

Developing a Covenant

A covenant is, "A compact or agreement between two parties binding them mutually to undertakings in each other's behalf" (Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, 276). "Covenants are the best tools I've seen to help both the group's ministry as well as the individual groups clarify their purpose, establish goals and objectives, discuss expectations and define functional issues." McBride¹

There are many examples of historical covenants like those made between God and his people in the old and new testament covenants, between leaders and their followers in the Mayflower Compact in pilgrim times, and between those who endeavor to govern over others in our own U.S. Constitution.

We also, in like manner, enter into covenant relationships with one another when we join hands in Holy Matrimony and make our marriage vows to each other before God, and join with other believers in becoming members of a local body of Christ.

As we meet together in flock groups, we have found it to be of great benefit to allow the group to come to an agreement, early on, as to the ground rules of operation and how we would like to interact and relate with one another. Topics in such a covenant include...

- Our mission and purpose,
- Our goals, objectives and expectations.
- Our structure as to location, dates, times, etc.
- How we'd like to handle common issues like refreshments, child care, etc.
- Our relationships...how we would like to function together

As the group gathers for the first time, a worksheet can be handed out to allow participants a chance to contribute their ideas to the process. The flock group leader facilitates the process and encourages participation by all members. After everyone has had a chance for input, a final agreement is drafted and handed out to the group members for their signature at the next meeting.

All participants are encouraged to sign as the covenant is by design a document created with input from all, and to be kept by all.

Covenants are expressions of group values, expectations, or behaviors for which we hold ourselves accountable. They are based on love and loyalty and are valid only if all parties seek to fulfill the covenant obligation. Thus covenants are binding agreements that can create trust and build community.

During the life of the group, the participants may want to review their commitments and make any revisions that the group feels are appropriate. A fresh look at the covenant may also help the group to refocus on their agreed upon mission, goals and objectives.

¹ From *How to Build a Small Group Ministry* by Neal F. McBride and published in Colorado Springs by NavPress, 1995.

Sample Worksheets and Covenants

You will find in Appendix H of the Flock Group Ministry Manual, several worksheets and sample covenants that can be used as you begin forming your flock group. The first worksheet provides an interactive way to help your group understand the biblical basis for forming the group, how it will be structured and what will be its focus. The second worksheet is provided to assist you in helping your group develop their covenant. Following the second worksheet is another example of a covenant agreement and a worksheet that could be used.

- Flock Group Ministry at College Park Church
- Worksheet for Developing a Flock Group Covenant
- Flock Group Covenant (Sample)
- Flock Group Covenant (Worksheet)

The key in developing a covenant for your flock group is to provide enough structure to help your group clearly understand why they are assembling together (your mission) and what your focus will be (the four pillars) and then provide an opportunity for input on goals and objectives, and how they would like to organize themselves and interact with each other.