

A GUIDE TO

Keeping Community Amid the Pandemic

One mission. One vision. One another.

We've been sent back to a very ancient way of doing church: the household. We are slowed. We are limited in contact with the wider gathering, but that should not limit community with God and with others. We could come out of this closer to Him and to one another. We could come out of this with new passion, fervor, connections, and tools to share the gospel, together.

The church tends to be at her best when we are forced to innovate. To slow down. To see what matters most. God is showing us the essentials of "church" in this pandemic. We have the opportunity as

those leading the priesthood of believers to press in more than ever before. We will be wise. We will have conversations we would never have had before. The Lord is very much on the move in our midst.

This guide is a beginning consideration toward how we will keep (and grow) the community of saints amid the pandemic. Right now is the time where Groups discipleship ministry becomes most important. The Church of Jesus Christ is the hope for the community in these days.

— *TVC Groups Team*

General Guidance

For the time being, we ask that you not gather in groups and meet with as few people as possible. This is a decision to honor the governmental authorities God has put over us and love our neighbors well. Consider Virtual Home Group Meets and some of the suggestions here in this guide.

“God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble.”

PSALM 46:1 CSB

Keep in Touch with the TVC Groups Community

- ▶ **INSTAGRAM** [@tvcgroups](#)
- ▶ **FACEBOOK** [The Village Church • Home Group Leaders & Coaches](#)
- ▶ **EMAIL** Please check to ensure you are receiving TVC Groups emails and that your email address is updated in your [TVC Profile](#); it is **essential** that it is current for the communications ahead.
- ▶ Groups Coaches/Groups Ministers: weekly touchpoints can and will continue as we lead through these days together.
- ▶ **Update the TVC Profile** for your Home Group. Area listings and rosters will become crucial during this time of local mission and ministry. **As the church coordinates the local needs in our area, this will be the primary way of mobilizing the people of God to meet those needs.** For instructions on how to update your Home Group information, visit [this link](#).
- ▶ **Be on the lookout** for more resources for loving your neighbors and the nations.

Keep Up-To-Date

The situation changes daily, sometimes hour by hour. We do expect that for at least eight weeks we will not congregate as a church body or perhaps even in groups. But there are many ways to stay informed and do the work of the ministry. One of these is to have the fruit of the Spirit in you as you talk with your household and share information about the everchanging situation.

The World and Everything In It podcast is doing excellent, calm, and accurate reporting during this time. If you aren't already a listener, consider tuning in during these unprecedented days. Here are a few examples of the variety of reporting you will hear each day:

- ▶ [Loving Our Neighbor Amid a Pandemic](#)
- ▶ [Quarantine Entertainment \(with Kids\)](#)
- ▶ [COVID-19 Around the World](#)
- ▶ [WORLD Homepage](#)

Give Us This Day Our Daily News is a short article by Jared Musgrove giving guidance and questions to how Christians can utilize good news sense with neighbors during times of confusion or panic.

The Practicals of a Virtual Home Group

STAY IN COMMUNICATION EARLY AND OFTEN.

Let your group know that you're there for them. If they have questions, concerns, or fears, this is the time to pick up the phone or talk online. Have someone host the meeting (choose the platform, send invites, etc.).

SET A TIME AND WEB ADDRESS for people to join.

TEXT REMINDERS with the Virtual Group meet address.

STRUCTURE the Group time:

- ▶ **Read or watch** prior to Group time.
- ▶ **Consider** the following five resources.

1. **LIFE TOGETHER** This brief but deep classic takes on a whole new meaning now. If you read one book during this time, make it this one.

- free [audiobook](#)
- free [groups guide](#)

2. **RIGHTNOW MEDIA**

- [Psalm 119](#) by Matt Chandler, with groups guide
- [Psalm 23](#) by Matt Chandler, with groups guide

3. **VIRTUAL GROUPS SERMON GUIDES** will post each week on [TVC at Home](#). They are designed with Virtual Group meetings in mind.

4. **VIRTUAL GROUPS PRAYER MEETING** utilizing [The Hour That Changes the World](#) as a guide to structure praying together during a Virtual Group meet.

5. **15 FREE READINGS** to read in the days of anxious headlines. You may share this with your Group Members for selective personal readings and/or to use selectively with the accompanying questions as the basis for Virtual Group discussion.

▶ **Send a reminder text** a few days to the Group before to read or watch prior to meeting.

