

For the Harvest Podcast #4 - Discovery Group

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The discovery groups are easy enough for a new believer to lead, as long as they're filled with the Holy Spirit and they have some degree of leadership gifting. I would say if you have the leadership competency to organize a birthday party, you could probably start a discovery group. And Many of the best discovery group leaders are what we call one step ahead leaders.

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These leaders are committed to Christ and, and committed to following a leader so that they can continue to stay one step ahead of the people that they're leading. And so someone who has really surrendered to Jesus and one step ahead, and you think about it. They're already ahead of the vast majority of people in the world.

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And, you're going to hear us talk a lot about it on this podcast. Commitment a lot. And this, this is the key to spiritual life, the power of God working and so on in someone's life. Second Corinthians 16:9 "for the eyes of the Lord will go to and fro throughout the earth. To strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

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Well, thanks for joining us again on episode four of the "For the Harvest podcast". The mission of our organization, Harvest Teams, is to accelerate evangelistic growth globally. We believe one of the most powerful tools to accelerate evangelistic growth is to start discovery groups. And this is just a simple and practical expression of the New Wineskins principle that John shared with us in one of our previous episodes.

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I'm going to let John introduce the subject for us once again, and we're going to deep dive into this today. And I think it's something that all of you, no matter what type of ministry you're involved in, will be able to take advantage of and put into practice pretty quickly. If you want to.

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All right. Thanks, Stephen, and I'm looking forward to this. This is going to be fun. It's a good topic today. And in the first three podcasts we discuss three important ideas, concepts. First was discovery Evangelism, which if you remember is, is finding those that God has already prepared for, and then sharing the gospel with them in various ways. And we looked at scriptures like, lift

up your eyes, the fields are ripe for harvest.

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What Jesus called those first five disciples called them reapers to kind of go in and do that. That's all in John 4. And then and then we talked. The second podcast was on New Wineskins. These are new gatherings filled with faith beginners and faith beginners could be a nonbeliever that's looking into things, or it could be a new believer.

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Jesus made a shocking statement one time in Luke 9 where he says new wine must have new wineskins. Very interesting. Meditate on that one. And then, the life cycle of the church was the third one, and that results in filling fields with those new wineskins. And we talked about the wisdom of when, you know, when to prioritize what, at what stage of the church, church's life and new life.

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That's the time in a church or a ministry. That's the time to really focus on fast evangelistic growth. That's your chance to reach people probably as well. And as far as speed wise as any time. And then maturity is for multiplication. Yeah. So be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. And now today we're going to discuss one tool to apply these three concepts.

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We call them discovery groups. There's lots of terms for this. And, but they're connected with a leadership training component. And that's one of the unique things about this. And we'll get that probably not into that leadership training component too much this week probably in the next podcast. But mature believers, even pastors and campus ministry directors can start these kinds of groups.

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But the greatest potential in these groups is when we start releasing new disciples to reach their friends and family. That's where the power comes from, what we've seen in some movements around the world, where this has worked the best, Discovery groups are easy enough for a new believer to lead, as long as they're filled with the Holy Spirit and they have some degree of leadership gifting.

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I would say if you have the leadership competency to organize a birthday party, you can

probably start a Discovery Group. Many of the best Discovery Group leaders are what we call one step ahead leaders, these leaders are committed to Christ and, and committed to following a leader so that they can continue to stay one step ahead of the people that they're leading.

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And so someone who has really surrendered to Jesus and is one step ahead, you think about it, they're ahead. They're already ahead of the vast majority of people in the world. And, you're going to hear us talk a lot about on this podcast, commitment a lot. And this is the key to spiritual life and the power of God working in someone and through someone's life.

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Second Corinthians 16:9 for the eyes of the Lord reigns to and fro throughout the earth, to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. And it's vital to understand, though, and I think it's a lot of confusion, and it is vital to understand that there's a clear difference between commitment and maturity.

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People get confused. You can be totally committed to something in a moment, but it takes a lifetime to become mature. When I first came to Christ at age 20, I made a full commitment to Christ. By the Grace of God. And, God used me to start multiplying a discovery group right away. And that group multiplied.

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It was at the end of that first summer, There were about 12 saved. And we baptized 9 that summer. And I was only a 3-month old Christian at the beginning of the summer and had not started going to church yet, had not even been to a Bible study before.

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I was far, far from being mature, but I was committed. And so by the grace of God, he led me to do, discovery evangelism to start a new wineskin that was very much like the discovery groups that we're going to be talking about today in this podcast. So I just want to give you a little overview. And then Stephen has got something that he wants to share. We wanted to share about what we saw in India and how this worked.

