

# Small Group Covenants (Guidelines)

## *Why They're Important*

Every member of every small group arrives with their own unique expectations about what the group should be like and what it should do for them. These expectations, whether large or small, can have a dramatic impact on whether the group is successful in the eyes of its members. Expectations of group members that are not expressed or not met can hold a group back or even break apart a group.

That's why [Small Group Covenants](#) (Guidelines) are so important in building trust and community. They provide communication of standards and goals for everyone in the group, allowing members to have a shared vision and language, which leads to mutual accountability. Covenants not only help clarify and unify members in their expectations, they also highlight the values and behaviors that are needed for a group to be successful.

Because each small group is unique in its values and expectations, each small group's covenant will be unique. Based on Bill Donahue's book, *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*, here are guidelines for developing a covenant.

- The covenant's values need to be generated by the group, not imposed by the leader. Get everyone's opinions and then give enough time (maybe even as much as a month) for members to think about them before agreeing to them.
- Be sure that the expectations are clear — not ambiguous or open to interpretation. A covenant should be in writing. Group covenants should always be in the form of "we" statements.
- Each person must affirm the covenant. Ask that everyone sign their names on the covenant to show their commitment.
- Covenants should be reaffirmed or reinterpreted on a periodic basis so that members are reminded and/or clarified about group expectations ... and can reaffirm their commitment to one another.
- Covenants should be created around logistics and values that support group goals and purposes.
- Logistics include how often the group will meet and where, attendance expectations and who will handle different needs.
- **Values include confidentiality, authenticity, transparency, acceptance, conflict, unity, invitation, multiplying, serving, praying, and worship.**