

Discovery: Announcing the Gospel in a Way That Replicates

By Cory Hartman and Harry Brown

Cory Hartman serves with New Generations, the hub of a family of organizations whose workers catalyze disciple-making movements everywhere. He is an author and collaborator on multiple books on ministry leadership, disciple making, and personal calling. Cory previously co-designed training processes and tools for a church consulting group and served for 13 years as a pastor in the United States. He earned DMin and MDiv degrees from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Harry Brown is the founder of New Generations, and he serves as CEO and chairman of the board of directors. Harry received religious studies degrees from San Jose Bible College, Prairie Bible Institute (Canada), and Pepperdine University. He also received an MBA from San Jose State.



Discovery, as the term is used by advocates of a mission approach called Disciple-Making Movements (DMM), is a complex idea.¹

1. It's a particular model of how people learn, especially how they come to know God.

2. *Discovery* can also mean any method of teaching where the instructor deliberately stimulates learning in accord with this model.

3. *Discovery* is a specific phase in the process of catalyzing a disciple-making movement. It happens *after* disciple makers have been welcomed into a social circle by the person with predominant influence in that circle, who wants to hear what the disciple makers have to tell. (This person is often referred to in DMM literature as a "person of peace.") The disciple makers have likely spoken the gospel conversationally in ad hoc and fragmentary ways prior to this point, but this is the stage where

1. This paper is adapted from Harry Brown, "Disciple Making Movements" (unpublished manuscript, December 18, 2024), Microsoft Word file.

they begin to present the gospel fully to a small group whom God prepared to welcome it.

4. *Discovery* is also shorthand for the tactic we use at that stage: a liturgy called “Discovery Bible Study” or DBS.

Much has been written about the tactic of Discovery Bible Study, whether directions for how to conduct one, success stories from doing so, arguments for its value, or defenses against critics. So why does the world need one more article on Discovery?

Attention has overwhelmingly focused on DBS (definition 4 above), but the tactic has limited value when standing on its own. DBS’s real merit appears when it plays a peculiar role in the broader method referred to in definition 3, which aims to start a disciple-making movement (which we define below). Form follows function: a DBS is built as it is to serve a particular purpose according to particular standards. This article concisely lays out that purpose and those standards and explains how the carefully designed tactic of Discovery Bible Study accomplishes them.

Though few have attempted this, we are by no means the first (Watson 2012; Watson and Watson 2014, 144–52). Yet we may be the first to propose a theological rationale for Discovery according to definition 1 above that’s more sophisticated and stable than a smattering of proof texts of how Jesus and the apostles sometimes taught. We also probe what this rationale implies about the best way to instruct people in life-changing knowledge that they will pass to others (definition 2).

Some readers may consider our presentation overbold. We aim merely for clarity and economy. We are convinced by what we express and believe we would be deceitful to pretend otherwise. Paradoxically, however, we are just as convinced that we don’t have all the answers. We welcome disagreement and alternative viewpoints so that together we might all attain what is highest and best.

Persons Aren't Things: The Heart of Discovery

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness' God created man in His own image" (Gen. 1:26 NASB). Read in connection with the rest of Scripture, this profound sentence intimates that humans are created to be children of the eternal Father, in the likeness of the Son, enlivened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit. The divine Trinity of persons made human beings to be persons as they themselves are, interacting as conscious, active agents with each other and with their Maker in ceaseless relationship.

A true-to-life model of learning has to accord with humans' essence as persons created in the image of God for a relationship of love with them and each other. This is especially true of a specific sort of learning: coming to know God, which is particularly sensitive to the deforming effects of sin and the devil on the human race. Coming to know God isn't just acquisition of factual knowledge—it is personal engagement with God, which requires God to overcome humans' disposition to avoid that engagement. In short, a genuine learning model has to treat human beings as active, personal, relational agents who are nonetheless naturally disposed to avoid or spoil the relationships they are made for.

We can illustrate with a series of examples. We know of a high school teacher who used to tell his classes, "There's no such thing as teaching. There's only stimulated learning." Of course he didn't mean that there's *literally* no such thing as teaching; instead he was trying to explain what teaching *is*.

