

COVENANT GROUPS

Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.

- 1 Samuel 18:3 (ESV)

Sunday morning worship services and Small Groups serve a huge purpose in the life of Grace Bible Church, but many Christians still lack deep spiritual friendships throughout the week. Spiritual friendships often happen most naturally in groups of 2 and 3. Because of this fact, we encourage those who do not have spiritual friendships to pray starting Covenant Groups to help meet this need.

A Covenant Groups create a space for believers to stay in the Word, nurture relationships, and hold each other accountable to be on mission. These groups are meant to be a safe place for us to be challenged, be transparent, and care for one another.

Anyone can start a Covenant Group. We do ask that the Covenant Groups consist of men meeting with men and women meeting with women.

Each group should focus on four important aspects of the Christian life:

1. **Text:** Staying in God's Word.
2. **Theology:** Processing God's word together.
3. **Life:** Caring for and exploring each other's hearts.
4. **Mission:** Praying for and seeking to reach the lost.

A SAMPLE ONE HOUR COVENANT GROUP MEETING:

1. Opening prayer
2. **Text:** Scripture reading from the past week is discussed. Read a selection together.
3. **Theology:** New insights from the scriptures are considered. "What does this passage teach us about God?" "What does it teach us about each other?" (See the Resources section at the end of this document for more in-depth questions.)
4. **Life:** Scripture is applied to our current life struggles and questions. "How should my life be different in light of these truths?"
5. **Accountability** to be on Mission: Strategic prayer requests mentioned and prayed for.
6. **Closing Prayer**

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES IN FORMING A COVENANT GROUP:

1. *Gospel Centered Discipleship* by Jonathan Dodson
2. *One to One Bible Reading* by David Helm

We recommend that groups begin by reading Dodson's book together to start off their Covenant Group. There is also a list of resources included at the end of this document.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COVENANT GROUPS:

What are Covenant Groups? Covenant Groups are groups of 2-3 people that meet weekly to discuss the Bible, accountability, and prayer. The Groups are self-governing, and are not controlled by the church leadership, and follow no specific curriculum. By design, Covenant Groups encourage the participants to discover the Word of God by themselves, with the Holy Spirit and one another to guide them. There is no need for a leader per se, as the group members decide the time and place of the next meeting, and which book of the Bible to read next.

Why do we need Covenant Groups? Because all too often true, Biblical community does not happen within the natural rhythms of life. Also, this type of community does not always happen even within the context of a Small Group.

What are the accountability questions? Each person can share questions to answer each week to encourage a Holy life and to encourage each person to witness to the power of God. Sample questions are shown in the Resources section at the end of this document. The members of the group do not need to have the same questions. Remember, the enclosed questions are only a starting point, and the questions you use should be targeted to specific things within your own life. The goal is to know and care for each other's hearts.

How do I join Covenant Group? You can set one up on your own if you'd like! Simply find another person/other people of the same gender to meet with.

Where do Covenant Groups meet? Groups can meet anywhere: in a home, a coffee shop, a restaurant, etc.

Why are the groups same-gender only?

Because of the need for honesty and transparency during the confession of sin, this is best done within groups of the same gender.

Why is there no leader? There is no need for a leader. One of the joys of this model is that anyone can facilitate a group. All you have to do is choose a location and a book of the Bible to read.

Don't we need a Bible teacher or study notes?

Not necessarily. The idea is to cut out the "middle man" and allow God to speak directly to you through the scripture. In many areas of our spiritual life we depend on others to spoon feed us or to take responsibility for our spiritual growth. Covenant Groups encourage us to support one another as we communicate directly with God and to take responsibility for our own spiritual lives.

What is the lifespan of a Covenant Group?

There is no set lifespan. Groups will either disband when one or more members can't meeting anymore, or will divide into two groups when a fourth member is present.

What about prayer? Prayer is a primary focus of Covenant Groups. Prayer should naturally flow from the confession of sin. You are encouraged to pray for friends and for each other during the week as well.

'Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.'

- James 5:16

COVENANT GROUP RESOURCES:

A METHOD FOR READING THE BIBLE RIGHTLY

1. Observation: What does it say?

- Answer who, what, when, where, why, and how questions about the text.

2. Interpretation: What does it mean?

- What does it say about God and man?
- Are there any good cross references?
- Summarize the text in one sentence.

3. Application: How does it effect?

- Are there any commands to obey, examples to follow, or promises to claim?
- Does the text expose any error in my beliefs or behavior?
- How does the text lead me to interact with others?
- What is the passage calling me to do?

