

THE FREEDOM BULLETIN

A Freedom Fellowships Newsletter

DECEMBER 2023

Announcements

Freedom Fellowships will be hosting its Old Testament Survey class this spring semester. The six-week class starts Jan. 17, 2024, and will take place every other Wednesday from 7-9:30 p.m. at the Study Center. Students must have passed Basic Christianity to sign up for this class. The class costs \$50 per individual, \$90 per couple and \$30 for students. Please sign up by Dec. 31!

LTC students are taking Perspectives this spring semester if they have not done so already. The course costs \$250 per student. Perspectives will take place Sundays from 5-8 p.m. from Jan. 7-April 21 at Cornerstone Community Chapel in Hartville, Ohio.

Many from Freedom Fellowships have served as volunteers at Joni & Friends Family Retreats in past years, and hopefully many will do so again next year! Sign-up starts Dec. 13 for Joni & Friends Family Retreat 2024. Week 1 will take place June 9-14 in Portsmouth, Ohio. Week 2 will take place July 7-12 in Berlin, Ohio.

Upcoming Events

Freedom Respite

Dec. 16, 10:30 a.m. at the Study Center

Combined CT

Dec. 16, 5 p.m. at the Study Center

Worship & Prayer

Dec. 17, 10:30 a.m. at the Study Center

2024 Fiscal Support Team (FST) Retreat

Feb. 3, 5 p.m. at Beulah Beach Camp in Vermilion, Ohio

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Need a good read this winter? Check out some great reads on our site:

<https://freedomfellowships.org/recommended-books>

Freedom Fellowships Launch Discovery Bible Studies

By Kyle McCallum

Discovery Bible Studies encourage participants to discover Biblical truth for themselves and put it into practice in their everyday lives.

I've been reading Roy Moran's excellent book "Spent Matches." In it, he lays out the failure of the Western church today in making disciples who make disciples. That is, Christ followers who are equipped enough to hand down spiritual insights and affect spiritual transformation in others. What you have in the west are many consumer Christians simply looking for the best spiritual experience they can find. The result is a western Christianity that is failing to reach the lost and transform lives.

This past year, I've spent much time teaching about the idea that every Christian is called to be a minister, not merely a passive consumer. It is refreshing for me to read a book like Moran's that hits many of the same convictions along with some practical

insights on how to instill these principles in the church. One point he makes is that we shouldn't be satisfied with merely equipping people. Rather, the truth we discover in God's Word is meant to be lived out. Put another way, we want to see not just effective listeners, but effective doers. Moran points out that people are most likely to become effective doers when they discover the truths of God's Word for themselves rather than being spoon-fed.

This is where Discovery Bible Study (or DBS for short) comes in. Championed by Christian leaders such as Roy Moran and David Watson among others, DBS is a method of Bible study that encourages participants to discover Biblical truth for themselves and put it into practice in their everyday lives. Ideally, it's a small group of 2-4 people who meet

to talk about their lives, read a Bible passage, and discuss its meaning and application for their lives. At the end, participants are supposed to think about what it is God is calling on them to do about the content studied.

At first, a DBS group sounds similar to a typical Freedom Fellowships cell group. The difference primarily is in the size of the group along with the structured approach to the discussion. For most of my ministry career, I've been in fairly large cell groups (6-8

group isn't going to work without your participation. It has been incredible so far seeing some of the quieter members of my DBS group seize the opportunity to open up and take a level of ownership of the group. But this is the key: the group has to be small. When the group grows, you want to have a view toward splitting again. That's the principle of multiplication in action.

The structure of the group looks something like this: You start out with some prayer.

The truth we discover in God's Word is meant to be lived out. Put another way, we want to see not just effective listeners, but effective doers.

people on average). This is good if your aim is to equip many people at once in the context of a teaching. This is bad if your aim is to facilitate good personal discussion and discovery of individual application. There are simply too many people to get to and not enough time. The best cell groups I've ever had have been when people come ready to open up and encourage one another, but it's easy to hide when you're in a larger group.

