

# PRESERVING THE FRUIT: FOLLOW-UP

## Discovery Groups Step-by-Step

For the discovery groups coordinator

Thank you for committing to train your congregation to use discovery groups as a platform for sharing the Gospel with individuals and families in your community. Throughout **ACROSS MONTANA 2010, we want to pray for, share the Gospel with, and engage every person in Montana who needs a relationship with Jesus.**

Having reached out to your community, you may have met non-churched people who did not respond to the invitation to worship with you on Harvest Sunday. It is also possible that family members, coworkers or friends in your social network did not respond when you invited them. These people didn't come to church but, certainly, you don't want to overlook their need for Jesus. Think outside the church! A discovery group may be the answer.

- 1. Cast a vision for discovery groups.** Most likely, discovery groups will be a new concept for the people in your congregation. Therefore, you want to help them understand what the groups are, why they are valuable, where and how they work, and who can be involved. (See Discovery Group Principles and Technique on this flyer.)
- 2. Enlist discovery group facilitators.** Have a sign-up sheet for people to commit to facilitate a discovery group. Encourage all members who can read to participate; even older children and youth can lead a discovery group for their peers. Remind them that discovery groups are for non-churched people who are interested in learning more about Jesus, not small groups of church people or believers who want to talk about Him. Therefore, each discovery group will have only one facilitator.
- 3. Prepare discovery group facilitators.** Secure pocket New Testaments or Gospel of John booklets to be distributed in the groups. Plan a training session for discovery group facilitators to review principles and technique, answer questions, and distribute resources. Practice sharing the plan of salvation, as this is the ultimate goal of the discovery group experience. Role play a discovery group, if appropriate. Pray together.
- 4. Coordinate support for discovery group facilitators.** Because discovery groups can begin at any time and in any setting, the support system must be flexible and on-going. Create a roster that lists facilitators, along with their discovery group dates, times and locations. Monitor the roster regularly, for an up-to-date, accurate roster is essential. Provide Bible study material on the Gospels of John, Luke, Mark and Matthew for facilitators that will aid them in answering questions in their groups. Maintain regular contact with facilitators to encourage and assist them. Be sure that facilitators know how to connect new believers to the church. Enlist church members as prayer partners for the discovery group facilitators and call them to prayer regularly.

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## Discovery Group Principles

For the discovery groups coordinator

Before you begin, you may be asking the question, “**Why discovery groups and how do I utilize them?**” Here are some thoughts as you prepare yourself and others:

**Discovery groups build bridges not barriers.** Often, Montanans are interested in Jesus and the Bible but not the church. Church can be a barrier over which many must cross in order to come to Christ. So, discovery groups offer a platform for engaging non-churched people in the world (our mission field) and inviting them to Jesus before involving them in church.

**Discovery groups occur outside the walls of the church.** A discovery group is a tool a believer can use to enter his or her mission field, using existing networks and relationships such as those at school or work, in the neighborhood, through recreational activities, and the like. The group meets at school or work, in someone’s home, or over coffee—whenever and wherever the non-churched group members are comfortable.

**Discovery groups are small groups that meet for a set time.** Discovery groups begin with one person or two, and are never more than six people (counting the facilitator). They meet for a determined amount of time: no more than one hour a week for no more than three weeks. People who are exploring the claims of Christ don’t want or make commitments that are open-ended or leave them wondering, “How do I get out of this?” So, discovery groups meet for three weeks; then, the group members evaluate whether the group would like to continue for another three weeks, and so on.

**Discovery groups use Scripture alone.** Discovery groups allow believers (serving as facilitators) to engage people with the Word of God, toward the goal of having them be impacted by Jesus Christ. God’s Word is alive and active and has the power to transform lives (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is inspired—God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). When non-churched people begin to read the Bible, particularly in the Gospels, it is as if they are having a face-to-face encounter with Christ.

**Discovery groups follow a simple process.** A simple beginning is to share a copy of the Gospel of John with each member of the group and invite him or her to read one chapter a day (21 days). Then, during the once-a-week meeting, the believer selects a Jesus story from that week’s readings, reads the story aloud, and facilitates group discussion by asking key questions and allowing time for observations. In this setting, the believer is not a teacher but a facilitator, helping group members discover for themselves who Jesus is. If, at the end of three weeks, the group decides to continue, they begin again with the Gospel of Luke. If more, then Mark and then Matthew.

