



AMONG WOLVES

DHATI LEWIS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



DHATI LEWIS is the lead pastor of Blueprint Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of North Texas and earned his master's degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. During his early years of ministry, Dhati became increasingly burdened to see healthy disciple-making churches in the city. This burden grew until the Lord gave Dhati a clear vision to plant a church-planting church in Atlanta. In 2009 Dhati, along with twenty-five others, moved to Atlanta with the goal of becoming the last generation of believers who have to abandon the urban context to search for sound discipleship. Dhati also serves as the BLVD Experience team director with the Send Network Team at the North American Mission Board. Dhati and his wife, Angie, have seven beautiful children.

STEPHANIE POWELL helped write and develop the *Among Wolves* Bible study. Stephanie has a master of arts in Christian ministry from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with her husband, Andrew. They're members of Blueprint Church, where Stephanie serves as Pastor Dhati's executive assistant.

ABOUT BLVD

BLVD offers an eight-session training experience on church planting in an urban context that equips planters to better mobilize their people to create a discipleship culture in their cities. The five aims are:

1. Gospel-centered
2. Local-church-based
3. Discipleship-driven
4. Urban-focused
5. Practitioner-oriented

Ultimately, BLVD aims to help urban practitioners move from an ethnic missiology to a neighbor missiology. The BLVD training experience seeks to help practitioners in the city raise up indigenous leaders who will make gospel-centered disciples through the local church.

A WORD FROM DHATI

What's up, everyone? My name is Dhati Lewis, and I'm excited that you've joined this Bible study. As you walk through Matthew and the eight movements, I pray that you'll encounter Jesus in ways you never have before. I pray that you'll be compelled to move away from a Christianity that's all about conferences, concerts, and church services toward a Christianity that's all about establishing a family and mobilizing an army to attack the gates of hell.

We hope this study will be used in a variety of different settings, but we've written with the underlying assumption that you're participating in this study with a group of Christians with whom you're in a church-member relationship—that you're part of the same local church. Therefore, throughout this study, when we use the terms *family*, *group*, *small group*, or *church*, unless otherwise clarified, we're explicitly referring to the small group of believers you're gathering with.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This Bible study provides a guided process for churches and small groups to explore what it means to make disciples in an increasingly diverse urban environment. Jesus told His disciples, "I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16). Through eight sessions of study, you and your group will walk through the Book of Matthew and trace Jesus' movements as He established a family and unleashed an army. The eight movements are:

1. Developing Vision from Burden
2. Establishing Family
3. Entering the Mission
4. Framing Disciple Making
5. A Call to Labor
6. Training from Service
7. Mobilizing Corporately for Mission
8. Unleashing Disciple Makers

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One week of Bible study is devoted to each of these topics, and each week is divided into a group experience and an individual experience.

In these sections you'll find biblical teaching and interactive questions that will help you and your group understand and apply the teaching. The individual assignment is best completed the day after the group session to ensure that participants will have enough time to complete it.

Both the group and the individual study employ a process designed to take you and your group beyond the church walls and join God on mission where you live, work, and play. This strategic process, summarized by the four Ds.

ABOUT THE FOUR DS

The strategy at the center of this study, the four Ds, will challenge participants to design either action steps or an outcome from each week's study. The four Ds—Discover Awareness, Dedicate to God's Vision, Develop a Strategy, and Deploy with Courage—will frame each week's group session and each week's personal study. Every week your group will respond to the following challenges.

DISCOVER AWARENESS

Where are we?

DEDICATE TO GOD'S VISION

What is God asking of us?

DEVELOP A STRATEGY

How do we get there?

DEPLOY WITH COURAGE

What obstacles or fears do we need to overcome?

Here's an example of how the four Ds work.

- *Discover (awareness)*. People are shepherdless in my city because of fatherlessness.
- *Dedicate (vision)*. God wants to raise up fathers in holistic stewardship.
- *Develop (strategy)*. Our church will implement programs to mentor young men.
- *Deploy (courage)*. We'll overcome the belief that people can't make the time commitment to mentor young men.

DISCOVER (AWARENESS) might be the most critical component of the entire process. If you don't have an accurate understanding of where you are, you won't be able to get where you want to go. If you think you're in Denver, and you want to get to Atlanta, you're going to drive southeast. But if you're actually in Charlotte, driving southeast will never get you to Atlanta. You must know where you are if you want to move to where God is calling you to go.

DEDICATE (VISION) asks, What's the goal? What's God's vision? Am I committed to that vision? Seeing the vision isn't enough. You must see it and dedicate to it before you can strategize.

DEVELOP (STRATEGY) is developing a plan to accomplish the vision, based on your awareness of your current position. You seek to answer the question, What do we need to do to be where God wants us to be, based on where we are now? Strategy should be the most practical step. Include deadlines, timelines, and accountability plans. You should always leave the Develop section with a clear understanding of what your next step needs to be.

DEPLOY (COURAGE) addresses the fears and obstacles you'll face in seeking to do what God is asking of you. Don't ignore this step. And don't ignore your emotions about what you're experiencing. Giving your emotions to the Lord, recognizing your fears, and entrusting yourself to Him are huge components of wholehearted obedience. Deploy addresses both emotional and physical obstacles that might prevent you from fulfilling your strategy.

DEVELOPING
VISION
FROM
BURDEN

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MOVEMENT 1

GROUP EXPERIENCE **START**

Welcome to *Among Wolves!* If you're studying with a group of believers you don't know well, make sure you take time to get to know one another before you begin the study. Knowing your fellow group members will make a big difference in the weeks to come.

Discuss the following questions.

What's something you're burdened for?

In what ways do you invest your life in seeking resolutions for the problems you're burdened for? What limitations do you have in being able to do so?

What's our church family most burdened for?