In a smaller DBS group, it's harder to hide. You're one of maybe four people, and the

Then you go around the circle talking about how you're doing personally, and you ask if there's anyone here or anyone you know with a need this group could help fill. You then read the passage and afterward go through a list of questions: What stuck out to you about the passage? Was there anything confusing or challenging? What does this passage say about God? About us? What are you going to do about what you've read? The goal is to avoid spoon-feeding Biblical truth to people and rather have people come to their own convictions.

In his book, Moran talks about how his church has a “hybrid” church style that includes both the “come and see” and “go therefore and make disciples” approaches to church. Firstly, you have the regular Bible teaching or sermon that delivers well-researched Biblical exegesis. This would include things like classes designed to equip people with doctrine at a high level. Secondly, you have the smaller DBS-style groups that are versatile and can meet anywhere. You’re

and evangelism happen at the same time. Real conversions happen when people recognize their need for a savior. People often need discipleship in that direction first. A DBS group can help people get there. In fact, there was a young man who attended our first DBS group meeting in the college ministry who went on to receive Christ the next week.

Many Fellowship Groups within Freedom Fellowships have already started implementing DBS groups.

DBS groups help us “think smaller.” They are smaller groups that facilitate close relationships, raise up new leaders, and help people discover Biblical truth for themselves.

meeting people where they are at. This is a much more effective strategy for reaching non-Christians who may not feel comfortable coming to a larger service.

You read that right, DBS groups can be open to outreach. Moran points out that often Christians make a distinction between discipleship and evangelism, but the reality is that Jesus saw both as one and the same. That is, to make a convert you have to disciple them toward Christ. Discipleship

In my own college home church, we’ve transformed our bi-weekly cell group meeting into a DBS group. We met for the first time as an entire cell group of 9 people, but we found that the talkers did most of the talking and the quieter members stayed silent. It also took longer than it should have. For the next time, we all met at the guys’ ministry house, then we split the group in two and met in different areas. We came back together afterward to spend some quality time as a full group. I found this smaller

discussion was much more fruitful, and it was exciting to see some of the newer members speak up. It felt like we all were able to bond more easily and there was less fear from our quieter members to speak up.

Interested in starting or taking part in a DBS group? Here are some principles to consider. First, it’s good to have at least one person leading the group that has a level of equipping that can prevent the group from arriving at bad interpretation or applications. Secondly, you want people in a DBS group to discover Biblical truth for themselves. That means rather than asking “what does this mean to me?” we should be asking “What is God saying to me?” The goal is solid truth-based application, and we want to avoid a relativized subjective interpretation.

Thirdly, have a purpose for your study. Don’t just rely on a random passage. DBS isn’t best for an exegetical verse-by-verse study of an entire book. Rather, think about what your group needs. Is it better fellowship? Improving evangelism? Supporting marriages? There are good chunks of scripture on all of these topics. Soon, we will be posting a guide of topics and scriptures to help guide DBS

groups that will be available on our website.

Earlier this year, we had a Body Meeting where I talked about the concept of “think smaller.” DBS groups help us accomplish this – smaller groups that facilitate close relationships, raise up new leaders, and help people discover Biblical truth for themselves. I also talked about how we want to bring the Word to our neighbors and those within our relational circles outside of the church. DBS groups are flexible enough that they can pop up anywhere. I love the idea of these groups springing up all over the communities in which we live. All we need is the willingness and courage to take the Word to them.

Meta Makes Some Moves

By Kaitlyn Farrance & Megan Smalley

To kick off 2023, Freedom Fellowships launched the Meta Sphere for its growing post-college fellowship groups. (For those who don't know, "Meta" is a Greek prefix that means "beyond.") When the sphere launched, it featured four fellowship groups, all of which had a mix of college students, young professionals, and young families. Earlier in the year during the Body Meeting, Greg Morscher noted that it's been amazing to see so many post-college and young families involved at Freedom Fellowships.

"We're fortunate to have a young adult focus and to have that kind of vibrancy."

