

## ***SMALL GROUP COVENANT***

*We agree to the following values:*

**Acceptance** - We will affirm one another's contributions.

**Confidentiality** - What is said in the group stays in the group.

**Openness** - As we are able, we will be open with each other.

**Refusal to Gossip** - We will only speak of those who are not present in a way that builds them up.

**Courtesy** - We will try to be on time if possible and make this group a priority. We will avoid distractions, such as texting or answering calls during small group.

**Accountability** - We will allow others to hold us accountable in areas that we need to grow.

**Safety** - We will create a safe environment where people can be heard. No quick answers or judgements.

**Dealing with Conflict** - If a conflict arises between us and another person, we will approach the person directly in a loving way.

I will try, with God's help, to uphold these values the best that I can.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

# Session 1—Influences

**Icebreaker** - Play a round of 'Get-To-Know-You Tumbling Tower'. Try not to knock it down and make a hot mess!

**Go over the attached Group Covenant together**

**Play the Video—Session 1**

1. Was there anything from the video that stuck out to you? Could you relate to Jib's story in any way?
2. Chris shared a story from the Bible about King David getting into a hot mess. At what point do you think David crossed a line into a toxic relationship with Bathsheba? What are some examples of influences that are harmless but could become toxic? What are some signs that they have turned toxic?
3. What are some safeguards you've taken to avoid crossing the line into an influence becoming toxic?
4. In the story about King David, his friend Nathan confronted him about his toxic behavior and helped him get back on the right track. The passage below was written by Paul, one of Jesus' closest followers, about confronting others when they are in a hot mess:

**Galatians 6:1-2** Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. 2 Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

Look closely at the underlined words. What do they tell us about when and how to confront someone who has found themselves in a hot mess?

5. Have you ever found yourself overcome by a toxic influence? Was there anyone who confronted you? If so, did they do it in a healthy way?
6. Do you have a friend who you can trust to be honest and direct with you if you find yourself in a hot mess? If not, how could you develop that type of relationship?
7. What are some steps we can take to get back on track if we are overcome by a toxic influence?
8. Have you ever felt, or do you feel now, that you are in a situation so messy that God couldn't or wouldn't help you out of it? Why or why not?
9. Are you struggling with a toxic influence right now? If so, how can we pray for you?

**Lead your group through the following prayer:**

“Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Ask God to bring to your mind anything that might be turning into a toxic influence for you. Take a minute to listen... Father God, if anything came to mind, we ask that you give us strength to overcome this toxic influence. Bring someone into our life that we can share this with and who will help us to get back on the right track. If nothing came to mind, help us to stay aware of any toxic influences that may try to creep in. Thank you for always giving us a new start and never giving up on us when we are in a hot mess. Thank you that your love for us never changes. Amen.”

## Session 2—Relationships

**Icebreaker** - Play a round of 'Get-To-Know-You Tumbling Tower'. Try not to knock it down and make a hot mess!

### Play the Video—Session 2

1. Was there anything from the video that stuck out to you? Could you relate to Josie's story in any way?
2. Chris shared a story from the Bible about a hot mess relationship that David had with Saul. What are some signs that a relationship has become toxic? How was David able to guard his heart, his peace, and his safety in that relationship?
3. Chris shared the importance of "guarding your heart" when you are in a hot mess relationship, and not allowing it to become hardened by unforgiveness. Has your heart ever become hard as a result of an unhealthy relationship? What effect did that have on your life?
4. Chris also encouraged us to "guard our peace" when it comes to hot mess relationships. Jesus gives us a process for making peace with another person in Matthew 18:15-17

**15** "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. **16** But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. **17** If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

What does verse 15 say about who we should go to and how we should go to them when we are hurt?

In verse 17, Jesus said if a person refuses to apologize, we should treat them as a pagan or a tax collector. How did Jesus treat pagans and tax collectors (see Luke 7:34).

5. There are times that we try to make peace with someone, but they refuse to apologize or accept our apology. In that case, Chris encouraged us to set a boundary in order to have peace. What are some ways we can set a boundary with someone without being unloving?
6. It could be said that when Jesus came to earth, humans were in a hot mess relationship with God. What did God do to make peace with us?
7. Would you say that your relationship with God is healthy, a hot mess, or somewhere in between? Do you want to have a better relationship with him? If so, how can we pray for you?