After your discussion watch video session 1 to hear Pastor Dhati speak on developing vision from burden.

Use the following lines to take notes as you watch the video.

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DISCOVER

WHERE ARE WE?

Gather in groups of two or three people and respond to the diagram below. In the space provided, record a few details about each of the four stories and ways you think God is currently moving in your context.



Compare and contrast what each group recorded, identifying common themes that demonstrate ways God is working in these stories.

How do these stories overlap with the burdens you identified earlier?

DEDICATE

WHAT IS GOD ASKING OF US?

Because God has given us His story in Scripture, we know His plan. We know what He's doing in the world. God's story is the stable component in the four stories that allows us to have a clear vision of His mission for us. The other stories make sense only when they fit into His.

Record below and discuss the way you would summarize God's story.

What's God's ultimate plan for humankind?

What role did Jesus play?

What role does the church play today?

Draw a visual that depicts God's plan and purpose for the world. Share and compare your pictures when everyone has finished.

As a group, read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. How do your pictures align with what Paul wrote in this passage?



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DEVELOP

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

This week's purpose is to develop a clearly outlined vision from burden for your family. To accomplish that goal, your group will reflect on and have conversations with others about ways God may be working through your church and in your city.

GROUP ACTION

Split the group in half and give these assignments.

Group A. Each member of group A should identify one other person in your church family to call or talk to this week. During the conversation each of you will ask the other church member the following questions.

What have you seen God do in and through our church during the past five years (or months if your church is younger)?

What do you think God wants to do in and through our church during the next five years?

Group B. Each member of group B should identify one person from your neighborhood or community to contact this week. During the conversation each of you will ask the community member the following questions.

What have been some of the biggest changes in our community during the past five years?

What do you hope to see God do in our community in the next five years?

Before leaving the group today, each member should record the following details about his or her upcoming conversation.

I'll call, text, email, or talk to:

I'll talk to this person by this date:

DEPLOY

WHAT OBSTACLES OR FEARS DO WE NEED TO OVERCOME?

As you plan to discover more about ways God is working in the four stories—His story, the city’s story, your story, and our story—what are you most anxious about?

What fears might prevent you from wanting to learn more about the four stories and to discover an authentic vision from burden?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray that your church family will be able to talk to different church and community members and learn more about ways God is working in your context.

Pray that the Father will help you understand how these stories are working together and will help you see the redemptive vision He has for your specific church family.

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INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE **DISCOVER**

WHERE AM I?

Use the following questions to reflect on and describe your personal story. As you work with your church family to discover more about the story of your community and your city, it's critical that you take time to reflect on your personal story and on ways God is working in your life. In doing this, you'll need to reflect on the things you're burdened for and on ways you plan to invest your life in seeking resolutions. God has given you gifts, experience, and a role to play in His story. The more clearly you understand your story, the better you'll be able to discover how God can use it to bring about His purposes for your church, your city, and His kingdom.

How did you get to be a part of the community where you live (both church and neighborhood)?

What have you consistently been burdened for over the past five years? How have you seen God's providence in your life?

What's God teaching you right now?

What's something you're currently burdened for in your church and neighborhood?

What gifts, strengths, and experience do you have that could be assets to your church and neighborhood communities?

DEDICATE

WHAT IS GOD ASKING OF ME?

Have you ever wondered what would have happened if David had used Saul's armor (see 1 Sam. 17:38-39)? What if David had tried to copy Israel's champion, King Saul? If he had put on Saul's armor and gone out to fight, he probably wouldn't have been successful because his confidence would have been in the armor. Instead, David trusted God's sovereignty and providence in his life, choosing to fight the way God had uniquely gifted him.

This reality hits home for most of us. While seeking to make an impact in our neighborhoods, we often go to conferences, read books, and try to mimic our evangelical-Christian champions. We look at great leaders and try to figure out what makes them successful so that we can copy their methods. But is this how God accomplishes His will "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:11)? Is this the process God is calling us to as He sends us out as sheep among wolves (see Matt. 10:16)? No, it's not. God is writing a unique story in your life. And while biblical principles will hold true throughout all time, the application of these principles will vary with each person and each context.

Dr. Hannah, one of my professors in seminary, used to say, "If God calls you to be a farmer, don't stoop so low as to become a king." The question we have to ask ourselves is, *What's my part in God's story?* By seeking the answer to that question, we have the opportunity to discover God's unique providence in our lives.

To discover our part in God's story, we first have to do the work that's necessary to understand God's story—redemption that brings reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. We must also be intimately familiar with the details of our stories and God's providence in our lives, for these are the experiences that form the burdens and passions in our hearts. If we don't understand our personal stories, we're in danger of being like David when he tried to wear Saul's armor. Or like auto-racing drivers, we become a billboard for everyone else's brand and lose God's unique fingerprint in our lives. This is why we must be students of our lives and experiences. Understanding our own stories is part of recognizing God's providence in our lives.

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DEVELOP

HOW DO I GET THERE?

Now that you've spent time in group discussion and in personal self-assessment in the Discover section, respond to another diagram like the one you examined in the group session. Record details about each story and ways you see God moving in each context. As you write, intentionally look for overlapping connections and unique features that show how your story intertwines with the other three.



Based on your reflections, list three to five specific burdens you have. Examples might be college students, biblical literacy, and fatherlessness.

DEPLOY

WHAT OBSTACLES OR FEARS DO I NEED TO OVERCOME?

Respond to the following questions.

What fears do I have about exploring my story and the stories of the people around me?

What fears do I have about receiving a God-given vision from burden for my life?

PRAYER

Pray that the Holy Spirit will show you different ways He has been working in your life and uniquely crafting your story to play a part in the other stories.

Place your heart in a posture of surrender as you listen to what God is saying to you about His vision for the stories you've examined this week.