

## **Home Church Meetings**

Imagine a couple, let's call them John and Clare. They have been reading the bible and noticed that home church is the only model of church mentioned in the bible. A model which is personal, interactive and empowering. They have noticed that Jesus started with 12 common men, fishermen, tax collectors etc. If Jesus worked mainly with 12 then we should too they figure. While examining the scriptures they notice that Jesus often ministered within homes and also instructed his disciples to work from homes. Surely we should be making disciples the way Jesus did, they figure to themselves, disciples who go and make other disciples. So a simple model forms in their minds - easy to start, low cost, easy to reproduce and relatively easy to run. Then they think there is something even more important than just having the right model, they need to be part of a movement where disciples are trained to plant churches so that many people can find their place and do the work God wants them to do.

So they get down to practicalities and think of a list of questions that need to be answered in order to get home churches going. They have come up with the following answers.

### **Where do we meet?**

The meeting does not have to be in a home. It could be in a quiet cafe or similar building. Most often though it will be in a home that can seat around 12 people comfortably and will be reasonably central to where the people live. The hosts are not automatically the leaders of the group but they should take the lead in practical issues such as organising the room, parking, clearing up and house rules. In some situations it may be appropriate to rotate between homes but it helps to keep it at one home for a month so people do not have to keep remembering where they are supposed to be.

### **When and how often do we meet?**

Everyone should be involved in deciding when to meet. Find the most suitable day but be ready to change the day if some other unavoidable commitments come up or new people join the group. The group should meet at least once a week, preferably twice.

Everyone should be respectful of the agreed time. It shows respect both to the Lord and to His people if everyone arrives on time. If one or two are late it leaves a large gap in a small group setting.

Sometimes it might be right to have a coffee with a newcomer to explain how home church is very different to traditional church, before they attend.

When you are in a small boat together it is helpful if you are all rowing in the same direction.

## What is our vision?

Here is typical vision: **Key - Plate - Pillar - Pathway**



Our vision is to plant 10 new home churches through evangelism and deep prayer. Luke 10 discipleship is the main **key** which we use to start new churches. Every one of us is a trainer.



Our home church life is centred around the word of God, praise and worship, shared meals on **plates** and shared lives.



Acts of kindness towards one another is a very important **pillar** of our church life. We dream in the Holy Spirit so that everything we do is yielded to Him. Every good work is done by grace.



Our vision inspires our next steps, our specific actions and our unique, singled out **pathway**.

## What considerations are there for praise and worship?

In line with 1 Cor 14:26-33 home churches do not have (or need) a worship leader. This passage describes a meeting where everyone is joining in - ie not front lead. In this way people are able to sing the songs on their hearts and worship in spirit and truth, It helps to have a sheet of numbered songs so that each member can choose. If there is no musician then use "voices only" or mp3 with printed words or youtube videos. There are many good worship songs with lyrics on youtube that can be used. Those attending should be encouraged to take part and promote a sustained period of adoration which does not descend into chat half way through but keeps a due focus on the Lord. At some point after the praise be sensitive to prayer needs of people within the group.

## How should we study the bible?

In scripture there is a place for both formal bible teaching and interactive discussion. We should expect to do both but to begin with interactive discussion will help people to get to know each other and feel included. However important foundational teaching such as the Fruits of the Spirit need to be taught fairly soon. If a formal teach is being done it helps to print

out the scriptures in full and give them out to different people to read. The leader should seek the Lord for the most appropriate topic for the needs of the group. If there is discussion everyone should be encouraged to remain on the subject. The leaders should be asking the Holy Spirit for direction during the meeting and be ready to move in the direction that the Spirit gives.

Discussions should be centered around scripture, maybe read a passage from the bible and ask simple questions. What does the passage say? What do we need to obey? Who can I share the passage with? Personal experiences relevant to the passage can be very effective at help the group to support each other.

The use of teaching videos should be kept to a minimum within the meeting as they tend to be a passive impartation of information. If there is a particularly good teaching available say on youtube then, if everyone has access, ask them to watch it at home then come to the meeting to discuss it.

Sharing testimonies can be very effective if outsiders are present. Social learning is one of the most powerful forms of learning, people easily learn from other people. Often the group can provide a very effective pastoral role withing itself as the members care for each other.