Without thinking about it, people commonly assume that a teacher puts knowledge into students' minds. If that's true, then the teacher is the only true *person* in the classroom. Persons who are healthy and conscious are active—they make choices and do things. But in this model, learners are passive—they don't make choices, and something is done *to* them. The learner isn't really a person but a receptacle.

Treating learners as things is not only wrong, violating their identity as persons created by God in his image. It's also ineffective. Persons learn; things don't. Jamming knowledge into a human's head doesn't make much difference. It either isn't remembered or doesn't transform—it becomes useless trivia squatting in brain cells.

Knowledge *does* last and transform the learner when they find something interesting and explore, consider, play with, imagine from, talk about, experiment with, evaluate, adjust, and apply that knowledge. Here the learner is acting like a person, and the more a teacher treats a learner like a person, the more the person will learn.

This is a much better model of teaching, but for bringing the gospel it still isn't complete. Three more persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are the starting point of this learning. They sent a person (the teacher) to bring the message. They draw a person (the learner) to pay attention to that message, overcoming the person's disposition to avoid them (the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit). And that person (the learner) doesn't come to know mere information—instead, through the message they come to know the persons they've been hungering for the whole time. The entire process is personal, and it all starts with God. That's Discovery.

Yet even this is not quite the whole picture. For illustration purposes we have depicted one teacher and one learner. But in the best learning environments, it is a group of people, personally connected with each other, who discover together. This too accords with what humans were made for: life in the image of a trinity of persons. A communal style of learning is especially important in non-Western cultures, and a disciple-making movement thrives on it.²

Discovery is how God has been revealing himself to human beings from Abraham until now. Time and again in Scripture, in all sorts of ways, God speaks and humans hear him, obey him, and share what they heard. Anytime someone comes to know God or know him better and is

2. We credit Chandan Sah with this observation.

transformed by that knowledge, *Discovery* is how it happens, no matter what means or method God uses to trigger it. So the question is not: “What’s the *one* way to spark Discovery?”—God has used all kinds of ways, including so-called “direct teaching” (unambiguous explanatory, directive monologue). Rather, the question is: “What’s the *best* way to spark Discovery so that it will *catalyze a disciple-making movement among this people*?” By that we mean, what’s the best way we can:

- help *ordinary* people discover God
- so that a *chain reaction* starts
- where these people *multiply* disciples, who obey,
- through their *natural social networks*,
- resulting in *gatherings spawning gatherings*—
- a reaction that maintains its *quality*
- *without depending* on the ones who started it.

These questions are answered by the five essentials of discovery.

Essential 1: The *Bible* as the God-Revealed Message

To catalyze a disciple-making movement as defined above, we contend that the message must be the Bible, not an evangelistic message that quotes the Bible, an expository sermon from a passage of the Bible, a diagram of the gospel with bits of the Bible, an illustration or parable that makes reference to the Bible, or a string of verses taken from different parts of the Bible. Rather, substantial excerpts of the Bible, many of them, with little to no commentary or rephrasing. In the DMM model that we advocate for, the disciple makers aren’t the content experts. The Bible is its own content expert.

The Bible has several critical advantages over rephrasings and repackagings of the Bible. First, the Bible is the highest-quality message there is—the only one that’s perfect. Second, the Bible minimizes distortions

of the message that human messengers accidentally carry from their own religious culture, life experience, and opinions. (Granted, the Bible carries the cultures in which *it* was written. For this reason, (1) designers of DBS Scripture sets curate passages with less cultural baggage likely to cause confusion, and (2) DBS doesn't preclude the disciple maker from giving a brief, necessary explanation of what few unfamiliar elements remain.) Third, a learner can transfer the Bible to someone else without depending on the people they received it from, and they can do so immediately, while they are still learning it themselves. Although other memorable, reproducible gospel formulas have been made, we maintain that none match Scripture for depth and for its capacity to keep teaching the learner over time.

