

HOSTING SMALL GROUPS ON FACEBOOK



HOW TO USE FACEBOOK FOR ONLINE SMALL GROUPS

Transforming a face-to-face small group into a Facebook Small Group.

Hosting Small Groups on Facebook

Intro: This document will give you helpful tips and ideas for “*Hosting a Small Group on Facebook*” regarding...

- A. Setup
- B. Communication
- C. Weekend Services
- D. Small Group Video Calls

Note: Facebook will be presented as the recommended tool in this document. However, there are other tools that provide similar services online. If you and your group feel more comfortable with another tool, please feel free to decide what’s best for the group. Facebook provides the following benefits for hosting your online small group...

- The Facebook platform provides multiple functions that will help with processes of **Communication, Weekend Services and Group Video Calls**
- Many churches stream their weekend services on Facebook Live
- A majority of people in our day already use Facebook. This is especially helpful when connecting a new person into your group.
- In addition to being accessible through a web browser, Facebook has mobile apps for tablets and smart phones. This increases the convenience for the group host and group participants.
- Facebook video chat allows up to 50 participants
- Facebook is a free web community

If someone in your group doesn’t have a Facebook account, you may ask them to create a temporary one for a season to stay connected to the group. They can use it for group purposes only and delete it later if they want. Encourage them to download the Facebook app and Facebook Messenger app for their tablet and/or smart phone.



A. SETUP

Setting up a Private Facebook group and a Group Chat in Messenger ahead of time will prepare your small group for a successful online launch. Below we will cover how to create a Private Facebook group as well as how to prepare the video chat for your online group.

- **Creating A Private Facebook Group for your Small Group**
A Private Facebook Group will give your group a safe place to communicate with each other. We'll talk more about this in the next section.

How do I create a Facebook group?

To create a group:

1. Look for the "Groups" button. On a desktop, it can be found by clicking on the FB icon in the upper left. It will then appear in the sidebar as an option. In mobile, it will be an option after hitting the button in the lower right with three horizontal lines.
 2. Once you get to the Groups page look for the "Create" button or "Create Group" button
 3. Enter your group name, add group members and then choose the privacy option for your group. We recommend making it private which will be explained in the next section.
 4. To add group members, they must first be your "friends" on Facebook. Make sure to "friend request" anybody you want to add that isn't a friend already. You may consider sending them an additional text or email to let them know about the "friend request" and the reason for sending it.
 5. Once you create your group, you can personalize it by uploading a cover photo and adding a description.
- **Create a Group Chat in Facebook Messenger**
 1. Access Chat by clicking on the horizontal lightning button near the top of the screen or in mobile, open the Messenger app.
 2. Create a Group Conversation by clicking "New Group", or in mobile, click the "box and pen" icon in the upper right. Then you can add group members.
 3. Send an initial message explaining the purpose of the group chat. Ex: *This is for our group video chat that will be used for our Small Group this Thursday at 7pm.*

You are now setup for Communication, Watch Parties and Small Group Video Calls.

B. Communication

Your private Facebook group is an effective way to communicate details to your group members. It also provides space to troubleshoot any tech issues group members might be having as well as answer any questions.

- **Ideas For Communication on your Private Facebook Group**



- If you're going to watch the weekend service together, post which service time the group can plan to watch it together (more explanation on this in the next section).
- If there is a video series your group is using for the online Small Group during the week, post the link to the upcoming video session in the private Facebook group (Ex: YouTube or Right Now Media).
- Provide a post ahead of time regarding the ground rules:
 - Proper etiquette, give your full attention, take turns, everyone participates, etc.
 - Mute when you're not speaking, unmute when you go to speak. Turn off notifications on your devices, etc.
 - Establish your login time, start time and end time (encourage the group to jump on a few minutes early)
- Remind them of the upcoming day and time for the Small Group meeting during the week.
- Take notes during the prayer request time while they are being shared in the Group video chat. Post the prayer requests in the private group **after** the meeting and encourage the group to pray over the requests during the week. Throughout the week, group members can leave prayers or testimonies in the comments. Use discretion as to how much detail you type out in a shared prayer request. This only works if your Facebook group is set to **Private**.

C. Weekend Services

If your church's weekend services are being streamed on Facebook live or recorded and uploaded, your Small Group can experience a service together through a Facebook Watch Party.


- **How do I create a watch party for our weekend service in a group?**

To create a watch party in a group:

1. From your News Feed, click Groups in the left menu and select your group.
2. Click Write Post at the top of the group, then click  Watch Party.
3. Click Add Video. You can search for uploaded videos or live videos.
4. Click Add to Queue next to any videos you'd like to add to your watch party, then click Done.
5. You can choose to add a description for your watch party, then click Post. You'll see a message that says, "Your Watch Party Is About To Begin."
6. To add additional group members to your watch party, type their name and click  Invite next to their profile picture, then click Done. Any people you invite will receive a notification that they've been invited to join your watch party. When someone joins, you'll see their profile picture in the bottom left of your screen.

While You're In Your Watch Party

Once your watch party starts, you can:

- Click Add Video to add additional videos to the queue.
- Click  Invite in the bottom left to add more friends to your party.
- Click Write something... on the right to chat with your friends who are in the watch party with you. You can click to add emojis, GIFs, photos or videos to your comments. When you'd like to finish, click End Watch Party.



After Your Watch Party Ends

Once you finish your watch party, a recap will be saved in your group as a post, which will show all videos watched during the party along with any comments that were made.

D. Connect Group Video Calls

When the day and time arrives for your Small Group to meet, use a video call in Facebook Messenger to get things started. As mentioned earlier, it's helpful to set up a group conversation with your members in Messenger ahead of time. Pull up this group conversation to start the video chat quickly. Messenger allows up to 50 participants on a call, but only the first six people to join will be on video. The remaining people will be audio only.

To video chat with a group:

1. From  **Chats**, open a group conversation with the people you want to video chat with.
2. Tap  .

To end a video call, tap .

Follow a Simple Agenda

A typical online Small Group should last about 60 minutes (no more than 90 min). If you're using a video-driven study, direct the group to watch the video on their own BEFORE the video chat.

- Start the video call 2-3 min early but don't start the meeting until the advertised time.
- Welcome everyone. As it is the real world, so it is in the digital... people will join late :)
- Check-in at the beginning to have everyone say something
 - This confirms everyone's technology is working properly
 - This confirms each person understands mute/unmute
 - This affirms participation
- Use an ice breaker question
- Discuss the study together. Exercise typical group facilitating skills.
- PRAY – ask for prayer requests & close in prayer. In this format it can be helpful to assign who can pray for each prayer as each request is shared. Review who's praying for what right before you begin praying. Always identify who will start and who will close out the prayer time. Ex: Assign someone to open up the prayer time to get things moving and then take responsibility for closing the time as the Host.

TIPS

- Check your lighting
- Adjust your camera angle
- Do a test run of your software
- Encourage members to also do a test run of theirs at home
- As the host, be aware of your demeanor during the video chat. Express enthusiasm about the ability to be connected as a group.