

## The Church Returns Home

The purpose of this study is to open the hearts and minds of a new generation of leaders to the clear biblical strategy of house churches.

Could it be that God in His wisdom is going to reach our contemporary world from house to house?

“God’s work done God’s way still attracts God’s blessing.”

Wolfgang Simson

# House Churches

## A Biblical Model and Apostolic Pattern with a Contemporary Impact!

*I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house. (Acts 20:20)*



Armenian House Church



China House Church and NE India House Church

*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Act 2:46-47)*

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## Information Page

### Q. What is the 5-Fold Global Mandate?

A. Equip and empower a new generation of leaders and believers who will fulfill the book of Acts in the power of the Holy Spirit and multiply the harvest through strategic prayer, power evangelism, Spirit filled discipleship, and church planting aligned with God's word.

### Q. What is a 5-Fold Global Team?

A. A 5-Fold Global Team is a group of 3 to 5 Ephesians 4:11 leaders who are full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of wisdom. The Holy Spirit sends these teams on strategic regional operations around the world for Kingdom advancement.

### Q. What 5-Fold Global Resources are Available?

A. 5-Fold Global resources for equipping believers and leaders are available on the website. These training manuals, like this one, are provided free to help make disciples and develop leaders God's way.

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*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*  
(2Timothy 3:16 NKJ)

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible.

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# Chapter 1: The Need for House Churches

## Bedadhanuru Village

Bedadhanuru Village is a one of three sub-villages of a small hamlet, Ganapavaram, in the West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh State, India. There are 4,495 people and 1,236 houses according to the 2011 census. The tribal population of the village is 50.2%. The literacy rate is 59.8% and the female literacy rate is 31.1%, which is rather typical of the rural villages of India. Although I've been in more villages than I can remember in this region, I became aware of Bedadhanuru Village through one of our emerging 5-Fold Global new generation leaders named Sudarshan Gummapu. I first met him in early December 2014 while conducting a series of leadership conferences in seven village locations in cooperation with our long-term 5-Fold Global partner, Bishop Santhosh Desabattula. At each place, the Holy Spirit showed me young leaders of the new generation whom He had chosen for strategic equipping in ministry. Here's what I reported on the events of December 10, 2014.

*"The fifth pastor's conference in Eluru village was attended by 130 with many wives also attending. The first session was on New Testament Church structure and we dealt more and more with breaking down dividing walls of denominationalism, men and women, and human management verses the supervision and ministry of the Holy Spirit. A man shared with great excitement about a recent church growth conference with David Paul Yongi Cho, a three-day conference in Malaysia he had attended on October 28, 29 & 30. He shared how the keynote address was the same message Brother Michael just delivered concerning the new generation. He declared to all attending that this is how he knew what was being taught was from God and not from man. He also shared that Muslims now were trying to capitalize on the new generation message around the world. This conference was hosted by Hebron Ministries and Pastor Martin. The second session also was powerful with the healing, restoration, and fresh anointing and outpouring upon marriages and ministries. Again, some women had tears running down their faces. One pastor asked to be filled with the Holy Spirit and his body began to shake when hands were laid upon him; his lips and tongue quivered as new tongues flowed. Another man said the pain in his back left as we prayed for healing. We prayed for another man who had two operations for brain cancer. Healing power touched him as well as another with an injured hand. The Spirit also directed us to another 21-year-old man chosen by God in the new generation global church movement."*<sup>1</sup>

Of course, Sudarshan was that young man and I later learned he was part of a team of as many as ten young leaders ministering in remote villages with the Pentecostal Fellowship Church of India. I was so impressed with his operational understanding and practice of team ministry that I invited him and another young leader on his team, Vinay Devarapalli, to join our 5-Fold Global Kenya Mission Team in June 2018. They shared with me during the Kenya Mission how they were following a 40-day strategy involving a house to house pattern of ministry. They had already established teams of young leaders in ten states of India.

The report of what took place in Bedadhanuru Village was just one example of how God was working with these young leaders.

"In the past month God has done so many miracles. We have conducted street meetings newly in Agency areas. In first week, no one helped us, then with tears we prayed for that village. In the village called "BEDADHANURU " we conducted street meeting under the street light, for that one sister gave us electricity for Mike system. When we started prayer meeting, in the middle of the prayer some people came from that village and they scolded us and gave warning to the sister who gave electricity, and they broke system. They threwed us from that village. My

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Gross. 5-Fold Global After Action Report: <https://www.5foldglobal.org/operations/operations-reports-india2014.html>.

self and some of my believers we stood together and all night we prayed, and read PSALM 2: 8 that " O, Lord please give these people as a possession". In the vision I saw one Angel came to that village before us. We came out from that village as Jesus told clean your feet dust in that city. When we came out from that village 3 days they don't have electricity, they struggled lot. Some elders from that city they scolded one who came and destroyed and stopped the God's work, that, " you people scolded and beat that pastors that's why we don't have electricity now. You did wrong against God. So, go and bring back that servants of God, this is good for us. Then that people who scolded us came and asked pardon and took us to their village. When we are going the Spirit of God came upon me and gave me strength. We arranged street meeting. Soon after finishing the meeting electricity came back. There so many people believed in Christ. Now we are conducting prayer meeting in every Friday."<sup>2</sup>

The ministry strategy was effectively working; however, Sudarshan and Vinay were with genuine humility seeking my counsel on how to be even more effective. I had only two questions for them. The first involved who was discipling the new believers. I clearly remember their answer: *"We're turning them over to local churches."* My second question was closely related. How many of these new believers remain in the local church after one year? Their answer was that only 3 out of 10 would remain in the church. It was obvious the pastors were not properly making disciples of the new believers. Unfortunately, this is common in many churches today. What's the solution? First, let's look at their initial ministry strategy.

1. Raise up teams of young 5-Fold leaders in twelve states of India.
2. Conduct 40-day team leader training with much prayer before sending out teams.
3. Send teams to targeted states.
4. Establish a prayer initiative for every advance into villages.
5. Conduct gospel meetings in villages with signs, wonders, and miracles (Power Evangelism).
6. Begin house fellowship meetings for prayer with new believers.
7. Refer new believers to nearest Pentecostal Fellowship Church.

For the most part, this strategy was working because it was aligned with ministry patterns identified in the New Testament Church. However, it was missing something very important that is clearly indicated in Paul's Miletus Leadership Conference with the house church leaders of Ephesus.

**Acts 20:20 I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house...**

Notice the teaching ministry was both *"publicly and from house to house"*. Therefore, I encouraged Sudarshan and Vinay to first pray for God to show them any local church pastors who will connect with the ministry strategy. Although few pastors embrace or recognize a need for the house church strategy, those who do experience a higher level of effectiveness and harvest impact. Secondly, I counselled them to minister the Holy Spirit to all new believers and disciple them in the homes for one year before considering turning them over to local churches. Pastors are notorious for pushing membership and loyalty to church programs while providing inadequate and very limited discipleship. These young leaders were assuming that the pastors would disciple the new believers entrusted to them. I

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<sup>2</sup> Sudarshan Gummapu. Report on Bedadhanuru Village, 8/8/18

remember my exact words to Sudarshan and Vinay on this, “*You disciple them!*” I further demonstrated for them during the Kenya Mission how to properly lay the foundation of the first principles of Christ’s doctrine into the hearts and lives of new believers. Once Christ is formed in them those who are led by God to enter a local church will be Godly agents to bring transformation and revival into established churches. Thirdly, I encouraged them to establish a house church network consistent with the Early Church. God used Sudarshan and Vinay to show me again the importance and need for house churches to be established in every place.

### **The Strategic Purpose for House Church Development**

The ministry is a continual learning experience for both leaders and believers. Although the enemy has created chaos and confusion around the world today, Christians must face the challenge that this same world is filled with people who have lost their way and need Jesus. I begin this study with the premise that everyone who sincerely names the name of Christ understands this. Despite our struggles with the flesh and cares of life, we must together without exception face the truth that Jesus Christ alone is the way, the truth, and the life. Both Jesus Himself and the New Testament Church decrees this:

- **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- **Acts 4:12** “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Note the emphasis on *no one, in any other*, and “*no other name*” in the Gospel and in the New Testament Church. Although an alarming number of prominent church leaders appear to have given in to the multicultural pressure to make exceptions to this truth, the new generation must strongly and unapologetically align themselves with the Word of God. Otherwise, they will detach themselves from the absolute necessity set up by God’s directive plan for global evangelism; a plan that includes the development of house churches.

New generation leaders and believers must have the heart of God in these things. His heart is expressed in His desire that none should perish. This truth and strategic purpose in Christ is one that should unify the body of Christ around the world.

- **2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The above Scripture does not mean that all will be saved. After all, not everyone who attends church knows the Lord. In fact, the late Evangelist Billy Graham once claimed as many as 60% of church attenders had not been born again. The emphasis in Scripture is on God’s heart. He does not deliberately desire anyone to perish or be destroyed. His desire is for them to repent and be born again. The Greek *choreo* (kho-reh’-o) has a basic meaning of *making room, giving place, and yielding to be filled or occupied by another*. The word entails *reaching, going forward, advancing, and gaining ground by having space or room for receiving and holding something or someone*. There exists a vacancy in the hearts and lives of those without Christ. Heaven declares that Jesus Christ is the only

One who can fill this vacancy. Much of the Church will continue to face inward while multitudes perish unless leaders and believers have the heart of God to reach them with the Gospel. Therefore, we need to look to the Early Church for guidance on what and how to do things. The Early Church has ministry patterns and strategies that are consistent with what Jesus taught and did while He walked upon the earth. The Light of the Gospel is destined to penetrate and dispel the darkness in every place. But local church pastors reduce God's strategic purpose to inviting people within the four walls of their church building. I say this respectfully, we have delegated evangelism to established local church pastors when we are all called to do the work of an evangelist.

**2 Timothy 4:5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**

What is your ministry? Your ministry has not changed. It's to equip the saints for the work of ministry! What ministry? His ministry! It is the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ!

**Ephesians 4:11-16 NLT Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup> Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup> This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. <sup>15</sup> Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. <sup>16</sup> He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.**

One of the things the above Scripture is emphasizing is that Christ Himself has set this equipping or training plan in motion. It's coming from heaven and it involves teamwork. So, for pastors of local established churches to arbitrarily dismiss the need for house church development so prominent in the ministry of Jesus and the Early Church displays a very limited understanding of the job description so clearly stated in the Bible. The establishment of house churches is needed in every generation as a primary and effective way of bringing in the end time harvest. This is the primary strategic purpose for the establishment of house churches. House churches are needed to fulfill the Great Commission.

### **The Rwandan Church Situation**

The Bible records that Saul was literally devastating the church. Look at these biblical descriptions of his pre-conversion activity.

- **Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison.**
- **Acts 9:1-2 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.**

- Acts 22:4-5 "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, <sup>5</sup> "as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.
- Acts 26:9-11 "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup> "This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against *them*. <sup>11</sup> "And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted *them* even to foreign cities.
- Galatians 1:13-14 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to destroy it*. <sup>14</sup> And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Of course, we are all aware of the dramatic transformation of Saul who became Paul. He is the same one with this dynamic testimony, "***He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.***" (Gal. 1:23). In addition, Paul later reminds young Timothy that suffering persecution is to be expected. It comes with the territory.