This last point is absolutely crucial to a disciple-making movement (DMM). Making the Bible the messenger as well as the message frees the movement from the tiny supply of trained, talented professionals. Instead it qualifies a virtually limitless supply of ordinary people as the workforce. The disciple makers could even be cut off or deported or killed, but as long as the disciples have the Bible, they can keep on and keep growing (Garrison 2004, 182–83).

Moreover, with the Bible a perfect message can be passed by imperfect people; thus, generations of disciples can overlap. While one generation of hearers is learning Genesis 2, they might be telling the next generation Genesis 1. One group doesn't need to understand *everything* before they pass *anything*. Instead, the message can replicate while it's still being absorbed. This allows the message to spread fast while people learn it slowly. The overlap of generations gives the illusion of speed.

How Discovery Bible Study Makes the Bible the Message

Many church-planting-movement advocates assert that for a movement to start, disciple makers must do what's been called "abundant sowing." As some describe it, this involves giving as many individuals as possible a succinct gospel presentation with an invitation to commit and then gathering those disparate individuals into a training circle (Garrison 2004, 177–79, 309–12; Smith 2011, 48–49, 68, 76, 116, 120,

203–22). This isn't what abundant sowing looks like in the DMM approach. DMM disciple makers abundantly build relationships, help people, pray for them, heal them, and testify to Jesus as they do—scattering breadcrumbs, not half a meal in a caplet. Their aim at first is not to win someone to Christ but to identify the aforementioned *person of peace* (inspired by Matt. 10:11–13; Luke 10:5–7). That person has two qualities: first, spiritual interest—meaning they want to know more—and second, community influence—meaning that they have the biggest sway in a social circle and the prerogative to welcome the disciple makers into it.

Disciple makers enter that circle with a series of Scripture passages that, working together, lay out the gospel. Though the series may contain just six to eight passages, it usually has eighteen to thirty. It doesn't give people everything at once but feeds them as much as they can absorb at a time. The series often begins at Genesis 1 and extends through the life of Jesus, sometimes further to the new creation at the end of Revelation. By proceeding through the Bible chronologically as a grand story, learners grasp the Bible on its own terms, including the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. They get the big picture, the "whole purpose of God," by seeing it for themselves as Scripture declares it (Acts 20:27).

Equally important is the way Scripture is presented in the Discovery Bible Study itself. At its most basic, a DBS consists of four questions about a passage of Scripture, the first being, "*What does the passage say?*"

Different DBS variants handle this in different ways. Among oral learners, a disciple maker reads or narrates the story orally or plays an audio recording in a language the people understand, then asks them to repeat it back as a group. The disciple maker runs through four or five or even more cycles of this until the group retells the passage correctly with everything in place. When the disciples have the passage memorized, they're able to repeat the process with others. Different techniques are used among literate people (see, e.g., Trousdale and Sunshine 2018, 215, 323–26). Yet in either case, such techniques ensure that the group firmly grasps what the Bible says, not a highly filtered reduction of it.

Essential 2: The Bible as the *God-Revealed* Message

Through the DMM approach, disciple makers ground people in a lifelong lifestyle of actively listening to God. This way disciples can keep learning and maturing even when the original human messengers aren't around. Those disciples can also serve as the messenger to others, and because *those* people also come to hear the Father directly, they can mature in Christ without the presence of *either* generation of messengers. Therefore, if disciples in every generation gain a lifelong lifestyle of actively listening to God, a chain reaction can extend far *and* maintain its quality without depending on the ones who started it.

This is only possible because the Father actively and directly speaks to ordinary people. Through the Son's blood, the Father opened free access to any person who would listen to him (1 Tim. 2:3–6; Heb. 10:19–22). And through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son open a person's inner ears to hear God's voice, their mind to understand, their attitude to trust, and their will to obey.³

The Bible itself testifies that it's normal for God to speak to his people without human mediators.⁴ Yet it is equally clear that instruction is *also* passed down from humans to humans, from generation to generation. We see both in a disciple-making movement, operationalized in a Discovery Bible Study. When disciple makers enter the circle of a person of peace, they hand down a firm, unchangeable message that they received from the generation before them, namely, the Bible. But they also train the people in that circle to hear God directly and act on what they hear, even before these people realize they're doing it, while the Holy Spirit is with them but not yet in them (John 14:17).