4. Pray the contents of the text.

COMA QUESTIONS

1. Context questions

- a. What sort of writing is this? (a letter, narrative, poem)
- b. Are there any clues about the circumstances under which it was written?
- c. What has happened so far?

2. Observation questions

- a. Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the text?
- b. What is the main point or points?
- c. What surprises are there?
- d. What are the key words? What words or ideas are repeated?

3. Meaning questions

- a. How does this text relate to other parts of the book?
- b. How does this passage relate to Jesus?
- c. What does this teach us about God?
- d. How could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?

4. Application questions

- a. How does this passage challenge or confirm my understanding?
- b. Is there some attitude I need to change?
- c. How does this passage call on me to change the way I live?

5. Pray together about what you have learned.

THE SWEDISH METHOD

1. Draw a **lightbulb** next to anything that shines out in the passage and draws attention; it can be something important, or something that particularly strikes the reader.
2. Draw a **question mark** next to anything that is hard to understand; something that the reader would like to be able to ask the author about.
3. Draw an **arrow** next to anything that the reader should take action on; something that applies personally to the readers life.
4. Discuss each and then pray about what you've learned.

DIFFERENT LISTS OF ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

NEIL COLE ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS:

1. What is the condition of your soul?
2. What sin do you need to confess?
 - a. Finances
 - b. Sexually
 - c. Anything else...
3. What have you held back from God that you need to surrender?
4. Is there anything that has dampened your zeal for Christ?
5. Who have you talked with about Christ this week?

QUESTIONS FROM JACK MILLER:

1. Where is God leading you to repentance?
2. Where is God stretching your faith?
3. How is/has God (been) working in your life?
4. Have you been repenting from sins lately?
5. Are you finding freedom in the gospel or are you insecure and guilt-ridden?
6. Have you done anything simply because you love Jesus?
7. Have you stopped doing anything simply because you love Jesus?
8. Do you see the fruit of the Spirit growing?
9. Do you think God is happy with your missionary zeal?
10. Do you see yourself growing spiritually? If so, how? If not, why not?

OTHER SAMPLE QUESTIONS – LIST #1

1. Have you remained angry with another or secretly wished for another's misfortune? Have you damaged another person by your words, behind their back or face-to-face?
2. Have you been exposed to sexually alluring material or allowed your mind to entertain inappropriate sexual thoughts about another?
3. Have you been honoring, understanding and generous in your important relationships?
4. Have you lacked integrity in your words and financial dealings?
5. Have turned the other cheek, gone the extra mile?
6. Have you practiced good deeds to be admired by others, or to be noticed by God?
7. Have you condemned other's shortcomings or prayed for their wholeness?
8. Have you bought or are you planning to buy anything the Kingdom does not need for you to own? Have you given generously because you trusted God to provide?
9. _____ (Your personalized accountability question)
10. Did you study all the Scripture you agreed to read? What did God tell you to do? Are you doing it?
11. Have you been salt and light? Have you shared some of what you are learning about God with a non-believing friend?

OTHER SAMPLE QUESTIONS – LIST #2

1. Have you been a testimony this week to the greatness of Jesus Christ with both your words and actions?
2. Have you lacked integrity in your financial dealings or coveted something that does not belong to you?
3. Have you been honoring, understanding and generous in your important relationships this week?
4. Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind their back or face to face?
5. Have you given in to an addictive behavior this past week? Explain.
6. Have you continued to remain angry toward another?
7. Have you secretly wished for another's misfortune so that you might excel?
8. Did you finish the reading and hear from God? What are you going to do about it?
9. Have you been completely honest with me?

OTHER SAMPLE QUESTIONS – LIST #3

1. In what ways did God make his presence known to you since our last meeting? How did you respond? What experiences of prayer, meditation and spiritual reading has God given you? What difficulties or frustrations did you encounter? What joys or delights?
2. What temptations did you face since our last meeting? How did you respond? Which spiritual disciplines did God use to lead you further into holiness of heart and life?
3. Have you sensed any influence or work of the Holy Spirit since our last meeting? What spiritual gifts did the Spirit enable you to exercise? What was the outcome? What fruit of the Spirit would you like to see increase in your life? Which disciplines might be useful in this effort?
4. What opportunities did God give you to serve others since our last meeting? How did you respond? Did you encounter injustice to or oppression of others? Were you able to work for justice and peace?
5. In what ways did you encounter Christ in your reading of the scripture since our last meeting? How has the Bible shaped the way you think and live? Did God provide an opportunity for you to share your faith with someone? How did you respond?