

Small Group Agreements

Small groups can benefit from an up-front set of agreements that govern the group's values, expectations, and behaviors. They typically culminate in a written agreement that we recommend the group create together in an initial stage of meeting, while the group is forming. These agreements are also sometimes called group Covenants.

Key elements of these agreements usually cover group values (such as areas of focus), behaviors (such as confidentiality, attendance expectations, respect for others' opinions) and logistics (who fulfills which roles and how often).

Research has shown the following elements make for a good group environment.

KEYS TO FORMING AGREEMENTS

1. The values in an agreement are best created by the group, not solely by the leader.
2. Statements are best started with "We agree...".
3. It is helpful to re-examine the agreements from time to time, just to remind members what they agreed to, and to modify them if needed.
4. The agreements are most helpful when they include the following:
 - a. Logistics
 - i. When and where to meet
 - ii. How often we will meet
 - iii. How long the group expects to remain intact (a year, 3 years, etc.)
 - iv. Who is responsible for leading
 - v. Who will handle refreshments
 - vi. What to do and whom to call if members cannot attend a meeting
 - b. Values
 - i. Open chair
 - ii. Accountability
 - iii. Openness
 - iv. Amount of time dedicated to one person talking
 - v. Acceptance of different points of view without generating conflict

The next page shows a template that your team is welcome to use as a starting point. The key is to make it *your group's agreement* by modifying it as required to result in your group's discussion and commitments.

Template: Small Group Agreement

Leader _____ Apprentice(s) _____

We agree to the following statements:

1. The purpose for our group is to _____.
2. We will meet for ____ weeks, after which we will evaluate our direction, longevity, focus, etc.
3. We will gather from ___ to ___ each _____ day/night and arrive and depart on time.
4. We will gather at _____ (might be one location or various locations/homes).
5. We will connect with Christ and one another by _____.
6. We will develop individually and assist one another in growth by _____.
7. We will serve the church by _____ (may be individual service opportunities or group activities).
8. We will agree to the following primary values for our group:
 - a. Participation
 - b. Confidentiality
 - c. Openness to others joining (from our church, neighbors, etc.) as long as they are willing to accept our agreement statement.
 - d. Group birthing another group(s)
 - e. Apprentice leader(s): We agree to develop the apprentice(s) in our group by _____. We also agree to begin to consider birthing a new group by _____.
 - f. We will seek to share some or all of the following roles and responsibilities:
 - i. Preparing and leading discussion
 - ii. Leading prayer
 - iii. Hosting meetings in different homes
 - iv. Planning group events
 - v. Bringing refreshments
 - vi. Other