**The Power of Discovery Learning for Transformation**

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My friend Terry Walling (*Stuck*, 2015, and *IDEA Coaching Pathway*, 2015) likes to say, “If you discover it you own it!” I have expanded this statement to:

If you hear it you might be inspired for a while, but will probably forget it. If you discover it you own it and will probably apply it for life and leadership transformation!”

Most of us have endured multiple lectures, sermons, and other forms of exhortation throughout our lives. Some of these experiences have probably been impacting while most have been forgetful or boring (<https://harvardmagazine.com/2012/03/twilight-of-the-lecture>).

**What is discovery learning?**

Before I argue for the benefits of “discovery learning” let me define a couple of concepts:

* Discovery Learning
* Transformation

DISCOVERY LEARNING: In the Study Guide for my DVD series on Small Group Facilitator Training I state that, “’Equipping the saints for ministry’ (Ephesians 4:11) involves more than feeding people information. It involves helping people take responsibility for their own growth, maturity, and destiny. I call this empowering dynamic the ‘discovery learning’ paradigm.” This paradigm involves:

* Information
* Insight
* Application
* Transformation

Another way of describing “discovery learning is, “The Holy Spirit is the teacher, the Bible is the text book, we all are students, and all of life is the classroom” (John 4:24).

TRANSFORMATION: Simply put, transformation is becoming like Christ through submission to the Holy Spirit. We become more loving (I Corinthians 13) through grace as we grow in purity, clarity of conscience, and sincerity of faith (I Timothy 1:5). Knowledge and wisdom are important in this process but they are not the same as transformation,

* Knowledge = knowing truth
* Wisdom = knowing how to apply truth
* Transformation = living the truth

Transformation is a process over time involving learning how to “abide” in Christ (John 15:1-17) through grace by faith (Ephesians 2:8-10) and the empowering of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) that produces love!

**What are the benefits of discovery learning?**

I have experimented with various applications of discover learning over the past dozen years or so. I use it in my classroom teaching, in small groups, and in my personal coaching. I have learned a few things through these experiments about the benefits of discovery learning. They include,

* As a facilitator, I do not have to have all the answers. I have learned to trust the Holy Spirit and the truth of the Bible to connect with people where they are at.
* I have seen the “light bulb” of insight go on as folks have learned to connect with God on their own.
* I have seen community being built as folks “listen and learn” from one another in a healthy give-and-take environment.
* I have seen folks develop deeper friendships with “accountability” partners.
* I have heard stories of transformation as folks encounter God in life transforming ways.
* I have seen “lay” folks empowered to replicate discovery learning in their own spheres of influence.

**How do you facilitate discovery learning?**

As I have implemented discovery learning in a variety of settings I have learned to include others in the process as “apprentices.” These apprentices get to shadow me and learn to facilitate by “doing it” and discussing the process with me. I call this process mentoring>empowering>multiplication (M>E>M).

Helping apprentices to develop the following skill set empowers them to facilitate effectively while apprenticing others (and the process is repeated). The skill set that I have identified includes:

* Active listening
* Summarization or Clarification
* Encouragement
* Open ended questions
* Responding to direct questions with a question
* Managing the “very verbal” or the “very quiet”
* Learning to admit that you don’t know the answer (but would love to explore what the Bible has to say with them)
* Prayer and discerning what the Holy Spirit is doing

I have not only done discovery learning in my personal spheres of influence but have worked with small, medium, and large churches to help them develop discipleship and leadership cultures using discovery learning with significant progress/success.