ONLINE BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Best Practices that Create a Better Online Bible Study Experience

BEST PRACTICES

Create a Better Online Bible Study Experience

1. **Plan for a shorter teaching session than in a classroom setting.** The online teaching experience is different than a classroom one. It may seem counter-intuitive, but when you're online, less is more. Craft a 20-25 minute Bible study experience, and use the remaining time to allow people to connect relationally – they are going to want to talk!

2. **Use "share screen" to introduce images and other content that enhance the study.** While people will enjoy seeing each other's faces, they will also enjoy seeing interesting images, maps, charts, a Scripture verse, a question, or other things you might share.

3. **Get the most out of your Personal Study Guide.** Because your meeting is taking place online, and because you may decide not to "share screen, direct people's attention to the Personal Study Guide used by your group. There you can help them focus on an image, a question, a quote, and the Scripture. The Personal Study Guide will be a great visual aid.

4. **Call on people in the online session to read and answer questions.** Fully engage your group members by asking them to read portions of Scripture. Don't ask a question and then answer it yourself. Ask your people to respond, even if it takes 10-20 seconds for them to formulate a response. If you answer your own question, you'll train them to wait on you and they will never speak up!

5. **Ask everyone to mute their microphones if they are not speaking.** Because many of us are spending lots of time at home these days, our children are, too. Muting microphones will reduce background noise and distractions.

6. **If you use the "share screen" feature to ask a question, revert to "gallery view" to get people talking.** People will respond to a question when they can see their fellow group members. Leaving an image on the screen may reduce people's responses.

LifeWay | Adults

Create a Safer Online Group Experience

1. **In your online tool settings, set up a meeting password to keep hackers out.** Online meeting tools like Zoom have a setting that can be put into action. You won't be able to do this from your calendar when you set up an online meeting. You'll want to go to your Zoom account and view your scheduled meetings. Open a scheduled meeting and turn on the password requirement. Hackers will hate this.

2. **In your online tool settings, don't allow screen sharing (hackers can post inappropriate images).** Some groups have reported that a hacker was able to share his or her screen with the group, and it wasn't an image for the feint at heart. Can you imagine people's disgust (and distraction) when a sexually explicit image suddenly appeared during a Bible study? In Zoom settings, change this to "Host Only" sharing.

3. **In your online tool settings, don't use virtual backgrounds (hackers might post inappropriate images).** It has also been reported that hackers can wiggle their way and share an inappropriate image if you are using those delightful virtual backgrounds...you know....the Golden Gate Bridge or other famous places. If you're tempted to share those images, don't.

4. **Never show your meeting ID in social media.** You might be tempted send out that ID on Facebook. Please don't! If a hacker comes into contact with it, you'll have an unwanted guest that could destroy your meeting. Send your meeting ID to your group members, but allow them to invite friends they trust.

5. **Disable file downloads.** As the host, be sure that you do not allow file downloads. This will prevent malware from finding its way into your computer, and a hacker would have a difficult time sending a file to the group members during the meeting (something that might contain inappropriate images).

6. **Disable the "Join Before Host" feature.** If you don't turn off this option, and if you as the host can't start the meeting because you've been detained (or maybe you forgot you had a meeting) then the first person who joins the meeting automatically becomes the host and has control over your meeting.

LifeWay | Adults

SETTING UP AN ONLINE MEETING

How to Lead a Bible Study Through Zoom.

1. Go to **zoom.com** and set up an account. (It's free.)

2. Schedule a new meeting.

Schedule Meeting

Topic

Bible Study

Date

5/ 3/2020   9:00 AM   to   5/ 3/2020   9:40 AM

☐ Recurring meeting   Time Zone: Central Time (US and Canada)

Meeting ID

🔘 Generate Automatically   ◯ Personal Meeting ID 555-121-2555

You will only have 40 minutes with the free account. To host a longer meeting requires a paid Zoom account.

3. After you hit SAVE, the next screen will show you the meeting's URL link. Send the link via text or email to those you are inviting. They will not need a Zoom account; only the host (i.e., you, the one setting up the Zoom meeting) needs an account.

    CAUTION: While we want group members to invite a friend to the study, direct them to do so with a direct invitation to the person. In other words, tell them not to post the meeting's URL on social media where all the world can see it. That can invite hackers and people who want to disrupt.

● ● ●   Invite people to join meeting 5551212555

Contacts   Zoom Rooms   Room System   Email

Choose from the list or type to filter

LifeWay | Adults

4. During the meeting, have a digital copy (PDF) of the book your group is using. Move your cursor over the bottom of the Zoom screen, and a toolbar will appear.

   Use the Share option to show the section of the book you are referring to. For example, if you want them to discuss one of the questions in the book or do an activity, show them the question or activity on-screen.