- 2 Timothy 3:10-15 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, <sup>11</sup> persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra-- what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. <sup>12</sup> Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. <sup>13</sup> But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Every generation of young leaders must understand that in the ministry you will suffer persecutions. The purpose of persecution lies in the Greek word, *diogmos* (dee-ogue-mos') and the verb for persecuted, *dioko* (dee-o'-k-o), which means "to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, evil men and those deceived by the enemy will run swiftly after you to harass, trouble, molest, and make it most difficult for you in the ministry of the Lord. Jesus Himself urges us to remember this:

- John 15:20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

The implication is that Christ disciples would continue the ministry of Jesus and in doing so would experience, by and large, the same response from the world. Why is this so important to understand? Because if a young leader or believer is not deeply rooted in Christ, he or she will not be able to endure hardships. Instead in the ministry, you will be like those who receive the Word with joy, but stumble

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<sup>3</sup> Thayer's Greek Lexicon. 1451, 1453.

when the pressures and persecutions of ministry arise (See Matt. 13:20-21). I appreciate it when young leaders share with me their difficulties in the ministry. I listen very carefully, but my response is always the same: *“Welcome to the ministry!”* Why do I respond in such a way? In the natural I don’t enjoy seeing them surrounded by such difficulties, but by and through the Spirit I know they must learn and actively engage the biblical view of persecution.

- **2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Today, there is absolutely nothing new or strange about persecution. Nothing has changed! However, is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church ready? Are young leaders and believers prepared for persecutions today? And what does this have to do with house church development? First, the One who sits at the Right Hand of God and has been given all authority in heaven and earth, is most serious about the persecution of His Church. We find Jesus *“standing”* at the Right Hand of God when Stephen is being stoned.<sup>4</sup> And a young man, Saul, was consenting with Stephen’s persecution and death. This was the same young leader who sought to destroy the Church by persecuting the followers of Jesus Christ. And what lengths did he go to destroy the Church? It was not only in the synagogues, but **“entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.”** (Acts 8:3). Although the Bible does not indicate that Jesus was *standing* in heaven during this specific persecution, however, I believe He was very concerned with Saul’s home invasions. In fact, Jesus was so concerned that He did something about it. Although Saul had an aggressive and violent plan of persecution, it was no match for the One he was persecuting. The Bible records that Saul saw a light from heaven, fell to the ground, and heard the voice of the One he was persecuting. It was Jesus who he was persecuting! (Acts 9:5-6). Saul was also blinded and was led by others to the house of Judas where the Lord sent the disciple, Ananias, to minister healing, water baptism, and the mighty infilling of the Holy Spirit. Although Paul ministered in many synagogues, much of his ministry took place from house to house. See Acts 20:20. Persecution inevitably comes. You don’t have to look for it; it will find you! However, you can be ready. Interestingly, Saul did not go from the Damascus Road to the synagogue, but straightway to a house of Judah where he prayed until God sent Ananias. It appears that a significant amount of all the ministry recorded in the New Testament occurred in houses during ongoing persecutions. What can we learn from this? Not only is house church development one of the most effective means of carrying out the ministry of Jesus, but it’s also the most effective biblical way of being ready for persecutions from religion, business, and government.

The modern Church has limited itself too long with a building construction vision. It’s time to enlarge the vision to include the development of house churches in every region. Otherwise, persecutions will drive many away from the four walls of the church. In March 2018, I was informed of a

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<sup>4</sup> Acts 7:55-56. The only reference in Scripture to Jesus standing rather than sitting. Some believe He was rising to receive Stephen, but the fact the persecutors had just *gnashed at him with their teeth* points to Jesus’ attentive concern to what was happening to His child.

difficult situation threatening the Church in Rwanda, East Africa. This appeal came from one of our dear 5-Fold Global partners:

*Dear Dr. Gross and all Brothers in Christ,*

*Greetings from a thousand hills of Rwanda. The church in Rwanda is going through difficult times, whereby we need all the Christians worldwide, first your prayers, second your financial support. The government of Rwanda has closed hundreds of churches and Kigali alone 711! Reasons being improper church structures, parking yards, rain water collection systems on church roof with huge tanks are needed to be installed and lastly church registration. Also, no churches are allowed in tents and in public buildings and many churches were renting them. So far nine churches have been closed because of the above, although we have the church registration. Downwards is news about our other fellow Bishops like Rwandamura who have been put into custody, as you can see in some of the screenshots I took of one of newspaper here. Blessings as you share with the body of Christ for help. When you fulfill the demands, they re-open the church. Already over 20 have re-opened again! But many don't know what's next.<sup>5</sup>*

CBN (Christian Broadcasting News) reported the following about the new governmental effort to gain more control over the country's religious community.

*"The government says it is only acting to save the lives of followers due to the churches failure to comply with building safety standards. President Paul Kagame has said he was shocked by the high number of churches in the small East African country of 12 million people. "700 churches in Kigali?" he said of houses of worship in the nation's capital in March. "Are these boreholes (deep wells) that give people water? I don't think we have as many boreholes. Do we even have as many factories? This has been a mess!" Kagame said Rwanda doesn't need so many houses of worship, claiming that such a high number is only fit for bigger, more developed economies that have the means to sustain them. Human rights groups have accused Kagame's government of clamping down on freedom of expression, which the president has denied. Six Pentecostal pastors who protested the church closures were arrested and accused of "illegal meetings with bad intentions," according to The Associated Press. The government is also taking other steps to rein in the nation's religious community through new laws. The new measure would also require pastors to have a theology degree before they start their own churches so that they teach correct doctrine, according to The Associated Press. The aim is to control the spread of Pentecostal churches that often spring up under leaders who claim to have received a call to preach. The majority of churches that have been closed are said to be small Pentecostal prayer houses, with some preachers suspected of growing rich off often impoverished followers. Some churches meet in tents or houses that cannot accommodate crowds and noise pollution from nighttime gatherings is a concern, authorities said. "The prayer houses were found in such poor physical conditions, and we are not targeting any religion," Anastase Shyaka, the head of the Rwanda Governance Board that regulates faith-based organizations, told the AP. "We are closing prayer houses of all different denominations and asking them to meet existing health and safety standards for their followers." Not everyone, however, has the money for a degree..Local media in the capital*

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<sup>5</sup> Newspaper article on arrests of six pastors for subversion to government policy against churches: <http://en.igihe.com/news/six-pastors-held-over-subversion.html>. March 6, 2018.

*have reported that over 6,000 churches have been closed so far across the country, but Shaka said the actual number was still being compiled.*<sup>6</sup>

Note how similar the government control over the churches in Rwanda is to the authority Saul received from the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Although both church buildings and prayer houses are being targeted in Rwanda, it's far more difficult for governments to gain control over homes (i.e. China). I also found it interesting how Pentecostal churches and prayer houses were the most frequently targeted by the government. I believe this is since the most effective global evangelism is being accomplished by those empowered by the Holy Spirit. There is further evidence that the Rwandan Church was not ready for the government action to control the Church. An August 2018 report indicates this:

*"A sanction was posted on thousands of religious buildings throughout the nation of Rwanda, requiring the buildings be closed to the public until updates can be made. It's a set back that many evangelical churches didn't foresee. "Many people are just, you know, discouraged," Pastor Moses Bukenya of the Gospel Center Church told CBN News. Rwanda's government is closing thousands of churches and dozens of mosques because the buildings do not comply with the country's safety standards. "Some people have joined other churches that have been reopened, while they work on their churches," Pastor Bukenya said. Some of these safety requirements include having at least 1.5 acres of land, a parking lot, a sound-proofed building and at least four bathroom stalls. Older churches have been able to make the upgrades quickly. Others, however, have been closed for months. Pastor David Barige of the Beautiful Temple Ministries said, "These days we are not able to have it like that and we are awaiting the hand of God. Church communities understand the necessity of the upgrades. However, some worry they'll never be able to afford them." "We definitely need prayers that the Lord may empower us to do what we are required to do by the government for our good and for the people we lead," said Bukenya."*<sup>7</sup>

Just think about how these Rwandan Pastors are describing the situation and what they see as the solution:

- A set back that many churches didn't foresee.
- Many discouraged people (some congregating to other churches, but where are others going?)
- Churches closed indefinitely (Note thousands of Christian churches but only dozens of Mosques)
- Waiting for the hand of God
- Worry they'll never be able to afford the building upgrades
- Solution: Prayers for the Lord to empower us to do what the government requires

My first question was how the above description and solution compares with the New Testament witness. The urgent appeal of the Rwandan Church was for prayers and finances to meet the

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<sup>6</sup> CBN report at <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2018/april/rwandas-government-closes-churches-to-gain-more-control>. April 4, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> CBN News Report at <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2018/august/rwandan-government-safety-requirements-temporarily-close-thousands-of-churches>. August 31, 2018

government requirements and some of these requirements were rather restrictive. But the government attempt is to control and decrease the number of churches in the country. What is the government most afraid of? Isn't it the multiplication of the number of disciples and churches in the land? Governments by and large don't want the message of Christ to spread any further. They know most churches in Rwanda cannot afford to upgrade their buildings. Church buildings are nice, but what about the ministry of Jesus? I urge new generation leaders. Always choose to continue the ministry of the Lord from house to house whether you have a building or not. Be ready!

What's happening in Rwanda should serve as a lesson to the Church at large. Get ready! Persecution has not ceased! Nevertheless, persecution cannot stop the Church of the Living God! Here was my response to the Rwandan Church situation:

*"Greetings to you in the strong name of our Lord Jesus. I've been praying about the situation of the Rwanda Churches being closed who do not meet certain building standards. It grieves my heart that pastors who resist like our Brother Charles are being arrested. Although I was initially surprised with the situation you described in Kigali, the Spirit suddenly reminded me that this is to be expected in the end times all over the world. Even though I understand the most apparent fix is finances to bring church buildings up to government standards, I know this is the obvious human solution when the call is for a spiritual solution. What I mean by this is that the Church in every place needs to wake up and be prepared for these situations. Spiritual leaders must prepare in the Spirit beforehand for persecutions like this from governments, etc. China is a great example of how they overcame and what was the spiritual strategy that could not stop the church of the living God in China? It was the house church strategy! The Chinese government would arrest leaders, destroy church buildings, and forbid meetings and yet the church kept growing by multiplication from house to house just like the New Testament Church. I've been exhorting the Church in every nation on this for decades. The churches in most nations are not ready for church buildings to be shut down. My counsel is to get ready! Prepare the body of Christ for persecutions so when it happens the church grows even more and more. The Word of God confirms this. I'm praying for the Church of Rwanda and will alert our 5-Fold Global intercessors soon to engage. Continue to keep me informed. We serve a triumphant God! The Church of Rwanda shall overcome and leap over this wall in the power of the Holy Spirit. God will be glorified!"<sup>8</sup>*

Although I've observed many churches that are unprepared for persecution, there are those who are ready. These leaders have recognized the need for house church development in addition to gathering in conventional church buildings. If the government ever shuts them down or even takes over their property and buildings, the ministry of Jesus effectively continues and even multiplies from house to house. Instead of panic and defeat, the church would have what Wolfgang Simson, a leading proponent of house church development, calls a *"persecution-proof structure."*

*"It would have a persecution - proof structure. It would mature under tears, multiply under pressure, and breathe under water. It would flourish in the desert, see in the darkness, and thrive in the midst of chaos. A church like this*

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<sup>8</sup> My response to the Rwandan Church situation, March 9,2018

would multiply like five loaves and two fish in the hands of Jesus, and its people would become its resources, with one name to boast about, the Lamb of God.<sup>9</sup>

The need for house church development has never been greater for Kingdom Advancement on earth.

