

DIVIDED



BECOMING UNITED

IN A DIVIDED WORLD

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	2
Tips To A Successful Group	3
Tips for Online Small Group	5
Part 1 DIVIDED: Becoming United in a Divided World "HOW TO DE-ESCALATE ANGER"	6
Part 2 DIVIDED: Becoming United in a Divided World "PEACEMAKERS"	18
Part 3 DIVIDED: Becoming United in a Divided World "SEPARATION OF CHURCH & HATE"	28
Part 4 DIVIDED: Becoming United in a Divided World "HOW TO AVOID ELECTION INFECTION"	40

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

- 1. WELCOME NEW PEOPLE.** Take time to introduce new people.
- 2. START & FINISH ON TIME.** Doing this will show your small group you value their time.
- 3. BE REAL, AUTHENTIC & TRANSPARENT ABOUT WEAKNESSES & STRUGGLES.** Some people in your group may be new to faith or new to small group often think there's a *right* way to answer discussion questions—or at least a few *wrong* things to say. So, they show up and listen in, but don't feel permission to say what's really on their minds. Set examples by sharing honest vulnerable answers. Sharing with a level of vulnerability sets the tone and gives permission for everyone—regardless of spiritual maturity—to respond authentically.
- 4. PLAN SOMETHING FUN.** Due to our current COVID-19 social distancing recommendation from the local government and CDC, we ask that any special and fun gatherings in person be postponed until further notice in order to safeguard the health and safety of everyone.
- 5. NO GUILT, NO SHAME.** This series is not meant to guilt or shame anyone into doing anything.

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

6. SILENCE CELL PHONES. As a courtesy to those who are sharing in your group, please try to stay off your phones unless for emergencies. It is okay with the exception of the use of your smartphone device for online meeting (Zoom).

7. BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE. Uncomfortable silences are bound to happen. It's okay! A long pause during a group discussion can be powerful. A *pause* gives space for quieter people to break into the conversation; silence allows people to figure out exactly what they would like to say.

8. MAKE GROUP A PRIORITY. Communicate in advance when you will be unable to attend by calling and/or texting your host.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT. Confidentiality is the key to building trust in relationships. Here are a few mottos to remember to be confidential: "What is said in small group, stays in small group." Nothing, nobody, never...Share *nothing, to nobody, never*" outside of the group.

10. TECHNOLOGY CAN BUILD REAL RELATIONSHIPS. Using a group texting app like GroupMe or WhatsApp makes it easier than ever to send quick logistical updates, share prayer requests, or just check in with someone mid-week. Connecting beyond your once weekly meeting communicates to your group member that *I see you and I'm thinking about you.*

11. AVOID TALKING or TEACHING TOO MUCH. Small groups are designed for everyone to share and grow together.

TIPS FOR ONLINE SMALL GROUP

- 1. SEND OUT AN EMAIL INVITE.** Ensure to send out a calendar invite with the meeting details and how to connect to the meeting platform (NHWW Small Group meets through Zoom.)
- 2. SEND OUT A REMINDER DURING THE WEEK.** Keep everyone in your group connected by sending a reminder during the week of your upcoming small group meeting. You can do this by using text message and/or email.
- 3. ONCE ON THE CALL, START ON TIME.** For your scheduled meetings, it's recommended to get started within 5 minutes of your scheduled start time.
- 4. MUTING OF MICROPHONES.** Get familiar with the Zoom features on your electronic device. It is helpful for everyone to know where the mute button is located. Ask the attendees to self-mute to avoid outside noise when someone else is talking & sharing. Doing this will help with the flow of your SG discussion time.
- 5. STICK TO YOUR TIME SCHEDULE.** Most small group meetings are held for about 60 minutes.
- 6. DOWNLOAD ZOOM APP.** In order to participate in the Online Small Group, download the Zoom App from your iPhone or Android. You may also download the Zoom App from your lap top PC or iPad device.
- 7. HOSTING AN SG MEETING ON ZOOM.** If you are interested in hosting a small group on zoom through New Hope Windward, let us know. NHWW small group team will help you get started. Zoom training is available weekly.
- 8. BREAK INTO SMALLER GROUPS.** For larger online groups on Zoom, it is best to break up into groups of 3-4 people during the discussion segment. Zoom has a feature that allows individuals to be grouped together in smaller clusters. This can increase more transparent conversations and provide more time for each person to join the conversation.



