

DIVIDED



BECOMING UNITED

IN A DIVIDED WORLD

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

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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.

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3. SEPARATION OF CHURCH & HATE

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 question:

Did you have a nickname when you were growing up? What was it?

Share with your group.

WHAT TO EXPECT

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



Christ followers are known for a lot of things today. Throughout history, Christians have done very, very good things and very, very bad things. And like an unfortunate nickname, some of the less loving things have stuck onto us. But we can change that if we are known for what Jesus wants us to be known for—our love. In this week's lesson, we will learn that loving each other the way Jesus did despite our differences will help bridge the gap that hatred created.

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Tip: BE REAL, AUTHENTIC, & TRANSPARENT ABOUT

WEAKNESSES & STRUGGLES. Some people in your group who 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.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.) Jesus wants us to be known for one thing and one thing only. Read the following scripture verse.

If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are My disciples.
John 13:35 (GNT)

There are no exceptions to this rule. We either love God or hate others. But we can't do both. Read the following verses that make that clear:

If we say we love God, but hate others, we are liars. For we cannot love God, whom we have not seen, if we do not love others, whom we have seen.
1 John 4:20 (GNT)

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you..."

Matthew 5:44 (NKJV)

Why do you think it's easier to hate someone who has hurt you than love someone who has hurt you? Why would Jesus tell us we have to love them?

2.) Paul gives us good instructions on how to make this happen in our own lives. In the book of Romans, as he's nearing the end and wrapping it up, he gives them some very practical examples of how we live out the love that God has shown toward us. Read the following verse together:

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good.

Romans 12:9 (NLT)

The word for "love" in this verse is the Greek agape. We all know the type of love that is driven by feeling, the love you had for that first crush or maybe the love you express to your pet. But agape goes much deeper. It's about a commitment of the will to do the loving thing no matter how you feel. Agape love is choice love! Choosing to love regardless of how you feel.

Share a time you chose to "agape love" someone you didn't feel like loving by choosing to do the loving thing rather than choosing to follow your feelings.

3.) Paul goes on:

*Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.
Romans 12:10 (NLT)*

Paul switches it up and uses a different word for love here, *phileo*. This word means brotherly or friendly love. Philadelphia is the “city of brotherly love” and has the same root word. It’s a friendship type of love. It’s about liking someone, not just saying you love them.

It can be hard to like everyone, but we can find something to like about anyone. *Ephesians 2:10* says that we are God’s masterpiece. When God made you, he made a masterpiece. God has put something in everyone that is amazing and unique. It’s up to us to discover it, appreciate it and express that kind of *phileo* love.

Take turns going around the group and pointing out the positives you see in someone else. (If the group is small enough, then each person can point out something about everyone, but if the group is too large then they can point out something in just one person. Make sure that everyone is given a chance to express this and that no one is left out.)

4.) Jesus told us **to love our enemies**. Sometimes we do that just in word, but not in deed. I can say I love someone without having to really do anything about it. But Paul goes on to explain how we love those who hate us.

Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. Never pay back evil with more evil. *Romans 12:14, 17 (NLT)*

At some point in your life, if it hasn't happened already, you will be persecuted by someone. They will hate you for no good reason. They will mistreat you when you go out of your way to love them. When that happens, we want revenge! We want payback!

The Bible says the best payback for persecution is prayer. This may seem odd, but this is more about us than it is about them. When you hold a grudge, it's like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies. But when you forgive, when you let go, when you can pray for someone who hates you, you will find true freedom.

Watch what happens to your heart when you start to pray each day for God to bless that person you are angry with. God starts to change our hearts and it can help us release the resentment.

Why do you think it's so hard for us to forgive someone for hurting us? How have you been able to let go of a past hurt by praying for God to bless them? If you haven't prayed yet for God to bless those you're angry with, try it this week...even if you don't feel like it.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?



There are 1,001 reasons we can give for hating someone and holding a grudge. But there's only one good reason not to. God sent His Son to die for you. And since He did that, we should lay down our own hurt feelings and bruised egos to love those who might hate us.

This week, when you find yourself thinking about that person who has mistreated you, show them love by praying for God to bless them and by choosing to forgive them.

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:

"Father, we know that You are in control of everything. We sometimes think it's all up to us, that our decision at the ballot box is the most important of our life. But the real decision that makes a difference is following You. So today, we commit and recommit to be Your follower by loving others. We're so glad that Your grace abounds in this area of our lives. As we move forward in the coming months, with the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, help us to be a people who represent You well with Your abundant grace to extend compassion to others. In His powerful and mighty name we pray, Amen."

Group Prayer Requests:

Name

Request

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 1

SCRIPTURE...

If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads. Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.
Romans 12:20-21 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 2

SCRIPTURE...

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 3

SCRIPTURE...

If we hate others, we are living and walking in the dark. We don't know where we are going, because we can't see in the dark.
1 John 2:11 (CEV)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 4

SCRIPTURE...

"What blessings await you when people hate you and exclude you and mock you and curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man. When that happens, be happy! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven."
Luke 6:22-23 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

You who love the Lord, hate evil! He protects the lives of His godly people and rescues them from the power of the wicked. Light shines on the godly, and joy on those whose hearts are right.

Psalm 97:10-11 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...



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