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Yeah, I think this concept of discovery groups, you know, you kind of ran into it, stumbled into it almost when you were a new believer. And when we took a trip to India, sometime or at the

beginning of the year, we started to run into some trends that were fully operational in this rapidly spreading gospel movement there.

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Something like 28,000 house churches that have started in the last 18 years. And, and it's really some of this we kind of discovered some of the same principles were operating, really with a lot of strength and zeal and moving really fast inside of this movement. And, and these people, one of the common things was that they were getting around the scriptures and it was and you had very new believers that were reading the Bible, or sometimes in the less literate areas, listening to the Bible with other faith beginners.

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They might be lost and curious, or they might be brand new believers, and those would grow into little house churches and they'd multiply. And you had very, very new believers that were committed but not very mature, taking the gospel to other places and starting new groups. So it's very quick to multiply and easy to reproduce. And it's some of those same principles that we've been putting into practice with these discovery groups here in the States.

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And we've already started to see some fruit that has come from that. So it's John, because you just described for us a little bit about the Discovery Group and what we're doing now.

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And just a brief definition is that a discovery group is an easily reproducible, application focused Bible discussion of basically 2 to 6 people.

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You don't want these really large, and they focus on one passage of Scripture at a time. And the groups that last around an hour or so most of the time. And, so that's kind of what we're talking about.

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Yeah. This isn't really a new concept. And, you know, I was thinking about one of the principles, if you boil it down to what it is, it's the Spirit of God using the word of God to transform people's lives.

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This is like the end of the fundamental elements of it. And it doesn't really matter what you call it. I think discovery Group is a great name because it implies that we are discovering it together, that the Scripture is the teacher. It's not you just waiting on some guru to teach you everything, but you just open the Bible and the Spirit of God uses what that is.

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And I'll just give you one example of my wife, Jessica. She's been doing this with one lady, one young mom. And it's not pretty all the time because all of our kids are climbing on them and, you know, interrupting them all the time. But over time, as they studied the Scripture together, she ended up making a full commitment to Christ and ended up getting baptized just recently.

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And I know, John's been doing this too at Compass with the group of guys. And I think it's like three out of the four original guys were baptized, right? Is that correct, dad?

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Now there have been 4 baptized.

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And it's just amazing. Just like how, potent. Like when you really just strip everything away. That's it. I think there's just beauty and simplicity when we strip everything away. And the Word of God is powerful. Like, we use that quote. It's like Spurgeon says, it's like a lion. You let the lion loose and the lion defends itself. The lion goes to work. Let the Word of God go to work. And so I think that's one of the beautiful things about these kinds of groups.

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Yeah, and I really think that the new believers equipping new but new believers or faith beginners, depending on what you want to call them, is one of the secret sauces of this. What when we see movement and make it so simple, so reproducible, and based on scripture. So they're automatically learning how to interpret. They're learning hermeneutics, basic hermeneutics, and how to interpret scripture.

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And God's Word is the hero rather than whoever's leading the Bible study. God is a hero. And so I just love it. And I think in the collegiate space, this can go viral on a campus. There's so much potential for this to go viral as students because it's already broken. There's so many little

affinity groups. And so I'm just super excited about this emphasis on discovery groups.

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So we see this kind of playing out now. But then where do we see examples of this in Scripture? But what would you say dad?

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Well, I'd say the first place we see it is when Jesus first started his ministry and the first few days of his public ministry, he went to John the Baptist's meetings, found the ripest of the ripe, and ended up finding those two guys.

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Andrew and John. And he invited him over to his house that day. And, when they got there at the house, Jesus spoke. Think about it for a minute. When Jesus is speaking, what's happening? The Word of God is speaking. I mean, it's direct. Whole food, Whole Scripture. Jesus is speaking directly to these guys, just like and not that much different than when we read the scripture that's inspired by God and breathed by God.

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Today, as we look at the Scripture, it's pretty exciting to see that. And we saw him do that. That's in John 1:39, if you want to read about that. And one of the things that I like to think about Scripture itself as being whole spiritual food. We're studying. My wife and I are studying health things right now, and, one of the things that keeps coming back to all the guys that we like listening to is that the way to have health and to get rid of diseases and that kind of stuff is to go back to one of the factors.

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One of them is exercise. One of them is food and the right things you're bringing into your body and Whole Foods the way God created them, you know, meats and vegetables and fruits and stuff like that is close to the way God made it is possible it is really healthy stuff. But what our society has done is that they've mixed all kinds of stuff in with it.