To end the year, the Meta sphere grew as two of its groups (Smash and Forge) split to form new fellowship groups!

Several new deacons have also been appointed and nominated for the groups. Here's a look at some new fellowship groups and deacons stepping up in this sphere!

BASTION

Bastion, led by deacons Ian and Adi McCullough and Tommy McCartney, had its first meeting Oct. 10. The group meets at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesdays at the McCullough's residence in Kent, Ohio.

By splitting, members have been able to cultivate a more intimate environment as well as have more opportunities to step up and use their giftings to encourage one another. More people are getting equipped to step up and teach who never had the chance before, and teachings have been more discussion based. Everyone is playing a role in making every meeting awesome.

Bastion kicks off the night with food and prayer to ensure the Lord is involved during the whole meeting. Before the split, figuring out corporate prayer was challenging, but praying beforehand

has drastically rejuvenated prayer as well as created awesome parenting opportunities with those who have kids. Adi and Ian's toddler, Lukas McCullough, looks forward to fellowship group nights and puts his kids' Bible along with one of his prized dinosaur books on the group's stack of community Bibles for everyone to use.

As 2024 approaches, Bastion is looking forward to getting involved with the community by serving in ministries such as the Hospice ministry that is beginning to take off. If you would like to pray for this fellowship group, it is requesting prayers for members to recognize how the Lord has gifted them and that they would exercise that in the context of the group.

THUNDER

Thunder, led by deacons Logan and Jessica Tiller, had its first meeting on Oct. 10. The split group is meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesdays at the Tiller's residence in Kent, Ohio. The Tillers said meeting at their house has provided a more intimate environment with the smaller group. Families with young children have been able to bring their babies to some meetings instead of taking babysitting shifts every other week.

The more intimate environment has also created precious learning moments for

children to watch their parents minister to the world around them. The Tillers said their son Cameron has periodically joined Thunder's prayer meeting to pray with the group.

Since its kickoff, members have been encouraged to take ownership of their faith, meet the needs of their community and to raise up the next tier of leaders in the church. Before Bible teachings on Tuesdays, members who are able will meet early to eat dinner together and to pray for one another. As 2024 approaches, Thunder's vision is to reach the community as well as for members to strengthen their relationships with Christ and with one another. If you would like to pray for this fellowship group, it is requesting prayers for Alec and Frankie Milnes, who have been nominated for deaconship, as well as for greater unity and community in the group as a whole.

SMASH

Smash had its first split meeting in early October, and the split has been great for encouraging believers in the group to step outside of their comfort zones! Greg and Lina Morscher along with Jordan and Bethy Yoerger serve as deacons in this fellowship group. The group meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Yoerger's house in Stow, Ohio.

Bethy said she has noticed a lot of believers learning to take ownership of the group since the split.

"We've seen a lot of workers step up into the holes that were created from the split," she said. "We're slowly growing, but we seem to have good outreach opportunities. Because we are smaller, we are able to be more intentional and less diffuse."

She added that the group hopes to keep growing in unity and that it could use prayers for endurance in the midst of

any persecution as well as for people to stay willing to remain willing to step out in faith.

“Because we are smaller, we are able to be more intentional and less diffuse.”

CFALLS

Splitting to form a post-college fellowship group focused in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, has been both challenging and exciting for this new group. Nick and Anna Rajcsak serve as deacons in the group with Michael and Melissa Disantis helping on the leadership team. The group meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Rajcsak's house in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.

"Ministry has been exciting and challenging," Nick said. "We have newer members that are really just getting started in their walk with Jesus. It's been so encouraging to see people in their late 20s or 30s open their heart to the Lord and accept His free gift of grace."

Nick admitted there have been challenges for members of the CFalls group as many are going through big life changes – changing careers, getting married, buying homes, having kids – and learning how to approach these big decisions with faith in Christ. He said, "The beautiful thing is that we can come alongside each other in these times and learn how to walk in faith."

