BEST PRACTICES FOR HOSTING AN ONLINE GROUP

Meeting online may be new to you or the members of your group. That's ok! The best thing you can do is be prepared. Read the suggestions below and be more ready than ever to lead an online group! Here are some simple things you can do to create a great experience for your whole group:

1. **Don't skip conversation starters or icebreakers!** It's a great time to get people comfortable with taking turns speaking. Unlike meeting in person, you don't want as much overlap in people's comments… But you also don't want awkward silences. Practice facilitating this kind of flow during the icebreaker.

2. **Be prepared ahead of time to spark discussion.** Before the Online Group meets, make sure you have reviewed the discussion material. Be prepared to share and draw from your own stories and experiences to help spark discussion.

3. **Explain these tips to your Group members at the beginning of EVERY Group.**
   - **Ensure your computer or phone is <u>stationary</u>.** Tell your group this from the very beginning — before anyone tries to do laundry or make a sandwich. People can feel free to move around the room if they are muted and their device is stationary.

   - **Don't forget about the MUTE button!** You will have the ability to mute ANYONE. One person's noise or feedback will be distracting and can interrupt other people. Remind Group members if they are NOT talking to stay muted to help prohibit background noise and distractions.

   - **Make sure the background behind you isn't distracting.**

4. **Ask specific people to speak.** They're still getting used to things and might need a little encouragement. For example, if you're about to talk about the sermon, start out by asking two or three people to share their highlights of the sermon. It will get others comfortable.

5. **Use the chat function to post the discussion questions.** This helps people stay focused on the question even when someone else is talking. It might also provoke a response for some of your more shy group members. This also works well for prayer requests. Taylor Brookshire will be present in all Online Groups to help with these functions.

6. **Silence doesn't have to be awkward!** Remember that this will get easier the more you do it. Here are some ways to keep it flowing:
   - If no one is answering questions, say, "I'll post that one in the chat window for you guys to think about." Then ask again.

   - Be ready to answer any of the questions first to get others talking!

Quick Details to Remember About Each Group

1. You need to create a FREE Zoom account! This will be a huge help as an Online Group Leader!

2. Please use a computer to lead any of the Online Groups. Using a computer will allow you to see more people in Gallery view and remain stationary to prohibit extra distractions.

3. Remember this rule of thumb as a Group Leader: The 80/20 rule. Group Leader should be speaking 20% of the time and group attendees should be speaking 80% of the time. Groups are about genuine connection! As people open up and up and talk they will begin to connect!