

Three Broad Teaching Styles

Although a myriad of different and unique nuances exist, three broad types of teaching exist. These differ based on the relationship of the teacher and learner to the material or content. I see two broad skills for teachers, depending on the audience and the desired results. First, “draw out” of others what is already in there (and please don’t demean teaching by saying this is “merely facilitating!”) Then when gaps in necessary knowledge or skills lack, many teachers are also able to “put in” what lacks. For small groups, first “draw out,” then as necessary “put in,” or tell. Both are good, proper. Choose the style that meets the aim of your group because both yield differing results.

1. *Directive Teaching* – preaching or podcasts are the number one example. Because of how **I** learn (“I” in *S-A-V-I* learning), I have learned a great deal from this style of teacher. The teacher prepares the lesson to be taught, and teaches the group without interaction, except a cursory interaction aimed at keeping the hearers alert. This may be the only way to teach when the audience is a large gathering. For a highly motivated audience when time is short and a large amount of information must be passed along in a relatively short time, this is the style to choose. If the audience has a low motivation to learn, this is normally the chosen style, although the teacher must be a strong orator to hold her/his audience and “put in” so people learn. The end result in either case focuses more on information or vision passed on.
2. *Discussion Teaching* – the teacher brings the passage or topic and a series of open-ended questions to draw out truth. The group actively participates in the process, thus greatly increasing learning. Questions guide the group to answers. The group grows, depending on how well-written the questions are and how skilled the teacher is in navigating the challenges of opening a group up (see “*Turning Obstacles into...*”). This style ranges from purely inductive where the teacher *only* asks questions to my preferred style. The teacher is actively involved in the group as one member, so adds short “bursts of teaching” at limited, appropriate times (I call this “popcorn teaching,” a short burst of energy resulting in something the group can leisurely enjoy together.)
3. *Discovery Teaching*– Each group does have a teacher, yet the group is “group-led” rather than teacher-led. There is however a

teacher, who primarily focuses on the highest act of teaching, “drawing out,” and less on “putting in.” The teacher keeps the group safe and guides it back on track when it moves off track, and guides the group by choosing the passage to explore. The Bible itself is the authority, not the teacher. Although there are nuances, here are two types of group-led *discovery* groups.

- a. *Discovery Bible Study (DBS)*: This is an internationally known style that has been integral to planting many churches worldwide. It began with a mission-focus, inviting those with little or no knowledge of Scripture and so no preparation. During the group, each learns by actively responding to a series of questions. Then each is asked to take a step of obedience through an “I will...” commitment. This is effective in early discipling stages, in “Come & See” kind of groups.
- b. “*Discovery in Doing*” (*DID*): This is my name for interactive learning with each preparing **before** group and putting truth into practice. This “flips” learning, asking the group to come prepared with “fresh bread” from their time during the week. Each comes as both a learner and a teacher, accelerating their growth to begin to feed themselves. Obedience-based learning is still the focus. This requires a commitment beyond *DBS*, and is best to launch in the “Come & Follow Me” tier and beyond, training each to be a life-long *life-learner* and doer.

Three Main Types of Teaching					
Type of Teaching	Led By	Participation	Size	Learner's Prior Prep	Desired Results
Directive	Teacher	Little/None	No Limit	None	Information
Discussion	Teacher	Active	5-15	None	Insight
<i>Discovery Bible Study</i>	Group	Active	6-12	None	Obedience
<i>Discovery by Doing</i>	Group	Active	3-6	Yes	Obedience

As teachers our three, primary goals are: (1) to equip and release life-related Bible learning in others to make radical disciples, (2) to develop a “soil” in community conducive to flourishing spiritual growth, and (3) to multiply teachers (2 Timothy 2:2). All three broad styles are appropriate, so select the one that best aligns with your desired results. If our goal is to maximize LifeChange in community and multiply leaders, then I suggest encouraging the group to shift to more *discovery* type learning, selecting the one that matches the current commitment level of the group.