The group aims to love and serve people in and around Cuyahoga Falls and nearby neighborhoods. Nick said the group could use prayers for opportunities to get involved in the community and for unity among members of the group.



In October, elders laid hands on four new deacons for fellowship groups in Meta, including Nick and Anna Rajcsak for CFalls group and Jordan and Bethy Yoerger for Smash.

A BIBLE STUDY FOR THE BOYS

BY MEGAN SMALLEY

When one Freedom Fellowships family saw an opportunity to start a discovery group for their son and his friends, they prayed and hopped on it with joy.

For a while, Sarah Ramsey, a member of the BroYo fellowship group, felt convicted to form some kind of small group Bible study for her 10-year-old son Ernst.

“There are a lot of kids in our fellowship but no other fourth-grade boys,” she said. “I had a burden for him to have a Bible study group.”

In July, Freedom Fellowships’ Body Meeting focused on the importance of church planting and discovery groups. As people split off to pray during that meeting, Sarah knew she wanted to pray about starting a small group Bible study for Ernst.

Sarah and her husband, Jeremiah, then decided to approach Ernst about the idea of starting a Bible study for him and his friends.

“We talked to Ernst about it on a hike,” Sarah explained. “He would have to want to do it and be on board with it. We said it’s only going to work if you want to do it since you’re going to be the one inviting people. He really liked the idea and was into it.”

In Colossians 4:2-3, Paul calls on believers to be devoted to prayer, watchful and thankful as well as to pray for God to open a door for

the gospel message. The Ramsey family did just that, praying for an open door to start a Boy’s Bible Study for Ernst and his friends. Jeremiah said they knew it would be important to keep the Bible study small and simple for it to work.

Devote yourselves to prayer,
being watchful and thankful.
And pray for us, too, that
God may open a door for
our message, so that we may
proclaim the mystery of Christ,
for which I am in chains.

COLOSSIANS 4:2-3

“What would it look like if we invited just one kid to our house to hear and talk about a Bible story? That’s what we wanted to do,” he said. “It’s not about starting a huge Bible study for 50 kids and launch it into space. It began with just praying. Then it was about trying to invite one kid. We’re going to invite one kid to one Bible study. That becomes a lot more doable!”

In September, Ernst did just that: He invited a few friends to attend a Bible study at his

house, and two boys came. The boys read through a Bible passage and Jeremiah asked them questions about the passage. Afterward, the kids naturally had a blast with a Nerf gun target-shooting contest.

With one Bible study done, Ernst invited his friends to come back the next month for another Bible study. This time, three boys came. Again, in December, he invited friends over for Bible study and this time six came!

Jeremiah said he and Sarah have encouraged Ernst to take ownership in the group by leading and explaining the activity after Bible study. He added that he’s hopeful other boys who come regularly might take ownership in the group, too.

“The goal is not me as a leader of these boys but it’s that these boys take ownership of this,” said Jeremiah.

Sarah added that it’s been encouraging to see all the boys genuinely engaged in the Bible discussion.

“The kids also ask some pretty good questions,” she said.

“They’ve asked, ‘Did Jesus want to die on the cross?’ and ‘Do you think Jesus knew what would happen to Him?’”

“It wasn’t that hard
to do – it is something
anyone can do!”

SARAH RAMSEY

Ernst plans to have another Bible study with his friends Jan. 5. The Ramsey family is praying for another good Bible discussion in January and for some of these boys to enter into a personal relationship with Christ.

Sarah admitted that the idea of starting a discovery Bible study for her son seemed daunting at first. But after praying about it and trying it out, the Lord provided everything to fall into place for the discovery group. It’s been an answered prayer to a concern she had earlier in the year.

“It wasn’t that hard to do – it is something anyone can do!” she said.



REACHING THE NATIONS OVER COFFEE & DONUTS

By *Elli Rozler*

A look at how Missions Prayer Breakfast ministry has grown and changed lives of people both in Freedom Fellowships and across the globe.