### **Why House Church Development is Critical**

The need for house church development is acknowledged more in developing nations than in the developed ones of Western Europe and North America. Why do American pastors typically resist house churches? There are several reasons for their opposition, however, research over the past two decades in America gives some indication in conjunction with the growing need for house church development. I encourage you to keep an open mind to what these research statistics indicate and consider this: Could it be that God in His wisdom is going to reach our contemporary world from house to house as well as through conventional local churches? The following research was conducted by the highly respected Barna Research Group.<sup>10</sup>

- USA experienced a rapid growth of participation in house churches during past decade – from 1% to 9%, according to a 2006 report.
- This means nationally 20 million adults attend houses churches in a typical week; 43 million during a month.
- Barna predicts weekly participation in house churches to double over the next decade and that house churches will become a permanent fixture of American society in the near future.
- 2000 – 70% of American Christians experience & express their faith in conventional churches gathering weekly in a church building; 5% in alternative faith-based community
- 2025 – 30% to 35% in local churches; 30%-35% in alternative faith-based community, primarily house churches.

In another survey, pastors grossly overexaggerated the spiritual condition of their congregations. The priorities pastors were basing their assessment on were found to be a problem. Just a casual glance reveals a gulf between pastors and church members involving ministry priorities and mission objectives. The research examined the following primary measures:

- Attendance
- How many had accepted Christ as savior.
- Were there enough people to keep church programs running?
- The maturity of a person's faith in God.
- The spiritual health of the people in the church. (Note: The vast majority of pastors did not assess spiritual health beyond a superficial participation of people in church. Pastors did not use the measures listed below. In fact, only 1 out of 10 used these).

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<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Simson. *The House Church Book: Rediscover the Dynamic, Organic, Relational, Viral Community Jesus Started*. Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition, Location 98.

<sup>10</sup> The Barna Research Group is based in Ventura, CA, and provides research, resources, and training to facilitate community and organizational transformation. The research cited is from a June 2006 report with 5,013 adults surveyed and another report with 614 senior pastors surveyed.

- The intensity (passion) of the commitment to love and serve God and people.
- The nature of a person's personal ministry.
- The breadth of congregational involvement in community service.
- The extent to which believers have some forms of accountability for spiritual development & lifestyle.
- The way believers use their resources to advance the kingdom of God.
- How often people worship God during the week or feel as if they have experienced the presence of God.
- How faith is integrated into the family experience of those who are connected with the church.

Stewardship, evangelism, lifestyle, & spiritual maturity were seldom considered by these senior pastors. For example, pastors were 21 times more likely to evaluate whether people showed up (attendance) than to determine whether people experienced the presence of God during their time at the church. Also, 4 of 5 pastors focused on salvation (decisions), but ignored issues related to lifestyle and spiritual maturity. In fact, the lifestyle of the churched and unchurched is essentially indistinguishable and is not a concern for most churches! Only 1 of 8 churches bothers to evaluate how many of their congregations are sharing their faith in Christ with non-believers. For every 2 churches that considered the congregation's breadth of ministry to people not connected to the church as an indicator of spiritual health, 5 churches focused on the amount of "in-reach" activity undertaken. It was not surprising to discover that most Americans listed their families as their top priority. However, in this survey of 614 senior pastors who were asked to list the top three church ministry priorities, only 4% listed ministry to families and a mere 3% indicated prayer. These were listed as the lowest priorities among the dozen ministries. If the local church is going to rebound from its current decline, then it's going to have to get a passion (burning fire) for prayer and ministry to the family. And the house is the domain of the family.

Most research shows an increasing gulf between pastors and the people of God. Could it be as Wolfgang Simson says, "*Church as we know it is preventing church as God wants it*."<sup>11</sup> The Apostle John told New Testament believers "***it is the last hour***":

- **1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.**

This means it's here! Paul told Timothy he needed to know this!

- **2 Timothy 3:1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:**

It's the last hour and perilous times for every generation. This generation of modern technology and social media is no exception. Jesus is describing this generation the same way He did when He walked on the face of the earth as the Son of Man.

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<sup>11</sup> Wolfgang Simson. *The House Church Book*. Kindle Edition, Location 103.

- **Matthew 11:16-19 NLT** "To what can I compare this generation? It is like children playing a game in the public square. They complain to their friends, <sup>17</sup> 'We played wedding songs, and you didn't dance, so we played funeral songs, and you didn't mourn.' <sup>18</sup> For John didn't spend his time eating and drinking, and you say, 'He's possessed by a demon.' <sup>19</sup> The Son of Man, on the other hand, feasts and drinks, and you say, 'He's a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!' But wisdom is shown to be right by its results."

Jesus also characterizes this generation as **“faithless and perverse”** (Matt. 17:17; Luke 9:41), however, it’s the rejection of Him that is the primary issue. I like how the NET Bible explains the comparison Jesus made.

*“The children of this generation were making the complaint (see vv. [Mat 11:18-19](#)) that others were not playing the game according to the way they played the music. John and Jesus did not follow “their tune.” Jesus' complaint was that this generation wanted things their way, not God's.”<sup>12</sup>*

It’s a critical time for every generation. But what about the Church today with all its denominations, traditions, and buildings? Is that the way Jesus wanted His church to be built? Are we wanting things our way rather than God’s? If so, how did we get where we are today and how do we rediscover and reclaim what has been lost? These questions call for a paradigm shift. The Church must first embrace the need for transformation before it can become effective and powerful again in bringing the ministry of Jesus to this generation. Wolfgang Simson summarizes this as a **“third reformation.”**

*“The historic Orthodox and Catholic Church — that existed after Constantine in the fourth century — developed and adopted a religious system based on two elements: a Christian version of the Old Testament Temple — the cathedral — and a worship pattern styled after the Jewish synagogue. They thus adopted, as the foundational pattern for the times to follow, a blueprint for Christian meetings and worship that was neither expressly revealed, nor ever endorsed by God in New Testament times: the “cathegogue,” linking the house-of-God mentality and the synagogue...Now God is touching the wineskins, initiating a third reformation, a reformation of structure from church houses to house churches.”<sup>13</sup>*

As you can see, the Church today is structured and operating more from an Old Testament pattern than the New. Look what Jesus had to say about this when the Pharisees asked Him why His disciples did not follow the traditions of the elders and the issue of the old and the new:

- **Mark 7:6-9, 13** He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. <sup>7</sup> And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' <sup>8</sup> "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men-- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." <sup>9</sup> He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition... <sup>13</sup> "making the

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<sup>12</sup> BibleWorks 9 (2009). NET Bible Notes, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Wolfgang Simson. *The House Church Book* (2009). Kindle Edition, Location 113, 127-128.

word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

- Luke 5:36-39 Then He spoke a parable to them: "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was *taken* out of the new does not match the old. <sup>37</sup> "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. <sup>38</sup> "But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. <sup>39</sup> "And no one, having drunk old *wine*, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'"

I want to encourage new generation leaders and believers that the new is more valuable than the old. This is what Jesus is saying! Many pastors assemble their church members under their control in small groups, home fellowships, connect groups, and whatever other terminology that comes to mind. I've observed these gatherings and they often are limited to repeating the traditional service in the home rather than the church building. Additionally, these groups are under the systematic control of a senior pastor. This is not a house church! The new Jesus is talking about is so new that it cannot be combined with the old. In fact, His presence and teaching signaled the passing of the old. The new cannot be confined to the old! This is what makes house church development so critical. We have a biblical model that God is again setting before us. Dare we ignore it? It is the house church model. Now let's consult Scripture to see how this strategic pattern emerged and how it can effectively transform our understanding of how to do church today.

## Chapter 2: The House to House Ministry of Jesus

### The Locations of Jesus' Ministry

What is the Church? More specifically, what is a house church? Is a house church a real church? If so, what is its relationship with the local church and the universal or global church? Roger Gehring, author of *House Church and Mission*, gives an excellent definition and identifying criteria for house churches.<sup>14</sup>

1. House church: a group of believers that meet independently & regularly in a home or place other than a church building. They are self-governed and considered a complete church on their own. The following elements constitute a house church: (a) a group exists that has developed its own religious life, including regular gatherings for worship; (b) the content of these regular gatherings for worship includes evangelistic & instructional proclamation, the celebration of baptism & communion, prayer, and fellowship; (c) elements such as organizational structures emerge as further evidence of a house church.
2. Local church: consists of all the Christians that gather at a geographically definable location (town, city).
3. Universal church: the worldwide body of Christians.

Early Christians met almost exclusively in the homes of individual members of the congregation for nearly 300 years until the 4th century when Constantine built the first basilicas. The home is the basic building block for the family and for the church. The Church is three-dimensional: House, Local, and Universal. Larry Kreider & Floyd McClung in their book *Starting a House Church* view church in America as three categories or different containers working together to accomplish God's purpose: Community Churches, Mega-churches, and House-Church Networks. The community church is like a community store; the mega-church is like a Wal-Mart Superstore; and the house-church network is like a shopping mall with many stores.<sup>15</sup> God continues to use and bless all three to reach the population. This is important to acknowledge as we look at the development of house churches in the Bible into citywide church movements connected with the global Church. I don't believe it's a question of either/or but one of both. Unfortunately, there continues to be competition between conventional churches accompanied by a resistance to house church development. But where and how did Jesus conduct ministry?

Jesus conducted His ministry in three locations:

1. Open-air settings (mountainside, by the sea, from a boat, on level ground)
  - **Matthew 5:1** One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, <sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them.

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<sup>14</sup> Roger Gehring. *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Larry Kreider & Floyd McClung. *Starting a House Church*. Regal Books, 2007.

- **Mark 2:13** Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them.
  - **Luke 5:1** So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, <sup>2</sup> and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing *their* nets. <sup>3</sup> Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.
  - **Luke 6:17-19** And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, <sup>18</sup> as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. <sup>19</sup> And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed *them* all.
2. Synagogues and the Temple (note: except for the Temple, these existed primarily in the form of house synagogues, private homes with or without architectural alteration. Elaborate structures are evident only from the 3rd – 6th centuries.
- **Luke 4:16** So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.
  - **Luke 6:6** Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered.
  - **Matthew 12:9** Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue.
  - **Mark 1:21** Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.
3. Domestic houses: (Note: 29 references to houses (*oikos*) in the Gospel of Mark alone).
- **Matthew 8:14-15** Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. <sup>15</sup> So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.
  - **Mark 2:1-2** And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. <sup>2</sup> Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.
  - **Mark 2:15** Now it happened, as He was dining in *Levi's* house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him.
  - **Luke 8:51** When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. <sup>52</sup> Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping."

These were the three places where Jesus ministered. It is significant that house to house is mentioned far more than any other place. This has led Wolfgang Simson and others to conclude that it's time for the church to return to the home.

*“Much of Christianity has fled the family and instead organized artificial performances in sacred buildings far from the atmosphere of real life. As God is in the business of recapturing the homes, the church turns back to its roots – back to where it came from. It literally comes home, completing the circle of church history at the end of world history.”<sup>16</sup>*

## The Capernaum Pattern

The ministry of Jesus in Capernaum is a lesson in house church development. Jesus moved to Capernaum after John was imprisoned and immediately following His rejection at Nazareth. This marked the beginning of His Galilean ministry.

- **Matthew 4:12-13** Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. <sup>13</sup> And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,
- **Matthew 9:1** So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.
- **Mark 2:1** And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house.