3. See for example John 14:16–17, 26; 16:7–15; Rom. 8:5–17; 1 Cor. 2:6–16; 12:3; Gal. 4:1–7; Eph. 3:16–19.

4. See for example Ps. 25:4–5, 8–9, 12, 14; Isa. 2:2–4; 30:21–22; 54:13; Jer. 31:33–34; Matt. 16:17; John 6:45; 10:3–4, 27; 14:26; 16:13; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 John 2:27.

How Discovery Bible Study Trains People to Hear God

This principle works practically through the second main question of a DBS: “*What does the passage mean?*”

In its simplest form, a DBS facilitator asks just this question after the group has gotten very clear about what the passage says; then each person answers it in their own words. One popular variant replaces it with two questions: “*What does it say about God?*” (or about Jesus, especially in the Gospels) and “*What does it say about people?*”

In the small group Bible studies that many of us are used to, this is the part where people drift far away from what the Bible says. Using the passage as a launching pad, they voice their opinions, notions, life lessons, and stuff they’re going through that has nothing to do with the passage. Or they cite ideas they heard some teacher (or leadership guru or TED Talk celebrity) say, read notes from the footer of their study Bible, or quote some other Bible verse that, though true, serves to override and distract from what the passage being studied is saying.

But a DBS has features that a run-of-the-mill small group doesn’t have and that prevents departures like this. First, to repeat: “*What does it mean?*” is only asked after the group has become rigorously clear on what the text itself says, ruthlessly excluding what they might *think* it says. That prior part of the DBS in clarifying what the text says goes a long way to prepare people to consider what the text means on its own terms.

Second, the disciple makers teach every single member of the group to ask every other member of the group another powerful question: “*Would you show me where the passage says that?*” When asked, sometimes the speaker explains more clearly what they meant and connects it to the passage. Other times they go searching the passage, find that it doesn’t connect with what they said before, and revise or retract their statement.

Asking “*What does the passage mean?*” with these safeguards helps people develop a genuinely biblical worldview. When applied to passage

after passage across the sweep of the Bible, asking this question drives a group to see the differences between what Scripture says about God, the universe, humanity, salvation, and the future and what they had always heard, believed, and assumed.

It also teaches the group that God speaks through the Bible and that they can hear him themselves. They might not be conscious of this at first, but they learn it by experience. By hearing what God says in Scripture, they begin recognizing thoughts in their minds that sound like something he would say. This roots a lifelong lifestyle of actively listening to God.

Disciple makers communicate the gospel by reading or telling Scripture and then asking questions, not by telling answers. They expectantly ask God to put the answers in people's minds by his Spirit, and he does. The quality couldn't be higher because God is the one doing the revealing. And it can replicate, because just as anyone in the group can recite a Scripture story to their social network, anyone can ask simple questions as well. This gets ordinary people into the game right away and enables a chain reaction that keeps going with quality without depending on the ones who started the chain.

Essential 3: Immediate Responsive Action

Whenever God speaks, we have a change to make (or keep making) or a step to take (or keep taking), just as James challenges us to be doers of the word, not just hearers (James 1:22–25). Therefore, a mission approach that catalyzes a disciple-making movement must ingrain immediate responsive action into the lifestyle of every disciple and the culture of every gathering of disciples.

A Discovery Group can't wait to gain this conviction (immediate responsive action) *after* they become disciples. By then it's too late. They can't be allowed to establish a pattern of hearing God's word and treating as optional whether they do anything about it. That pattern makes anemic, disobedient disciples, and once it's set it's difficult to break.

From the get-go, therefore, learners need to link hearing the message with obeying it so that they keep associating the two forever after.

How Discovery Bible Study Ingrains Immediate Responsive Action

In the DMM model, disciple makers link hearing and obeying by the third main question of a Discovery Bible Study: “*What will you do?*”

DBS keeps the learners much closer to the text of Scripture than happens in a typical inductive Bible study. As a result, the application steps that learners propose for themselves are closer to the scriptural text too.

