



HOW TO LEAD A VIRTUAL GROUP

A Quick Guide to Small Groups





Summary

Virtual small groups are a great way to stay connected and allow members to interact with each other face-to-face... well, sort of.



Ten Minute Read



Small Group Commitment #2 *Cultivate Relationships*



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For the time being, we have asked small groups to not gather together as a way to honor our governing leaders and do our part to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Though we are limited in contact, we should not limit this time of gathering together as a community. More than ever, we need to stay connected during a time of social distancing.

So how do we connect relationally when we are not able to gather physically? Virtual small groups are a great way to stay connected as a group and allow your group members to interact with each other face-to-face... well, sort of.

Imagine how this time can renew our love for the Lord, cultivate deep, life-giving relationships, experience moments of fervent prayer and passionately live out the one another's of Scripture (from six feet or more).

God said it's not good for man to be alone. Just as God wired us for relationships, He has also given us modern tools to stay connected.

Though the coming weeks are uncertain, we are entering a time when we need each other. We cannot pull inward and quarantine ourselves in isolation. Is a virtual group a replacement for community? No, but it's what we have.

NOTE: If someone in your small group doesn't have a computer or is stressed out with technology, ask them to call your phone (or the phone of another member) and put this phone on speakerphone and place it next to your computer. This will allow them to listen and still participate in the conversation. This is better than nothing.



Theological Truth

Technology is a mixed bag of blessings and curses. On one hand, technology has solved problems around the world, alleviated diseases and it has improved the quality of life for billions of people. However, technology can be used to inflict pain, suffering and it can lead to unintended consequences.

Ultimately, technology must be redeemed for the glory of God, your good and the good of others. Technology cannot be simply rejected, demonized or even mindlessly accepted and used. As Christians, we need to utilize technology discerningly and with an open hand knowing that technology is not the solution to every problem, but it can be a wonderful tool to share the gospel and do good for others.



Ideas to Consider

SOUND

Be aware of where you set up your computer to avoid distractions and background noise such as the TV, dishwasher and pets. Make sure you know how to mute and unmute your computer and adjust the volume.

VIDEO

Think about the angle of your computer. Is your group seeing up your nose? This isn't the time for a snack.

LIGHTING

Your group members want to see you. If possible, pick a room that has an overhead light. It's hard to see you if you are in the dark, have a light behind you or have window in front of you.

TIME

If you have families with children, you might need to adjust your time and meet later so parents are freed up as their kids are in bed. As a leader, you are also going to need to watch the clock and effectively manage the time of your group. *Note: If you're using Zoom, you are limited to 40 minutes and this time will go fast.*

FACILITATE

The purpose of connecting virtually is to bring your group together. As the leader, you will need to be direct in your questions to ensure everyone in your group has an opportunity to share and individuals are not talking over one another. It's your job to draw out those who are quiet and redirect those who are timid.

GRACE

Give yourself grace as the leader. Some people might not want to participate. Expect awkward moments. Meeting virtually as a group is not ideal, but it is far better than not bringing your group together at all. We need community. We need to continue to share our lives and support one another during this time.

TECH SUPPORT

Overall, the virtual platform you pick doesn't matter as much as the level of comfort you have with the platforms. Use what is most comfortable for you and your group. If you have a group member who is tech savvy and familiar with these platforms, recruit their help and engage to help the rest of your group.



How to Lead a 40 Minute Virtual Group

BEFORE YOU MEET

Set a clear day and time and remind your group. With everyone's schedules and routines thrown off, send your group a reminder and ask them to be ready so you can start on time and maximize your time together. Consider sending a text 30 minutes before meeting as a final reminder to your group.

Give your group your questions in advance. This will help avoid awkward pauses and ensure your small group members are prepared to participate.

Be ready. Does your computer have power? Is it quiet? Are you in a place where you feel comfortable?

HOW TO START YOUR GROUP

Welcome people as they join. Thank them for coming. Quickly make people feel comfortable.

Share the reason for why you are meeting. Tell people why it's important to meet during this time.

Start your virtual group with prayer. This might be the most awkward part of meeting virtually as a small group, so let's just embrace it from the very beginning.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR GROUP

Intro discussion: *"Let's take the next 30 minutes to share our lives and ways we can support one another. Since we are limited with our time, let's try to keep our answers brief so that everyone has a chance to share."*

- **CHECK IN** – How is everyone doing? Ask everyone to share one high and low for this week.
- **LEARNING** – What is one takeaway you have learned from this week? This might be something you are learning or working through personally or something from the Radiant God study or sermon.
- **CARE** – Does anyone have immediate needs? As a group, are there ways we can care for these needs?
- **PRAY** – How can the group be praying for you over this next week? Ask someone in your group to take notes and follow up with an email to send out these requests.

HOW TO END YOUR GROUP

Thank people for meeting. Don't take for granted the effort it took to meet virtually.

Reinforce why it's important to stay connected. Set up a plan to stay connected throughout the week.

Pray to end your time. Allow your group members to connect as time allows after prayer.

Link	Zoom	Skype	Google Hangouts	FaceTime Call
How To	Zoom Tutorial	Skype Tutorial	Google Hangouts Tutorial	FaceTime Call Tutorial
Features	300 Max Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen Sharing • Recording Capability • IM Chat in meeting 	20 Max Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen Sharing • Recording Capability • IM Chat in meeting • Background Blur (if you don't want people to see what needs to be cleaned up behind you) 	25 Max Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatic Focus • Screen Sharing • IM Chat in meeting • Intelligent Muting 	32 Max Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works on most Apple devices • Recording Capability • You can transfer video calls from your computer to your phone mid-call
Pros	Mobile and desktop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with all OS • Free signup 	Mobile and desktop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with all OS • No sign up • No downloads • Join the group meeting via shared link 	Mobile and desktop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works on most OS 	Apple mobile and desktop capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FaceTime call from group message conversation • No sign up
Cons	The free version only allows for 40-minute meeting duration for 3 participants or more <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No dial-in numbers • Need to download plugin prior to use 	Small participant max	Requires a Google account to access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not work well with non-Chrome web browsers • No recording capability 	No IM chat during call. Chat is done through text message <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No screen sharing • Only works on Apple devices
Summary	BEST OPTION This is probably the best option for most small groups.	EASIEST SET UP This is the easiest setup option for various Mobile and PC operating systems.	WORST OPTION This is the worst option since it requires every person to have a Google account.	BEST OPTION FOR BREAKOUT or 1:1 This is the best option for those with an iPhone since the call can be mobile.