▶ **Use the group guides** of either the book, the RightNow videos, or the weekly TVC sermon to facilitate discussion, prayer, and connection.

▶ **Pray together** each time with specifics.

▶ **Gender-Specific Virtual Group meets** are also great options, considering families with children who are in the home, number of people who can join a Virtual Group meet, etc.

▶ **Consider safe activities for your children** during a Virtual Group meeting. We understand the entire scenario is less than most parents' ideal, so we will have grace with one another and try to give help as we are able.

FREE VIRTUAL GROUP MEET PLATFORMS

Link	Zoom	Skype	Google Hangouts	FaceTime Call
How-to	Zoom Tutorial	Skype Tutorial	Google Hangouts Tutorial	FaceTime Tutorial
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300 Max Participants • Screen Sharing • Recording Capability • IM Chat in meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 Max Participants • 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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 Max Participants • Automatic focus • Screen sharing • Intelligent Muting • Share options in call • IM chat capability • Recording Capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 Max Participants • Works on most Apple devices • Record video calls • Transfer video calls from computer to phone mid-call
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile and desktop capabilities • Works with all OS • Free signup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile and desktop capabilities • Works with all OS • No signup • No downloads • Join meeting via shared link 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated with Google ecosystem • Mobile and desktop capabilities • Works on most OS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple mobile and desktop capabilities • FaceTime call from group message conversation • No signup
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The free version only allows for 40 minute meeting duration for 3 participants or more. • No toll-free dial-in numbers • Need to download plugin prior to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small participant max 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a Google account to access (free account creation available) • Does not work well with non-Chrome web browsers • No recording capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No IM chat during call. Done through messages • No screen sharing • Only works on Apple devices
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best option for larger groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easiest setup option for smaller groups with various Mobile and PC operating systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best option for those familiar with Google • Probably the worst option for most groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best option for groups who already have an iPhone group conversation going with blue text bubbles

For additional information regarding features, system requirements, and more, refer to the [following site](#).

Virtual Group Meet Etiquette

SOUND Be aware of where you are setting up the call in your home (are you around loud dogs, dishwashers, etc.). Everyone should know how to Mute and Unmute.

VIDEO Think about the angle. Are we seeing up your nose? What is behind you?

LIGHTING We want to see you. Is there light behind you? Is there a window in front of you?

Consider (and Ask) Where Your Members are at in These Days

▶ **Make calls** to Group members.

- *How are they doing?*
- *What are their daily rhythms in the midst of this?*
- *What passages of Scripture are they reading/praying during these days?*
- *Any immediate needs?*
- *How can you pray for them specifically during all of this?*

These questions can even be adapted to the Virtual Group meet time. It can be a good time of sharing, prayer together, and meaningful connection.

Serving One Another and Neighbor

▶ **Keep the [One Another commands](#) of Scripture** at the forefront. Consider how they will play out in your household and across your community during the pandemic. Ask God to use you as you follow these commands in your household, across video calls, working from home, etc.

▶ **Pray.** And let others know how you are actively praying for them. Send a card, message, or text.

▶ Consider **sending small care packages** to one another (favorite candy, a handwritten card, etc.)

▶ Check in with **neighbors**. Even if you've yet to meet them, this is the time.

▶ Offer to buy (or have delivered) **groceries** for elderly neighbors or those with a compromised immune system.

▶ Consider (and ask) how you can **serve single parents and single men and women** in your neighborhood, workplace, or Group.

▶ **Send gift cards** and prayers to families who depend upon a local business, restaurant, etc.

▶ Call or write **healthcare workers** to encourage them. Let them know specifically how you are praying for them.

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”

ROMANS 12:15

- ▶ Send **teachers** encouragement via email or letters as they prepare online lessons. Let them know how you are specifically praying for them.
- ▶ Have a **Virtual Group meet** (Google Hangout, Zoom, etc.) with your Home Group. Loneliness will be a tool of our adversary these days.
- ▶ **Keep giving.** Your tithes and offerings directly help TVC continue to do local ministry and mission during this time of pandemic. For online giving during this time, please refer to [this page](#) of our website.

The Greater Story

The story is not the pandemic. The story is how God is moving, even in the midst of the pandemic. Never forget during these days that we are a church united in the mission to love God, love people, and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Now more than ever we need Groups. We continue to lead the pursuit of biblical friendships and practice the One Another commands, using all our gifts to share the gospel, together.

The gospel, together.