1. HOW TO DE-ESCALATE ANGER

ICEBREAKER

If this is a new group or there are new people, please take a moment to **introduce yourselves**.



To start off your small group, briefly share your response to the following questions:

What is your favorite type of music?

Share with your group.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Let's get a big picture of what we'll be learning today...



Let's face it, we are living in the Divided States of America. While everyone tries to get their voice heard, get their point across, or get their two-cents in, no one seems to be getting along. It's like everyone is playing their own music at full blast, and all we're left with is noise. How do we cut through the clutter and chaos and live like the peacemakers Jesus called us to do? Today we will learn some biblical steps in how we can de-escalate our frustrations and anger when we find ourselves in a place of disagreements.

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Tip: BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE. Uncomfortable silences are bound to happen. It's okay! A long pause during a group discussion can be powerful. A *pause* gives space for quieter people to break into the conversation; silence allows people to figure out exactly what they would like to say.

Tip: CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT. Confidentiality is the key to building trust in relationships. Here are a few mottos to remember to be confidential: "*What is said in small group, stays in small group.*" Nothing, nobody, never...Share nothing, to nobody, never" outside of the group.

ONLINE Tip: MUTING OF MICROPHONES. Get familiar with the Zoom features on your electronic device. It is helpful for everyone to know where the mute button is located. Ask the attendees to self-mute to avoid outside noise when someone else is talking & sharing. Doing this will help with the flow of your SG discussion time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.) Why are we so divided? It appears that the news makers and social media posters thrive on telling us why "the other side" is wrong and why their opinions are always right. When we live like that, we will find it harder and harder to build a bridge to those who are different than us.

It's easy to like people who are just like us. It's hard to be agreeable around people we disagree with. But God has built a church full of different people. We don't look the same, act the same, or even talk the same. We have different tastes in food and music, different teams we root for, and even different ideas about politics. But when the first followers of Jesus put their differences aside, they found unity and maturity.

All believers were united in heart and mind. Acts 4:32 (NLT)

This doesn't mean they all thought the exact same way. As you keep reading through Acts and the rest of the New Testament, you'll see disagreements and even arguments. But what they kept through it all was their unity.

The church is full of individuals! If we were all the same, it would be like a soup that is blended together to taste the same. Instead, we're like a salad. Each part is unique and retains its individuality. But blend together, we make something different that none of us could accomplish on our own.

Think of someone you interact with but disagree with. How does it make you feel when they disagree with something you say or believe? How do you think they feel when you disagree with them?

LOWER THE VOLUME AND SPEED OF YOUR SPEAKING

2.) One thing we can do to be united instead of divided when we talk to those we disagree with is to **lower the volume and speed of our speaking**. It may sound overly simple, but it sure works. Read these wise words from Proverbs:

A gentle response deflects fury, but a harsh word makes tempers rise.

Proverbs 15:1 (CJB)

Gentle words are spoken softly and slowly. Wise people don't get in a hurry or talk over the other person. Just like two people in a room listening to different music, we can either crank it up louder and neither one of us is heard, or we can keep the tunes low so that we all enjoy the space.

Here are some other things the Proverbs tell us about our words:

Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.

Proverbs 10:19 (NLT)

When we keep talking without stopping to listen to the other person, it can lead to disconnection and disastrous results! From putting our foot in our mouth to eventually saying something we will truly regret, our words can get us into all kinds of trouble.

The one who knows much says little; an understanding person remains calm.

Proverbs 17:27 (MSG)

Not only is it wise to let our words be few, but it's also wise to choose calming words. Our words can stir up anger and chaos, or they can cool down the most difficult of situations.

If you love to talk, that's fine. But understand the power behind your tongue. It can offer words of encouragement and grace, or it can tear down and destroy connection with others.

Think of a time when someone said something that upset you and instead of raising your voice you lowered the volume of your voice and the speed of your speaking. How did it affect you and the other person?

3.) Lowering the volume and speed of our speaking can help you keep your calm while calming the other person down. How does that work? Let's take a look at another book of wisdom, the book of James in the New Testament.

Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear. God's righteousness doesn't grow from human anger.

