

Community Groups & COVID-19

In the face of the Coronavirus, we are working daily to make the best decisions possible for the health and well-being of our church family. Many of our weekly events have been cancelled or postponed over the next two weeks and adjustments are being made as new guidelines and directives are issued by local, state, and national leaders. You can stay up-to-date with the latest information by checking our social media outlets or our Fellowship Updates page on the website. Information will be updated each Tuesday and Thursday at 12:00 p.m.

When it comes to community, we want to be wise in making responsible decisions as a church family and as group leaders. What does a wise decision look like when it comes to community? I believe we can draw some of that wisdom from Hebrews 10:24-25...

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

How can we “stir up one another to love and good works?” How can we continue meeting together? How can we encourage one another?

The answers to these questions will look different for each group. As group leads and co-leads, you will determine what things look like for your group over the next few weeks as we maneuver through the uncertainties of these times. However, below are some guidelines to help you lead well...

How can we “stir up one another to love and good works?”

This is a great time to review our discipleship rhythms and reflect on which rhythms we may need to improve and identify other rhythms where opportunity may readily exist.

- **Daily Devotion** - *Read & reflect on God's Word daily.* This is certainly not a time to pull back from daily devotion, but to lean in to God's Word even more, with others, so we retain and grow deeper in the hope of the Gospel.
- **Prayer** - *Talk with God all the time.* Take this opportunity to pray more deeply and more often for one another. Pray for health and healing of those infected both here and throughout the world. And, leaders at all levels in our churches, community, nation, and worldwide need our prayers.
- **Freedom from Strongholds** - *Confess your sins to one another.* While many of us may never suffer the physical impact of COVID-19, we still struggle in our sin. This can be a great time to renew our freedom from strongholds.
- **Love Your Neighbor** - *Work together to meet needs.* The door has been left wide open for us to love our neighbors well. Children who rely on school lunches for their weekly meals. Those who rely on services such as Meals on Wheels and the generosity of other organizations to provide for their needs. Some of those agencies are losing volunteers who feel they need to step back during this time. If you or your group are called to be on the frontlines, opportunity abounds.
- **Sacrificial Generosity** - *Give your best because the Gospel is worth it.* There are people and organizations who are already feeling the financial impact of all that is happening right now. For some, it is simply uncomfortable and may require a change in lifestyle. For others, the impact may be devastating. How can you or your community group be sacrificial with your time, money, and/or resources? Are you in need? Is someone in your group in need?

- Share Your Story - *Share what Jesus has done in your life.* Quite simply, people need to hear what Jesus has done and is doing, right now, in your life. Stories are going to be written and rewritten during this time.
- Celebration - *Rejoice together always.* Watch for those things that happen—things you can rejoice in and celebrate with your group, no matter how big or how small.

How can we continue meeting together?

The options are many and will look different from group to group. Some groups will continue meeting together with no change to their norm. If you choose to physically meet together, please use precautions and guidelines that are honorable to those in your group. ***President Trump introduced, among others, a recommendation that all Americans avoid groups of more than 10 people.*** Check out these resources for keeping your meetings safe...

- [Schools, Workplaces, and Community Locations](#)
- [Workplace, School, and Home Guidance](#)

Other groups may shift their focus to prayer, sacrificial generosity, and/or loving their neighbors. Still others, perhaps due to health and life stage, will choose to find alternative ways to meet and/or communicate. Here are some ideas to help you lead well through this...

- Have regular/daily conversations through your group communication platform (email, group text, GroupMe, band, etc.).
- Use an online video platform to meet as a group from separate locations.
 - [Zoom](#) - free for the first 45 minutes
 - [Google Hangouts](#) - free
 - [Talky](#) - free
 - [Skype](#) - free up to 10 people.
 - [Slack](#) – free
- Use a conference call or use the buddy system to check on each other with a good ol' phone call.

Whichever platform you choose, if you are not familiar with its use be sure you test it out so you are comfortable with it before you go live with the group.

How can we encourage one another?

Communication! Communication is our key to encouraging one another. It is calling, texting, video chatting with our community group. It is asking how they are doing and how we can pray for them. It is me (and the staff) communicating updated information to you. And it is you communicating with me when you have questions, or you have needs, or someone in your group has needs or is ill—we want to know.

This is a time where things can be (or are) divisive around the various responses to COVID-19. Some are continuing their lives and routines as close to normal as possible while others are taking every possible precaution. We can encourage one another through mutual respect and understanding of the varied responses, letting only encouraging words come out of our mouths.

Thank you for leading well during this time that is something new for most, if not all of us. Inevitably, we will not get this 100% right, but we will lead the best we can through all of this.

Many blessings!

Warren