

WHY BECOME A HOUSE CHURCH?

Welcome to the Why Become a House Church? group study!
Let's open in prayer and ask God to help us hear what He is saying to each of us. [Open in prayer.]

Church in the New Testament

Okay, let's begin by reading the first two verses in the book of Acts:

"I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach **2** until the day He was taken up, after He had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen" (Acts 1:1-2, CSB).

Verse 2 tells us that Jesus—through the Holy Spirit—gave instructions to His apostles until the very day He was taken up into heaven. So the closest model we have of how Jesus wanted His Church to function is the church that these apostles led. After following Jesus' commandment to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Church was finally born on the Day of Pentecost. Let's read the outcome of what happened that day:

"So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. **42** And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. **43** And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. **44** And all who believed were together and had all things in common. **45** And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46** And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, **47** praising God

and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:41-47).

As you can see, the ministry of Jesus through the apostles had a profound effect on these new believers. Verse 42 tells us that they became devoted to four things: "the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." These were, without question, priorities that Jesus had taught the apostles. Verse 46 tells us that day by day the people were meeting in the temple and breaking bread in their homes. Acts 5 tells us that they were also teaching and preaching the Word of God in their homes. Let's read Acts 5:42:

"And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus."

As we continue to read through the New Testament, we see that all churches met in homes. Let's read a few verses that reference this:

"Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, **4** who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. **5** Greet also the church in their house" (Romans 16:3-5).

"Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house" (Colossians 4:15).

"Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, . . . and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house" (Philemon 1:1-2).

Why Homes?

It's not only the New Testament that teaches us that churches met in homes; early church history also verifies it. In fact, for the first 300 years of church history, there was no widespread plan to build buildings for churches to meet in. It simply was not the way Jesus taught His apostles—but why?

Let's list some of the benefits of hosting smaller churches in homes:

1. Homes are more available. Virtually everyone lives in some kind of a home.
2. Homes are more cost-effective than buildings. There's virtually no additional cost.
3. Homes require less energy for maintenance and setup.
4. It's much easier to change the location of a house church meeting if a problem arises.
5. Meeting in smaller gatherings allows for personalized ministry to every person.
6. Homes are usually in neighborhoods that are harvest fields of people who need to be reached with the Gospel.
7. Churches in homes can multiply much faster than churches in buildings.

In many parts of the world right now, there are incredibly effective ministries called Disciple Making Movements (DMMs). These DMMs have been able to baptize a new person to Jesus for every \$0.66 donated, whereas www.joshuaproject.org reports that the average campus-style church in the United States sees people baptized at a rate of one for every \$1.5 million received. Why so much? Well, campus-style churches are simply expensive to run. Buildings, staffing, equipment, and maintenance are only the basics. And church growth can be terribly misleading as believers move from church to church, creating attendance shifts without new salvations.

Does that mean large church settings are not valuable? Not at all! These opportunities for worship and corporate learning are wonderful gifts from God. In fact, Hebrews 10:24–25 tells us,

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **25** not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . . but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (NKJV).

Did you catch that? So much the more. Since the return of Jesus is obviously approaching, we should be finding more ways to gather and not less. There is no reason to abandon attending traditional church gatherings; these can be opportunities to grow and serve and connect in unique ways. However, if we truly want to see the effectiveness and multiplication described in the New Testament, the traditional church model is simply not going to do it.

A More Effective Way

When Jesus left earth for heaven, He handed the baton of His ministry to us, His followers. Jesus commissioned us in Matthew 28:19–20:

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. **20** And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The mission of Jesus' Church, therefore, is to “Go and make disciples of all nations.” This is what He has called us to do. It isn't just the mission of missionaries or evangelists. Each and every believer is called to be a disciple-maker. Each of us is called to see the harvest that Jesus has pointed out (Matthew 9:38) and to engage in that mission field. In fact, this calling is a significant reason that house churches are needed now more than ever. Believers must not simply be spectators.

There are many lost souls around us, and the Church has, in many ways, been asleep. We must be activated, not just collectively but individually, to gather in settings that will stir us up toward the mission that God has called us to. We must not simply look for a minister to learn from, but we must begin to see ourselves—and each other—as ministers.

First Corinthians 14:26 gives us a clear perspective on how the New Testament Church operated in a way that activated everyone:

“When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up” (ESV).

Each time a house church gathers, the group is inviting the Holy Spirit to minister to each person, through each person. It’s an active, life-giving community that helps each participant become the person God has called them to be.