In addition, the application commitments that come out of a DBS are more concrete. If it can’t be acted on immediately—or at least a plan be made immediately for future action—it doesn’t answer the question. So vague wishes like “I want to be more caring” don’t work. Even “I’m *going* to be more caring” doesn’t do it. Something like “When my roommate comes home grouchy, I will speak kindly to her instead of snapping back” is more like it. In keeping with this, a learner’s answer to “*What will you do?*” is commonly known as an “*I will*” statement in DMM parlance, because in an English-language DBS, if the answer doesn’t begin with the words “*I will,*” it doesn’t count.

Moreover, the “*I will*” has to be concrete in order to work with another question in a DBS, one that’s never found in an inductive Bible study. The next time the catalysts meet with the person of peace and their circle, they introduce a new question even before opening the Bible: “*How did it go?*” In other words, “*How did it go with the thing you said you were going to do the last time we met?*” This is why a person’s answer to “*What will you do?*” the previous time has to be concrete enough that they have a real answer to “*How did it go?*” the next time.

The implicit curriculum of a DBS is deliberately built to send a powerful message. Note that at this early point in the group’s DBS experience, the disciple makers may never have said, “The Bible is God’s word,” and haven’t said, “When God speaks, we need to do something.”

These principles haven't yet appeared to the learners through the explicit curriculum, the text of Scripture itself. But the group begins learning these truths from the beginning by *how* the disciple makers bring the message (Prinz et al. 2022).

Asking "*What will you do?*" and "*How did it go?*" have extraordinary power to shape the culture of a gathering of disciples even before they become a gathering of disciples. This is critical for catalyzing a chain reaction of disciple making that maintains high quality without depending on the ones who started it.

Essential 4: Self-Replicating Process

To catalyze a disciple-making movement, disciple makers need a self-replicating process, a routine every learner follows that has replication built in, not added on after the fact. That routine has to be simple enough that any disciple can repeat it, even if their intellect is average (or lower) for their people and they've scarcely led anything in their lives.

The standard routine in DMM is Discovery Bible Study. A disciple doesn't have to come up with what to say, because the content is nothing more than the Scripture they received. And the process is a series of simple questions that anyone can issue to a room of people. It's an easily repeatable routine that anyone can learn and do.

DBS has replication built in by means of the fourth main question. After members of the group get a strong grasp of the words of the passage ("*What does it say?*"), perceive its import ("*What does it mean?*"), and commit to take a step or make a change as a result ("*What will you do?*"), the facilitator asks, "*Who will you tell?*"

This question directs every person in the group to tell someone outside the group the passage they heard and what they learned from it. Just as with "*What will you do?*", each person gives a specific answer that can be verified in the next meeting.

Yet what makes DBS a self-replicating process isn't only the "*Who will you tell?*" question, but also what learners do when the people they tell respond.

Imagine that a group is doing discovery for the first time by hearing and responding to Genesis 1. One of the attendees, Michael, goes and tells his friend John. John is fascinated by what he hears and wants to know more. Now Michael faces a choice. He could invite John to come with him to the next DBS session. But alternatively, Michael could say to John, "Why don't you talk to your wife about it and I'll come to your place. Get your family and friends together, and whatever I learn I'll bring it to you and we'll do the same thing." In other words, at this critical juncture, Michael could draw John into Michael's circle, or Michael could enter *John's* circle and take the gospel there. The latter option is replication.

Along with the gospel, Michael has learned a process that both impels him to spread the word and equips him to repeat the process in a social circle touching his own. That's what makes it self-replicating, and that's how the gospel can spread across interlinked circles to saturate an entire community, even an entire society.

Other Ways Discovery Stimulates Replication

In addition to these features, Discovery has other qualities that facilitate replication for generations.

First, people naturally pass on what's personal to them. When someone learns the gospel by discovering the truth for themselves from God's word, it doesn't feel like a foreign formula but like a native idiom welling up from within. And when truth is personal, they'll share it repeatedly, even in the face of intimidation and suffering.

