

# MEN'S MINISTRY GATHERINGS AS CHURCHES REOPEN



As churches begin to reopen, here are some things that small group leaders, such as Men's Ministry, may want to consider moving forward:

**SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES:** I think we all probably understand that the time when the church is given the "green light" to resume gathering and the time when people *feel comfortable* gathering, will likely not be the same. Some will come back ready for things to be exactly like they were prior to "stay at home" – and others will want to be very cautious. It will be important to err on the side of safety. The men's ministry leadership should set the tone for this.

## 1. COMMUNICATE YOUR CLEANING PROCEDURES AND HEALTH POLICIES

Coming back, people will want to know what your new cleaning and sanitation standards will be. (This will likely be a church-wide issue, not just small groups). Will you have someone wiping door handles, handrails, tables, and other commonly used surfaces – both before and after your gathering? Tell your people about any current or new procedures, such as the placement of hand sanitizer stations, so they know you take their health seriously.

## 2. MAKE CLEAR FELLOWSHIP/GREETING EXPECTATIONS

At least early on – and perhaps for longer than we would like – men should refrain from shaking hands, giving "holy" hugs, etc. as most men's groups are used to doing. Even if many feel that it would be ok to do so, leaders should be sensitive that there are many who will not, and, if they feel that this is not going to be taken seriously – may not attend. One day, and hopefully sooner than later – we will go back to shaking hands! In the meantime, consider a fun, manly alternate, non-contact greeting, such as tapping your heart with your fist!

## 4. MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING

As the men's leader or leadership team, set the tone in maintaining social distancing. This would include while informally fellowshiping prior to the meeting, standing in line for meal service (if and when you plan to do this), and in your seating arrangements. Consider limiting hand-outs – can it be shared electronically instead?

## 3. DON'T ALLOW MASK-WEARING (OR NOT WEARING A MASK) TO BECOME A "MACHO" THING

Much like hand shaking, many will not feel safe unless they are wearing a mask. It MAY be that wearing a mask is part of your overall church policy, and if so, your men's group should follow suit. On the other hand, some will be quite cavalier about not wanting or "needing" to wear a mask. If it is left optional to each individual, make it clear that both views are welcome.

**GATHERING TIME:** As we come back from this time of separation, some parts of our men's gathering will feel familiar and comforting. Other things will be different. Plan for the things that can safely and comfortably be done, while allowing for the continuation of things that may have been newly learned or experienced.

## 1. PLAN FOR BOTH A PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL MEETING

During the COVID-19 crisis, many churches have experienced an actual increase to the number of people who have worshiped electronically, instead of a decrease! There are non-church-goers whose spiritual hunger have been reawakened during the period of quarantine – men who are hurting and searching. Also, as mentioned, some church members are just not going to be ready to come back physically for a while because of an underlying health issue. We don't want to lose either group. Hold your meetings at the church, but also broadcast it via Zoom or Google Meet so that others can be a part. This will take some thought and practice, but can be really productive!

## 2. CELEBRATE BEING BACK TOGETHER

Men have been yearning for fellowship together. When you do gather, how can you celebrate? One thing to consider is asking men what positive things they have learned about themselves – and from God – during this time. Focus on the positive for now. (Many men will have had very negative feelings and

thoughts as well – and these are valid. There may be a time to deal with this productively, but for now, focus on how you all have changed for the better.)

### **3. CONTINUE THE FOCUS ON REAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Being denied the opportunity to fellowship in person has led many to find new ways to reach out. Conversations have revealed that many men are struggling with a variety of issues – fear for their jobs/career; fear for their ability to provide for their families; anger over the loss of control of their circumstances; frustrations with being cooped up with family members for days and weeks on end. In addition many men may have fallen into destructive habits such as internet porn, addictions, etc. Some have drawn closer in their walk with Christ, others may have experienced spiritual dryness – and MOST have experienced both! Conversations over the past few weeks have seemed to become more “real”. “How Are You Doing?”

### **BACK TO MISSIONS**

Some churches were able to discover new ways of ministering to those in their communities during the COVID-19 crisis. Both during quarantine, and going forward, many people have had and will have unmet needs in your congregation and your community. Plan for how you and your church can meet some of these needs. Who among you has had unmet needs that the body of Christ can now handle? Some have felt the financial impact of lost income and may need assistance.

*Example: NCBM has developed a COVID Crisis hotline for discovering those in communities who need help with procuring food, medicines, pet needs, etc. during the crisis. Churches can sign up to get alerts when a need arises in their area.*

*Example: NCBM rebuild centers and mission camps have remained available for small groups of day workers throughout the COVID-19 crisis. This is a viable option for those in the Eastern part of the state, as well as those in Shelby area. As we progress, overnight opportunity will begin to return as well.*

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