### Prayer

Who would you like to have a healthier relationship with? Write their name on this handout or on another piece of paper. If you don't want to be specific, you can simply write "family member, friend, co-worker, etc." Pass your paper to the person on your right. Go around in a circle and pray for the person who handed you their paper. You can use the prayer below or pray your own prayer.

"God, please bring peace and healing to the relationship that \_\_\_\_\_ has with \_\_\_\_\_ . Amen."

## Session 3—Words

**Icebreaker** - Play a round of 'Get-To-Know-You Tumbling Tower'. Try not to knock it down and make a hot mess!

### Play the Video—Session 3

1. Was there anything from the video that stuck out to you? Could you relate to Jake's story in any way?
2. Paul, one of Jesus' closest followers, wrote these words to the church he planted in a city called Ephesus:

**Ephesians 4:29** *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

Have someone in the group read through the passage above two more times, slowly. After listening, is there a word or phrase that jumped out at you? What does that word or phrase mean to you?

3. What percentage of the words that come out of your mouth "benefit those who listen?" What about the words that don't benefit others - what do they sound like (gossip, sarcasm, complaining, negative, obscene)?
4. What kinds of things affect the words that you use? For example - outside influences, your mood at the time, the people that you are around, etc.
5. What is one thing you could change about the words you speak to make them more beneficial to those around you?
6. Chris told a story from the Bible about a man named David, and the "hot mess" words that Goliath spoke to him. Can you recall a time when you were the recipient of "hot mess" speech? How did you respond?
7. Chris encouraged us not to retaliate or personalize when we are confronted with harsh words from someone else. Instead, he said we should speak the truth louder than the lies. What truth do you need to hear most right now? If nothing comes to mind, look at the list below:

- ◆ You are a masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10)
- ◆ God chose you and loves you (Ephesians 1:4)
- ◆ You can do all things through God's strength (Philippians 4:13)
- ◆ You are God's child and he delights in you (1 John 3:1, Zephaniah 3:17)

## Prayer

What truth do you most need to be reminded of today? Write it down on this handout or another piece of paper. Pass your paper to the person on your right. Go around in a circle and pray for the person who handed you their paper. You can use the prayer below or pray your own prayer.

“God, please help \_\_\_\_\_ to be reminded of the truth that

\_\_\_\_\_.”

## Session 4—Religion

**Icebreaker** - Play a round of 'Get-To-Know-You Tumbling Tower'. Try not to knock it down and make a hot mess!

### Play the Video—Session 4

1. Was there anything from the video that stuck out to you? Could you relate to Susie's story in any way?

2. Chris told a story from the Bible about King David, who danced with all of his heart before God and was criticized by his wife for his behavior.

Earlier in David's life, when he was just a boy, a godly man named Samuel told him that one day he would be king. At the time, David was a scrawny little shepherd boy and didn't look very kingly. Samuel was a little unsure that God had chosen the right person. But God spoke these words to Samuel,

**1 Samuel 16:7** *"The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*

Do you think that Samuel shared these words with David? If so, how do you think that may have affected his attitude on the day he was dancing his heart out for God?

3. Chris explained that one type of "hot mess" religion is one that focuses on outward appearances and behaviors instead of the attitude of our hearts. Do you think that means our outward behaviors are irrelevant to our faith? Why or why not?

4. Why do you think we so often put our focus on outward appearances instead of what's in the heart of a person?

5. Have you ever experienced "hot mess" religion in a church or other Christian setting? Without mentioning any specific names or places, what did you experience? How did it affect your faith?

6. Do you struggle at all with judging others based on the way they act or look? Have you ever had a hard time accepting someone who came to your church? Explain.

7. Is there a person in your circle of influence who, on the outside, looks or acts very different from you? How can you walk across the room and show God's love to that person this week?

**Pray the prayer below by going around in a circle and having each person read one sentence:**

God, thank you for looking past our outward appearance and into our hearts.

We pray that when you look into our hearts, you see an attitude of humility and love.

If there is pain from religious people who have hurt us in the past, please heal those hurts.

If there is bitterness, help us to forgive.

Give us eyes like yours, to see past the outward appearance in others.

Help us to have eyes of love, and not judgment.

Give us the courage to walk across the room and talk to someone who is different from us.

If we have hurt or judged others, in the name of religion, forgive us.

And help us to take steps to make things right.

Let people who are far from you, be drawn to the love that we have.

And let that love point them to you.

So that they can know that there is a God that loves them just as they are.

Even if they are a hot mess.

Thank you for loving us, even when we are hot messes.

Thank you for loving us no matter what. Amen.