

## LEADING A COMMUNAL DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

- This method is called “communal discovery” because the community, the group, discovers the truth of a Bible passage together through asking and answering good questions and seeking Jesus together in His Word. The leader assists the group in digging into the passage rather than only the leader sharing insights and answering the group's questions.
- The format used for this kind of Bible study is called a "Manuscript" of the passage. The “manuscript format” is just the text of the passage, no verse numbers, chapter divisions, headings, or notes at the bottom of the page. This format helps the learners "see" the passage in a fresh way, and helps the learners discover themes and relationships within the text. There is lots of room and white space to mark up the text and write notes and questions on the page that can be shared with a small group.
- Each "Communal Discovery" Bible study starts with a few minutes of personal time for the group to read and mark their texts. The group spends the rest of the hour sharing what they see in the text, sharing questions that arise from the text, and grappling with those questions as a group as they seek answers from the text. The leader helps summarize the main points or flow of the passage. Finally, the group discusses how the passage relates to them and how they could apply it. The leader's role is to facilitate the discussion and the discovery process.

## PREPARING TO LEAD THE STUDY

### Study the Passage for Yourself First

- At the end of this section is a page which describes a method you can use to prepare your studies. It is called “Daily Passion for the Word,” and it leads you through a systematic way to study the passages. You can prepare them in the context of your quiet times, or set aside a special time to prepare. Preparing each one should take you about an hour and a half, or two 45-minute quiet times.
- As you study each passage, make sure that you make a personal application from the passage that affects your life. What is Jesus saying to you in each passage, and calling you to do or change? In the book of Ezra in the Old Testament, chapter 7 verse 10, we see that Ezra set himself to *study* the law, then *do* it, *then* teach it in Israel. He studied first, then applied before he taught the passage. Ezra is the example for us to follow as we prepare and lead Bible studies. Study first, then apply it for our own lives, then teach it. In this way the passage will have gripped your own heart and life and you can teach it with real power and conviction.
- Sample "Teaching Notes" are being written in the Communal Discovery format for various Bible passages. These Teaching Notes can be found in the "Bible Study" section of the [www.urbana.org](http://www.urbana.org) web site and also on the InterVarsity web site at [www.InterVarsity.org](http://www.InterVarsity.org). These Teaching Notes contain some ideas for introducing and entering that particular text, some main questions the group may raise and some possible answers, a sample summary of the passage, and some possible application questions. These notes are for guidance only. They are intended to give you something to check your own study against after you have completed it and to help you with ideas as you prepare to teach the study. They are not intended to replace your own study and preparation. *Therefore, please do not turn to the Teaching Notes until you have done your own study of the passage first.*

## **Annotated outline with timing for your one-hour Bible study sessions each morning.**

- **Introduction (1 minute)**
  - to method
  - to passage
  - Take a minute (a little longer the first day) to introduce the Communal Discovery method and the passage.
- **Individual Time To Study the Text or “Enter the Text” (5 min)**
  - Give your group about 5 minutes to study the passage individually. You could use a creative way to have your group look at the text such as "pretend you are a movie director setting up this text as a movie. What scenes would your movie include? How would you set them up?" Or you can teach the three basic ways of approach to study a text: 1. Look for the specifics such as who, what, when, where, and how; 2. look for connections within the text such as repetitions and contrasts; and 3. enter the text experientially by becoming one of the characters in the story.
- **Share Observations/questions together (15 minutes)**
  - This time should be lively. You could have them share their responses to the creative "enter the text" exercise that you and let the observations and questions come out of that sharing. Or you could ask: "What do you see here, and what questions do you have?" Do NOT ask "content questions" such as "where were Jesus and the disciples going?" or "who did Jesus encounter on the road to Samaria?" Rather, ask open ended questions such as "what did you see" and "what else did you see?"
  - Note their questions but tell the group that we will hold off answering them yet.
- **Answer questions together (24 minutes)**
  - Walking through the passage again, answer their questions together.
  - Encourage the group to base their answers on evidence from the text itself and the context. If you are studying a Gospel or an Epistle in the New Testament, and people to whom these were written knew the Old Testament, finding parallel passages in the Old Testament is helpful in interpreting the texts. Teach the group how to use a Bible Dictionary to find out cultural background and definitions of words. Do NOT use a commentary during the study since commentaries are interpretations by the commentator.
  - These 25 minutes of answering the questions together that the group generated are the heart of your study.
  - If you have helped the group observe well, the group itself becomes self-correcting. Keep them in the text, and help them develop good questions and answer them from the passage, its context, and the Old Testament background.
- **Summarize (5 minutes)**
  - After walking through the passage and answering the questions as a group, a few main themes should emerge. Summarize those with a few sentences or a paragraph.
- **Process/Apply (10 minutes)**
  - Help the group process and apply the passage. Have some possible application questions ready to go. Make sure you leave about 10 minutes for this. This is where Jesus will solidify what He has been speaking to the group about in the study. He will transform them by His Word as they make specific applications and then do them.

Remember that you are the facilitator of the groups' learning. Trust Jesus, the text, and the Holy Spirit to be the authority, and trust the Holy Spirit working through the group to come up with a good interpretation and application of the passage.