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But all these addictive ingredients and stuff in it, sugars and, you know, processed vegetable oils know, like I'm not going to go into that much detail right now. But the point is that the Scripture is pure whole food now we hear it. But also when you do it, it's food for you. When you put it into practice in John, John 1, you know, it also talks about my food is to do the will of the

father.

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And these groups are really good at not getting direct input from Scripture, not just somebody processed version of it, but also and then applying it in their lives. So anyway, I think there's a lot in the Bible about it. And Jesus is a great example.

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Yeah. And, I think that there's pros and and cons to using, material, you know, that someone's written because in some of these places like India or other places that the material was introduced, once the group finished the material, then they're like, oh no, we need to get the packet from the mothership, you know?

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I heard about a story, even in a mission context where they were giving Bible studies out and they had a paper clip. And maybe this is a made up story, but they said, "hey we can't do that now because we don't have the paper clips anymore." And so this, you know, discovery groups, using the Scripture itself and a set base of questions just that has a timelessness where you can keep doing that and starting new groups and training.

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And the more you use the questions, the more comfortable you get with it. And it's like after several weeks, the new believers, the people in the groups, the participants can go lead their own groups and it just becomes second nature in how they're doing it. And so that's yeah, that's a few thoughts on that.

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You know, Paul, you just reminded me, we actually had this happen in my discovery group, just last week actually, we've been using this process, the discovery group process.

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And, last week, one of the other guys that's in it offered to lead the discussion, and he said "I'll give it a shot." And he did. He just used the template, brought in some extra scripture, and he just ran the group just fine. So it's just super simple for other people to pick it up and run with it.

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And one of the things that happens is that the participants in the meeting, they're all learning how to glean from the Bible directly how to get something from it. And they're learning that in a group with some others kind of helping them and kind of correcting them a little bit here and there when in a healthy kind of way.

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And that prepares them to go home and interpret that, read the Bible and interpret the Bible and apply the Bible on their own and their own personal Bible study. So it really helps. But in the meetings itself, we really emphasize that the Bible is the teacher. Okay? The Bible is alive. It's active, it transforms the mind and therefore transforms life.

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And you don't need to be a Bible teacher to lead one of these groups. In fact, it's a little harder for a Bible teacher. I tell myself all the time back from saying too much and dominating the group. So. But a new believer can do this, and, it's almost... I'm not going to say anybody can do it because I think it goes a little too far.

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But lots and lots of people can do that much more than can lead other kinds of groups and teach Bible studies and be effective.

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I think we've let the anticipation build. We've talked a lot about the benefits of it and, and what kinds of people can do it. But I think now it's time to dig into it and talk about what a discovery group is.

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And so the one three part framework that I've heard said many times, it's super easy to do and to teach others is look back, look up and look ahead. It's kind of the three big pieces to the discussion that occurs. And so, John, could you just take us through piece by piece? But what is this "look back" portion?

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The look back is, you know, of course you can't do that in your very first meeting because there's nothing to look back on.

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And maybe you can go a little bit, you know, what's something you're thankful for? There's something you can talk about. Something from their past life, I guess. But it's mainly for the second meeting and those kinds of things for a meeting. And what you basically do is you're reporting back to the group what you said you would do, in your looking forward time at the end of a group meeting, at the end of a group meeting, the look forward time is you're writing an I will statement.

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You're thinking about how I'm going to try to apply this to my life. And this is what I need to do this week to obey God. And they share that with the group. And now you're in this look back time... and this isn't a large portion of the meeting. Maybe 10%, 20% of the time you're doing that.

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Because the bulk of the meeting is what you get to when you get to the look up part.

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Yeah, I think the benefit of looking back is the goal. Like we mentioned is obedience to the scriptures. It's not just knowledge of scriptures. And so when you have a look back element to it when you're asking, how did it go last week with your goals?

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Then there's a little bit of accountability. And the cool thing is you can kind of adjust that to the level of the group. It's not like if they're a brand new believer, you know, you're horrible and we don't do that anyway with the mature people. But, you know, you can tailor the level of accountability to the level of the group.

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And I think one of the benefits of that is that, yeah, there's a phrase that it's kind of a leadership phrase that "what's rewarded gets repeated." And so when you look back and you say "wow, you applied that to your life. Great job." That kind of reinforces the application that you're trying to make at the end of the study.

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That's good. That's great.

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That's great. So it sounds like you start off each meeting with this look back discussion. It sounds like it's part icebreaker or warm up and part accountable, like David said. And then it seems like you, you start to get into the meat of the Bible discussion at the look up piece? Is that kind of how it goes next?

