

**HOW TO LEAD A GUIDED
DISCOVERY LEARNING
BIBLE STUDY**

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THE IMPORTANCE OF GUIDED DISCOVERY LEARNING

1. As the name implies, Guided Discovery Learning (GDL) focuses on the teacher's guiding the class, rather than his preaching or lecturing the entire session.
2. GDL encourages participation of the class members. It is based upon the supposition that people learn more through "hearing and doing" together than through simply "hearing."

NOTE: The following is based on sound educational data.

* **How we learn. . .**

- a. We learn 83 % of what we know through sight.
- b. We learn 11 % of what we know through hearing.
- c. We learn 4 % of what we know through smell.
- d. We learn 2 % of what we know through touch.
- e. We learn 1 % of what we know through taste.

* **How we retain. . .**

- a. We retain 10 % of what we read.
- b. We retain 20 % of what we hear.
- c. We retain 30 % of what we see.
- d. We retain 50 % of what we see and hear.
- e. We retain 70 % of what we say.

Can you imagine a Bible study class of 50-80 people, and you standing behind a lectern delivering a message to the class? That is what we normally have done. We do not intend to use this method anymore!

Instead, imagine 10-18 people (or fewer) out of your enrollment of 18-28 (or so) meeting together. After a departmental assembly of about 15 minutes with a number of other classes, you will meet with your group (class) around a table, or together in a circle of chairs, or in some location in the auditorium. Here you have an interplay of discussion and study guided by YOU, the teacher, with a lot of class participation. If possible, you will want to sit with your class in an informal study time.

THE PROCESS USED IN GUIDED DISCOVERY LEARNING

A good teacher will spend no more than 50-60% of class time talking (or lecturing or teaching) -- the remainder of the time will be spent in class participation.

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The use of questions is the most basic tool of GDL.

1. The teacher asks questions of the group, requiring the students to think, read, study, ponder, and reason.
2. When the group responds, the teacher expands, develops and enlarges, and illustrates the point.
3. Discussion is the important technique; however, it is not "open" discussion where you are soliciting everyone's opinion. (We cannot have a true discussion of the Word of God, for such a discussion would mean that we do not know what the truth is, but are instead trying to find a relative truth together. The Word of God is not relative!)
4. Remember this is GUIDED learning. As the teacher you are a guide, a facilitator, a leader in the study of what the Word of God **does** teach. You lead a study through questions to **arrive at the truth!**
5. You are accountable to keep the class on track toward your specific objective, which is the lesson aim.

This is the method that Christ used. When you study the gospels it is apparent that Christ used questions and masterfully directed thought, and eventually action through guided discovery learning. (Questioning was also the method of teaching used by Socrates. In fact this method could be called the "Socratic method.")

Note:

It is apparent that you need to understand that a lesson format includes an aim, introduction, main body of the lesson, applications, and conclusions. These points help you to keep on track as you lead in GDL.

TEACHING METHODS INTEGRATED WITH GUIDED DISCOVERY LEARNING

The following methods are suggested for Bible study with adults; and most of these ideas ought also to be used with children of junior age on up to adults.

1. Lecture

Lecturing is the most traditional teaching method. It is used both out of habit, and because that is the only thing we have seen done or used by others. A lecture is a planned talk intended to supply information to meet a specific objective.

a. Weaknesses:

- * Lecturing is often based on the assumption that if people are told something, they know and understand it. This is an incorrect assumption.

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- * Lecturing often produces passive learners.
 - * Because the teacher receives no feedback, he does not even know what his students are thinking.
 - * Lecturing often is like "broadcasting" the Word rather than meeting specific needs.
- b. Lecturing is the best method:
- * when time is limited.
 - * when the group is too large for other methods.
 - * when the leader is the only person with the information, as when a background study of a book of the Bible is being done and the teacher is introducing the book to the class.
- c. The lecture method becomes effective:
- * when the teacher's lecture lasts for a few minutes at a time and is interspersed with questions and answers, discussion, brainstorming, buzz sessions, etc.
 - * when lecturing is used with visuals, diagrams, outlines, pictures, story-telling, posters, object lessons, etc.

2. Group discussion

This method will help to draw people out!

- a. Definition: A guided interlude of thought and opinion designed to move learners to a stated objective (aim) in which the leader and the learners:
- * share ideas.
 - * identify problems.
 - * find solutions.
 - * understand, recognize, and apply Bible truth.
- b. Group discussion is effective because it keeps interest high, provides feedback, and builds cohesiveness in a group.
- c. Group discussion is weak because a class can "ramble" and miss the aim and objective of the lesson and Biblical portion. It must be GUIDED.
- d. Warnings in the use of group discussion: It should never be the only method used in a teaching session, but should always be in combination with other methods such as lecture, questions and answers, buzz sessions, etc. It can be ineffective if most of the group has not previously done independent study.
- e. Suggestions in the use of group discussion:
- * An effective way to use group discussion is to give a definite assignment (Example: "Open your Bible and everyone study verses 10-14 for the next three minutes, and be prepared to discuss _____")
 - * Another useful way to use group discussion is to let your learners study in small groups (buzz sessions) where they have a definite portion and specific questions to consider. (After the allotted time they will share with the whole group during a short time of report, under your direction.)

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f. Advantages and disadvantages of the group discussion method:

Advantages:

- * Allows sharing of ideas/opinions.
- * May stimulate interest.
- * Encourages cohesiveness in a group.
- * Broadens viewpoints.
- * Allows the leader to share the teaching-learning process.
- * Encourages reluctant learners to share ideas.

Disadvantages:

- * Requires knowledge that the learners may not have.
- * Discussion may get "off target."
- * Vocal learners may dominate discussion.
- * Timid learners may be threatened or embarrassed.
- * Leaders must be skilled in directing the discussion for it to be effective.

