

## COVENANT CONVERSATION - PROMISES

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*“When we choose to come together in small groups, the promises we make to each other help to shape and direct our life together . . . the ongoing life of the group becomes the context for promise-keeping.”* --- Roberta Hestenes, “Using the Bible in Groups”

### WHY COVENANT?

Just as God made covenants with his people in ancient times in order to demonstrate the extent of his love, so group members make, and with God’s help keep promises to each other, enabling them to move from great intentions to disciplined commitment.

The following eight covenant dynamics are the expanded versions of the list we include in our facilitator training manual and in each study guide. We encourage every group, several times a year, to take time to reread the covenant.

1. **The covenant of affirmation** (“agape” – unconditional and non-possessive love):  
There is nothing you have done or will do that will make me stop loving you. I may not agree with your actions, but I will love you as a person and do all I can to hold you up in God’s affirming love.
2. **The covenant of availability:** Anything I have – time, energy, insight, possessions – is at your disposal if you need it, to the limit of my resources. I give these to you in a priority of covenant over other non-covenant demands. As part of this availability, I pledge my time on a regular basis, whether in prayer or in an agreed-on meeting time.
3. **The covenant of prayer:** I covenant to pray for you in some regular fashion, believing that our caring Father wishes His children to pray for one another and ask Him for the blessings they need.
4. **The covenant of openness:** I promise to strive to become a more open person, disclosing my feelings, my struggles, my joys, and my hurts to you as well as I am able. The degree to which I do so implies that I cannot make it without you, that I trust you with my problems and my dreams, and that I need you. This is to affirm your worth to me as a person. In other words, I need you.
5. **The covenant of honesty:** I will try to mirror back to you what I am hearing you say and feel. If this means risking pain for either of us, I will trust our relationship enough to take that risk, realizing it is in “speaking the truth in a spirit of love” that we grow up in every way into Christ who is the head (Ephesians 4:15). I will try to express this honesty in a sensitive and controlled manner, and to meter it according to what I perceive the circumstances to be.

6. **The covenant of sensitivity:** Even as I desire to be known and understood by you, I covenant to be sensitive to you and to your needs to the best of my ability. I will try to hear you, see you, and feel where you are and to draw you out of the pit of discouragement or withdrawal.
7. **The covenant of confidentiality:** I will promise to keep whatever is shared within the confines of the group, in order to provide the atmosphere of openness.
8. **The covenant of accountability:** I consider that the gifts God has given me for the common good should be liberated for your benefit. If I should discover areas of my life that are under bondage, hung up, or truncated by my own misdoings or by the scars inflicted by others, I will seek Christ's liberating power through his Holy Spirit and through my covenant partners so that I might give to you more of myself. I am accountable to you to become what God has designed me to be in his loving creation.

--- *From "Covenant to Care" Louis H. Evans, Jr.*