What can be said about Capernaum. The NET Bible gives some basic information about the city:

*“Capernaum was a town located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, 680 ft (204 m) below sea level. It was a major trade and economic center in the North Galilean region, and it became the hub of operations for Jesus’ Galilean ministry.”<sup>17</sup>*

Although Jesus continued to enter the synagogues to teach and cast out unclean spirits, it was in the house of Peter and Andrew that most of His miracles took place.

- **Mark 1:29-34** Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup> But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. <sup>31</sup> So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them. <sup>32</sup> At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> And the whole city was gathered together at the door. <sup>34</sup> Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

The entire city was drawn to one house where Jesus was present. Earlier in the synagogue Jesus taught the Word of God. He also commanded an unclean spirit out of a man. The members were astonished by His authority. His fame spread everywhere. Praise God for that, but at Peter’s house Jesus **“healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons”**. *Many* means a very large number. In the synagogue, the unclean spirit spoke. At Peter’s house, Jesus did not even allow the demons to speak. Could this mean the house of Peter in Capernaum became a center of operation for the ministry of Jesus?

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<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Simson. *The House Church Book* (2009), Kindle Edition, location 223.

<sup>17</sup> BibleWorks 9 (2009), NET Bible, Matthew 4:13, Note 22.

Peter's house became a place of instruction and miracles. A review of what took place in this one house paints a clear picture that it was a ministry headquarters for Jesus and the Twelve.

- Mark 1:29-34 (Peter's mother-in-law & many who were sick & with demons healed and delivered).
- Mark 2:1-12 (Jesus preached the word and healed the paralytic).
- Mark 3:19ff (His family & scribes are taught).
- Mark 9:33ff (Jesus teaches the 12 on being a servant of all).
- Matt. 9:27-31 (Two blind men are healed).

This leads me to believe that house churches can become strategic operational centers to carry out the supernatural ministry of Jesus Christ.

Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida were relatively close in proximity. There's a two hour walk between them. Some scholars call these three cities the "*evangelical triangle*" because Jesus did most of His greatest works there.

- **Matthew 11:20-24** Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: <sup>21</sup> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> "But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. <sup>23</sup> "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. <sup>24</sup> "But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

The regions around these cities were strategically targeted by Jesus in accordance with biblical prophecy. Jesus came to Capernaum to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

- **Matthew 4:14-16** that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: <sup>15</sup> "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, *By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:* <sup>16</sup> The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned."

One can't help noticing the whole region is referred to as "*Galilee of the Gentiles*". I wonder how many Gentiles were gathered at the door of Peter's house? Nevertheless, Jesus took up residence in a house at one location (Peter's house) and exercised an itinerant ministry with a citywide and regional impact. It is also likely that Jesus used the house of Martha in Bethany (1.7 miles from Jerusalem) in much the same way as Peter's house in Capernaum (See Luke 10:38-42; Matt. 21:17; Mark 11:1,11,12; John 11:1-9). Jesus went from village to village, house to house in His ministry.

- **Mark 1:38** But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." <sup>39</sup> And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

- **Mark 6:6** And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.
- **Mark 6:56** Wherever He entered into villages, cities, or in the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.
- **Mark 8:27** Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, "Who do men say that I am?"

Is there an intentional pattern for house to house, village to village, city to city outreach? If so, is this a strategic pattern Jesus wants repeated? Can the development of house churches impact regions and even nations for Christ in the same way today?

### **The Mission Instructions of Jesus**

The Mission Instructions of Jesus reveal an intentional and continuing pattern of ministry that includes the house church strategy (Matthew 10:1-42; Mark 6:7-13, 30; Luke 9:1-6, 10; 10:1-20). A composite examination of these instructions describes the life of an itinerant ministry team. Let's breakdown the instructions from Luke's account. Remember, these are the mission instructions given by Jesus when He sent out the Seventy, a second generation of disciples.

- Disciples sent out in teams of two

**Luke 10:1** After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

- Rigorous instructions on equipment & supplies for the mission (travel light, renounce all belongings, and depend upon God).

**Luke 10:4** "Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.

- A prohibition about greeting someone on the way (Note: reveals urgency of the mission and the danger of getting distracted).

**Luke 10:4** "Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.

- Identify the son of peace in a house with an expression of peace.

**Luke 10:5-6** "But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' <sup>6</sup> "And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.

- Stay in the house of peace (a fixed place as a base of operation).

**Luke 10:7** "And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.

- Eat and drink what you are given (the operational base is also the house of provision).

**Luke 10:7 "And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. (Luk 10:7 NKJ)**

- The laborer is worthy of his wages (host provides room and board and the hospitality of the house).

**Luke 10:7 "And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.**

- Instructions in every city to eat what is set before you. (This denotes a pattern from city to city).

**Luke 10:8 "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you.**

- The instructions to heal the sick and share God's kingdom.

**Luke 10:9 "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'**

- Instructions on handling rejection (reveals the eschatological intensity and earnestness of the kingdom mission).

**Luke 10:10-16 "But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' <sup>12</sup> "But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. <sup>13</sup> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>14</sup> "But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. <sup>15</sup> "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. <sup>16</sup> "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."**

- The return and mission report of the disciples where Jesus puts things in perspective.

**Luke 10:17-20 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." <sup>18</sup> And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup> "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. <sup>20</sup> "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."**

It's clear from the mission instructions of Jesus that He trained His disciples to do house to house and city to city outreach. They patterned their ministry after His. There is a strategic movement, a progression of the mission from house (10:5) to city (10:8) in this outreach strategy. The first stage of proclamation was the house as a ministry headquarters and the 2nd stage was citywide outreach. The immediate mission objective was the transformation of the house and household. German scholar Roger Gehring gives this summary.

*"Jesus' missional approach consisted of finding a house and a household willing to commit themselves to his kingdom message. With this house as a social and material basis, he, along with his newly recruited followers, attempted to*

reach the entire town of Capernaum and from there the surrounding area within and beyond the “evangelical triangle” by traveling from house to house and village to village.”<sup>18</sup>

## The Significance of Jesus’ Ministry in Domestic Houses

The strategic progression of the ministry of Jesus from house to house led to a multiplication of the number of disciples. When you have an entire city gathered at the door of a domestic house accompanied by a great many miracles, you have an unstoppable movement. People are drawn to the Lord. His fame spreads through the land. Multitudes for His presence and multitudes believe on His name. Wolfgang Simson presents an interesting outlook on the rapid growth potential of this ministry pattern of using domestic houses.<sup>19</sup> He says a typical house church may have 6-20 members. It doubles in size every 6-9 months. In his theoretical calculations, Simson takes an average house church with 12 members and a safe doubling rate of 12 months. He also anticipates the house church does not grow the first year and even assumes a 25% fallout rate. Although we want to be optimistic about the house church ministry aligned with Jesus’ ministry, it’s good that Simson factors in some realistic effects of struggles at the beginning. Here’s the chart he presents:<sup>20</sup>

After Year	Number of House Churches	Number of People
1	Only 1, not 2	12
2	2	24
3	4	48
4	8	96
5	12 (=16 less 25%)	144
6	24	288
7	48	576
8	96	1,152
9	192	2,304
10	288 (=384 less 25%)	3,456
15	6,912 (=9,216 less 25%)	82,944
20	165,888 (=221,184 less 25%)	<b>1,990,656</b>

At a glance, the above multiplication scenario appears out of reach and a mere fantasy. However, it has occurred several times in history.<sup>21</sup> The conclusion is that “*house churches are multipliable structures*”.<sup>22</sup> When Jesus builds the church and we do our part in partnership with Him, with the Holy Spirit, and with one another, multiplication takes place.

The significance of Jesus’s ministry in domestic houses is in its penetration into where people live and its rapid multiplication, especially in the face of persecution. History declares that the most

<sup>18</sup> Roger Gehring, *House Church and Mission* (2004).

<sup>19</sup> Wolfgang Simson. *The House Church Book* (2009), pp. 58-59

<sup>20</sup> Wolfgang Simson. *The House Church Book* (2009), p. 59.

<sup>21</sup> Jim Rutz documents this in his book. *Megashift* (2005). Colorado Springs: Empowerment Press.

<sup>22</sup> Simson, p. 59.

severe persecution of Christians leads to the most rapid growth. New generation leaders need to have a vision for multiplication from the outset rather than a vision for position, land, and buildings. God's way results in these things multiplying from house to house and city to city.

- The number of disciples (Acts 6:1,7)  
**Acts 6:1** Now in those days, when *the number of the disciples was multiplying*, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.  
**Acts 6:7** Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.
- The word of God (Acts 6:7; 12:24)  
**Acts 12:24** But the word of God grew and multiplied.
- The number of churches (Acts 9:31)  
**Acts 9:31** Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.
- Signs, Wonders, and Miracles (John 14:12; Acts 4:30; 5:14-16)  
**John 14:12** "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father.  
**Acts 5:14-16** And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)<sup>15</sup>  
Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.<sup>16</sup> There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.
- The seed sown and the fruit (Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:10)  
**2 Corinthians 9:10** Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have *sown* and increase the fruits of your righteousness,

These are five good reasons for new generation leaders to make house church development a top priority patterned after the ministry of Jesus.

## Chapter 3: House Church Strategy of the Jerusalem Church

### The House with the Upper Room

The Jerusalem Church immediately and intentionally carried on the ministry of Jesus after being filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. They did so in accordance with His instructions. The way Jesus trained them was the way they did ministry. It was God's way and the Lord daily added to the Church those who were being saved. How did this all come about? Was there a specific strategy involved? A detailed look into the house missions in the Early Church will shed light upon these questions. I begin with the house with the upper room.

- **Acts 1:12-15** Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. <sup>13</sup> And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son of Alphaeus* and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son of James*. <sup>14</sup> These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. <sup>15</sup> And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty) and said...

The Greek *huperoon* (hoop-er-o'-on) refers to the highest part of the house. It was sometimes built upon the flat roof of the house, where Orientals were accustomed to retiring to eat, meditate, and pray. This house is presented as a prototype of an early Christian place of worship. They all know where this place is. What took place in this house?

- It's where they prayed together.  
**Acts 1:14** These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.  
**Acts 4:31** And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.
- It's where they fellowshiped with one another.  
**Acts 2:42** And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.
- It's where they met for worship, broke bread, and had preaching and teaching.  
**Acts 2:46-47** So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.  
**Acts 5:42** And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.
- It's where they (the 120) were gathered on the day of Pentecost.  
**Acts 2:1** When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

One tradition (530 AD) identifies the Upper Room with Mary's house, but the Upper Room could also be the house of James, the Lord's brother. This probably means there was more than one house

where Christians gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12, 17). In addition, a male householder is clearly implied in Mark 14:13-15 (See also Matt. 26:18) when it came to such houses.

**Acts 12:17** But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren." And he departed and went to another place.

**Mark 14:13-14** And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. <sup>14</sup> "Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' <sup>15</sup> "Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished *and* prepared; there make ready for us."

The Greek *oikodespote* in the above passage is a singular masculine noun. It refers to "***the master of the house***", This is where Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples. It is described as "***a large upper room***", so it would facilitate the first 120 believers. Regardless of who the house with the upper room belonged to, it was the place they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The house with the upper room continued to be a place of great spiritual significance.

## **The House of Mary**

The House of Mary, mother of John Mark, is another significant house of considerable spiritual activity referred to in the Bible. The first Christians in Jerusalem met in at least two houses: the house with the upper room and the house of Mary. Immediately following Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison, he came to the house of Mary.

- **Acts 12:10-17** When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. <sup>11</sup> And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and *from* all the expectation of the Jewish people." <sup>12</sup> So, when he had considered *this*, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. <sup>13</sup> And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. <sup>14</sup> When she recognized Peter's voice, because of *her* gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. <sup>15</sup> But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel." <sup>16</sup> Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened *the door* and saw him, they were astonished. <sup>17</sup> But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren." And he departed and went to another place.