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## Discovery Group I.M.P.A.C.T. Technique

For the discovery groups coordinator

- I Ice-breaker.** Ice-breakers encourage people to get to know and become comfortable with each other. Ask a question that everyone can answer to reveal something about him- or herself. For example, birthplace, hobby, favorite ice cream, what they do for fun.
- M Meet.** Meet on their turf, not yours! Inviting people to your home is comfy for you, but it may be a barrier to them. Ask yourself, “Where will they be most comfortable?” Meet in a place and at a time that fits them—where and when they want.

- P Purpose.** The purpose for the discovery group is to get non-churched people to discover Jesus Christ as well as the truths of the Bible. So, get them to participate by asking open-ended questions.

Stories in the Gospels are best. Pick a story in the week’s readings that fits their context. Read the story aloud, having them read along with you with you. Avoid teaching the Bible to them. Allow them to become explorers. Keep other believers out of the group, especially if they seek to dominate by demonstrating their knowledge of the Bible. The goal of I.M.P.A.C.T. is for the Jesus in Scripture to engage the lost person. Your role is one of facilitator, not teacher.

- A Ask.** After you read the story, then ask the following questions, one at a time. You respond first with the simplest answer you can possibly give. Then, ask the question again and allow time for them to respond. NOTE: There are no wrong answers.
- What did you like about the passage you just read?
  - What did you not like about it? What bothered you?
  - What did you not understand about it?
  - What did you learn about God from it?
  - What do you personally need to do about it?
  - What phrase or sentence from this passage would you like to think about this week?

- C Connect.** Gradually move toward sharing some of life together. Don’t make yourself a pest with your presence, but learn to connect with them regularly on neutral territory. Ask yourself: “What sports can we play together and/or with others?” or, “What fun event, of mutual interest, is coming up that we might attend together?” and the like.

- T Time.** Value and honor their time. You have determined to meet for no more than one hour each week, and you’ve defined that boundary in the beginning. Honor it.

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## Plan of Salvation

For the discovery groups coordinator

A plan of salvation is a summary of the Gospel. It explains why, how, and what happens when we place our faith in Jesus, as told in God's own words from the Bible. One simple plan\* is:

- **God loves you.** The Bible says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). You are a part of the world that God loves. God loves you very much and He wants to have a relationship with you. You are an important person to God.
- **But, you have sinned.** The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Breaking a rule is an example of sin. Another example is getting angry at someone or thinking ill of him. Sin is an action or thought that God does not like. How have you sinned?
- **Your sin separates you from God.** The Bible says, "But your iniquities [sins] have separated you from God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). Because of sin, you cannot be with God and He cannot be with you. You cannot have a relationship with Him.
- **But, Jesus died for your sin.** The Bible says, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ [Jesus] died for us" (Romans 5:8). God sent Jesus into the world so He could die for our sins. Because Jesus died, your sins can be forgiven. Because of Jesus, you can have a relationship with God.
- **Though, now, Jesus lives again.** The Bible says, "Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). The Bible also tells us that because Jesus is alive, "He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him" (Hebrews 7:25).
- **Jesus can be with you.** The Bible says to have a relationship with God, you must:
  1. **Repent.** That means you understand that you are a sinner and that you turn away from your sin. To repent, you simply tell God that you know you have sinned, ask Him to forgive you, and ask Him to help you obey Him. The Bible says, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out" (Acts 3:19).
  2. **Believe.** You must believe that Jesus died for you and that He is alive today. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). You must believe that Jesus is the only way for you to get to heaven.
  3. **Receive.** You must invite Jesus to come into your life to be your Savior and the Lord over your life. By inviting Him into your life, you are promising to obey Him in all areas of your life. The Bible says, "Yet to all who received Him [Jesus], to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God" (John 1:12).
- **The important question for you now is, Do you want to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord?** You can do so by praying. Tell God what's on your heart.

\* Other salvation plans are found in this packet, with the Door-to-Door Gospel Distribution, Evangelistic Event, and Harvest Sunday information.