### **What should be done to encourage fellowship?**

Home churches are a place of refuge were everyone should feel welcomed, accepted and included. Fellowship consists of getting to know each other and supporting each other through lifes battles. At the start of each meeting serving a drink and catching up for a few minutes helps people to settle down. The leader needs to decide when people are settled and start the meeting fairly promptly so that it does not linger towards being a social social club.

### **Meals and Breaking Bread**

Eating together is a very effective way of doing a religious detox. It may be every week or occasionally depending on the needs of the group. The meal helps people to relax and be themselves. Just being together in the Lords presence can be just as important as praise and bible study. Sometimes the power of the Lord can be released, setting people free - even while you eat. Everyone should bring something to the meal so that the burden does not all fall on the host. A great time to remember the Lord with bread and wine is during the meal. If there is any possibility of there being alcoholics present be sure to use grape juice instead of wine. The breaking of bread does not have to be at the meal. Sanding in a circle and remembering Him during a meeting can be a very focused way of sharing communion as well.

Playing games can also be useful for helping people to be themselves. Interactive word games help people to relax and relate. Both traditional church life and ordinary life is often too formal and serious. We need to have fun, be authentic with each other and cultivate a sense of safety

and belonging.

### **What should be done for visitors?**

Welcome visitors, ask them to share who they are within the group setting, ask sensitive non-threatening questions. Follow them up, if they came with someone they know make sure that person is looking after them. Greet them at the end of the meeting and get their contact information. Give them a call during the week. Ask them how they liked the meeting, and invite them back. It is important that you make visitors not only feel welcome, but wanted. If appropriate let them have some carefully selected literature which will encourage faith.

### **Who should lead the group?**

In scripture home churches are lead by elders either male or female. Traditional church is lead by priests or pastors which is a concept that came from Constantine not the bible. Elders are typically not people that have been to bible school but are responsible community leaders as described in Timothy and Titus. With home church many more people are leaders so the care of the people is done by many. In traditional church one man is responsible for the many and is often burnt out. The traditional pastors of today need to move into an apostolic role making way for elders to take their place.

There are many different types of leadership that could be employed: charismatic, managerial, authoritarian, loose - anything goes. Scripture says that elders are responsible for the affairs of the church 1 Tim 5:17. Some people want a leaderless church having had bad experiences in other churches. However things can and do go wrong in any church, people are not perfect and the enemy is constantly trying to attack. Elders should be there to put things right and to give the church the stability and direction needed. God is a God of order. Elders are not to rule in an authoritarian way but should be transparent - part of the family only stepping into their role when needed.

Some would be concerned that elders are not trained and therefore likely to fall into doctrinal error. In the bible the apostles were responsible for keeping elders on track. Scripture and good teaching is far more readily available in our day so there is less risk. Most of the time elders will be helping people to follow the foundations of the faith and not dealing with deeper doctrinal issues. Elders are always free to seek help from more experienced leaders if there are issues they are struggling with.

### **What practicalities need to be taken care of?**

#### **Temperature, Light and Noise**

The host needs to be sensitive to the level of heat in the room. If it is very cold provide some heating, if it is too hot open some windows or put a fan on or air conditioning. Check to see

that everyone is comfortable. Make sure there is adequate light for reading scriptures. Try to make sure that there are no distracting noises from other rooms. If possible close the door or window that the noise is coming through. Phones should be set to vibrate and only strictly necessary calls should be taken, out of earshot of the group.

### **Arrange chairs**

Chairs should be arranged in a circle or square not in rows. This will help to promote open sharing and face to face communication. If possible set out the chairs before people arrive. This will help them to feel welcomed and enable the host and others to focus on meeting and greeting.

### **Clean Up**

Everyone should participate in clean up. It should not just be left to the host or a select few.

### **Should we take an offering?**

If there are needs known to the group then an offering should be taken. In the early church some widows were taken care of and some elders were supported. There may be some practical items that need to be purchased as well. There is no need to have a bank account just a box into which people can give anonymously. The box should contain a pad with a record of money taken. In order to be walking fully in the light the transactions should be counted and initialed by 2 members of the group. For purchases one initial and a receipt retained in the box will suffice.

### **When things go wrong, how should they be put right?**

Both elders and members should very careful to observe the instructions of the Lord in Matt 18:15-17. When someone is doing something wrong gently confront one-to-one then a few-to-one then the whole church becomes involved. The emotion of the moment must not dictate, disrupting the meeting with unnecessary disturbance and confrontation. All correction should be done in the way the Lord has directed.