## Other Hints

- If you need more help after you have prepared the study on your own, turn to the Teaching Notes in the back for ideas and resources.
  - *Reminder: Don't just ask the questions in the Teaching Notes and have the group answer them. Rather, have the group itself generate the questions, and then dig together for answers.*
- Don't preach, don't lecture, and don't share everything you saw. Get the group to share what they saw.
- Encourage those who are sharing a lot to tone it down and let others share, and encourage those who are not speaking up to share a simple observation that they see in the text.
- Colored pens or markers will help your group as they study the manuscript text. They can mark connections like repetitions, contrasts, and cause-to-effect with different colors and see them better. They can mark themes. You may want to bring along a set or two of colored pens or markers for your group to use during the studies.
- There is a special Small group Leader resource area on the [www.urbana.org](http://www.urbana.org) web site at [www.urbana.org/u2000.biblestudies.cfm](http://www.urbana.org/u2000.biblestudies.cfm). You can download helpful resources from this part of the web site. The resources include:
  - Teaching Notes for other passages
  - The "Daily Passion for the Word" outline
  - "Exploring D.C.", an article by IV Staff Lindsay Olesberg which compares Bible study to taking a trip to explore a new city.
  - "Enhancements to Inductive Bible Study," a helpful set of ideas written by InterVarsity's National Bible Study Task Force.
  - Practical articles on:
    - "How to Enter the Text"
    - "How to Write Good Questions"
    - "How to Summarize and Lead Your Group into Processing and Application"
    - :Outlines of two powerful talks about the power of the Bible:
      - "Why I Love God's Word" by Bob Grahmann
      - "The Power of God's Word" by Lindsay Olesberg
- If you have any questions about the studies as you prepare, get in touch with your local InterVarsity staff person.
- Pray for the members of your group. Pray that they will be open for the study, will put themselves into it, will seek God in His Word, and that God would really speak to them as they dig into His Word together.

# DAILY PASSION FOR THE WORD

*How to meditate on the Bible in your quiet time or Bible study preparation*

## **Be Expectant**

The Bible is God's living Word. As you approach the Bible, pray that God would *meet you*, so you experience God Himself in His Word; *speak to you* as a friend to a friend; *teach you* His truth; *surprise you* with some new insight or discovery; and *transform you* over time into the image of Jesus.

## **Get Honest with God**

As you approach God in expectant prayer, take time also to think through what the last few days have been like for you. Share honestly with God what and how you are feeling as you approach your time with Him. Share your struggles and joys. Ask Him to speak, over time, to issues in your life.

## **Look Closely**

- ❑ Read the passage carefully, and write down specifics that you see such as who is there, what is happening, when is it, where is it, and how is it happening.
- ❑ Circle or write down words, phrases or ideas that *connect* by repeating, contrasting, being similar, going from the general to the particular, or stating a cause that leads to an effect.
- ❑ Put yourself into the passage. If it is a narrative, put yourself into the story. What do you see, smell, taste, and feel? Choose one of the characters and become them. If it is a letter or law section, feel what it might have felt to get the letter or hear the law. If it is poetry, let the power of the poem and its images sweep over you.
- ❑ What questions does the passage raise in your mind? What words, phrases, or concepts don't you understand? Does the passage turn in any unexpected ways? What intrigues you? Write these questions down.

## **Meditate**

Step back and read the passage a few times again. Read it as if Jesus were standing right there with you (He is!). Ponder again the points that stand out to you in the passage. What does the passage say or point to about Jesus? Ask Jesus what He has for you personally in the passage. What area of your life is Jesus speaking to?

## **TAKE A SECOND PASS AT THE PASSAGE**

Today you'll look at the same passage, but from a different angle.

## **Think Deeply**

See if the passage can be divided into thought units, paragraphs. See what sentences you think add up to a thought unit and mark that as a paragraph. (These may or may not be the same as the paragraphs in the version of the Bible you are using.)

- Write a brief title for each paragraph.
- Consider the questions you wrote yesterday. Look hard in the passage for insights into these questions. Also look at the context of the passage. What comes before it and after it?
- One of the best ways to move towards answers to your questions is to look for connections among the paragraphs. Is there a word, phrase or idea that repeats? Is there a contrast? Is there a cause in one paragraph and the effect in another; or a string of similar words, phrases, or ideas that run through a few paragraphs? Draw lines between the connected words or phrases to mark them. What do you think is significant about these connections? What light do they shed on possible answers to your questions?

## **Summarize**

Look at your connections, your questions, your points of significance, and the context. Step back and ask yourself: what are the main points of this passage? What is the author trying to say? Why is this passage or story here? Try to write this in an integrative sentence.

## **Hear from God and Act Boldly**

As you ponder your study, do you sense that God is speaking to any part of your life? Is there a promise to trust, a command to obey, or an example to follow or avoid? Is there a deeper insight into God or your experience with God? What action are you going to take in response to what God is saying to you?

## **Worship Him**

Take the time to worship God and respond to His love for you. Thank Him for speaking to you in His living Word.

## **The Joy of Community**

After you have studied the passage on your own, share it with trusted fellow believers in a Christian community to get their correction, affirmation, and insights. Have at least one fellow believer with whom you share Bible study on a regular basis.