In fact, there are many reasons to be a part of a house church—and here are some of the best. A house church is where:

1. You have a community where you are known and where you belong.
2. Other believers can help you process the complications of life and the changing culture.
3. Prayer support and encouragement are offered when facing challenges.
4. Practical help is offered when needs arise.
5. You have a safe place to step out in the gifts God has given you.
6. You receive support as you pursue your own calling.
7. You can have fun and laugh with others in a place that is God-honoring.
8. You will experience exponential spiritual growth as you are encouraged and challenged to actively participate in the lessons taught.

9. You will fulfill part of the ministry God has called you to as you encourage, strengthen, pray for, and support others.

What Is a House Church?

So then, what is a house church? A house church is a gathering of believers in homes, businesses, or just about anywhere who are committed to meeting regularly as a church for the purposes of growing spiritually, serving each other, and supporting one another to carry out the Great Commission.

As a gathering of maturing believers, house churches can facilitate more in-depth discussion times without being hindered by excess explanations and clarifications.

Many churches have adopted a small-group ministry model to help foster connections within its members. Though small groups and house churches may look similar in size and location, there are a few attributes that set house churches apart:

1. House churches meet regularly, not just seasonally. This is not to say house church members cannot go on vacation, but the community will continue to meet without a presumed end date.
2. House churches are meant to embrace and partake of everything Jesus intended for His Church. Biblical elements such as worship, communion, outreach, baptism, and raising up the next generation are not neglected due to an assumption that the larger church will take care of them. House churches make room to be all that Jesus intended the Church to be instead of being merely supplemental to a larger weekend service.
3. House churches are meant to focus every believer on their individual calling as a part of the Great Commission; they do not simply study a lesson each week. Regardless of the study topic, the heart of these

groups is to encourage and empower each person to reach the unreached in their spheres of influence.

What Does a Service Look Like?

There is no perfect church service for every group, but here is one sample of what a weekly house church gathering might look like:

- **Fellowship** (Before Service)
- **Opening Prayer and Weekly Check-in**
- **Worship**
- **Exhortation and Ministry**
- **Announcements and Giving**
- **Teaching, Discussion, and Response**
- **Communion** (or as a part of a meal before or after the service)
- **Fellowship** (After Service)

If you have attended a church before, you are probably familiar with most of these elements, but the beauty of a house church is the way the congregation can approach them more personally. Let's examine what some of these aspects of a service could look like:

- **Weekly Check-In** – a time for each person to share and receive prayer. Each week can start with a more personal touch by asking questions such as, “What are you thankful for?”; “Have you learned anything new from Jesus this week?”; and, “How can we pray for you?”
- **Exhortation and Ministry** – a time to give the Holy Spirit room to speak through people. Someone may have a word of encouragement, prophecy, or exhortation. Various members can minister as the Holy Spirit leads them.

- **Teaching** – a time to teach based on “the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:41-42) by going verse-by-verse through a New Testament text starting with John, Acts, and Romans. For new house churches, we have produced a set of three group studies that will establish your foundation together: “Jesus’ Church,” “Jesus’ Gifts,” and “Jesus’ Commission.”
- **Discussion** – a time to discuss and process the passage that was just read. The teacher will lead the church through a set of questions for discussion and personal growth.

One final note about the weekly services: The multitude of counselors is an important factor in upholding the Word of God as our final authority. For instance, any prophecy given or exhortation offered must align with Scripture. If there is a question about the biblical accuracy of something suggested or shared, it is important to allow time and opportunity for those questions and conversations. In fact, during the verse-by-verse discussion time, encourage everyone to help by asking, “Where do you see that in this passage?” if something seems outside the context of the particular passage being discussed. In this way, the discussion can stay on topic but also keep the focus on what that passage is teaching.

What Part Can You Play?

Every member can bring something to the table. Here are just a few ways that different house church members can contribute to the weekly gathering:

- **Hosting** – The house church leader does not need to also host the gatherings. You can gather at anyone’s house or a local park or community center. If you have a space you’re willing to offer, let it be known.
- **Administration** – Taking attendance, creating food rotations, or facilitating group communication are a few administrative ways to support the house church. If you are good with details, offer your support.