What we know about Mary's house? (Note: Mary, John Mark and Barnabas were related and came from a Levitical background (Acts 4:36-37; Col. 4:10).

- It held a considerable number of people because many were gathered for prayer (Acts 12:12).
- It had a gate typical of a large distinguished home with a gate, courtyard, and rooms. (Acts 12:13-14).

- The mention of the servant girl, Rhoda, means the house belonged to the affluent (Acts 12:13-15).
- Mary's house was not the only house believers met in because Peter went to another place. More than one meeting place existed. (Acts 12:12, 17)

This also reveals that in Jerusalem, there were some well to do Christians who possessed homes and made them available for the larger groups of believers (Acts 1:13-15; 12:12-17; 21: 15-17).

## The Operation of the Jerusalem House Churches

There are three biblical summaries that include and imply the operation of house churches in the Jerusalem Church.

- **Acts 2:41-47** Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.<sup>42</sup> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.<sup>43</sup> Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.<sup>44</sup> Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,<sup>45</sup> and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.<sup>46</sup> So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,<sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
- **Acts 4:32-35** Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.<sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.<sup>34</sup> Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,<sup>35</sup> and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.
- **Acts 5:12-16** And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.<sup>13</sup> Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.<sup>14</sup> And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,<sup>15</sup> so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.<sup>16</sup> Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Just how committed to the house church development were these early believers in the Jerusalem Church. Acts 2:42 and 46 are connected by the Greek plural present active participle, *proskartereo*. The meaning of this word indicates a very high level of active and continued participation in the life of the Church. The definitions provided by the Thayer Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament reveals an equivalent level of dedication and commitment. Thayer's definitions:

- to adhere to one, be his adherent, to be devoted or constant to one
- to be steadfastly attentive unto, to give unremitting care to a thing
- to continue all the time in a place

- to persevere and not to faint
- to show one's self courageous for
- to be in constant readiness for one, wait on constantly

This was the temperament of the apostles and believers as they continued the ministry of Jesus. It created a healthy environment for those who would come later. They also practiced a community of goods on the one hand and the establishing of a plurality of house groups on the other. It was not, nor should it be compared to, a system of communism or socialism, but one of looking out for the needs of each other. They also gathered as the whole church in the temple for preaching, teaching, and prayers. After all, they were Jewish Christians. However, their primary meeting place was in the homes.

Luke describes what happened in the Jerusalem House Churches.

- **Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**

The above terminology indicates operational areas built around their participation with Jesus' house to house ministry. A closer examination reveals that these functional areas were quite specific. This is supported by the definite article appearing in the Greek before each area or operation. Most modern Bible translations overlook this point. Also because of the usage of (*kaí*) "and" between each functional area, it is clear that this represents the basic agenda for an early Christian house church gathering.

- Teaching (*te didache ton apostolon*) – instruction that was both comprehensive and systematic. The apostle's doctrine was the doctrine of Christ with the goal that all would become teachers (Heb. 5-12-6:3).
- Fellowship (*te koinonia*) – Christ-centered with God-given unity in heart and mind. This was clearly demonstrated in sharing material things with one another as the need arose. This was a spiritual fellowship; relationships built upon Christ and partnership with the Holy Spirit and each other (Acts 2:44; 4:32).
- Breaking of bread (*te kiasei tou artou*) – a communion celebration built around a common meal. The Lord's Supper was included in the house church gatherings. Paul had to give corrective instructions to the Corinthian house church gatherings (1Cor. 11:17-34).
- Prayers (*tais proseuchais*) – praying in the house church and in the temple. This was more than reciting the Lord's Prayer. It involved strategically targeted intercession (Acts 4:23-29; 12:5, 12).

The house churches in Jerusalem functioned in the above way. And, this continued to be the pattern of operation for house church gatherings throughout the early expansion of Christianity. It is important to point out here that the larger part of modern church services limit the scope of these operational areas. However, this was not the case in the Early Church.

The Bible records that the believers gathered around Solomon's Porch, the Temple, and on the streets of Jerusalem. But how do we know there was a plurality of house churches in Jerusalem? Here are a number of reasons house church development existed:

- Luke reports that the church grew rapidly so two houses would not have been enough.
- Intense form of fellowship experienced along with the communion meal requires many house churches.

- Saul enters houses in Jerusalem to arrest Christians (Acts 8:3).
- A plurality of house churches existed alongside the local church in Jerusalem.
- The house churches were an important training ground for future leaders and a showplace for an attractive Christian lifestyle (i.e., Stephen & Philip who were Hellenistic Jews)

### **Peter's Boundary Breaking House to House Mission from Jerusalem**

Peter and the other Apostles remained in Jerusalem for about eight years (32-40 A.D.) preaching only to the Jews. We know this because believers in Jerusalem were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria after the stoning of Stephen and the severe persecution that followed. However, the Bible says the apostles stayed in Jerusalem.

- **Acts 8:1** Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

It's significant to note that those fleeing Jerusalem ***"went everywhere preaching the word"***. (Acts 8:4). I've often wondered if God in His omniscience planned this all out because what followed was one of the greatest expansions of Christianity and house church development. Here's how this miraculous expansion took place:

- **Acts 8:1, 4** – Apostles remain in Jerusalem. Believers scattered throughout the region due to great persecution. They preach the Word everywhere.
- **Acts 8:5-13** – Philip holds a miracle working crusade in Samaria. Many healed and delivered, including Simon Magus, who previously practiced sorcery.
- **Acts 8:14-25** – The Jerusalem Church sends Peter and John to Samaria to ensure the new believers receive the Holy Spirit. Simon Magus is confronted. Peter and John preach in many Samaritan villages as they return to Jerusalem. This begins their itinerant ministry. James, the brother of Jesus, appears to be an important team leader in the Jerusalem Church.
- **Acts 9:32-35** – Peter travels throughout the country ministering from house to house. Aeneas, paralyzed for 8 years is completely healed. A city and region (Lydda and Sharon) turn to the Lord.
- **Acts 9:36-43** – Peter is staying in Joppa in the house of Simon, the tanner. Tabitha is raised from the dead in her home in nearby Lydda. Many believed on the Lord in Joppa. Peter stayed with Simon many days. One day as he prayed and waited for lunch to be prepared, he had a vision and was divinely instructed that men were coming for him from Caesarea.
- **Acts 10:1-48** (See also Acts 11:1-18) – Peter goes with the men sent by Cornelius. Six Jewish believers go with him. Peter preaches the gospel in the house of Cornelius where many gathered. They (Gentiles) were all filled with the Holy Spirit. This is a clear example of the house mission approach and may mark the beginning of the first house church in Caesarea.

Even a casual observer of the above mission development can see the vital role of the house to house ministry. Although this does not exclude the likelihood that Peter and others also went into the synagogues, the streets and marketplaces to evangelize, the importance of the house to house mission

of Peter to the rapid expansion of Christianity cannot be minimized. It broke all boundaries! New generation leaders must recapture this strategy without delay.

# Chapter 4: House Church Strategy of the Antioch Church

## The Global Mission of the Antioch Church

The Bible says those who were scattered after the great persecution over Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. Although they preached only to the Jews, some of them preached to the Gentiles at Antioch.

- **Acts 11:19-21** Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. <sup>20</sup> But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

It's important to understand that Antioch was a major pagan city. The NET Bible notes give us a glimpse of the enormous size and pagan environment of Antioch.

*“Antioch was a city in Syria (not Antioch in Pisidia). This was probably the third largest city in the Greco-Roman world (Alexandria in Egypt was the second largest, and Rome the largest) and was the seat of government in Syria. Five miles away was a major temple to Artemis, Apollo, and Astarte, major pagan deities.”<sup>23</sup>*

By no means was Antioch an easy city for Kingdom Advancement. Nevertheless, **“the hand of the Lord was with them”** and many people received Christ. Let's follow the pattern once again.

- **Acts 11:19-21** – Some of those who were scattered preach the Lord Jesus to the Greeks (Gentiles). A large number receive Christ.
- **Acts 11:22-24** – The Jerusalem Church receives the news and sends Barnabas to Antioch who encourages them to continue in the Lord.
- **Acts 11:25-26** – Barnabas purposely finds Saul (Paul) in Tarsus and brings him to Antioch. They gather with the church and teach many people for one year.
- **Acts 11:27-30** – Prophets come from Jerusalem. Agabus prophesizes a worldwide famine. The disciples of Antioch decide to send relief to Judean believers. They decide to send it to the Jerusalem church elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (Paul).
- **Acts 13:1-14:28** – Ephesians 4:11 leaders in the church at Antioch pray and fast. The Holy Spirit speaks to set apart Paul and Barnabas to fulfill their calling. They lay hands upon them and send them forth on their first global missionary journey.

The above highlights what I call a **“progressive impact zone”** of the church in Antioch that looks like this:

- **Acts 11:19-30** – Citywide Mission with Barnabas and Paul teaching many for one year.
- **Acts 11:27-30** – Regional Mission with prophets coming from Jerusalem and a collection begins for Judea.

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<sup>23</sup> BibleWorks 9 (2009). NET Bible. Acts 11:19, Note 44.

- **Acts 13:1-14:28** – Global Mission – Paul and Barnabas sent out together on the 1<sup>st</sup> global missionary journey.

The impact of house church development in Jerusalem and Antioch was not limited to homes. It impacted cities and regions. The Antioch Church became the 2<sup>nd</sup> major center for the expansion of Christianity.

### **The New Testament Pattern for Apostolic Operations**

The Biblical record testifies to a global mission strategy. It's a team strategy and a pattern for what I term "*apostolic operations*". These are sending operations with high impact. The Antioch Church displays this global strategy in surprising detail. Let's first look at the sending of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13 and 14.

- The Ephesians 4:11 (5-Fold) leaders of the church would pray and fast unto the Lord - Acts 13:1-2.
- The church would send out on mission journeys those the Holy Spirit indicated (after prayer, fasting and laying on of hands) – Acts 13:3.
- The apostolic ministry team would complete the operation – Acts 13:4 – 4:25.
- The team would return to the church and gave an accountability report – Acts 14:26-27; Luke 10:17-20.

This is very convincing evidence of what a citywide network of house churches can do in the context of a truly operational structure of 5-Fold ministers, which we will discuss in more detail in the next chapter. In addition, Acts 11:26 reveals they were a group of considerable size. The residents of Antioch would not have noticed one small house church. Also, Gal. 2:11-14 suggests a multiple number of house churches in Antioch. Roger Gehring makes this important observation about the mission strategy in Antioch.

*"The parallels between the mission structures in Antioch and those of Jesus are even more clearly documented in our texts. The common elements of itinerant, partner, sedentary (one house as an operational base), and planned missional outreach along with structures for sending and accountability upon return are all observable..."*<sup>24</sup>

The 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey from Antioch displays a very similar global mission strategy. The progressive pattern looked like this:

- The Holy Spirit forms an international team of Paul, Silas & Timothy.
- The team is working interdependently with the apostles & elders in Jerusalem and the church in Antioch.
- The team has a planned mission to revisit the churches, see how they are doing, and deliver the letter from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.
- The Holy Spirit directs the team to a new target, Macedonia (Europe).
- Salvation, healing, and deliverance are released throughout the region and new churches are planted in at least 7 cities.

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<sup>24</sup> Roger Gehring, House Church and Mission (2004).