Second, Discovery gets through doors that persuasion shuts. Among many peoples, simply telling people what they ought to believe immediately creates opposition and throws up walls. By contrast, Discovery doesn't tell people what to believe; it invites them to encounter a story and to make of it what they will.

As a final note, a self-replicating process not only spreads the movement wider and longer but also grows disciples deeper. Most people assume that if a disciple grows, the disciple will then multiply. We maintain that if a disciple multiplies, the disciple will grow. We don't wait for a disciple to reach a point called "maturity" and then expect them to replicate. On the contrary, we believe that replicating is the best stimulant to maturity there is. Nothing helps a disciple grow more swiftly and fully than the responsibility to disciple someone else.

Essential 5: Gathering Pattern Set at the Beginning

A genuine disciple-making movement doesn't consist of branching generational chains of individual disciples but of gatherings, *ekklēsiai*, the Greek word typically rendered as "churches" in the English New Testament. Therefore, to catalyze a DMM, what disciple makers do with a circle of learners at the beginning must prepare them to become a gathering of disciples, an *ekklēsia*, down the line. The gospel-sharing process ought to help learners practice the basics of life in the gathering even before they know they're doing it.

Becoming a Jesus follower requires a person to make a big change of mind and a big change of behavior. That is a heavy lift, but in addition, the new disciple typically needs to agree to go to church often—and not just go, but participate. To do that, the disciple needs to learn many new things that we "church people" have forgotten; to us these ways and ideas are so familiar, but to the new disciple it's like taking up residence in a foreign country. Before they become a believer, we, the seasoned Christians, see the big gap between them and Christ, while the new disciple sees the big gap between them and the church.

By contrast, imagine a group of unbelievers who are going through a process of discovering God and the gospel in the Bible. Eventually they also discover the concept of the gathering and what it does. Imagine if they were to realize that they've been doing this all along, that it just

takes a small step for them to become a gathering, not a giant leap to “join the church.” That would make it much easier to catalyze a disciple-making movement with generations of gatherings spawning more gatherings (Trousdale 2012, 107).

Discovery Bible Study is designed to set the gathering pattern at the beginning. In addition to the core questions, many DBS variants include other features that ease the transition from DBS to gathering.

For example, in one version, a DBS session begins with the questions, “*What are you thankful for?*” and “*What challenges do you have?*” This brackets a space in the meeting that will be filled by prayer later on. Several sessions in, when the group answers these questions, the disciple makers introduce and model the practice of thanking God for the good things and asking him to help them with the struggles—not just their own, but each other’s. This establishes a routine of prayer and praise that becomes much richer as disciples grow and become a gathering.

The question, “*What challenges do you have?*” can also help train the group to show compassion in practical ways. One DBS variant follows it with the question, “*How can we help?*” This stimulates group members to love each other in action creatively. As an added benefit for replication, when someone answers the question about their challenge, in many cases it’s actually a struggle suffered by someone they care about outside the group. That spurs the group to join forces to help someone in the wider community. That in turn not only grows the learners’ conformity to Christ’s image; it also softens the community’s soil for receiving the gospel themselves.

The Long Way

To sum up, for disciple makers to catalyze a self-sustaining disciple-making movement, their method of sharing the gospel requires these essentials:

- The *Bible* as the God-revealed message

- The Bible as the *God-revealed* message
- Immediate responsive action (obedience)
- A self-replicating process
- Gathering pattern set at the beginning
- These essentials cohere with the model of teaching and learning we call *Discovery*. They are captured in a tactic called *Discovery Bible Study*. Though exceedingly simple, DBS embodies and passes down profound theological and mission principles in a sophisticated way.

Movement advocates have sometimes been accused of cutting corners and taking shortcuts in the arduous work of gospel mission, to have a fixation with speed, an urge to get things done quickly, and a vulnerability to the secular Western idolatry of efficiency, immediacy, and huge results (Williams 2024, Rhodes 2022). Maybe sometimes the critics are right. But if so, whichever disciple makers have these vices aren't committed to *Discovery*. It takes too long for them.

