

HOW TO LEAD A GREAT ONLINE GROUP

As our circumstances have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is simply not possible to meet together in the same room like we have in the past. As we transition into a time where our face-to-face meetings will be limited, we want to make sure that we are not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another as Hebrews 10:25 instructs us. Biblical community is bigger than just a physical gathering; it is what happens when we intentionally come together to speak life, encouragement, and truth into each other's lives—and now, more than ever, that kind of community is as crucial as it has ever been.

Whether you are leading an Adult Bible Study or a Life Group, you are not just leading a meeting. You're leading people. In a time when many of your members may feel overwhelmed, anxious, or confused, you have more opportunities than normal to care for your group. Your meetings may not look like they always have, but every effort you make to let your members know they are cared for and not alone—even if it is just something simple— will speak volumes. Now more than ever, we need to be People Caring for People.

This is a simple guide to help you do just that:

1. PICK YOUR PLATFORM

We live in an increasingly digital world, which means that your opportunities to stay connected are almost limitless. Here are a couple of options for groups to meet together online:

- [Zoom](#) (this is the one we highly recommend)
- FaceTime
- [Google Hangouts](#)
- [GroupMe](#)

You may already be familiar with some of these. But if you are not, the rest of this guide will help you set up Zoom Meetings for FREE.

2. COMMUNICATE THE PLAN

Let your group know where your digital meetups will take place. If you are using something like Zoom, have them download the application to their device (we'll show you how below). Once you have settled on the medium you want to use, let your group know the schedule you will keep. If you generally meet on Sunday mornings, for instance, you can still set your meeting for the same time. Allow for a grace period as people get used to meeting digitally. It will take some getting used to, but as long as you are there for each other, it's absolutely possible!

3. BE FLEXIBLE

As you settle into a new rhythm, remember that the number one priority during this time is CARING for the people in your group. Good leadership doesn't mean that your perfectly executed plan goes off without a hitch; it means that each person in your group feels heard and cared for and loved by the people around them. We will be providing sermon-based curriculum for Groups to use, you can access that by going to <https://www.firstlight.church/covid-19>. It might be that your members need to take some time to update you about their personal situations, current needs, and ask questions. That is perfectly okay, too. As a leader, you get to help this happen. We think that's amazing.

4. PROMOTE MUTUAL CARE

Once you get a handle on how everyone in your group is getting on, pay special attention to the different needs that arise. One of the benefits of living in community—even if that community is distant—is that we have each other to lean on when we are in need. Do what you can to make use of the resources the group has to help out those who need something. Take your cues from the first century church: “Now the entire group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common ... For there was not a needy person among them because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of what was sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet. This was then distributed to each person as any had need” (Acts 4:32, 34-35).

TO WATCH A VIDEO TUTORIAL ON HOW TO SET UP, SCHEDULE, AND JOIN A ZOOM CALL CLICK THE LINK BELOW OR VISIT www.firstlight.church/covid-19

**VIDEO TUTORIAL: [Group Leader Set up](#)
VIDEO TUTORIAL: [How to Join a Meeting](#)**

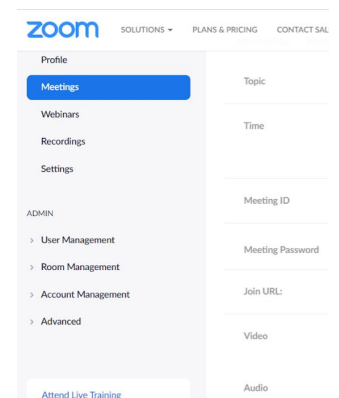
HOW TO CREATE A ZOOM MEETING

1. SIGN UP FOR A FREE ZOOM ACCOUNT

- Visit <https://zoom.us/signup>
- To schedule meetings you will need to have a Zoom account. You're group members **DO NOT** need to sign up for an account. All they will need to do is download Zoom to whatever device they want to use.

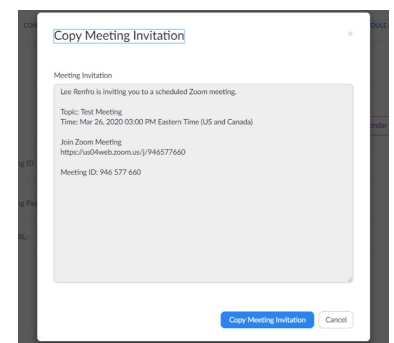
2. SCHEDULE A VIDEO MEETING

- Once you are logged into Zoom, on the left side click the **MEETINGS** tab
- Click **SCHEDULE MEETING**
- You Can Label the meeting your small group name (i.e. "Renfro Life Group")
- Scroll down to **WHEN** and choose the Date when you want your group to meet and the time.
- Under **DURATION** leave it at an 1 hour
- **NOTE - If you have 3 or more people on the call, it limits your group time to 40min with the FREE version.** Which is fine for an online group. 40min should be adequate time.
- Scroll Down to **VIDEO**, click the **ON** box for both **HOST** (which is you) and for **PARTICIPANT** (which will be your group members)
- Under **MEETING OPTIONS**, you can select "Enable Join Before Host" so that group members don't have to wait for you to start the meeting to join.
- Click **SAVE**



3. SEND THE ZOOM INVITE TO YOUR GROUP VIA EMAIL

- Once you **SAVE** the Meeting, it will take you to your Meeting Page
- There will be a **JOIN URL** with a website link. Next the link it will say "**COPY THE INVITATION.**" Click that.
- Once you've copied the Invitation, click "**Cancel**" to exit.
- Then you can Open your preferred email and **PASTE** the invitation in the Email. You can do this by pressing the "Ctrl" button and while holding that button, press the "V" key. Or you can "Right Click" with your mouse or keypad and click "Paste"
- You can email yourself the invitation. Open the email on your phone. Copy the the email and then text it to your group members.



4. SEND THE INVITE TO YOUR GROUP VIA TEXT

- If you prefer to text the invitation to your group members, then the easiest way to do that is to download the Zoom Meetings on your phone.
 - Apple devices visit the App Store and search Zoom. It's the "Zoom Cloud Meetings" app.
 - Android devices visit the Google Play Store and download the "Zoom Cloud Meetings" app.
- Open the App and login with your email and password.
- Under the "MEETINGS" tab click your meeting title (i.e. Renfro Life Group)
- Click the "ADD INVITEES" button.
- Click "Send Message" and type the Name or Number of the person you want to text it to.
- Or you can click "COPY TO CLIPBOARD" and then you can text it to group members by "pasting" it in your messages. Usually you can "Paste" by tapping the text box in your message and the word "Paste" will pop up. Click paste and it will paste the invitation into the message.

5. TELL YOUR GROUP HOW TO JOIN

- A day or so in advance to the meeting send a message to your group along the following lines (tweak to your specifications):

Hey Group! To help everyone stay safe, we're going to have our group online! About ten minutes before we start, I will email you a link to a Zoom call.

If you are on your computer (Easiest Method! Does not require a Zoom account), simply click the link and it will prompt you to either Download Zoom or Join the Call. If asked, click to allow "Zoom" to use your camera and microphone.

If you prefer to use a smartphone, download the Zoom Cloud Meetings app from the Apple App Store or Google Play. Simply click on the link I will send and it will automatically open in the app.

For couples, please use just one device per household to avoid echos on the call.

If you have any questions, please give me a call!

6. HAVE A GREAT GROUP MEETING

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to let us know. You can contact Lee Renfro at lrenfro@firstlight.church or by phone 937.838.0748 and he would happy to walk you through, step-by-step.