

Part 1: GETTING STARTED

When: New online groups can start anytime

The Groups Will Meet: Weekly

Day of the Week: Whichever day works best for you

Time: Whenever works best for your group. Plan for the meeting to be anywhere between 45-60 minutes depending upon how much each participant engages.

Length of Commitment: Minimum 4 weeks; 6 weeks preferred.

Technology: Choose a platform that is accessible to and agreed upon by your group members, such as:

- Zoom
- Google Meet
- Skype
- Facebook Messenger.
- Need more guidance? [Check out the pros and cons of each platform.](#)

Childcare: The most important thing is to relax and go with the interruptions because we all know that interruptions will happen. Here are some options to consider when it comes to meeting online:

- Meet when children are asleep. This is most common.
- Spouses can trade off by taking turns in attending to children during the online group meeting.
- Enlist a relative or friend to help with your kids.
- Hire Netflix to be your babysitter! No shame.

Group Format & Curriculum: Host a 60-minute meeting using this very simple yet flexible format. It has three parts:

Look Back (10-15 minutes):

Check in with your group. Share your “highs” and “lows” (and not just the lows) from the past week.

Look Up (15-25 minutes):

Rather than watching a video together potentially wasting precious group time, I recommend having a good conversation centered around the weekend sermon and focus on personal **application**. Why? Because in many cases, group members enjoy their pastor's messages, but do little with what they've heard. So, share what you learned and what you'll do about it.

The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action.

- Herbert Spencer

Be doers of of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

- James, the brother of Jesus

Here are a few standard questions to guide your group discussion time.

1. What's the one thing I heard hope I never forget?
2. What might Jesus be inviting me to do with what I've heard? If someone is struggling to apply what they're learning, you may inquire if there is:
 - A sin to confess?
 - A promise to claim?
 - An example to follow or unfollow?
 - A command to obey?
 - Knowledge to acquire?
3. Lastly, how well am I doing right now loving those God has put in my life?

Weekly sermon guides are available for download on the church's website if needed.

Look Ahead (10-15 minutes):

Close your group time with prayer requests. Group members can take turns closing out the whole group with a prayer, or the group can pray for each other as the Spirit leads.

Part 2: GROUP MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

1. **Be Present.** Showing up consistently establishes the foundation of trust within the group. Showing up mentally means being prepared and free from distractions as much as possible. Showing up randomly reminds the group that people are thinking about them outside the group time.
2. **Create a Safe Space.** Groups are messy places because people's lives are messy. All the messiness of life adds up which is exactly why people need friends who are for them and who will walk with them through their messes. The group members

have a responsibility to empathize and encourage each other without enabling destructive behaviors/attitudes.

3. **Make It Personal.** When you choose to Make It Personal that means you establish priorities and be real about how you're doing. Group members have a responsibility to take ownership of their group and to offer themselves in serving the group in some capacity. Group members participate by taking turns leading the discussion or part of the overall experience.
4. **Move Them Out.** This expectation is all about being faithful to Jesus' command to go and make disciples. When you choose to move people out that means you move them to be the church, move them to what's next. Leaders ask, "What's your next step?"
5. **Staying on Track:** It's easy to chase rabbit trails, so if you feel like your group is starting on a subject outside of the curriculum, just say something like..."well, that's going to open a whole other can of worms, let's go to the next question" or "well guys, that's going to be a whole new conversation, let's get back to today's discussion." When you find the opportunity, get back on track.
6. **Hold Confidence.** Nothing will disrupt a group more than breaking confidentiality. What is shared within the group stays within the group, except in cases where outside help is needed because someone will be harmed. In those cases, consult with your Discipleship Pastor before taking action.

Part 3: GROUP SUPPORT

If there is any issue that your group cannot resolve, you can contact me:
Cell: 785-249-3036; Email: jcooper@gptopeka.org

Part 4: REPORTING YOUR GROUP'S PROGRESS

Appoint a group member to check in twice with your Discipleship Pastor during the 6-week period. Let them know how many folks are participating and what is happening in your group. Also, let them know of prayer needs or any situation that the pastors and staff might need to know about: sickness, surgery, financial need, life transition, or similar.

Part 5: WHAT'S NEXT?

When the 6-weeks is up, group members have fulfilled their commitment to the group. The group can decide whether to continue together for another 6-weeks or not. Another option is for the group to multiply. If this little experience is done well where everyone has a share in the ownership of the group, it makes it simpler to reproduce the group by inviting a new couples into the group and start new groups and use the same process.