**Best Practices for Online Small Groups**

Leading a small group online differs from leading a small group in person. Here are some helpful tips to ensure that your small group experience is positive:

1). **Encourage group members to download the video platform you are using prior to meeting**. This reduces delays on the front end and enables you to start on time.

2). **Ensure you have ample lighting**. It’s best not to have lights behind you, such sunlight from a window, and if you can, use lighting so people can see your face.

3). **Try to center your face in the video camera**. Don’t sit to close that that’s all they see or too far away that people find it hard to see you. Ensure that your camera angle is positioned to eye level or marginally above, so that it’s not aimed on your forehead or neck.

4). **Choose a room that has minimal distractions.** Turn off anything that would emit noise (tv, cell phone, etc). Don’t have your pets in the same room if at all possible. If you have headphones, use them rather than use the speaker from the device you are using.

5). **Be prepared**. Ensure that your group members have any participants guides or handouts prior to the meeting. Make sure that you have gone over the study materials and are familiar with the topic being discussed.

6). **Only use one device per household**. Multiple devices provides feedback and echo’s that will affect your ability to effectively communicate.

7). **Keep your mic muted whenever you are not speaking**. This ensures good sound quality. You can use visual cues to stay engaged with those in your small group, or even use the chat feature to communicate.

8). **Facilitate the discussion**. Be welcoming but also don’t be afraid to be the leader. Ensure that one person does not do all the speaking (including yourself). Encourage whole group participation. You can say something like, “Thanks for your thoughts on that. Would anyone else like to add anything.” Generally speaking speak 30% of the time and listen 70% of the time.

No doubt there are other ways to improve your online small group experience, but these will certainly help you on your way to having positive and engaging small group discussion.