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That's right, that's right. And generally you work with about, you know, 10 to 20 verses. In the beginning of that time, if you have somebody new come in the group, you go over the ground rules. And the ground rules are quite important. I mean I've led some of my neighborhood group, I've got, I've had four neighbors come in real regularly.

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We kind of got used to doing it a certain way. And we all, you know, it was great meetings. But then one of my new neighbors right across the street came and I didn't go over the ground rules. I just kind of assumed that they'd be all right and in the end I needed to and it made that meeting a little bit harder because, and the new person spoke more than then it would be normal.

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And so what ground rules are these: We stick to the text. You know, stay with one passage. Don't jump all around the Bible. The typical thing for people who have been in Bible studies and Christian Bible studies a lot is they do a lot of cross-references where people know the most in the seminary.

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They're quoting this and that all over the Bible, and then the new believer or the person who had never studied the Bible, they feel lost. So you want to literally stay on the same page of what you're talking about, and that puts everybody on an equal footing and helps people participate better in the group.

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The second thing you want to do is you want to participate and don't dominate. And, don't try not to speak more than the others in the group. And this goes to the leader too, if there are four people in the group. You've got a fourth of the time that doesn't mean you can't say anything.

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You can say stuff and you can give your insights and maybe pull out some of the most important insights you want to make sure they get from the passage. But you don't dominate it. You kind of look for that. So that's the second big rule. And then the other one we mentioned already, the Scripture is a teacher.

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And so you're not trying to teach, you're just trying to keep pointing them back. And everyone in a group learning to point people back, well what does it say about that question. How does the text deal with that? And so that becomes quite an important part of the whole process.

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I think those rules are really helpful. Especially, if, you know, you have someone that's coming into the group that is a little bit more of the dominator type personality or that kind of guy, you might pull them aside ahead of time before you even bring the group. Sometimes I've one-on-one conversations.

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Get someone on your team to be like, hey, can you really help me make this a really engaging environment for the others? And then they're coming in kind of like with that co-leader mindset. So that's just kind of an idea there.

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And then the other problem with, cross-references, having so many cross-references is that it, like, really does set apart the people that have Bible knowledge and the people that don't. If you're just looking at that one text, it levels the playing field.

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And it also distracts from really digging deep into that one passage. So I think that's the other important thing about sticking with the text as well.

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So let me ask for an example. Okay. So say you're reading John 3 and it's talking about the snake lifted up in the wilderness. You know what I mean. Like are you what do you do then? Like, do you just say, oh no, we're just going to stay in the text, in this one passage.

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That's a great question that came up in my group. It comes up just about every time. And so sometimes when it's a real quick, it's in the passage. And the passage doesn't explain what it is. You can give a quick couple of sentences. Reference back to this, what happened in the Old Testament. And this is that there was sin in the camp. And, you know, you can just say you can tell it in a good way.

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And as a good leader, you might look ahead, read it ahead and kind of be ready to share briefly how you would answer those questions that might come up without, you know, let's go back to the Old Testament, read that whole story and get into the details of it. Just give them enough they know so they can.

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So that text makes sense to them. That's how that's how I've done with that. That's part of my one fourth of the time. If I have four people, that's one fourth of the time. I've, I've used this to explain this a little bit. So that's what I've done with it.

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Makes sense. Yeah. That's good.

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Yeah. That's a good example because it seems like the goal of sticking with the passage is not to bring in new information. That's gonna muddy the water for discussion. But if it adds clarity to the passage you're reading, it's okay. In short, short bursts is what I'm hearing.

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Okay. So you covered the ground rules and it's time to read the passage. So like, really practically. What's that look like when you've got a new group starting through 10 or 20 verses?

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Okay. Well, what you do is you read a section of it, Have different people in the group read a section, maybe a paragraph in it, you know, out loud.

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Then you have somebody else read a section of another paragraph out loud, and you kind of go

through maybe the whole passage, sometimes even half of it, if it's quite a long one. But, but you read through it out loud, then you ask people to go back in and read through the passage silently, just kind of on their own and focusing on a question about

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What was the author's intent for writing this? And that's what you're trying to look at. You look at the author's intent and you're not jumping to application yet. You want to make sure you got the observation and you got what they're saying, to start with and then you kind of summarize the passage and you let different people take paragraph by paragraph and kind of put it in their own words, section by section.

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That helps them again, understand it and make sure. And that's when a lot of the questions kind of come up and you keep pushing them back to what does the passage say about that. And, and that's helpful. And then once they've done that, now they've gone over it three times in a way, at that point in the meeting.

