

HOME GROUPS OR HOME CELLS.

WHY DO WE NEED THEM?

There is not a strong biblical base. But there are some hints here and there that the Early Church met in this way. Church in the house is mentioned several times (Acts 2:46; Rom.16:5; 1 Cor.16:19; Col.4:15; Philemon 2).

It's definitely something the Spirit is saying to the Church at this time.

The Plan (Administration) - suitable for the present fullness of times (Eph.1:10; Eph.3:3,10).

IT'S A MAJOR PRINCIPLE OF GENUINE CHURCH GROWTH.

The major growth churches round the world that are actually growing through conversion are growing for five reasons:-

- a) They have learned how to pray. Especially in the realm of spiritual warfare.
- b) They have produced an evangelizing body through active home cells.
- c) They are living in aggressive faith.
- d) They have released women to full function in the body.
- e) They move in power and see a flow of healings and miracles on a regular basis.

CHURCHES WITH HOME GROUPS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO THREE TYPES:-

1) Churches that are really founded on Congregational Meetings. The Home Groups are there simply as an addition for those who may want them. Being part of a Home group is not considered to be a high priority.

2) Churches that are founded on the power of large Celebration Meetings. Home Groups are added to soften the anonymity and give some sense of family to those who feel the church is too big and impersonal without smaller meetings as well.

3) Churches that are founded on Home Groups. They feel the church is first called to be right in the local community touching the people around through their

homes and daily lives. To such churches the Congregational and Celebration Meetings are a great additional blessing and an important dimension to the church but the Cells or Home Groups are seen as the heart of it.

REASONS FOR HOME GROUPS.

1st REASON - PASTORAL/GOVERNMENTAL.

Exd.18:13-26. The Jethro Principle.

Choose faithful men and teach them the statutes. Show them the way to walk. The work they must do. Judging the people at all times. Judge smaller matters themselves. Bring only the hard cases to Moses {The overall Leader}.

2ND. REASON - DISCIPLING.

Make disciples not just believers - Matt.28:18-20 .

Train them to become like their Master - Luke 6:40; Mark 1:17; Matt 4:19; Copy or Follow Jesus 1 Cor.11:1; 1 Thes.1:5-7

Really free because they know the Word and continue in it - John 8:30,31.

Exhort, encourage, admonish one another - 1 Thes. 2:7,11; 1 Thes.5:14

Doers not hearers only - James 1:21-25.

3RD REASON - TO DEVELOP GIFT AND FUNCTION.

Develop gifts and ministries. All should have a function.

At Home Group level, everybody learns to function. 1Cor.14:26.

- i) Pray
- ii) Worship
- iii) Move in gifts
- iv) Share from word
- v) Impart and receive vision & faith
- vi) Meet needs - mutual ministry to one another
- vii) Develop leadership

4TH. REASON - FELLOWSHIP AND CARING.

Acts 2:42-47. Not just attending meetings, but sharing a life together.

Fellowship - Koinonia.

- a) to share a common life.
- b) to share a common purpose.

An extended family - serving, eating, rejoicing, playing together as well as the normal "spiritual" things.

NOTE:- "One another" occurs 16 times Scripture. It's good to study all these and see the list of what we are supposed to be doing for and to one another. The flock was intended to largely care for itself and cause its own growth and development. The Good Shepherd leads the sheep to good pasture and then they feed themselves. He does not attempt to force feed them or disconnect them from The Head who is Jesus. The sheep have the Lambs and feed them the milk they need, not the Shepherd.

These days in Western churches we tend to over-pastor people and become their source instead of teaching them how to get it from God themselves. Most Christians have now come to expect it.

5TH. REASON - THE ULTIMATE REASON - TO EVANGELISE THROUGH HOME GROUPS.

- i) Personal witness
- ii) Specific prayer targets over contacts made.
- iii) Evangelistic Cell meetings.
- iv) Seeker Bible studies.
- v) Parties with a purpose.
- vi) A door into the church.

WHAT DO WE DO?

1) Church is divided into groups of about 8- 12 in number.