- New teams are birthed (i.e. Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila).
- Return to Antioch and Jerusalem Church.

The global strategies out of the Jerusalem and Antioch Churches have served as patterns for our 5-Fold Global Apostolic Team Operations since the year 2000. When put all together, the mission instructions of Jesus, the house church development at Antioch and Jerusalem, and the global mission strategies, there is a visible New Testament pattern for apostolic operations. I have identified at least eight elements for consideration when planning strategic mission operations.

1. An International team
2. Teamwork with those who prayed and laid hands upon you
3. A planned mission directed by the Holy Spirit
4. Adjustment to new targets
5. Team persecuted
6. New churches planted
7. New teams of Ephesian 4:11 leaders birthed
8. Return and report to the brethren

New generation leaders need to be alert to these elements as they are sent and directed by the Holy Spirit on strategically targeted missions.

## House Church Networks

The challenge facing new generation leaders is whether the apostolic pattern under consideration can reach a community or city through the formation of house churches. Paul's use of domestic houses proves that it can. For example, four of Paul's greetings mention house churches.

- **1 Corinthians 16:19** The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.
- **Romans 16:3, 5, 14-15, 23** Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5Likewise greet the church that is in their house. 14Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. 15Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. 23Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.
- **Philemon 1-2, 21-22** Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, 2to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: 22But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.
- **Colossians 4:15** Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.

These greetings point to more than just some isolated house churches. They indicated a network of house churches from city to city and region to region. The whole church appears to be a house church

network during this time. The mission strategy must have included a multiplication of the number of houses churches.

Paul's house to house ministry demonstrates an outreach pattern that included house church development. A brief review of the team's ministry in houses proves just how important this church planting strategy was to the overall global mission. *Oikos* is the Greek word used for house or household in the New Testament. What is referred to as the *oikos* formula, "**and all his household**" is prevalent in each of the following passages:

- **Acts 16:14-15** – Lydia and her household baptized. This marked the beginning of Christianity in the West.
- **Acts 16: 19-34** – Philippian jailer and household baptized.
- **Acts 17:1-9** – House of Jason is a base of operation.
- **Acts 18:1-4, 7-8** – Paul stays with Priscilla & Aquila; Crispus & his household are baptized along with many Corinthians. House churches begun in their houses along with the house of Titus Justus.

Confirmation of Luke's report is found in many of Paul's apostolic letters. Acts 18:2 (1 Cor. 16:19); 18:5 (1 Thess. 3:6); 18:5 (2 Cor. 1:19); 18:18 (Rom. 16:1); 18:19 (1 Cor. 16:19); 18:27 (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:6; 4:6). Therefore, there's overwhelming evidence for massive house church development in the outreach strategy. I've observed a growing number of young leaders capturing this New Testament vision and outreach pattern.

The global impact of what we are discovering in this study almost takes one's breath away. There's great work being done in advancing God's Kingdom around the world today, but the citywide impact appears limited. I pray young leaders will catch fire for cities. A network of house churches in a city can win that city for the Lord. In addition, to Jerusalem, Antioch, and other cities, there were eight cities with a plurality of house churches.

- **Philippi** (Acts 16:11-15; 25-34) – Reliable reports of house churches in the house of Lydia and the jailer. (Note: Phil. 1:1 mentions a plurality of overseers so it can be safely assumed that there was a plurality of house churches there)
- **Thessalonica** (Acts 17:1-9) – Jason hosted the apostolic team and 1 Thess. 1:9 & 2:14 indicate a community of believers exist. In addition, 1 Thess. 5:12, 27 show that a plurality of house churches is there as well.
- **Corinth** (Acts 18:1-8) – Paul forms a house church with a couple, Aquila & Priscilla, which serves as the focal point of a citywide mission; Paul moves into the house of Titus Justus, a good candidate for another house church as well as Crispus. Both were most likely home owners. In addition, Stephanas is listed as the first convert in the Corinth (1 Cor. 1:16) and is identified with Fortunatus and Achaicus of his household (16:15-1). The fact that Paul urged others to submit to them reveals a house church under his leadership. A very important revelation is that Rom. 16:23 and 1 Cor. 14:23 indicate a gathering of the whole church of Corinth at a location. Acts 18:10 says there are many Christians in the city. Erastus, a city official in Corinth (Rom. 16:23), must also be considered as a possible house church leader (Acts 19:22; 2 Tim. 4:20). There was a plurality of house churches in Corinth meeting in at least seven or more homes alongside the whole church which met regularly, but not as often.
- **Cenchreae** (Rom. 16:1-2) – Phoebe had a house church meeting in her home. This was a branch of the Corinthian mission.

- **Ephesus** (Acts 18:18 – 19:41) – One year after the Corinthian mission, Paul began his mission to Ephesus where he stayed longer than in any other city. Priscilla & Aquila moved there (1 Cor. 16:19) and a church is established in their home identical to the mission pattern in Corinth. Epaphroditus is called the first fruit of Asia Minor (Ephesus region) in Rom. 16:5 and Mary is commended for her labor, which reveals that they were members of their house church. 1 Cor. 16:20 confirms that there were other brethren who did not meet in their house church. This again affirms a plurality of house churches in Ephesus, but this cannot be certain. Paul's many trips there, the size of his team, the many co-workers there indicate a large congregation. In addition, Acts 20:20 appears to confirm the existence of many house churches, ***“...how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.***
- **Rome** (Rom. 16:3-16) – Priscilla & Aquila return to Rome and establish their 3rd house church (Corinth, Ephesus & Rome). Verses 14 & 15 document two more house churches in Rome. In addition, verses 10 & 11 may identify those who belonged to other house churches in the city. The population of Rome during this time was about a million people.
- **Colossae** (Philemon 1-2; Col. 4:9, 17) – Philemon is addressed to a small house church that most likely meets in the home of Philemon.
- **Laodicea** (Col. 4:15) – Nympha is a woman who has a house church in her home. Nympha, Priscilla, Phoebe, Junia and Lydia all reveal that women had a notable involvement in leading house churches.

The house church strategy of the Antioch Church continued to be an integral part of their global mission strategy. The new generation church must include it as part of their operational strategy. In doing so, they will restore the authentic identity of the city church. Simson explains the value of the house church network in relation to the city church:

*“The church in the New Testament was named according to its geographical location, not denomination. Similarly, with a new wave of house churches, this also opens up a way back to the “city church” – all the Christians of a city or region meeting in citywide celebrations...Imagine the public tumult when this collective, city-based, and authentic leadership regularly provided prophetic vision, teaches apostolic standards, stands united, blesses each other, and speaks to the world with one voice.”<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>25</sup> Simson, pp. 14-15

# Chapter 5: Leadership Structure of the New Testament House Churches

## The Ministry Emphasis of the Early Church

What was the most prominent emphasis as leaders engaged in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ? I recently examined the first 20 chapters in the Book of Acts to identify specific things that stood apart from all others. I quickly discovered that these areas of emphasis in the Early Church were those that God worked with. They were the things that drew God's attention and the fire of His Spirit. I've listed seven primary emphases:

1. The Word of God (53 times)
2. The Holy Spirit (50 times)
3. The Name of Jesus (41 times)
4. Evangelism (37 times)
5. Unity/Togetherness (28 times)
6. God's Authority (27 times)
7. Prayer/Intercession (25 times)

When you take the first three listed, it's apparent that this generation of leaders and believers are in danger of a casual approach to God's word, an increasing neglect of the Holy Spirit, and a reducing of the name of Jesus to little more than a hashtag. New generation of leaders must rise up to reverse this trend. You can do this by emphasizing in ministry what God will work with.

I also noticed tremendous results or fruit attached to these emphases. The connection was very transparent. When leaders emphasize what God emphasizes, God responds with great confirming power. Here is a list of some of the fruit.

- Increase/Growth
- Signs, Wonders, and Miracles
- Power/Strength/Edification
- Boldness
- Joy/Rejoicing
- Giving/Sharing

Again, some of these results were listed as many as 30 times in the first 20 chapters of Acts. These results closely followed and surrounded the primary emphases. The following chart helps to visually see the impact of a Church on Fire when leadership emphasis is aligned with what's most important with God:

Key Emphasis	Biblical Example	Biblical Result/Fruit
<b>The Word of God</b> – This involves both the preaching and teaching of God's Word. The Lord backs it up with	<b>Acts 2:16</b> "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: <b>Acts 5:20</b> "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."	<b>Acts 6:7</b> Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. <b>Acts 12:24</b> But the word of God grew and multiplied.

<p>powerful life changing results when the Word increases and spreads!</p> <p><b>Mark 16:20</b> And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with <i>them</i> and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.</p> <p><b>Hebrews 2:4</b> God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?</p>	<p><b>Acts 6:2-4</b> Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." <sup>3</sup> "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of <i>good</i> reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; <sup>4</sup> "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."</p> <p><b>Acts 8:4</b> Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.</p> <p><b>Acts 15:35</b> Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.</p> <p><b>Acts 17:11</b> These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily <i>to find out</i> whether these things were so.</p> <p><b>Acts 18:11</b> And he continued <i>there</i> a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them</p> <p><b>Acts 19:9-10</b> But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> And this continued for two years, so that all who dwell in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.</p>	<p><b>Acts 13:48-49</b> Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. <sup>49</sup> And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.</p> <p><b>Acts 14:3</b> Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.</p> <p><b>Acts 17:2-4</b> Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and <i>saying</i>, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." <sup>4</sup> And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.</p> <p><b>Acts 19:18-20</b> And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. <sup>19</sup> Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned <i>them</i> in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and <i>it</i> totaled fifty thousand <i>pieces</i> of silver. <sup>20</sup> So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.</p>
<p><b>The Holy Spirit</b> – He commands, sends, and supervises the ministry of Jesus on earth. No leader can afford to neglect or minimize the deity and operation of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is the ministry of Jesus Christ. And the ministry of Jesus Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is commanded by Jesus.</p> <p><b>John 14:12</b> "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater <i>works</i> than these he will do, because I go to My Father.</p> <p><b>Luke 24:49</b> "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."</p> <p><b>Acts 1:4-5</b> And being assembled together with <i>them</i>, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the</p>	<p><b>Acts 1:8</b> "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."</p> <p><b>Acts 2:33</b> "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.</p> <p><b>Acts 2:38-39</b> Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."</p> <p><b>Acts 5:32</b> "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also <i>is</i> the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."</p> <p><b>Acts 6:3</b> "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of <i>good</i> reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;</p> <p><b>Acts 8:14-17</b> Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, <sup>15</sup> who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>16</sup> For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.</p> <p><b>Acts 13:2</b> As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."</p>	<p><b>Acts 2:4</b> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.</p> <p><b>Acts 4:31</b> And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.</p> <p><b>Acts 9:17-18</b> And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup> Immediately there fell from his eyes <i>something</i> like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.</p> <p><b>Acts 9:31</b> Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.</p> <p><b>Acts 10:44</b> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, <sup>47</sup> "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we <i>have</i>?" <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.</p> <p><b>Acts 11:24</b> For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.</p>