3. Questions and Answers:

It is imperative that we work at developing the art of asking questions. (You will note other materials given to you about "launching" questions and "guiding and application" questions. STUDY THIS MATERIAL THOROUGHLY!)

Questions and answers are appropriate at any point in a lesson. The method of questions and answers can be used as the "heart" of a lesson, or it can be interspersed throughout the lesson and used along with other methods.

a. Suggestions in their use:

- * Work on good, clear phrasing of the questions. (See other notes.)
- * Use different levels of questions:
 - Don't use many questions dealing simply with factual recall. (Illustration: "What did David use to kill Goliath?")
 - Generally, use questions that begin with "How", "Which," and "Why." They engender more discussion and are thought provoking.
 - Generally, questions that begin with "Who", "What", "When" and "Where" will be weak. Of course, this is not always the case.
- * Allow time for class members to think before asking for a response.

b. Strengths of the use of Questions and Answers:

- * Questions guide the teacher because they provide "feedback."
- * Questions not asked of a specific person involve everyone.
- * Questions are a great way to get people to evaluate.
- * Questions help in making strong Biblical applications.

c. Weaknesses of the Question and Answer Technique:

- * If questions are poorly planned and only require one word answers, they will bring discussion and follow-up to an end.
- * If the questions are asked of a specific person, others may quit thinking, since they are not involved.
- * Follow-up after an answer is vital for teachers. Teachers need to learn how to build questions upon questions, and questions upon answers.

They must WORK AT IT!

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4. Brainstorming

- a. Definition: A method in which learners spontaneously present any response they can think of in rapid-fire succession. No evaluation is done until all ideas are out in the open.
- b. Strengths of brainstorming: It encourages creativity and is a good introduction and attention-getter.
- c. Weaknesses of brainstorming: It can produce some "off-the-wall" ideas. The leader must have confidence and the background to handle comments tactfully and keep on target.

This method ought to be used from time to time. A teacher should try different methods, even if at times it is a learning process. Ask the class to help you and cooperate with you in the use of a new teaching method. It is for their sakes.

5. Case Study

The teacher gives an account of a hypothetical life situation that presents a problem. It includes enough detail for the group members to analyze the situation and suggest possible solutions. To create the case study requires imagination on the part of the leader.

This is a powerful way to teach people how to use Biblical solutions for their real life problems. It is also an effective way to introduce or close a lesson. Caution: Don't use actual situations known to them.

SUMMARY: Following is a summary of various scenarios that can take place in the teaching format of a class: (Almost all of these methods should be used on any Sunday in a Bible study class. To do so will necessitate a teacher's determination to learn HOW to teach and guide a class in an interesting way. Such interesting and effective interchange cannot take place in the normal lecture situation.)

1. Leader talks--learners listen.
2. Learners read--leader explains.
3. Leader questions--learners respond.
4. Leaders and learners discuss.
5. Learners search--leader guides.
6. Leader and a few learners talk--other learners listen.

IMPORTANT SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF THE GUIDED DISCOVERY LEARNING METHOD

1. If a question is relevant at the point in the lesson when it is asked, answer it. Spend as much time as you feel is necessary for the sake of that person, and of the whole class. Sense their needs!
2. If the question for some reason is not relevant, use the following techniques:

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- a. Postpone it: "I'll get to that later if that's okay with you."
 - b. Answer quickly: Sometimes a very quick answer is best. (Illustration: "Yes, but I've got to keep going; perhaps we can come back to that again later.")
3. There are questions you ought to anticipate as you study. If you do not wish for them to come up, pose them before anyone else has a chance to ask them, and then answer them yourself.

Illustration: "In Acts 2, there is a Biblical mention of tongues. However, I do not want to get off on that subject today and miss the real point of our lesson, so let's not get into a discussion of tongues today. We'll do that later when that is the aim of our lesson."

4. If you do not know the answer to a question.
 - a. Do not allow that to be a a problem. This should not bring fear. Just plan to study for the answer. Just say, "I don't know the answer, but I will find out and tell you next week." (Then don't forget to do so.)
 - b. Admitting that you do not know is often a great asset. It gives you a genuineness that people respect. No one knows everything, so pride should not keep you from admitting that you do not know.
5. Some "NO, NO's" as you teach.
 - a. Do not call on specific persons for answers to questions unless you know ahead of time that they won't mind. Ask people ahead of time if they can be called on to pray.
 - b. Usually, do not ask direct questions. It is best to ask the whole class. Do not put people on the spot, for there could be potential embarrassment. Some cannot read at all, or not well. Do not "unmask" them. One suggestion here is that you might phone a faithful member at home and have them prepared for a specific question--particularly if that question involves detailed study.
 - c. Do not ask a visitor to read or to answer a question; however, if they volunteer, encourage their participation. This will make them feel a part of the class.
6. Handling a person who dominates a class. First, teach your regular class members how we want our classes to be conducted. Tell them that you strongly encourage their participation, but you do not want any one person to dominate the discussion times. (The departmental director should speak about this subject occasionally in the department assembly.)

If a person becomes disruptive to the class, you will ultimately have to tell him privately, after a class session, that he must give others an opportunity to participate. This will call for strong leadership on your part. Ask for help in this, if you feel it is needed, before you undertake it.

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SUMMARY

Understand what GDL is and the importance of your format, and study the various teaching methods outlined here. Keep these guidelines before you when you prepare a lesson until they are a part of you. Review methods often, and plan the way you will use several or all of these in your Bible study and teaching.

"Remember. . .do not preach." People learn much more through participation than through listening alone. Try to involve every class member at every opportunity. You are a facilitator, a guide. Ask people for their assistance to encourage participation.

Involvement creates relationships. . .relationships bind people to a church and to the Bible study ministry.