Many ways of doing this. It's like decorating a house. There is no one right way. What is the right way? It can be Geographical. Good mix of age. Good mix of spiritual maturity. Recognize friendships. Specialist groups a possibility. Same age

group. Same gender groups. Definite commitment to one group.

2) A definite leader appointed with accountability directly to the Pastor, or in larger churches, an Elder or a Home Cell Supervisor of 4-8 groups. Usually a couple but can be a single person male or female.

3) As soon as possible in a new group establish who is the number two so he/she /they can be being trained to take over and form a new group as the church grows.

4) Life of the home group centers round a regular meeting.

- i) One location. Usually best in Home Group Leader's house.
- ii) Not just a meeting - A life together.
- iii) Where possible couples come together.
- iv) Not just a mini Sunday meeting.
- v) A sense of purpose.
- vi) A definite plan.
- vii) Start and finish on time.
- viii) A sense of order but flexible.

YOU CAN ONLY HAVE AS MANY HOME GROUPS AS YOU HAVE GOOD LEADERS.

Ideally, the Home Group should not exceed more than about 12-15 people, otherwise the purposes of the group begin to be defeated. But, it's better to have fewer groups with good leaders even if they are too large, rather than make new groups with bad leaders.

THE HOME GROUP LEADER.

1) A Captain of Ten having the following characteristics:-

- * They should function like Parents of an extended family.
- * Does not need to have any public ministry.
- * Deals with people on a one on one basis.
- * Does not need to be an administrator, but must have enough organizational skills to run the group efficiently and maintain a sense of zeal and purpose.
- * Does not need a pulpit teaching gift but must be able to teach and impart the truths of Scripture into peoples lives.
- * Knows the Scriptures and imparts truth in a conversational way.

- * Is a lover of people and loves to spend time with them.
- * Small things are important to him.
- * Their life, marriage and family should be an example to others. They must be worth following and can disciple the people by their example.
- * The leader's main gift is pastoral but without a strong evangelistic passion the group will introvert and lose its way.
- * Does not initiate strategy or vision.
- * A loyal follower of those who do.
- * The leader speaks positively and is an encourager.
- * The leader inculcates loyalty in those who follow him/her towards the leadership of the church.
- * Their life is characterized by joy and thanksgiving.
- * He/She stewards for another - the Elders - and knows it.
- * Could be a person with a greater measure on his way to his real ministry.

- 2) A Steward not an owner.
- 3) Loyal to the Senior Pastor or the Set Man.
- 4) Accountable to designated authority.
- 5) A Para-medic not a Doctor.
- 6) Needs clear guidelines on what to handle and what not handle on their own. Should not try to handle the big issues alone.
- 7) No confidential counseling sessions with members in which the Pastor or Elders do not have access to the disclosures made.
- 8) Free access by Pastor or Elders at any time to any of the group.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SET-MAN (SENIOR PASTOR) AND THE ELDERS TO THE HOME GROUP LEADERS.

The Home Group Leaders must be seen as the most important interface between the Overall Leader and the Church.

It is their input more than anything else that will cause the Church as a whole to rise up and fulfill the vision of the leadership.

For this reason Home Group Leaders will be a high priority target of the enemy.

Satan will want to discourage them and make the Home Groups seem futile and pointless. Without constant watchfulness the groups will end up introverted and going nowhere.

Therefore the Head of the Church should :-

- * Have deep conviction, faith and vision concerning Home Groups.
- * Not just appoint the Home Group Leaders and leave them to get on with it.
- * Pray for them as a first priority.
- * Take pastoral responsibility for them or at least delegate each one to caring Captains of 50's & 100's.
- * Encourage, Appreciate and Approve frequently.
- * Honor them and lift them up before the people frequently.
- * Envision them and keep them full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.
- * Take trouble to provide proper training for them.
- * Monitor them and the Home Groups frequently, for example, by at least monthly meetings and by written reports.
- * Have a clear strategy and take time to impart it.
- * Have clear goals and targets with dates to achieve these goals so as to have some measure of progress.
- * Call the Home Group Leaders to clear accountability.
- * Address any problems quickly. Don't leave them unresolved.
- * Prayer and fasting is the standard tool to break any deadlock.

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