<p>Promise of the Father, "which," <i>He said</i>, "you have heard from Me; <sup>5</sup> "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."</p>	<p><b>Acts 15:28</b> For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:  <b>Acts 19:1-2</b> And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples <sup>2</sup> he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."  <b>Acts 20:28</b> "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."</p>	<p><b>Acts 13:4</b> So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.  <b>Acts 15:8</b> "So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as <i>He did</i> to us,  <b>Acts 16:6-7</b> Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. <sup>7</sup> After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. (Act 16:6 NKJ)  <b>Acts 19:6</b> And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied."</p>
<p><b>The Name of Jesus</b> – More than a name. It's the name above every name that is named in heaven and on earth and below the earth (Phil. 2:9-10). It's His name that captures God's attention and all of heaven.</p> <p><b>Matthew 18:20</b> "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."  <b>John 14:13</b> "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.  <b>John 14:26</b> "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.  <b>Mark 16:17-18</b> "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; <sup>18</sup> "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."</p>	<p><b>Acts 2:32</b> "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.  <b>Acts 3:16</b> "And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which <i>comes</i> through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.  <b>Acts 4:12</b> "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."  <b>Acts 4:18</b> And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.  <b>Acts 9:15</b> But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. <sup>16</sup> "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."  <b>Acts 10:43</b> "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."  <b>Acts 11:20</b> But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.  <b>Acts 19:13-17</b> Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." <sup>14</sup> Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. <sup>15</sup> And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" <sup>16</sup> Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. <sup>17</sup> This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."</p>	<p><b>Acts 3:6-8</b> Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." <sup>7</sup> And he took him by the right hand and lifted <i>him</i> up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. <sup>8</sup> So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them-- walking, leaping, and praising God.  <b>Acts 4:13</b> Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.  <b>Acts 4:29-30</b> "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, <sup>30</sup> "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."  <b>Acts 8:12</b> But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.  <b>Acts 11:21</b> And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.  <b>Acts 16:18</b> And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.  <b>Acts 19:18-20</b> And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. <sup>19</sup> Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned <i>them</i> in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and <i>it</i> totaled fifty thousand <i>pieces</i> of silver. <sup>20</sup> So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."</p>
<p><b>Evangelism</b> – All leaders are instructed to do the work of an evangelist.</p>	<p><b>Acts 1:8</b> "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."</p>	<p><b>Acts 2:41</b> Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added <i>to them</i>.</p>

<p><b>Matthew 28:18</b> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.</p> <p><b>Luke 24:46-49</b> Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup> "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> "And you are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."</p>	<p><b>Acts 2:40</b> And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."</p> <p><b>Acts 3:19-21</b> "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, <sup>20</sup> "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, <sup>21</sup> "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.</p> <p><b>Acts 8:25</b> So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.</p> <p><b>Acts 9:20</b> Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.</p> <p><b>Acts 10:34</b> Then Peter opened <i>his</i> mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. <sup>35</sup> "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.</p> <p><b>Acts 13:38-39</b> "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; <sup>39</sup> "and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.</p> <p><b>Acts 14:7</b> And there they preached the gospel.</p> <p><b>Acts 16:10</b> Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.</p> <p><b>Acts 18:4</b> And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.</p> <p><b>Acts 19:8</b> And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God</p>	<p><b>Acts 4:4</b> However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.</p> <p><b>Acts 4:33</b> And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.</p> <p><b>Acts 6:8</b> And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.</p> <p><b>Acts 10:47</b> "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we <i>have</i>?" <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.</p> <p><b>Acts 13:43, 46</b> Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God... Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold.</p> <p><b>Acts 14:8-10</b> And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. <sup>9</sup> <i>This</i> man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, <sup>10</sup> said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.</p> <p><b>Acts 16:34</b> Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.</p> <p><b>Acts 18:8</b> Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.</p> <p><b>Acts 19:11</b> Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, <sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.</p>
<p><b>Unity/Togetherness</b> – This can only be established in Christ. Jesus prayed for this and He expects the Church to display it.</p> <p><b>John 17:11</b> "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.</p> <p><b>John 17:20-23</b> "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup> "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world</p>	<p><b>Acts 1:14</b> These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.</p> <p><b>Acts 2:1</b> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.</p> <p><b>Acts 2:14</b> But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.</p> <p><b>Acts 2:46</b> So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,</p> <p><b>Acts 3:1</b> Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth <i>hour</i>.</p> <p><b>Acts 4:32</b> Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.</p> <p><b>Acts 14:1-2</b> Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of</p>	<p><b>Acts 3:11</b> Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.</p> <p><b>Acts 4:13</b> Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.</p> <p><b>Acts 4:33-37</b> And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, <sup>35</sup> and laid <i>them</i> at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. <sup>36</sup> And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, <sup>37</sup> having land, sold <i>it</i>, and brought the money and laid <i>it</i> at the apostles' feet.</p> <p><b>Acts 5:12-16</b> And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. <sup>13</sup> Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed</p>

<p>may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup> "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: <sup>23</sup> "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.</p>	<p>the Greeks believed. <sup>2</sup> But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.  <b>Acts 15:22, 25</b> Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, <i>namely</i>, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren... it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,</p>	<p>them highly. <sup>14</sup> And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, <sup>15</sup> so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid <i>them</i> on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. <sup>16</sup> Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.  <b>Acts 14:3</b> Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.  <b>Acts 15:30-31</b> So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup> When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.</p>
<p><b>God's Authority</b>- Divisions among leaders and churches is a direct result of not understanding and submitting to God's authority in Christ. The obedience of faith is adhering to and operating under divine authority.</p> <p><b>Matthew 28:18</b> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."  <b>Luke 4:32</b> And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority.  <b>Luke 9:1</b> Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases.  <b>Luke 10:17-19</b> Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." <sup>18</sup> And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup> "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.  <b>Luke 19:17</b> "And he said to him, 'Well <i>done</i>, good servant; because you were</p>	<p><b>Acts 1:1</b> The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, <sup>2</sup> until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,  <b>Acts 1:7</b> And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.  <b>Acts 4:18-20</b> And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. <sup>20</sup> "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."  <b>Acts 5:9</b> Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband <i>are</i> at the door, and they will carry you out."  <b>Acts 5:38-39</b> "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; <sup>39</sup> "but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it-- lest you even be found to fight against God."  <b>Acts 8:26, 29</b> Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert... Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."  <b>Acts 9:3-5</b> As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. <sup>4</sup> Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" <sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It <i>is</i> hard for you to kick against the goads."  <b>Acts 10:15</b> And a voice <i>spoke</i> to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."</p>	<p><b>Acts 1:8</b> "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."  <b>Acts 4:21-22</b> So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. <sup>22</sup> For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.  <b>Acts 5:11</b> So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. <sup>12</sup> And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.  <b>Acts 5:41-42</b> So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. <sup>42</sup> And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.  <b>Acts 8:36</b> Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, <i>here is</i> water. What hinders me from being baptized?" <sup>37</sup> Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." <sup>38</sup> So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.  <b>Acts 9:20</b> Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.  <b>Acts 10:44-48</b> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, <sup>47</sup> "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we <i>have</i>?" <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.</p>

<p>faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'</p> <p><b>Luke 22:25-27</b> And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' <sup>26</sup> "But not so <i>among</i> you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. <sup>27</sup> "For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? <i>Is</i> it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.</p>	<p><b>Acts 10:33</b> "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."</p> <p><b>Acts 16:6-10</b> Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. <sup>7</sup> After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. <sup>8</sup> So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. <sup>9</sup> And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup> Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.</p> <p><b>Acts 18:9</b> Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; <sup>10</sup> "for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."</p>	<p><b>Acts 11:16-18</b> "Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>17</sup> "If therefore God gave them the same gift as <i>He</i> gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" <sup>18</sup> When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."</p> <p><b>Acts 18:11</b> And he continued <i>there</i> a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.</p>
<p><b>Prayer/Intercession</b> – Prayer and intercession were linked to all that took place in the Early Church.</p> <p><b>Luke 11:1</b> Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, <i>that</i> one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."</p> <p><b>Mark 11:24</b> "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive <i>them</i>, and you will have <i>them</i>."</p> <p><b>Matthew 26:41</b> "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed <i>is</i> willing, but the flesh <i>is</i> weak."</p> <p><b>Luke 18:1</b> Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,</p> <p><b>Matthew 26:53</b> "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"</p>	<p><b>Acts 1:14</b> These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.</p> <p><b>Acts 2:42</b> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.</p> <p><b>Acts 3:1</b> Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth <i>hour</i>.</p> <p><b>Acts 4:24, 29-30</b> So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You <i>are</i> God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, ... "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, <sup>30</sup> "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."</p> <p><b>Acts 6:4-6</b> "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." <sup>5</sup> And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, <sup>6</sup> whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.</p> <p><b>Acts 8:14</b> Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, <sup>15</sup> who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>16</sup> For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.</p> <p><b>Acts 9:11</b> So the Lord <i>said</i> to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for <i>one</i> called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.</p>	<p><b>Acts 2:4</b> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.</p> <p><b>Acts 2:43-44</b> Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,</p> <p><b>Acts 4:31-35</b> And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. <sup>32</sup> Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, <sup>35</sup> and laid <i>them</i> at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.</p> <p><b>Acts 6:7</b> Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.</p> <p><b>Acts 8:17</b> Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.</p> <p><b>Acts 9:17-18</b> And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup> Immediately there fell from his eyes <i>something</i> like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.</p> <p><b>Acts 10:34</b> Then Peter opened <i>his</i> mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.</p>

	<p><b>Acts 10:4</b> And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.</p> <p><b>Acts 10:9</b> The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.</p> <p><b>Acts 12:5</b> Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.</p> <p><b>Acts 12:12</b> So, when he had considered <i>this</i>, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.</p> <p><b>Acts 13:1-3</b> Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup> As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." <sup>3</sup> Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent <i>them</i> away.</p> <p><b>Acts 16:13</b> And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met <i>there</i>.</p> <p><b>Acts 16:25</b> But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.</p> <p><b>Acts 19:6</b> And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.</p> <p><b>Acts 20:36</b> And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.</p>	<p><b>Acts 10:44</b> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.</p> <p><b>Acts 12:11</b> And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and <i>from</i> all the expectation of the Jewish people."</p> <p><b>Acts 15:12</b> Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.</p> <p><b>Acts 16:16-18</b> Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup> This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." <sup>18</sup> And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.</p> <p><b>Acts 16:26</b> Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.</p> <p><b>Acts 19:10</b> And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. <sup>11</sup> Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, <sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.</p>
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If we can only bring ourselves in ministry to emphasize what God does, things would drastically change in how we do church together.

**The Operation of the 5-Fold Ministry**

Church structure today has regressed into a sea of individualism and competition. The leadership structure has drifted far from what we observe in the Early Church. There is a world of difference between today's pastoral structure and the Ephesians 4:11 leadership structure of the New Testament. Where is the Church at regarding the operation of the 5-Fold ministries today? I agree with what Wolfgang Simson says about this:

*"In the Christian world, we have all the right pieces, but we have fit them together in the wrong way because of fear, tradition, religious jealousy, and a power-and-control mentality...the five ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-12 – the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers – are found today, but not always in the right forms and in*

*the right places. They are either frozen in ice in the rigid system of institutionalized Christianity, exist as clear liquid, or vanish like steam into the thin air of free-flying ministries and “independent” churches accountable to no one.”<sup>26</sup>*

Pastors are only members of a team. This 5-Fold team of ministers has been established by the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, we find individual pastors leading the church much to the exclusion of the other ministries. I say this respectfully, but the pastoral dominance in the local church is a problem. The focus on attendance, programs, and buildings is becoming more unproductive by the minute. Simson accurately describes the situation.

