

# How to Participate in a Small Group

**Congratulations! You have been invited to participate in a small group! Small groups provide a safe place for a personal encounter with Jesus, the development of authentic friendships, and honest sharing. People who participate in small groups testify to the many blessings that come from walking the journey of faith with their peers. This handy guide highlights the things you need to know to participate in a small group and get the most out of your experience.**

## **Typical Meeting Structure** *(approximately 90 minutes, or 2 hours if including a meal)*

Welcome (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Content and Discussion (1 hour)

Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Reminders/Other Business (5-10 minutes)

**\* If your group would like to share a meal together, consider adding 30 minutes to your socializing time at the beginning of your session.**

## **Expectations and Etiquette**

### **General Expectations**

- *Members are expected to make the small group a priority in their schedule and expected to be on time for meetings.*
- *All members have a responsibility to set a tone and group culture that is respectful, humble, open, honest, non-judgmental, and loving.*
- *Silence in group discussion is to be expected and an important part of the experience.*
- *Members are encouraged to share while maintaining a balance of participating without dominating.*
- *Members listen respectfully and do not interrupt one another.*
- *All members agree to keep confidential anything personal shared in the group, unless there is a risk of someone harming themselves or someone else.*
- *Members are encouraged to pray for one another in between meetings.*

### **Online Communication Etiquette & Suggestions**

- *Be familiar with the controls of the digital platform you are using (muting, video on/off, chat options, speaker vs. gallery view, etc.).*
- *Remember that when your video is on, you can be seen by everyone; when your microphone is on, you (and all household noises) can be heard by everyone.*
- *Be sure to turn your video on during the meeting to better connect with the other participants.*
- *When you are not speaking, mute your microphone to avoid background noise and echoes.*
- *During group prayer or readings, it is best to have your microphone muted if you are not leading the prayer. If everyone is speaking out loud at the same time with their microphones on, it creates a delay in the sound, causing a significant distraction, and will prevent everyone from being able to pray/read in sync with each other.*

### **Ten Commandments of Small Group Discussions**

1. Be open, humble, non-judgmental, and loving.
2. Allow silence.
3. Do not dominate the conversation.
4. Listen respectfully.
5. Do not interrupt.
6. Be encouraging.
7. Ask clarifying questions.
8. Maintain confidentiality.
9. For online meetings, turn your video camera on.
10. For online meetings, mute your microphone when you are not talking.

- *If you are leading prayer, consider using screen share options to share prayers, readings, videos, etc. with the group.*