

Why meet in homes?

1 - It is difficult to obey the commands of the New Testament in groups that get too large. A very instructive study is to look up the fifty-four 'one anothers' of the New Testament. We are told to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), to admonish one another (Colossians 3:16), to confess our sin to one another (James 5:16). These are next to impossible in a larger context.

2 - In I Corinthians chapters 11 - 14, the only specific instructions as to how meetings are to be conducted are given. I Corinthians 14:26 says that when we come together each person should be able to bring a contribution, whether it be a song, a Word, etc. This would only be possible in a smaller setting. It is an opportunity for each participant to exercise his/her spiritual gifts which is not feasible in a large service.

3 - Many non-believers will not attend a Church service, but will come to a home meeting. Inviting someone to a small group meeting provides a way to involve a non-believer directly into a community of believers.

4 - Small groups foster close relationships and integral community. The small group atmosphere is ready-made for building friendships. People talk more in small groups of people. People are quick to recognize needs, and help to meet them. Relationships that are formed outside of the (sometimes artificial) setting of a church service, are relationships that will endure and strengthen over time.

5 - Acts 2:42 can only fully occur in a small group.- *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

6 - Home groups give you the opportunity to be fully led by the Holy Spirit rather than having to stick rigidly to a structured format.

STARTING THE MEETING

Before we introduce ourselves, let's remember:

1 -This is a safe place to grow spiritually. We ask that whatever is shared here would remain confidential.

2 - You will notice we do not use a bunch of fancy religious language.

3 -We do not try to impress people with how much Bible quoting we can do.

4 -Please be sensitive so that everyone has opportunity to share and contribute.

5 - No one should ever feel forced to share or participate. It is okay to just sit and observe. (You want to develop an environment that encourages participation but not an environment that manipulates people.)

6 - Please turn cell phones off, or on "vibrate."

Ice Breaker Questions

Ice breakers are simple questions that help people to open up in a non-threatening way while revealing a little bit about themselves. Here are some examples:

1 -When you were small - which superhero did you like?

2 - Which is the best vacation you've ever had?

3 - What is the craziest thing you have ever done?

4 - If you could go on a road trip with any person (dead or alive), who would you choose and where would you go?

Worship

In contrast to a large meeting, the worship experience in a home is often facilitates a more intimate and personal experience with the Lord as the God who is near. If there are no musicians or song leaders in the group videos or CDs can be used. Allow for prophetic words, words of knowledge, etc. Besides music, a testimony can be given or people might want to express what they are thankful for.

Bible Study

The goal is for everyone in the small group to participate in the Bible study. You must be careful not to allow one person to dominate or to talk all of the time, including you or whoever is the Bible study leader. The person is leading everyone to study the Bible together, not teaching the Bible to the group. The best way to do this is through using open-ended questions that encouraging discussion without people feeling pressure to come up with the right answer. Avoid making evaluative comments following participant responses.

SAMPLE BIBLE DISCUSSION

Read Genesis 3: 1-11 - *The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"*

² *"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied.* ³ *"It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"*

⁴ *"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman.* ⁵ *"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."*

⁶ *The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.* ⁷ *At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.*

⁸ *When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man^[a] and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees.* ⁹ *Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"*

¹⁰ *He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."*

¹¹ *"Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"*

Discussion Questions

1) Eve was convinced to do the wrong thing by the serpent and Adam was convinced by Eve. How can we keep ourselves from being wrongly influenced by others?

2) Adam and Eve's choices caused them to hide from God and become separated from Him. If they were people living today, who left God because they were ashamed of their failure, what advice would you give them in light of what Jesus has done for us? How could we best reach out to people who feel ashamed of who they are?

3) Even after Adam and Eve disobeyed God he still came looking for them. What does that tell us about God's heart toward us?

4) Would someone like to share a testimony of how you received God's love and acceptance even after you did something you weren't proud of?

Prayer

Ask group members to share about personal needs and needs of family members and friends if they choose to. Take time to pray for these needs but keep the prayer short and to the point. It would also be good to speak words of encouragement to the people who share about needs. At times the group may want to plan a specific ministry activity to respond to a need that they hear about. This could include visiting someone in the hospital, providing food for someone who is sick at home, visiting a lonely person, providing childcare, going shopping for someone, or any other activity to help someone in need. These kinds of acts of true Christian love often provide opportunities for evangelism as well.

Closing Fellowship

End with a time of fellowship. It would be good to have snacks available. Many people in our culture feel alone and lack the opportunity to just sit and share in an environment of unconditional love and acceptance. Try your best to wrap up the evening by the specified time. Some people may love the meeting but don't come back if they are not reasonably sure when things will wrap up.