Missions Prayer Breakfast is an important ministry of Freedom Fellowships. Every third Saturday of the month, people from every fellowship group come together to pray for the movement of the gospel across the world over breakfast. This ministry not only blesses the mission fields, but it also blesses the people who attend by improving their faith and walks with God.

Todd Muller has been an advocate for Missions Prayer for years, having a great burden for the great commission: Jesus' command to take the gospel to all the nations.

WHY DO WE DO MISSIONS PRAYER BREAKFAST?

Todd points to two verses: Isaiah 49:6, which talks about how God's plan all along was to rescue His people, the Jews, but also bring salvation to the nations through Jesus. Then the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 includes Jesus' final words to the disciples, reflecting God's plan and intention for His kingdom to reach all nations.

"We are making disciples in north-east Ohio as we should. But it is my conviction that God has a role for each of us to not only make disciples where we are but also support taking the gospel to all the nations," said Todd. "At Missions Prayer Breakfast we can do just that – engage in God's work to take the gospel to every nation."

WHAT HAPPENS AT MISSIONS PRAYER BREAKFAST?

First, someone will usually share scripture about God's burden for missions. Then, updates will be shared about what's happening in key fields Freedom Fellowships partner with. Then the group will pray for those ministries, sometimes in small groups.

"It's very edifying and inspiring to step back from just our ministry here and hear about what God is doing throughout the world," said Todd. "Revelation 5:8-9 talks about how the prayers of the saints are tightly connected with the blood of Jesus being shed for all the nations. When we pray to God, we are participating in his plan and he responds. And we are changed. As we pray, we develop God's heart for the nations."

Many people within our fellowship have been greatly encouraged in their personal faith through Missions Prayer Breakfast. Chris Gabele said he likes to attend the meeting every month to hear updates on how God is moving across the world.

"It's important to pray for what is happening inside the church, but also equally important to be praying for what is going on outside our church," said Chris.

Lauren Allie said her family has committed to attending this ministry, so they bring their kids every month to get them involved and excited about missions, too!

People who go also gain new perspective on cultures around the world. "It's a great reminder that the world (and, in turn, God) is bigger than our everyday lives," said Tanya Dalton. "It gives me hope for the world. I can get sad about my family, specifically the ones in Japan, because I'm unsure if they'll come to Christ, but this helps me remember I can keep praying for them and that God hears me and He is working out His good plan."

Todd likes to take pictures of people gathering to pray, then send them to the various missions and ministry partners to encourage them, letting them know we are praying for them. He said how meaningful it is to them with so many replies of appreciation.

Seeing the group grow has been encouraging to Todd, who previously hoped that the group would one day see enough people come to split into two prayer groups. His hope has come to fruition – last meeting there were six prayer groups!

Fifteen years ago when he started attending, Todd said he would bring his kids who expressed excitement for the donuts. Now, his kids are at the meetings to pray and report on what they are learning about missions. "And now we've got a new batch of little kids coming for the donuts," he said. "I can't wait to see what God is going to do with them."

WHAT'S NEXT FOR MISSIONS PRAYER BREAKFAST?

The exciting news on the missions front for Freedom Fellowships is that we've committed to adopting a region through IGL (India Gospel League)! Todd said we will rally in prayer support to join in with the saints that are working on the front lines in India from Kent, Ohio. Prayer

is most important as they are facing spiritual strongholds and generations against Jesus, and experiencing lives being set free. Join in by praying with these pastors and workers as they do the good work! See the side column to learn more about how you can participate in this amazing opportunity to participate in the Great Commission!

And join us for Missions Prayer Breakfast every third Saturday at the Study Center at 10 a.m. Announcements are posted on a Facebook page for this ministry and reminders on the Freedom Fellowships Facebook page. Next meeting will be Jan. 20, and Ben Masserey will be sharing about his family's prospective trip to France (Tamarack is bringing breakfast. Don't forget!)

Contact Todd Muller for more info or questions about Missions Prayer Breakfast.



CONTACT

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MEETING TIMES

Central Teaching: Sat. at 5 p.m.

500 VFW Pkwy, Kent, OH 44240