

Discovering Purpose Bible Study

How To Launch Your Online Discovery Group

1. Form a small team.

Discovery Bible studies are one of the greatest tools for sharing your faith with people who are far from God or not sure about what they believe. The goal is to create a low pressure and relational environment where anyone can come and honestly explore God and the Bible. If you can form a small team of committed believers who desire to reach non-Christians you will have more encouragement and momentum to get your group started and keep it going. It is important that you don't have too many established believers on your team. You will want to have at least as many non-Christians or new believers in your group as you do mature believers. The goal is for new people to see other faith beginners like themselves in the group so they don't feel behind.

2. Brainstorm a list of people that you each want to invite.

Create a master list of people that you have been wanting to share the gospel with that you think might be open to joining a discovery Bible study. Since this group is online, geography is no longer an issue! You can invite anyone from anywhere. Try to come up with at least 10 people that you each could invite. If you invite 10 you can realistically expect to have 2-3 people join you. Add each person to a daily prayer list. As you are doing this you can start reaching out to the people on your list to just catch up casually. Start praying for God to prepare the hearts of people for when you invite them. God already knows who will be in your group. You just have to be faithful in reaching out to them and asking.

3. Give each person a call or send out text invitations.

Start inviting people at least a week before you are wanting to start your group. It may take a couple of invites to get someone to join you. If people can't talk when you call them or you are struggling to get a hold of them, send them a text, asking them if they would be interested.

Here is a sample script for both a call or text: *"Hi John! How have you been doing? I recently thought it would be fun to put together a Bible study with a small group of my friends who may be interested in learning and discovering more about the Bible. The topic is on how we can discover our purpose in life and is for anyone no matter what they believe. Would this be something that you would be interested in?"*

We know this is a relational risk but God uses this type of risk all the time to lead people to Christ. Most people are not offended by an honest and straightforward invitation. People like to be invited to things. Even if they say they are too busy or not interested at least you broke the ice spiritually and you can keep praying for them and engaging with them relationally.

4. Set up a time that will work for everyone.

Scheduling may be one of the most difficult parts of getting this Bible Study together. Something you want to make sure you are doing is once someone says they can come or are interested ask them to send you their availability. Once you have everyone's availability, or the days that will work best for them, even if they say "anytime", you can then see where the overlap is. Once you figure out a time that works for most people, create a recurring meeting time in your calendar and let everyone know about it. If you have enough people interested in the group and you can't find a time for everyone to meet you may consider starting two groups.

5. Choose the platform you want to use.

Zoom is one of your best options for online groups, especially because it allows you to share your screen with the other participants. This works well with showing videos, doing ice-breaker activities, However, the free version limits you to a 40 minute call if you have more than 2 people. This may mean you pay for a pro account or simply end your call and restart it if you run out of time having great conversations about God's Word! Facetime or Facebook work as well, but are more limited in how many features they offer.

6. Start on week one!

Make sure you start on the first week of the study, It is meant to be done in order week one through four. Make sure everyone gets a copy of the study for that week (we recommend sending it to everyone ahead of time, and sharing it on your screen for everyone to see). Remember, people might drop off after the first week so remember that sharing the Gospel is one of the most important aspects of this study. Each week will review the Gospel to some extent, so make sure to look over the lesson beforehand so you can recognize where the lesson goes over that and can prepare to spend some extra time on that.

7. Follow up personally with people to share the gospel.

As you work through the study together keep an eye out for those who seem responsive to the discussion and pursue setting up virtual gospel appointments with those people first. Make it your goal that by the end of the Bible study you will set up a gospel appointment with everyone that joins you. Be loving and bold! Most people will appreciate you taking the time to hear their story, answer their questions and share the gospel with them. Start praying that God will provide several discipleship relationships from this study.

How To Lead Your Group

1. Start with get-to-know-you questions

Not everyone will know each other at these meetings so start each meeting with an "icebreaker" question. These help everyone get to know each other, and can be as

simple as what sports they like, their favorite ice cream flavors, favorite books or movies, etc. Get creative and consider even some short ice breaker games also!

2. Come prepared.

Don't wait until right before the meeting to review the lesson, prepare beforehand! This will help you be better equipped to move the discussion along, as well as answer questions people might bring up.

3. Don't stress about the people who aren't there. Love the people who are there.

Most likely there will be a friend who told you they would make it to the group but ghost on you. Other times there could only be one new person who comes. That is ok! If God uses this to lead them to Christ then all the effort will be worth it. Smaller groups are usually more ideal for discussion anyway.

4. Don't be afraid of silence!

Some people take a bit of time to think about what they want to say before they answer. While everyone is thinking, it can be easy for you to start feeling self-conscious about the silence. Let it happen! It is ok sometimes for team members to break a long silence to keep the conversation going. Don't put new people on the spot or make them answer. Some would rather participate by listening and making occasional comments others will talk a lot. As the weeks go by people will start to open up more and be more comfortable answering the questions.

5. Close in prayer.

This is a Bible study and your friends know that it is. Even if they all are not Christians, this will help them realize how important this is to and that you really believe in the things you are talking about. Ask them for prayer requests, and check in on them during the week. Your friends will be really touched by your initiative! Make sure you really labor in prayer for these requests. Them seeing God answer a prayer could be a great step forward for them coming to Christ.

6. Have fun and keep building the relationship outside the group!

During the group time keep the whole conversation moving forward and upbeat. Feel free to crack some jokes and take some fun tangents along the way. If people want to hangout afterwards and play Jackbox, games on Discord or have a Netflix party you could be ready to do that with them afterwards. If people want to leave right afterwards that ok also. Try and keep up with your friends casually throughout the week on social media, texting or invites to social events. Your real friendship is a key tool God could use to help lead them to Christ!