

# The DBS (“Discovery Bible Study”) in a nutshell

**Isaiah 55:11 says,  
“When my word goes forth, it shall not return empty or void,  
but will accomplish the thing for which I sent it.”**

This verse best encapsulates the DBS. God’s word does what He said it would do—and the DBS helps us get out of the way so that God proves Himself faithful to His promise. There is absolutely nothing “mystical” about the DBS, but it is miraculous. Here is why I think God is honoring this Disciple-Making Model in profound ways:

1. **The DBS is a God-honoring and God-exalting process.** People directly engage and rub up against God’s word. In doing so, He—He alone—receives the glory as He proves Himself faithful over and over again as ***HE*** enlightens the hearts of people to discover who He is directly from His word.
  2. **The Holy Spirit becomes the Teacher.** It gets the teacher, dvds, and other ‘book studies’ out of the way, allowing the “True Teacher” –the Holy Spirit—to enter and teach.
  3. **There is a dependency on God** to reveal Truth—and He does—every time.
  4. **God delights in speaking through people;** He speaks through His word and through people to reveal Himself in the DBS process. That is spectacular to see unfold. No kidding, it is an adventure each time.
  5. **The DBS disciples and inherently makes disciples.** So far, I’ve done the DBS about 150 times. Never once (and there is no exaggeration here) has the ball fumbled down the field—not once. It is stunning every time—especially with those who are seeking or who are young in their walk with Christ. And it is refreshing and rehabilitating for those of us who think we’ve been disciplined and are good disciplers.
  6. **The DBS is relentless in shepherding towards transformational living** through: personal authenticity, accountability, personal responsibility, evangelism, prayer, and acts of service.
- People often tire of a study, but I’ve not experienced anyone “tiring” of the DBS process because it is so natural, engaging, and empowering. Who gets tired of encountering the God of the Universe?

The DBS is much like a cake: it needs to be **tasted first** in order to really “get it”. Then, after tasting it, a discussion of why it was so good and how it was made is more profitable and enlightening. It’s the “tasting” that makes the difference, as the ingredients below don’t “wow” or convince. But like most good cakes, it’s about simple, good ingredients—mixed in the right way and in precise amounts--that make it work. The same is true with the DBS.

(By way of observation, everyone **initially** wants to “tweak” the DBS process—especially those who’ve not tasted or tested it for very long. I advise to stay the course. Watch and see God honor this process. The words, the order, and the methodology behind each ordered step have immense value, purpose, and intentionality. You will find that in “tasting and seeing it” that the Lord, indeed, is good.

The best thing that you can do is to DO the DBS with a group of people AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. There’s no need to stock the pond; the DBS will hold its own with anyone as long as you cling tightly to the process. Test and taste it.

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**Thankful? • Challenge? • How did it go? • Read-Read-Retell-Detail •  
God? • People? • Obedience • I will • Share? • Challenge?**

	The DBS in 17 words	What to say...	Purpose
1	Thankful?	<i>From this past week, what is something you're thankful for?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positions our hearts to be grateful</li> <li>Models prayer</li> <li>Practices gratitude and proper perspective on life</li> </ul>
2	Challenge?	<i>From this past week, what was challenging for you?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positions our hearts to admit that we have needs and</li> <li>Implies we need help along the way by admitting imperfections in life and people</li> <li>Notice we intentionally did not use words like “struggle” or “prayer requests”. These tend to be inflammatory and emotional language. Guys especially will shut down. ‘Challenge’ works very well with everyone.</li> </ul>
3	How did it go?	<i>How did it go?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on the previous week’s DBS “I will statements”/ “Share”/ ending “Challenge”</li> </ul>
<b>P A U S E</b>	<b>R-R-R-D</b>  <i>Read • Read • Re-tell • Details</i>	1. Reader 1 – reads passage all the way through 2. Reader 2 – same as above (useful to read from another translation) 3. Reteller – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Reteller should feel NO pressure to memorize or capture everything because...</li> <li>The <u>group will then follow up with any missing/important “DETAILS”</u>. This should not be a time to knit-pick or interpret, but simply fill-in key points</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*(See the footnotes below)</li> <li>This is what I call the “special sauce” (goofy, I realize). It brings to focus God’s word, where everyone can listen and attend</li> <li>Avoid having each person read one verse, which is highly distracting and promotes inattention</li> <li>After hearing the passage read twice, the Reteller simply retells as if to a 10-year old</li> <li>Be sure that the Re-teller does NOT interpret, but simply tells the essence of the narrative/theme/parable</li> <li>Retelling should take 30-60 seconds</li> <li>“Churched-up” folks have the greatest difficulty retelling as they tend to “go seminary” on the group. Kindly remind them to K.I.S.S. (“keep it simple, Sweetheart”).</li> </ul>

