

# ELEVEN22 ONLINE DISCIPLE GROUPS

Thank you for leading an online, gospel-centered, mission-focused, community-based disciple group where people can discover and deepen a relationship with Jesus Christ and live out their discipleship journey! We hope this brief guide is helpful as you lead your group online.

## 1. Decide how your disciple group will communicate virtually

- Online Space – Weekly meeting as a group
  - Choose a virtual meeting platform of your choice, OR
  - The Church of Eleven22 can provide access to a shared ZOOM account\*
    - \*Although multiple platforms are available, this guide references the ZOOM platform
- Ongoing Communication – Choose one way to stay in touch throughout the week
  - Private Facebook group w/ Messenger
  - Ongoing text thread or app like GroupMe, WhatsApp, etc.

## 2. Prepare the Online Space for your group meeting

- Watch – Eleven22 “How-To” videos and review the best practices further below
- Review Admin Settings – Confirm the following:
  - Disable
    - “Join Before Host” allowing you to welcome people as they arrive
    - “File Transfer” to prevent digital virus sharing
    - “Allow Removed Participants to Rejoin” so anyone you remove from the group can’t come back in (an internet-safety best practice)
    - “Accepting people into room” to avoid distraction every time someone comes late, or loses connection and has to rejoin
  - Enable – “Co-Host” so you can assign others to help moderate
- Get Comfortable – With muting/unmuting all participants and individual participants; practice using the various online platform features to create an engaging environment
- Reach Out – To one to two people from your group, ask them to co-host with you to:
  - Assist in muting/unmuting, as needed
  - Assist in moderating, keeping discussions focused
  - Watch for distracting lighting/background/sounds
  - Help facilitate engagement and conversation

\*If you run into any issues while setting up Zoom, please reach out to Greg Knapp ([gregory.knapp@coe22.com](mailto:gregory.knapp@coe22.com))

## 3. Facilitate Your Group! - *Make It Fun!* (Staying connected and in community is most important. Below is just one way to host an online group.)

- Pre-meeting – Encourage, Equip & Empower your disciple group
  - Email the ZOOM link to your group and remind them of online worship gathering times and location ([coe22.online.church](http://coe22.online.church))
  - Before your virtual meeting, watch the sermon and review the curriculum

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- One hour before, send a text: "We're meeting in an hour, here's the link to our Online Space. See you soon!"
- Welcome – expect some technical challenges with your virtual group, especially during the first few weeks. Also, expect people to be late, same as face to face
  - Pray first!
  - Instruct / coach the group on the platform functions, buttons and best practices - at least throughout the first three weeks
  - Acknowledge the host/moderator functions and who has been assigned as host
  - Review – Lighting, Sound and Camera Best Practices (*outlined further below*)
- Warm-up – *Get people talking!*
  - Ask – The group to introduce themselves if there are any new members or share a highlight from their week. This is a good time to have members practice mute/unmute and 'raising' their hand
  - Practice – Using the "all mute" function, as the host
  - Acknowledge – The interesting dynamic of a virtual disciple group and talk about 'group guidelines' to ensure everyone feels comfortable sharing
  - Announce – That you will call on individuals to share to help guide the conversation and ensure everyone has an opportunity to engage and contribute
- Discuss Questions – Remember the goal is to *facilitate* conversation, not teach!
  - Don't feel like every question has to be asked
  - Keep the conversation focused on how we can better follow Jesus
  - Create space as needed to: pray, care for members, allow the Holy Spirit to move
- Prayer Requests
  - Remind – Anything shared in "room", MUST stay in the room
  - Determine – How prayer requests will be shared outside of your Online Space
- Post-meeting – Text/GroupMe/Email/Facebook (Ongoing Communication)
  - Within a day, share the reading plan, prayer requests and announcements
  - In two to three days, follow up on the Action Step in the form of a question to generate group conversation and celebrate next steps as disciples of Jesus

## \* Best Practices for Hosting Online \*

- Get familiar – understand the online/virtual platform **before** your first group meeting
  - Explore – preferences for audio and video to understand options
  - Know – how to turn-off audio and video from within the meeting space
  - Know – how people can say, "I have something to add"
    - Raise hand on camera, "unmute" themselves or raise virtual hand
  - Know – how to use other features: chat, reactions, screenshare, whiteboard, etc.
- Hospitality – Remember, virtual hospitality is as important as in person, if not more!
  - HOST - join the meeting **at least** five minutes early to welcome people

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- Kick-off every meeting with one engaging question that EVERYONE can answer
- Engage (call-on) people that tend to be quieter or haven't spoken in awhile
- Lead well in the below lighting, sound and camera practices to model for others
- Lighting – Find the best option in your home/office
  - The brightest light shouldn't be behind you, at your side or directly overhead to avoid shadows and silhouettes
  - Test through laptop/phone to see how it looks for others
- Sound – Find the quietest place in your home. Remember, even soft noises can be loud virtually
  - Don't run dishwasher, play music, etc. while hosting, remove pets from the room
  - Test if closing a door creates an echo in your room, aim for a room with carpet / rugs
- Camera - TEST for comfort and best experience for everyone in your group to see you
  - Keep it level – both surface and level height with your face; use boxes to raise up, if needed
  - Talk into the camera – eye contact creates connection in virtual environments!