

**WEAVING LIVES
TOGETHER:
DEVELOPING A
GROUP COVENANT**

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THE 411

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. In the context of a Bible study group, a covenant is a helpful tool that guides the group members as they journey through biblical community together. It defines the direction the group should go and the commitment the group will require of each participant.

There are several examples of covenants in Scripture: God and Noah in Genesis 6 and 9, God and Abraham in Genesis 17, Jonathan and David in 1 Samuel 18, and Christ and the Church in 1 Corinthians 11:25 and 2 Corinthians 3:6.

It is important to include everyone in your group in the covenant building process. Each study group has its own personality, so a covenant must be specific to your goals, needs, and concerns.

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS YOU FORM A COVENANT:

How do we want this group to impact our lives?

What commitments will it take from each of us to do that?

Are we willing and able to make these commitments to each other?

How should misunderstandings or disagreements be handled?

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

While each covenant is unique, there are some key issues that should be addressed in all covenants:

SCRIPTURE: Scripture will be taught and discussed in ways that can be applied to life.

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is said in the group stays in the group unless it is determined that a person is in danger of hurting themselves or someone else. In this case, the appropriate full-time church staff will be notified to help. Nothing said in the group should be discussed outside the group without the permission of those involved.

RESPECT: The group is not about advising, analyzing, or "fixing" others. Groups meet to support, encourage, and admonish each other toward Christ-likeness. We do all of this in love.

SHARING: Be considerate of everyone in the group and allow each time to share. Be sensitive about dominating group discussion times; limit the amount of time you share.

ATTENDANCE: Make a commitment to your group to show up on time and end on time. When you can't attend, call the host to let them know. Group members should commit to regular attendance.

LISTENING: Everyone needs a listening ear. When someone is talking, everyone else should be actively listening.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: Whenever relationships are involved, there will be conflict. Strive to handle the conflict biblically according to Matthew 18.

OFFENSIVE STATEMENTS AND JOKES: Everyone is on the same side. Guard against offending each another by avoiding offensive statements and jokes. If someone offends you, work it out directly with that person.

PREPARATION: Come ready to fully participate in your group. This means completing any reading or study before your group meets. Be ready for discussion.

SOCIAL OUTINGS AND SERVICE PROJECTS: Commit to building community and impacting your world. These activities are as important as attending study time.

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GROUP COVENANT

- * **PRIORITY:** While we are in this group, we will give the group gatherings priority. All the sessions are integrated, with each session building on the sessions that precede them. Committed attendance is vital to our growth.
- * **PARTICIPATION:** Everyone is encouraged to participate, and no one dominates.
- * **RESPECT:** Everyone is given the right to his or her own opinions, and all questions are encouraged and respected.
- * **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Anything that is said in our gathering is never repeated outside the group without permission from all group members. This is vital in creating the environment of trust and openness required to build biblical community.
- * **CARE AND SUPPORT:** Permission is given to call upon each other at any time, especially in times of crisis. The group will provide care for every member.
- * **ACCOUNTABILITY:** We agree to let the members of our group hold us accountable to commitments we make in whatever loving ways we decide upon. Unsolicited advice giving is not permitted.
- * **MISSION:** We agree, as a group, to reach out and invite others to join us and to work toward multiplication of our group to form new groups.
- * **MINISTRY:** We will encourage one another to volunteer and serve in a ministry, and to support missions by personally serving and giving financially.

I AGREE TO ALL OF THE ABOVE _____ DATE: _____