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*4	God?	<i>What does this passage say about God?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions #4-6 are the core of the DBS</li> <li>• It is important to have each group record what they discover (in questions #4-5-6) so that they can share with the entire group (assuming there are divided into multiple smaller groups). I’ve noticed that incredible things are being discovered, but only to evaporate before sharing with the entire group. Have someone (other than the facilitator) to jot down what is being discovered in order to share with the larger group.</li> <li>• <b>Notice the *asterisk.</b> The asterisk makes or breaks the process!! The asterisk asks, “<b>Where is THAT found in the passage?</b>” <b>Meaning, there is to be NO hyperlinking to any other passage, sermon, verse, or text. →Why?</b></li> <li>• It keeps the “sheep away from the wolves” (inerrant theology). If I allow John Piper, Charles Stanley, Rick Warren, or “Good Theologian John Doe” in—as good as they are—I’ve now opened the door for someone to potentially reference a Rob Bell or Joel Osteen, et al. (or whomever your poster-child is for inerrant theology).</li> <li>• By not hyperlinking, this allows the “pedestrian” and the “seminarian” to be on equal footing. The moment you let “Matthew-Mark-Luke &amp; John” in, you disenfranchise and alienate others in the group who aren’t as “churched up” as you. I know that this sounds nearly heretical, but countless people in your church DON’T connect in a small group for this very reason--because they aren’t knowledgeable enough or “churched up” enough as others who’ve been doing church for literally decades. This, in part, is why the DBS is so effective among mixed age groups and life-stages!!</li> </ul>
*5	People?	<i>What does this passage say about people/man?</i>	
*6	Obedience?	<i>What does this passage say about obedience?</i>	
6b	I will . . .	<i>In light of what we now know about his passage, what is God calling you to do this week?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the <b>CENTERPIECE</b> of the DBS (&amp; where most curriculum fails).</li> <li>• As you post what has been observed, give time (a minute or two) for people to simply examine, breathe, &amp; meditate. Allow them time to ask, “God, what do you want me</li> </ul>

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			<p>to do this week because of what I’ve seen today?” Don’t rush this part. Breathe and let others do the same. (1-2 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the transformational part, where my life begins to look differently. I become intentional. Because of my new or reinforced beliefs about God and Man, how do I behave differently this week?</li> <li>• What am I going to commit to and become accountable for (with this group)?</li> </ul>
7	Share?	<p><i>How will I live this out loud this week? Who needs to hear this (content or the DBS method)?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Here, the DBS provokes evangelism and intentional “living out loud” of what I’ve learned--for others to see or know</li> <li>• It puts me on mission for the week</li> <li>• Maybe I share the content from the Bible, or maybe it’s simply going home and sharing the DBS method with your spouse so that the family can begin a Bible study around the kitchen table.</li> </ul>
8	Challenge?	<p><i>In this upcoming week, what is going to be a challenge?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Again, notice we didn’t go “prayer request” on anyone. We end like we began, except this time we want to know about an upcoming challenge for this next week.</li> <li>• Typically, what happens is that group members do, in fact, pray here—but don’t force or make this the expectation. Be sensitive to the group members (especially if they aren’t Believers—because to whom would they be praying?) If you’re among the church ed up, then go for it.</li> <li>• These challenges are a means for the group members to have their lives INTERSECT outside of the confines of the church—to meet a need, text someone and pray for them on that day when their ‘challenge’ is going to present itself. Be spurred on to “love and good deeds” and go walk in them. Don’t just leave “it” there in the holy huddle of a classroom. Go do life with each other outside of the church. Live out Biblical community—to do some real life TOGETHER beyond the DBS.</li> </ul>

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## Roles:

1. Facilitator – pace & purity – the Shepherd
  - a. Goes first – sets the level of authenticity - models
  - b. Engages the group members and keeps the group moving
  - c. Makes group aware of time (about a minute-90 seconds per person)
  - d. Ensures no one person makes this a personal therapy session
  - e. Guards the integrity of the model, strictly keeping to the text, allowing no hyperlinking, helps group to have fun in “outing” others in their tendency to hyperlink
2. \*Reader 1 – reads passage all the way through
3. \*Reader 2 – same as above (useful to read from another translation)
4. \*Re-teller

## About the process:

- Questions 1-2 help us to “look back” and form community by expressing gratitude and our needs.
- Question 3 ushers in accountability and responsibility for action and transformational, missional living from the previous week (assuming you have the nearly the same group as last week).
- R-R-R-D is the “special sauce”. (When is the last time you’ve attended a small group and actually heard God’s word 3 times? If you stopped here, you’d be ahead of 99% of most other Sunday School classes across the country). I love to hear someone “retell” what they’ve heard. It challenges me every time as I wonder: “Do I have this episode firmly in **my** mind and heart, ready to retell it to others?”
- Questions 4-6 are the core of the DBS. They help us to “look up.” They remain constant and are enough to feast on until Jesus returns. Displaying/recording what group members are discovering is absolutely crucial for the edification of the entire group. I’ve used a white board, flip-chart paper, several napkins, an ipad/iphone, and even an old cardboard box.
- Question 6b is the centerpiece. It is where we enact and choose to obey and behave as a Son or Daughter of the King. We take on responsibility and commit to living out something that God has birthed in our hearts or made us aware of. Most of the time the “I will” statements are nothing terribly profound. In fact, they are mostly “simple,” but often not easy or natural, requiring effort, intentionality, risk, and loads of faith to execute. In the end, isn’t it always about walking by faith and trusting that Jesus’ way is the better way? The “I will” statements are often hard to get to (because of time); make every effort to reach them. **They are game-changers** for the individual and your church.

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- Question 7. Evangelism – moving from “me” to “thee” – developing a heart to love others – moving outward with my focus – being intentional, on mission, and like Jesus.
- Question 8. Challenge for this next week – where lives intersect outside of the walls of the church or DBS – where other group members see opportunities for acts of service and love and prayer. This, too, is a game-changer.

I hope you'll taste the cake.

Please call if I can help field any questions.

**-gbaines**

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