Discovery is no shortcut. It's slow. It doesn't come all at once—it takes time to get the message across, time for people to believe it, time for them to adjust their lives to it. *Discovery* is indirect. It can't be forced; it depends on the learners and on the Holy Spirit above all. *Discovery* takes twists and turns. *Discovery* is the long way.

We take the long way because *Discovery* yields benefits we don't get any other way. *Discovery* teaches disciples to hear their Father's voice, which they can hear in any situation at any time. *Discovery* instills a lifelong lifestyle of hearing and obeying Him, setting them on the path to mature until Jesus returns. *Discovery* can be facilitated by anyone with anyone, which gets all ordinary people into the game of the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. *Discovery* enables a chain reaction that maintains quality without depending on the ones who started it. This chain reaction, running through natural social networks, enables an increase of disciples greater than population increase as disciples pass on what they learn while they're still learning. This is a credible path to carry the gospel to the billions of lost

people in the world and complete the assignment Jesus gave us. And then the end will come (Matt. 24:14).

If Discovery is the long way, then perhaps the real shortcut is so-called “direct teaching,” particularly at the point of initial gospel breakthrough. (“Direct teaching” does play a role in certain situations in a later stage of starting a disciple-making movement. One such situation is described in our other article in this issue, “Heresies, Pharisees, and Folk Religion.”) Explaining or persuading rather than letting the text speak for itself, answering questions rather than pointing back to the text that raises the questions or others that illuminate, summarizing or systematizing the gospel rather than letting the text disclose it—all these cut short the slow process of planting the gospel deep in those learning to hear God’s word and obey it for the first time. These tactics may seem more sensible, controlled, relevant, even pure, but they fail to account for the essence of humanity as persons—relational agents—created in the image of the Triune God. Worse, these techniques tend to engender dependence and thereby reap seedless grapes: the fruit might taste good but it doesn’t reproduce.

To avoid this, DMM disciple makers employ Discovery, relying on the Bible as the self-revealing message, because they’re laying a foundation. On that foundation they can build great things that stand the test of time.

Questions for Conversation

1. Which of the authors’ arguments do you find most helpful and convincing? Which parts of the article stimulated questions, push-back, or alternative perspectives?
2. How is Discovery Bible Study understood and practiced in your context? What insights from the article might be most applicable in reaching the people you are called to?
3. Do you agree with the authors that Discovery Bible Study is a way of “announcing the gospel in a way that replicates”? Explain your answer.

Bibliography

- Brown, Harry. 2024. "Disciple Making Movements." Unpublished manuscript. December 18, 2024.
- Garrison, David. 2004. *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*. Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources.
- Prinz, Emanuel, Sandro Oliveira, J. R. Stevenson, and Trevor Larsen. 2022. "Continuing the Conversation on 'Proclamational' DBS: Four Reflections from the Motus Dei Network." *Seedbed Journal* 33, no. 1 (March). <https://www.seedbedjournal.com/article/continuing-the-conversation-on-proclamational-dbs-four-reflections-from-the-motus-dei-network>.
- Rhodes, Matt. 2022. *No Shortcut to Success: A Manifesto for Modern Missions*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- Smith, Steve. 2011. *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution*. With Ying Kai. Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources.
- Trousdale, Jerry. 2012. *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love with Jesus*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- Trousdale, Jerry, and Glenn Sunshine. 2018. *The Kingdom Unleashed: How Jesus' 1st-Century Kingdom Values Are Transforming Thousands of Cultures and Awakening His Church*. With Gregory C. Benoit. Murfreesboro, TN: DMM Library.
- Watson, David. 2006. "Let's Bake a Cake (Getting Ready for a CPM)." *CPM Journal* 1, no. 1 (January–March): 23–30.
- Watson, David, and Paul Watson. 2014. *Contagious Disciple Making: Leading Others on a Journey of Discovery*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- Watson, Paul. 2012. "Small Groups That Have the DNA of a Disciple Making Movement." *Mission Frontiers* 34, no. 6 (November–December).
- Williams, David. 2024. "Disciple Making Movements: Applying a Faithful Balance." Lausanne Movement. September 2024. <https://lausanne.org/global-analysis/disciple-making-movements-applying-a-faithful-balance>.