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Now you can ask the question now, okay. Now we understand this. What stands out to you is most important from this passage. And you just let anybody or everybody share on that. Now oftentimes we don't have to go any further than that. That'll take up a lot of the meeting because, you know, people are sharing. But sometimes if the discussion lags, maybe you have a lot of introverts in the group.

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You can prime the pump for that question. What stands out to you, you might ask, is there anything being taught about God in this passage? Is there anything taught about people? Are there any commands to obey? Especially if you know those things are in it, or any promises to claim, any example to follow. So you can kind of prime the pump as you need to, but oftentimes you don't even need to do that.

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One of the things that I've thought about is, in the Bible, there's not actually a lot of talk about discussing the Bible, but there is a lot of talk about meditating on the Bible. Okay. And what I can, I think a good, helpful Bible study, helpful Bible discussion is actually a form of group meditation.

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And I think that's one of the beautiful things of a Discovery Group is, like you said, you're going over it multiple times, you're really digging deep into it, and you're getting the richness out of the text itself rather than just your good ideas. Because I've been in a lot of Bible studies, too, where you'll read the verse and then everyone will close their Bible and then they'll discuss, what do I think?

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What are my good ideas about this? And I was like, you're missing the whole point. We need to be like, sinking our teeth deeply into it and really meditating and diving deep and again, deep is not necessarily the Greek words and the cross references. I think the deep is really like meditating on it and exploring what it means and applying it to our lives.

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That's, I think, the true depth to it. And so that's one of the things I think strategy really helps people, kind of digest it in a greater way. And, it changes their lives more.

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And it's modeling what you can do in your quiet time if, as you're encouraging them to read on their own in their time alone with God, these kinds of thoughts and questions and things can be really applied to that as well.

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And I've found it's really fun to have somebody I've had people in the both the groups that I, most of the people who come into groups and the two groups I'm leading right now, they've never read this passage before, and they're coming up with a brand new insight, and they're excited about it because they just found it.

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And, you know, the guys get excited about finding that. And it's just kind of like they're feeding on each other's enthusiasm. And looking at this new there's new insights from God's word.

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And I love it because like, especially if it's a new believer, it's just there's like a purity about it that you can tell they haven't read, you know, XYZ: preacher, this preacher's commentary on it.

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They're just sharing from the Spirit of God inside of them is like, you know, helping them share something that's profound or more profound than if they just read, or listen to some sermon on it that it's a beautiful thing.

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Because we never want to take away from the scripture also had a place for preaching and teaching, and there are people in line with that.

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And that needs to be part of the process. But what happens is that in most churches and ministries that's happening in every group, it's all processed, you know, and it's all the preaching and teaching and you're not getting a place where you're getting directly into the Word. So this is an addition to some of the other things that the church can do.

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It's not the only thing that the church does. So I just wanted to throw that in.

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Yeah I'd be out of a job in that case.

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So what do you do? I know that, you know, on one hand, we're saying the Bible is the teacher and we don't want to facilitate, not teach. But what do you do if somebody comes up with an interpretation of, like, the scripture that you're reading that you know to be totally wrong, like, how do you approach that?

00:30:48:01 - 00:31:01:12

Well, the way I approach that is that I might ask them, where do you see that in the text? Let's all look at that. Let's see, where did you find that in the text? And then if they can't find it in the text, that kind of goes back to one of our ground rules.

00:31:01:12 - 00:31:18:12

We're sticking with this text. The other thing that they come up with is "what do the others of you think? What else do you see in this text?" And so there's ways you can get around that. You're really trying not to, you know, trying to really be kind to them, especially if they're new with it.

00:31:18:14 - 00:31:43:00

But at the same time, you want to help them learn how to get the scripture. And sometimes some of the best insights. Is there a little bit of that correction? You know, I think of one thing and then we say what's passage says and we deal with that. And you know, I just yeah, I didn't see that before that, that is a better way to and they're saying that in front of the whole group. And it just kind of gets everybody more motivated.

00:31:43:00 - 00:32:27:01

Yeah. One of the phrases that I know Paul uses, especially in evangelism, if someone shares a wacky idea, you can always say, oh, that's interesting. You know, that's an interesting perspective. And then you could say, and then you can kind of ask another question, well, what do you think about this? Or, you know, whatever it is. So it's just a good tool in your tool belt there.

00:32:07:17 - 00:32:27:01

Yeah. And realize not every conversation needs to happen in that moment. So if you have this group of 3 or 4 others that you're helping lead, you might set up an appointment one-on-one to go in and be like, hey, you know, like, how are you doing?

