



Standard Small Group Norms and Values

***GROUP NORMS** are behaviors and practices (ground rules) that a group agrees to in order to help establish a safe, predictable environment. A norm is something we can easily observe in each other. It's easy to see if it is being followed or broken.*

COMMITMENT TO COMPLETE HOMEWORK

We ask group members to complete all assigned homework. This is an important norm to uphold for everyone to gain the most from the content and discussions.

COMMITMENT TO ATTENDANCE

To create a stable, predictable small group environment that fosters trust, it is of utmost importance that group participants can count on one another attending each week.

COMMITMENT TO CONSIDERATE ABSENCES

If you need to miss a week, please let your group leader know so they can plan accordingly and inform the group of your absence.

COMMITMENT TO CONFIDENTIALITY

Our small groups are considered confidential, which means, when anything is shared that might be personal in nature, please exercise discernment and avoid gossip.

COMMITMENT TO KEEP YOUR SHARING FOCUSED ON YOUR OWN THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Focusing on yourself will benefit you as well as the ones around you. Stick to "I" or "me" statements, not "you" or "we" statements. When we focus on or share others' thoughts and feelings it can cause us to avoid dealing with our own issues.

COMMITMENT TO NOT FIX OTHERS

An important element of our small group environment is the freedom to safely share and process, creating space and welcome for the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. We are not here to fix each other. We ask participants to agree and commit to gentle and kind interaction with one another, refraining from judging, shaming, or excessively advising others.

COMMITMENT TO WELL-BALANCED GROUP SHARING

We ask all group members to be aware of the amount of time they have shared, and to not monopolize sharing opportunities. We also encourage members to stay on topic!

COMMITMENT TO TRUST

As brothers & sisters in Christ, we expect that maturity and reconciliation will be used anytime a conflict may arise within a group, especially involving theological or personality differences.

GROUP VALUES are vitally important and we desire that they become a normal part of our small group culture. We ask small group leaders and members to embrace, commit to, and make every effort to model, encourage, and foster these group values.

PRAYER

We value taking all our desires, feelings, thoughts, struggles, and joys to God. Though we may not stop our discussions and pray each time a person in the group expresses struggle or pain, we highly value lifting all our requests to God regularly.

DESIRE TO MATURE

We value the willingness and openness of group members to change their attitudes and beliefs about themselves, others, and God. This comes with the realization that we are all still in the process of sanctification, being transformed into the image of God's Son. If an individual does not have a desire and need for change, very little can be done to help them mature and grow.

DESIRE TO LOOK INSIDE

We value the willingness of members to focus on their own process and relationship with God, not on the relationships and choices of spouses, children, parents, or others. It can be tempting to believe that if we just help or fix others, or get them to change, our pain and problems will disappear; we invite group members to look seriously and bravely at their own life and how God desires to relate personally to their heart and experiences.

HONESTY

We value honesty as a way of life and as a fundamental biblical principle in establishing and maintaining healthy relationships with God, others, and ourselves. We are referring not only to being honest with others about what is going on in our lives but more importantly being honest with ourselves.

OPENNESS

We value the willingness of each group member to gain new awareness and insight from being open about what is really going on in their life. It is critical to let God, and others know what is going on with us. Others cannot enter in, understand, help, or support us in an area of difficulty if they do not know how or with what we are struggling.

TRUE ENCOURAGEMENT

We value building up, affirming, and motivating one another to believe what is true. Recognizing our achievements as we overcome and become new creations in Christ is extremely valuable. However, we do not value giving false praise or patronizing others with shallow Christian platitudes. The most encouraging thing to do is listen and attempt to understand. We value thoughtful, timely encouragement, allowing the other person who is sharing to feel heard, and not simply doing or saying what may make us feel more comfortable (giving advice, giving a solution to their problem, etc.)

WRESTLING

We value wrestling through ideas, thoughts, feelings, and the truth of Scripture with God. God's wrestling with Jacob (Genesis 32:22–32) was a deep expression of respect and a loving growth opportunity for Jacob. God could have simply crushed Jacob or forced his will, but God valued the process for Jacob's sake. We value the same kind of process and learning.

RESPECT

We value showing one another respect as individuals who are uniquely created by God, deserving of being heard and understood just as we are. Please show respect to others by listening to what they are thinking and feeling. We want to practice ***active listening***, using our ears, face, body, and posture to indicate our respect and attentiveness. We also value respecting each other's time.

ACCEPTANCE

We value offering to one another the same unconditional love, acceptance, and grace God has shown to us through his Son, Jesus Christ. We make this most evident when someone chooses to share something tremendously shameful to them, and as we listen, we do not turn away; instead, we draw near to them with God's compassion and acceptance.