- **Service Roles** – Your house church leader may ask you to lead an element of the service, such as communion, worship, or announcements.
- **Kids + Youth Ministry** – You may have a passion for the next generation and offer to help. Consider and discuss as a house church how you can best disciple and equip your kids and youth.
- **Prayer Support** – Pray for your house church and leader(s) and help champion and coordinate times of corporate prayer and prayer walks.
- **Lead Your Own** – You may be a part of a house church but feel the tug to start your own with people you know. Do it! The more house churches that are planted, the more people are being equipped and supported to be on mission with Jesus.

Remember that the goal of each house church member should be to individually disciple others and eventually plant new house churches. The goal is not to try to grow a large house church but to keep these gatherings more personal.

Don't Go It Alone

While starting a house church doesn't really demand anything more than a home and a few believers, it's a wonderful thing to have a ministry family to support your church and connect with. Many people launch ministries that eventually fizzle out. The reasons for this vary—from loss of personal motivation to people issues to lack of experience to errors in judgment—but the result is the same: What was meant to flourish, flounders.

Solid Lives House Church

The Solid Lives House Church ministry focuses on the multiplication of disciples and house churches. Our goal is to launch disciple-making movements everywhere that plant churches that plant churches, make disciples who make disciples, and train leaders who train leaders. We are ever-

This is why partnership is important. Remember when Jesus provoked a huge catch of fish for Peter and Andrew?

“When they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. **7** They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats” (Luke 5:6-7, ESV).

It was an overwhelming load for just Peter and Andrew (though they even had each other!). But they called out to their partners, John and James, for help. If the sons of Zebedee hadn't been close at hand, Peter and Andrew wouldn't have had the support they needed to haul in so many fish!

It's important to have partners in ministry, both individuals and groups that you know will be there when needs arise.

Joining a house church network/ministry is a great way to get that partnership, both to help you get started and to keep moving forward. These kinds of ministries are set up specifically to support and resource house churches with things like:

- tools and planners to help you get started,
- teaching materials and studies,
- leadership training,
- safety standards and protocols for things like kids' ministry, and
- personal connection with leaders.

In fact, we'd love to have you join Solid Lives!

multiplying to see as many people as possible rescued by the saving power of Jesus and become the Great Commission believers they are called to be.

When house church members give tithes and offerings, all funds are given electronically and directed towards these goals. Solid Lives House Church works directly with our BFAM

Movements* ministry to develop resources for house church settings that can then be used by other house churches around the world. Additionally, we are creating discipleship tools crafted specifically for personal and small-group settings to help anyone be a disciple-maker. Our goal is to equip and encourage everyone to fulfill Jesus' call to reach those around them. Free resources offered through the BFAM app include the "Jesus' Church," "Jesus' Gifts," and "Jesus' Commission" group studies, along with discipleship tools like "The God of the Bible," "Creation to Christ," and—coming soon—"Operation Solid Lives" and "Walks with God."

So, what do you do now? To partner with the Solid Lives House Church ministry, a house church leader can begin by [CLICKING HERE](#) to access the interest form.

Once you submit your interest form, you will be contacted by the Solid Lives House Church Team. We will help you begin the simple journey to become a Solid Lives House Church. We will:

- contact you to schedule an online interview, where you will connect personally with a leader.
- walk you through the various resources available to you and help ensure a successful launch.
- offer training opportunities.
- connect you to the monthly leader meetings that will introduce you to other house church leaders.
- become a point of contact for questions and support as you lead your house church.

May the Lord give you wisdom and direction as you pursue His calling as Great Commission believers together.

Next Steps for New House Churches

(1) Take a few minutes to discuss the various roles (listed above) that make up a house church. Who might be willing and able to play a new role starting next week?

(2) Determine the teaching series you will begin next week. If you haven't yet done the "Jesus' Church" group study, we recommend you start there. If you're not sure what is available, you will be introduced to all our teaching/study materials in your Welcome Letter from the Solid Lives House Church director.

(3) As a part of this community of believers, and to spark ongoing spiritual growth, every house church member is encouraged to:

- read your Bible daily (We recommend the [Solid Life Journal reading plan](#)).
- journal about what you hear the Lord saying through your reading time.
- spend time in prayer daily.
- submit your heart to the Lord daily, asking Him to use you to minister to others.
- invite the Holy Spirit to give you a word, encouragement, or exhortation to share with someone in your house church each week.

(4) Plan to celebrate your official start with a meal or dessert next week—potluck style! Who is bringing what?

* For more information on these disciple-making and church-planting resources, visit BFAMmovements.com or download the BFAM app.