00:32:27:01 - 00:32:44:07

And just, you know, minister to them personally. But you know, you mentioned this, this issue, let's look at what the scriptures say, if you don't mind, if you'd like to, we can look at what the Scripture says in other places about that issue that you brought up and just kind of answer that question that way.

00:32:44:07 - 00:32:50:21

And that way you get a more customized approach, and it doesn't embarrass him in front of the other members.

00:32:50:21 - 00:33:06:12

That's right. So what do you do? That goes along that same line of thinking when they come up with a question. That's a hard question. That's not in the passage. That's when you talk about, well, let's get together afterwards and talk about that in another setting.

00:33:06:12 - 00:33:22:22

It's not really in this passage, but that's a great question. Let's get to and talk about that or we have something we call the, "table it box" and a later box and we kind of write down the question. And then every month or so we're going to have a question and answer tonight. In fact, I'm doing one of those tonight.

00:33:23:00 - 00:33:40:09

With most of the people in my group. And we're inviting making it an outreach. And so we've already had our last meeting. We had a lot of questions come up in the meeting. And, we dealt with some of them in the meetings because it was kind of in the past, the other ones we said, well, let's wait for those, let's wait for Wednesday night and we'll do that.

00:33:40:09 - 00:33:56:23

So I'm not doing that every week, but maybe a month or so. You could have this night where you can be the teacher and you can answer your questions, and you can have them bring up new questions and bring their friends and that's actually a kind of a cool outreach. They want to come for their questions, and they know their friends want to do it.

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And I think one of the things that you can do as a leader is when you answer the question, then you actually show them it's almost like when you're doing math problems, you show your work like you show how you got to that problem. And I think with the way that you interpret the Bible and you explain your interpretation of the Bible, then you show your work, you show them how you got to that conclusion.

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Example: in John 3 it talks about, you know, the water and the spirit being born of the water in the spirit. That's one of those confusing passages. But I know you've kind of taught us well... he talks about physical birth and he talks about spiritual birth. So maybe one of the interpretations of that is the water might be referring to physical birth.

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And so that's an example of because you're showing that because of the context. That's the way that you interpret the passage. And so even just, modeling those principles that we talk about is like the rule of context is that context rules and that you interpret the unclear scriptures in light of the clear scriptures that you use, you interpret the unclear in light of the clear.

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So a few of those interpretive grids that we use that if we're modeling that for the people in our group, then that actually helps them to be able to do that in an effective way.

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Yes, I thought of a new idea and also an interpretation. You interpret it based on the close ones rather than the ones that are far away, you know, the ones that are close in the context right before that.

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There are two verses before, two verses after. Where's that insight? Rather than go back someplace else in the Bible that they don't know, that is another good principle of interpretation.

00:35:33:17 - 00:35:48:20

What if someone comes to one of these with like a big ESV study Bible and they want to read all their, all their notes and, footnotes and all that kind of stuff, what do you guys do if that happens?

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When we're first getting started, I actually run off the scripture. I get a page and they get 20 verses on a page. I write it off, I give everybody the same page. So literally they're working on the same page instead of working under different translations, or especially with Study Bibles. And they're always wanting to go to the notes.

00:36:05:20 - 00:36:26:16

And somewhere along the line I try to teach them that the notes are not the same as inspired scripture, even though they're in the Bible. These are like somebody's sermon about the Bible in there. And so try to help them to understand the difference in that. And that we're sticking with the scripture here.

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I mean, I could even picture people pulling out their phones and opening up A.I. and asking that to answer a question for them. We have so many external tools available

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One of my guys I have to kind of get after him about this, I think some other nice way, he keeps bringing up the The Message Bible, which is good.

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"Well in the message it says this!" and you know, it expands and so and which is pretty good and it's usually good stuff. It's not wrong, but it's still the rest of them don't have a message Bible in front of them. And so it puts them at sort of a disadvantage. So anyway, those things are going to happen.

00:37:07:19 - 00:37:36:04

This is why these groups are not...They're organic. They're messy. They're things that are going to happen. You have to adjust. And that's one of the reasons why, when we talk about the next podcast, why it's important for you to be in a harvest team where you're talking about these kind of things that are coming up and you're helping those leaders to not only start their group, but also to lead their group and to solve the problems they're going to run into. So we will get to that later.

00:37:36:04 - 00:37:54:22

One of the themes I heard is you guys were kicking around the different problems and solutions, something you talked a little bit about and one of the prior podcasts, but Grace and truth, you're kind of tackling the challenge head on, but with grace and truth. You don't want to hammer people, especially when you're dealing with faith beginners.

