

Making the Shift Back to Meeting in Person

Principles to Consider and Questions to Discuss

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Nextlevel Groups made the transition from meeting in person to meeting online. Despite our uncertainty about the future it is important to discuss as group the value of meeting again in person as soon as possible. These *Principles to Consider* and *Questions to Discuss* are intended to walk your group through the process of discerning *when* and *how* to start meeting again together physically.

PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER

Fellowship

We are called above all to obey the Lord and His commandments. He has told us in his Word to not fail to meet together, and so whether online or in person, we need to keep meeting consistently. (Hebrews 10:25). Hold *fellowship* as a high priority.

Convictions

There will be differing convictions among the members of your group when it comes to whether or not to meet in person. Additionally the perspectives may vary in your group around the idea of when to begin meeting in person.

1. Encourage the members of your group to take personal time to prayerfully discern how to begin opening their lives again to in-person social interaction.
2. Do not fail to take into consideration one another's consciences and personal convictions (See Romans 14:15;19; 15:2)
 1. Bear with one another as you consider how to begin meeting in person again. (See Ephesians 4:2)
3. Honour the directions from the authorities as a way to honour God (See Romans 13:1)

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

Ask these questions *together* as a group:

1. What have been the *positive* and *negative* results of meeting online?

Follow Up: What are some of the primary benefits of meeting in person that have been sacrificed because of the need to meet online?

2. Do we *need* to meet in person to experience and live out the *fellowship* that God has called us to in His word?
3. What is your *personal conviction/approach* to beginning to open your life up again to in-person social interaction? Why?
4. What is our *next step* as a group in the pursuit of meeting again in person?

APPLICATION

Make plans to meet physically at the earliest possible and most appropriate time. The tremendous spiritual, emotional, and relational benefits of doing so are worth pursuing and prioritizing. Be creative about how to begin meeting together physically while still respecting the recommendations of the authorities as well as the convictions of everyone in the group.

LEADER'S GUIDE

The Big Idea:

Every day we wonder when life is going to go back to "normal". When will we be able to experience physical in-person fellowship with the other members of our group. The purpose of this discussion guide is to lead your group through the important principles and questions that are required to move forward together toward the goal of meeting again physically in person.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- email your group the Discussion Guide and make sure that they print their own copy prior to the meeting
- get everyone involved: Read the introductory paragraph; have your co-leader open with a topic-related prayer; assign others to read paragraphs and sub-points; encourage brainstorming applications

PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER

We want to begin our discussion by meditating on the truth and reorienting our thinking to the word of God. As we do that, we will be reminded of some of the values that our group holds as an expression of the body of Christ. These values/principles, will help direct our conversation about what to do.

Fellowship

We are reminded of the value of meeting consistently.

Convictions

We are reminded that there are differing perspectives represented in our groups. In this section we want to encourage everyone to pursue those convictions personally with the Lord and consider their personal approach to opening up their life again to physical interactions. Additionally, we want to point the group toward unity. Committing to honour and love one another despite our differing perspectives.

At the end of this section, invite the group to consider any other principles from the scriptures that might apply.

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

With important Biblical principles established, we can now move on to asking important questions together as a group.

1. Positives: Less of a commute; More energized without the commute time; Less rush; better than nothing; health and safety in the midst of pandemic. Negatives: No hospitality opportunity; Less personal connection; technology struggles; harder to read people; harder to express sympathy and interact meaningfully
2. Some key words
 1. Need: Are we design for in person interaction? This word is intended to be provocative. Help the group not get distracted by this word.
 2. Fellowship: This is a good time to remind about what fellowship is.
3. Emphasize *personal*. Go around the "table" and have each person share their personal approach. Ask follow-up/clarity questions if needed.
4. Taking into consideration everyone's personal approaches as well as the goal of meeting again in-person as soon as possible, recommend a way forward. Ask for input.

SUMMARY

No matter the ebbs and flows that we will experience during this pandemic, let us continue the conversation and continue moving toward meeting again in person so that we might have more opportunity to live out the fellowship that God has called us to as His body.