and moving into ministry. So, I'm 100% for that. The big ask is sometimes more effective than just kind of dribbling into it with people.

00:49:12:14 - 00:49:33:02

And I think the thing that we're facing is a lot of people are busy and like, they already have a Bible study that they are part of or multiple Bible studies that they're part of. And so, like, for me, like, it's just challenging people and helping people count the cost that in order to actually do this, you are going to have to let go of some things.

00:49:33:02 - 00:49:51:05

You're going to have to say no to some lesser things in order to prioritize this. And it's good for people to do that. It's good for people to like, make those hard choices, to do that. And so I think that's the other thing. And then even in our lives as leaders, we have to make those choices too, you know?

00:49:51:05 - 00:50:10:00

So we have to model it. That's the challenge for me is like, I know that I need to be modeling it myself if I want this to trickle down to my people as well. And so we all have to take a long, hard look at things like, what are the things that we're doing that we don't need to be doing? And how can we focus on this?

00:50:10:00 - 00:50:39:10

And that's why I'm a little biased towards young adults and college students and doing ministry with them is because I have more time to invest in things like this. And they're kind of like wet cement. You get this DNA into their life soon. They may just do it for a lifetime. And so, if you're looking towards a demographic to get this kind of ministry going, maybe check out the college campus, check out the young adults in your community and see what God's doing.

00:50:39:12 - 00:50:41:08

That's how Jesus did it.

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Yeah.

00:50:42:10 - 00:50:52:17

Almost all of his 12 were probably in their lower to 20s to upper teens. Best we can understand. So that's who he focused on.

00:50:52:19 - 00:51:06:08

Dad, you're also a good example of if you are older, you still got more in the tank. And so you

know, if you're not dead you're not done.

00:51:06:10 - 00:51:10:22

I try to remind myself of that.

00:51:11:00 - 00:51:18:07

But you know, it's true. Like, I mean, if you have ministry and you have people in your church that are, you know, retired or whatever they still have opportunities.

00:51:18:13 - 00:51:20:03

That's a new big opportunity.

00:51:20:03 - 00:51:38:19

A great purpose ahead of them; they have more time than they ever had to not waste it collecting seashells. But, you know, win souls for Christ and to use that. So no matter what age you are listening to this you can do that. You can do this too, with your sphere of influence.

00:51:41:12 - 00:52:03:16

Well, thanks, guys. I think this has been a really valuable talk on how to get going with the Discovery Bible groups. And if somebody, if they just picked up with us here, I definitely encourage you to check out episode 4 to talk about how to do it. And you can also go to [HarvestTeams.com](http://HarvestTeams.com) and view the how to on a discovery group.

00:52:03:17 - 00:52:25:05

We actually have a little one page there that describes it as well. So, join us next time for the next discussion with the "For the Harvest" podcast. And bye!