00:37:55:00 - 00:38:20:02

But point them to the truth with grace. So I appreciate that. So we've talked about step one and step two. There's the look back and then look up is the Bible discussion portion where we've done the ground rules, read the passage summarized and asked a question like "what stands out to you?"

00:38:20:04 - 00:38:29:03

And that tends to be a meaty discussion. And so what comes next as we get into this "look ahead" piece?

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Okay. Now that's not looking forward or looking ahead. And that has to do with application. This is what you are going to do with it. Now we understand it. What are you going to do with it?

00:38:39:06 - 00:38:57:09

And if you can get them to a place where they're saying "I will by the grace of God or I will try to do this by the next meeting," I'm going to start doing this. This is how I want to apply this to my life. That's what you're looking at.

00:38:57:09 - 00:39:13:17

That's what you're looking for during that period of time. Again, it's easy to let the middle part fill up the time so much. You have no time for the last part. And that's a little bit of a danger. I would say try to save time for that because that's really where the rubber meets the road.

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If you get my drift. And you just want it, you want to come to that and you want to help them to do it. Now, one of the problems that we faced is that sometimes people are nonbelievers. And so they're not ready to apply everything in Scripture right now.

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But one question I asked to a group, and I know I have several there, is if you are a fully devoted follower of Christ, how would that person apply this? And then the ones that are committed are sitting back. Yeah, I guess so. I agree that, you know, if they are complete and and that that sort of helps and takes a little bit of pressure off, you know, pinning somebody down who's not quite there yet, he's still seeking,

00:39:59:17 - 00:40:31:09

But there's also nothing wrong with them trying out some of the principles. Yeah. You're kind of encouraging them. You know, you're reading Philippians 2 about putting the goals and interests of others above your own and they're like, oh, I want to serve my wife by doing the dishes and or whatever it is. You're like, okay, hey, that's awesome. You know? I think we want to be careful not to let them off the hook too much.

00:40:31:09 - 00:40:47:00

I agree and then but and then as they are applying it and then they realize that this is really hard and they're like, well, the solution is you need the Holy Spirit's power in order to obey effectively.

00:40:47:00 - 00:41:16:15

And we all need the Holy Spirit's power to effectively obey these things. And so I think that's a good that's actually maybe one of the ways that someone could come to Christ is they're trying to apply the Bible, and then then it's not working too well. And they realize they reached the end of themselves, and then they realize their need for Christ to actually transform their life from the

inside out... but yeah, I mean, I think about, applications, you know, there's a kind of different level.

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Again, depending on your group, sometimes it can start very vague, like, I just need to do this more, but then the stronger they are, they become as believers, the more specific. I think you want to challenge them to be in their applications and challenge them. And so it's okay if at first they're just like, oh, I want to be more loving to my spouse.

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And then over time you're like, "okay, what does that look like? You know, what does that mean?" I think this is a good way. So have you had times where people like they don't come up with any applications, like, what do you do then?

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Yeah in one of my groups, my neighborhood group with the doctor and his wife and neighbor across the street that never had read the Bible before.

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They love the group. They love the look up time. If we do that every week and they're learning and they're processing. The guy, that's not the believer, You know after reading John 1-4 and you know, yeah I think I'm about ready to get baptized too, you know.

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So he's just kind of saying and he hadn't done it yet. But I've gotta you know, have that follow up with him. I'll usually still throw it out. How can you apply this? But they tend to be a little bit quiet during that.

00:42:31:10 - 00:42:53:22

I'm not beating them up because I'm seeing so much of the progress. Yeah. Being made in the scripture, I try to do one myself and my wife is in the group, so she'll share one usually. And so we're giving them some modeling of that at least. But I even told him one time...I'd love to see this more. But it didn't do much good.

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That's great. Yeah. You're modeling is the biggest thing you can do. And even, you know, when

we teach in a quiet time and stuff, making a smart application specific, measurable, action oriented, realistic and timely, those are kind of a good way to think of it.

00:43:12:07 - 00:43:32:01

And you can kind of just throw that out there and it doesn't have to have all those things. But if it has that general idea of something specific that you can know you did or not that week, that's more helpful than just generally being more loving to your spouse, you know? And so, yeah, that's just a little freebie there.

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But so keep in mind you might start off with all nonbelievers, but hopefully they're not going to stay nonbelievers like my group with the college guys that now most of them get baptized and walk with Jesus, now. They're pretty committed. They're handing out fliers on campus, and one of the guys who came to Christ we baptized a couple months ago.

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He baptized somebody else this week. So it's pretty cool. But now I can go a little more Christian oriented with them because the group sort of shifts from a pure evangelistic kind of Bible study to more growth and discipleship and encouragement.