James 1:19 (MSG)

When we are slow to speak, we can be quick to listen. It helps us to hear the other persons side. Also, when we slow down our speaking and increase our listening, it can help us lower our anger and frustration levels.

Why do you think that listening more than talking can help us stop being angry? (Example, we assume the best of the other person, we see things from their perspective.)

TRY TO UNDERSTAND BEFORE TRYING TO BE UNDERSTOOD

4.) Another great way to help unite us with those we disagree with is to **try to understand before trying to be understood**. To do that takes empathy, seeing things through another person's point of view.

In the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch told his daughter, "You never really understand a person until you crawl into their skin and walk around in it." You cannot just imagine what they are thinking or how they are feeling. Instead, you can truly understand a person by really getting invested in their life and doing your best to try to feel what they feel and experience what they experience.

The Bible calls this compassion. The Greek word behind it literally means “gut.” In other words, you are so involved and invested in another person’s life that you can feel what they feel, right in your stomach. Have you ever experienced that?

Jesus did all the time. Read the following passages about how He felt compassion on others:

When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew 9:36 (NLT)

Jesus saw the huge crowd as He stepped from the boat, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Matthew 14:14 (NLT)

Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with Me three days and have nothing to eat. I don’t want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.”

Matthew 15:32 (NIV)

Jesus was moved with empathy when He saw people who were different, who were sick, who were hurting, and who were hungry. When we come in contact with people who differ from us, how do we respond?

Think of a time when you were communicating with someone different than you. How did you respond? Were you compassionate and empathetic or rushed and upset?

WHAT WILL YOU



This week, chances are you will find yourself talking to someone you disagree with. How will you handle it? It's easy to be divided, to scream and argue, to want to get your point across without considering theirs. Instead of someone who divides, let's be people who unite:

- *We will lower the volume and speed of our voice.*
- *We will try to understand before trying to be understood.*

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Take a few minutes to close your time together with prayer and to pray for each other's prayer requests. Below is a sample prayer to read if you choose to. You can also choose to write down each other's prayer requests to remember throughout the week.



Sample Prayer:

"Dear Father, we are humbled and grateful that You are patient with us. Help us to be patient with one another. When we disagree with others, help us to not allow our disagreements to divide us. Help us to respect one another. May we continue to choose to pursue our relationships regardless of our difference of opinion. Thank You for living out the example through Your love for us. Help us to be quick to listen, so to speak so we can be slow to become angry. Help us to manage our mouths instead of letting them manage us. Help us to not let anger divide us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!"

Group Prayer Requests:

Name

Request

DURING THE WEEK

Find Time To Read God's Word



The Power of Feeding on God's Word Daily

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

As we read God's word, we begin to see how God responds to things. Doing daily devotions re-patterns the way we think and transforms the spirit of the mind. Then, when we face similar situations as Jesus did, we begin to respond in the same way.

Doing devotions is an excellent way to record, process, and share what God is speaking to you. It's also a useful tool to use at a later time to reflect on and review some of the "gems" that you have received. Without writing these down, you may forget God's promises and some very important life lessons! While doing devotions is a very personal time with the Lord, you may want to share some of your daily devotions with your family, friends, co-workers, or small group. Through discussion, you may be able to look deeper into what God is speaking to you, gain new insights, and even encourage others.

Sample Devotion

SCRIPTURE

"If you do not carry your own cross and follow Me, you cannot be My disciple."
(Luke 14:27)

OBSERVATION

Self-sacrifice is a prerequisite for discipleship. Self-centeredness has no place in the life of a Jesus follower.

APPLICATION

It can be hard to focus less on self and more on Jesus, but when we do we are living out the very commands of Jesus.

PRAYER

God, help me to live a selfless life by always focusing on what You want instead of what makes me happy, comfortable, and content. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 1

SCRIPTURE...

"I am in them and You are in Me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that You sent Me and that You love them as much as You love Me." John 17:23 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 2

SCRIPTURE...

*Better to hear the quiet words of a wise person than the shouts of a foolish king.
Ecclesiastes 9:17 (NLT)*

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

*Everything you say should be kind and well thought out so that you know how to answer everyone.
Colossians 4:6 (GWT)*

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

*Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.
James 1:19-21 (NLT)*

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

I said to myself, "I will watch what I do and not sin in what I say. I will hold my tongue when the ungodly are around me."
Psalm 39:1 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...



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