5. Zoom allows all participants to speak, so encourage your group's participation. Remind them to click the mute button in the lower-left corner of the screen when they are not speaking. This will keep any background noise (a barking dog or kids playing) from interrupting the conversation.
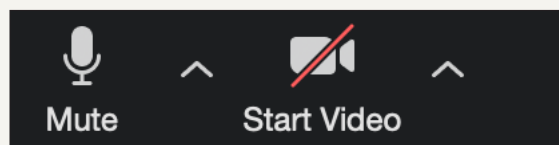
   OPTION FOR GROUP MEMBERS: If they don't want to be seen, they can click the video button next to the mute button. They will be able to see you and the screen you share without being seen. They will also be able to speak (unless they mute the microphone).


Tips for a Safer Group Experience

1. **Require a passcode.** Click the box for requiring a password. You can use the passcode provided or create your own. Send the passcode to those you invite to the study. This prevents hackers from joining and taking over the group.
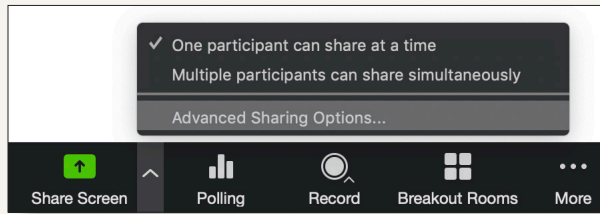
2. **Disable "Join Before Host."** When setting up the meeting, go to "Share," choose Advanced Options and turn off "Enable join before host." You want to maintain control as the host, but if this is unchecked, the first person to enter the Zoom meeting will become the default host. A potential hacker could take over as host.
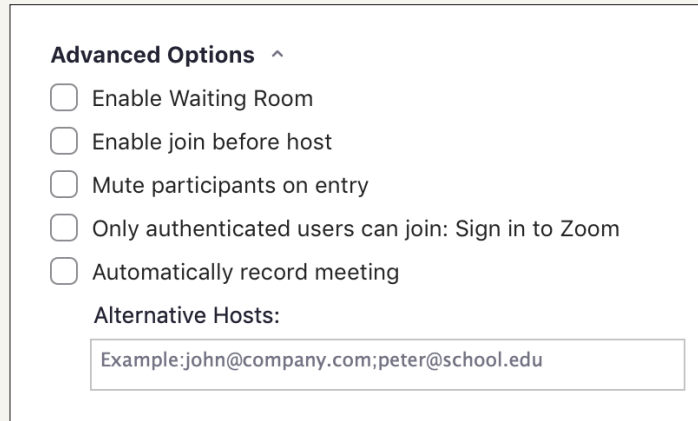
3. **Disable Virtual Background.** It may look cool to have an image of the beach behind you as you host a group, but it's not recommended. If what is seen on the screen is you in the room in which you're sitting, you're fine. If some other image is behind you, click the up arrow next to video. Under "Choose Virtual Background," choose the "None" option. You might want to remind all your participants to do this to avoid any embarrassing pictures.
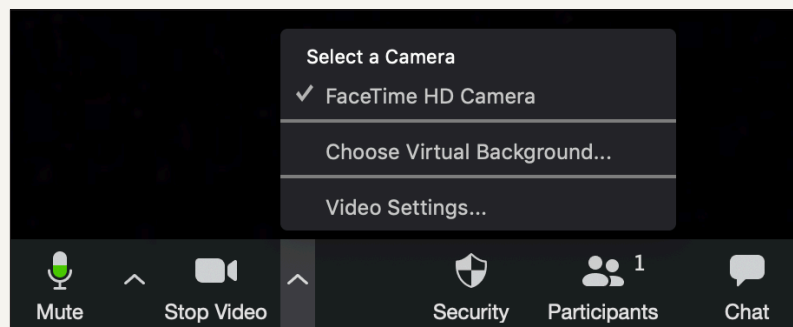
4. **Disable Screen Sharing.** Under Share, choose "Advanced Sharing Options." Choose "Only host" under "Who Can Share?" This will prevent hackers from posting any offensive and inappropriate images.

5. **Disable file transfer.** Disabling file transfer will prevent malware from finding its way into your computer, and a hacker would have a difficult time sending a file to the group members during the meeting (something that might contain inappropriate images). To do this, sign in to the Zoom website. Go to Settings then Meetings then scroll down to File Transfer, and turn off that option.
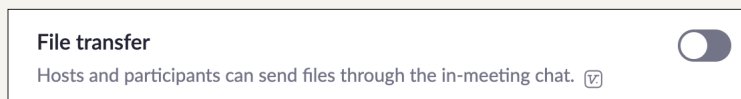
Helpful Links

- Free Coronavirus links and leader helps: **lifeway.com/coronavirus**

- LifeWay Groups blog with lots of good helps and articles: **groupministry.lifeway.com**

LifeWay | Adults