00:44:15:11 - 00:44:36:22

Eventually, you know, the whole dynamics will change. You begin to be a discipleship group, potentially. But when you get in that space, hopefully some of them are out starting the new group with the new faith beginner, because that group is already becoming old. Go back and look at the life cycle of church and from the last podcast and you'll see what I'm talking about there. If you don't know what I'm talking about.

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I was just going to say one of the things that the Apostle Paul said was to warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, but be patient with everyone.

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And so I love that idea of like, there's some that just need to be warned and there's some that just need a little more time. And everyone needs patience. So we all need patience for God's goodness

00:45:03:07 - 00:45:27:10

So here's a question. What if their application is not based on the scripture you just read? It's just like a random thing like that. They feel like they should. Do you just like, celebrate whatever application they feel like?

00:45:20:05 - 00:45:27:10

I celebrate the application. Some of you guys say, I mean, I'm struggling with pornography. How are we going to do it? You know, so I want to get away from that.

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So we're praying for him and we're putting that in the list and we ask him next week, so that's fine. They can do that. But your main thing is you're trying to get them back to the passage, but sometimes other stuff comes up and they're going to share something that's going on in their lives.

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And so yeah, should you pray for them and you encourage them in that way? That's what I do anyway.

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Yeah. I would lean on all this being as gracious and flexible as possible, that they don't feel like they're being, you know, like too controlled. So we want to have an appropriate level of structure.

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But I find that creating that environment of work gives a lot of grace to people. And it is helpful.

00:46:10:20 - 00:46:20:14

So I throw this in: a lot of that kind of stuff we just got done talking about is kind of advanced leadership, kind of way of thinking and massaging those kinds of things.

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Which is good, we can do that. But, you don't have to know all that. You just do the basic questions and go back to Scripture. You can do that. And I think a new Christian is probably not going to... or maybe he will jump on people too much sometimes.

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But anyway, I'm just saying there's some that people can do without knowing all the stuff that.

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I keep going back to it that it's like we need the Holy Spirit to guide the whole process. And in these groups

00:47:02:09 - 00:47:12:03

you're relying on Him as the leader, you're relying on the Holy Spirit to guide what you're saying, what you do, and, that's going to be the thing that really helps transform people's lives.

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And remember, a new Christian has the Holy Spirit from day one. Exactly. He's got it so he can do much more than we think.

00:47:20:02 - 00:47:30:20

He doesn't have to have all this background, and God can inspire him to stick with that text. The Spirit of truth can help bring out the truth in that text. And he can. He can get it. So we just got to go.

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Honestly, sometimes the more raw the new believer is and the more proof we see, you know, because they're just getting after it and they're doing things that we wouldn't do.

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But God's Spirit is moving. And, 2 Corinthians 4:7, "we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the all surpassing power comes from God and not from us." So the longer I've been in ministry, the more faith I have in God's ability to use others, to use new believers, to use faith beginners to people that are on the front lines of those relationships.

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And so, as a ministry leader, this podcast is probably primary for ministry leaders. We need to be on the frontlines ourselves modeling, but also getting our people on the frontlines as much as possible. And in collegiate ministry, the best person to reach a student with the gospel is another student. Because they have the most friends and where I'm able to put them on the frontlines

there.

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So that's kind of a thought there. Yeah. Let's rather have it be messy and have to fix those issues with people that need training than make everything neat and tidy.

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Yeah. And when we tell our stories of what we've been doing, we need to kind of tell it more in the way of like, if I can do it, then you can do it too.

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It's not that I'm this expert being a Bible study leader and things like that. It's just like, baby steps, you know. And I think if you have that mentality in the one step ahead leadership that they don't have to be this, you know, person that knows all the Bible. It's just yeah, just opening the Bible. And I think that's when we're going to start seeing more of a movement, with these kinds of things.

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Well that's great. I think we've covered the overview of what a discovery group looks like. There's a lot more tips and tricks that we want to share with you, but we'll have to put that into a later episode.

00:49:37:04 - 00:50:05:21

And, next up, we're going to be digging into some of those things, like, how do you start a discovery group? We're going to talk about some strategies for finding and filling your new group, with Faith beginners. And then also how to start or join a harvest team where you can be equipped and encouraged and over time, trained to help solve some of these problems and begin to multiply your groups in your harvest field.

00:50:05:21 - 00:50:23:19

So I'm looking forward to digging into that subject because, you guys, thanks again for joining us today and look forward to our next discussion here on the "For the Harvest" podcast.