*“Statistically, a traditional one- or two-hour worship service is very resource-hungry but produces very little fruit in terms of discipling people and changing lives. Economically, it is a high-input, low-output structure.”<sup>27</sup>*

In addition, the separation between clergy and ordinary believers is more and more prevalent. The pastoral system of leadership and operation is failing. It’s been failing for decades! No longer does it bring the church to the people. Simson compares it to a Babylonian captivity in need of deliverance:

*“Today God seems to be in the business of delivering His church from a Babylonian-like captivity of religious bureaucrats and controlling spirits and bringing it into the public domain.”<sup>28</sup>*

The church needs to return to the operation of the 5-Fold ministries and the priesthood of believers. It needs to get back to the home. It’s important to note this because house church development provides an opportunity to transition to a full utilization of the Ephesian 4:11 leader team to equip believers for the work of ministry. But how practically would the 5-Fold ministry work from house to house? Simson provides one of the best explanations:

*“The local house churches are then networked into a movement by the combination of elders and members of the so-called fivefold ministries (apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers) circulating from house to house, like blood circulating in a human body. The apostolic and prophetic ministries play a special foundational role (Ephesians 2:20; 4:11-12). A pastor (shepherd) is an important member of the whole team, but he cannot fulfill more than part of the task of equipping the saints for the ministry. He has to be complemented synergistically by the other four ministries in order to function properly.”<sup>29</sup>*

This is an enormous transformational challenge to implement, but some leaders are beginning to do it. The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) recently reported a new approach to leadership by a mega church in South Carolina. Teaching Pastor Clayton King gives this testimony:

*“I was senior pastor for one year but now our church has one senior pastor and we’ve literally in our new bylaws named Jesus Christ as our senior pastor. So we are structured differently now. It’s a true team approach and let me*

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<sup>26</sup> Wolfgang Simson. *The House Church Book* (2009). Kindle Edition, Location 150-153.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.170

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Location 143

*tell you, I love it. By the grace of God it's working. We're healthier than we've ever been. We're stronger than we've ever been.*<sup>30</sup>

The team has four lead pastors, three teaching pastors, and 14 campus pastors who oversee the operation of the church in all its locations in cities throughout the state. Although they maintain the pastoral identity for the entire team, just this shift from individual to team approach transformed them in only two years. I don't believe they went far enough, but the church exercised great courage to make such a transition. And it began with officially declaring Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church. In doing so, they placed themselves squarely under the Lordship (authority) of Jesus Christ.

Many pastors proclaim Jesus is building the Church, but few apply the practical reality of this truth:

- **Matthew 16:16-19 AMPC** Simon Peter replied, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 Then Jesus answered him, Blessed (happy, fortunate, and to be envied) are you, Simon Bar-Jonah. For flesh and blood [men] have not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter [Greek, *Petros*—a large piece of rock], and on this rock [Greek, *petra*—a huge rock like Gibraltar] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades (the powers of the infernal region) shall not overpower it [or be strong to its detriment or hold out against it]. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind (declare to be improper and unlawful) on earth must be what is already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose (declare lawful) on earth must be what is already loosed in heaven. [Isa. 22:22.]

Simson identifies four ways leaders can approach and apply the above truth.<sup>31</sup>

1. We will build our church in our own strength and traditional way.
2. We will build His church with human means other than the Holy Spirit for our spiritual ends.
3. Jesus will build our church using His resources for our ends. He pours His oil on our fire.
4. Jesus will build His church as the master builder and invites us to become His coworkers.

The only approach God blesses is the last one. The clear implication is a spiritual partnership. Look how Paul explains this to the Corinthian Church:

- **1 Corinthians 3:5-11** Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. <sup>7</sup> So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. <sup>8</sup> Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. <sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are God's building*. <sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take

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<sup>30</sup> Steve Warren, CBN News Report: *Jesus Christ Named Senior Pastor: South Carolina's NewSpring Church Rebounds After Two Years*. October 1, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Simson, pp. 130-131

heed how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Today, new generation leaders must break with the individual and competitive nature of church leadership and fully embrace the operational mindset displayed in the Early Church. We are coworkers in partnership with God and one another to do ministry His way. And we need to remind the people of God to view us as nothing more than **“servants of Christ.”**

- **1 Corinthians 4:1-2 AMPC SO THEN, let us [apostles] be looked upon as ministering servants of Christ and stewards (trustees) of the mysteries (the secret purposes) of God. 2 Moreover, it is [essentially] required of stewards that a man should be found faithful [proving himself worthy of trust].**

I pray the Lord will renew this attitude in the hearts and minds of all leaders and believers. This is the first step toward bringing the 5-Fold ministry back into the Church.

The 5-Fold team ministry ordained in the beginning by Christ Himself is the solution to the leadership structural problem. The Bible declares that the Church is built upon an apostolic and prophetic foundation.

- **Ephesians 2:19-22 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**

Notice how membership is in God’s household (home) and how everything is connected to Jesus, the Head. This is how the 5-Fold ministry functions. Simson explains it this way:

*“All of the ministries within the fivefold ministry have their own tasks to fulfill in equipping the saints, and they constantly circulate through the (house) churches, like their own respiratory or circulatory systems. The most important aspect of these ministries for house churches is that they can also multiply themselves: apostles spotting and training other apostles, prophets spotting and training other prophets, and all of the ministries multiplying themselves through the simple and biblical process of discipleship. This way, the leadership structure can grow exponentially with a multiplying house-church movement.”<sup>32</sup>*

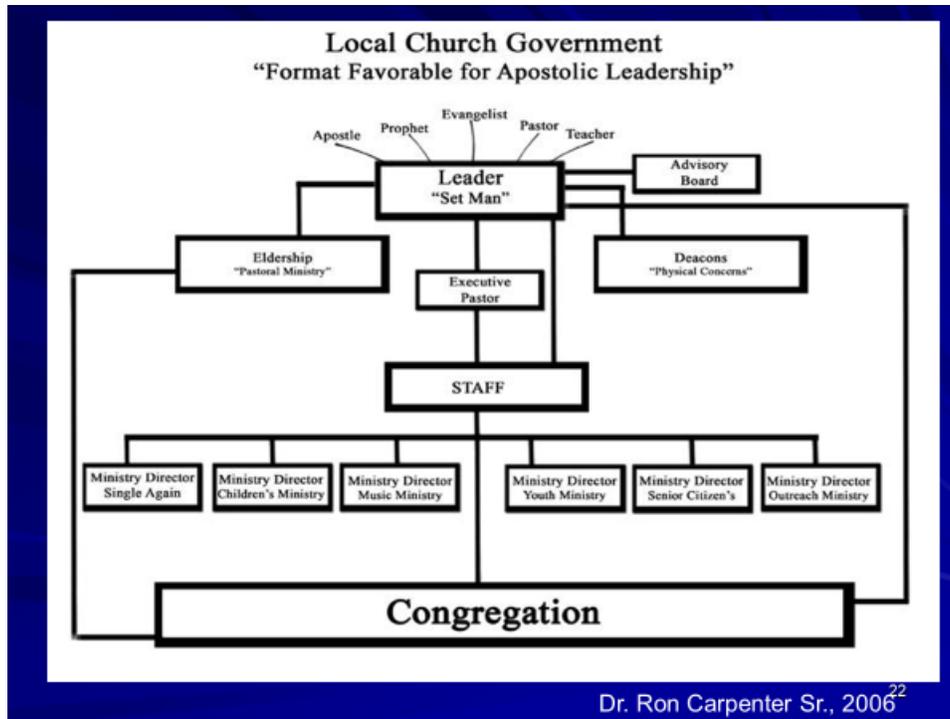
How different this is from current church leadership structure! Biblical quality of discipleship (equipping the saints) and multiplication of leaders are two essentials necessary for house church development. The senior pastor structure is not found in the New Testament. Although God is raising up thousands of new generation leaders, there is only room for a few in the current church leadership structure. This structure is hindering the growth of Christ’s Church! How is the senior pastor structure doing this?

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<sup>32</sup> Simson, p. 62.

*“Instead of equipping God’s people for ministry, they are performing it for them. Instead of teaching the people how to teach, they are just teaching. Instead of equipping people to be evangelists, they are simply evangelizing. Instead of training people how to prophesy, they are prophesying and then leaving – and seldom leaving disciples behind.”<sup>33</sup>*

Some senior pastors, particularly those of larger sized churches, attempt to involve Ephesians 4:11 leaders through periodic speaking engagements and conferences in their church. They carefully maintain, however, the senior pastor understanding and position of authority. They are the “set man” of the church who oversees the itinerant apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers. The following diagram visually displays the leadership structure of this model:



This is how pastors of conventional churches normally view the inclusion of the Ephesians 4:11 ministry team. It’s built around the premise of a one “set man” understanding or leadership model. One pastor described it this way: *“While you welcome a team approach to leadership, there can only be one voice.”* This view makes it clear that the “set man” is always the senior pastor. This view and structure of leadership tends to become self-serving when the solution to conflict in leadership is reduced to *“Simply let the individual know you are in charge.”* It’s interesting to observe that those who follow this “one-man rule” model typically use Old Testament examples to support it. This is because the New Testament promotes a team model of servant-oriented leadership as reflected in the Ephesians 4:11 leadership gifts and the plurality of elders overseeing house churches. The “set man” model views the team in a much different manner as seen in the above organizational chart. The “set man” model also tends to view everything from a narrow perspective of one’s own vision. Unity is achieved and

<sup>33</sup> Simson, p. 63.

maintained when all accept the one vision of the one voice of the one man governing the church. One senior pastor I once served under expressed the senior pastor role in this way:

*“For unity to be our standard, there can be diversity of opinion but only one vision; many under shepherds, but only one true shepherd who’s anointing comes from God and not someone’s self-seeking agenda.”<sup>34</sup>*

Although we must all guard against those who are seeking self-gain, it is unwise to use such a model as a primary principle for unity. The “*one mind*” and “*one accord*” passages in Scripture have much more to offer us. Leaders who advocate the “*set man*” model will rarely be supportive of the establishment of house churches. Some may even war against their development. But what would happen if leaders of conventional churches would embrace and promulgate house churches as a primary strategy to penetrate their cities and regions for Christ? It didn’t take long for Early Church leaders and believers gathering from house to house to fill Jerusalem with the doctrine of Christ (Acts 5:28) and later turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). These were actually the testimonies of those who opposed the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The leadership structure of the modern church needs to change. It’s time for the 5-Fold ministry to be restored through house church development focused on multiplication. The House Church movement in the Early Church was a supernatural movement that fully involved the operation of the 5-Fold ministry. It was not one and done. The apostolic/prophetic thrust of these ministries continued and expanded from house to house, city to city, and region to region. Are new generation leaders ready to embrace the operation of the 5-Fold ministry or follow many of their predecessors and ignore it?

*“If God has given these ministries, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11, we are not free to dismiss them, and if we do, we do so at our own peril, violating a crucial building principle of the Kingdom.”<sup>35</sup>*

## **Peter’s Instruction to Elders**

The Apostle Peter presents some important instructions to elders. These instructions were not only addressed to the elders, but also to believers dispersed in house churches throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1Pet. 1:1-2).

- **1 Peter 5:1-11** The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: <sup>2</sup> Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; <sup>4</sup> and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. <sup>5</sup> Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” <sup>6</sup> Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, <sup>7</sup> casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be

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<sup>34</sup> Chuck Schumacher, *When Warriors War Against One Another*, 2006

<sup>35</sup> Simson, p. 70.

sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. <sup>10</sup> But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. <sup>11</sup> To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

It's interesting that elders are always identifying a plurality of leaders in the New Testament Church. Peter also refers to himself as a **“fellow elder.”** Therefore, we can easily conclude that these leaders consisted of house church leaders and itinerant 5-Fold ministers. The implication is that they are uniquely together in the ministry. Peter also emphasizes he is a **“witness”** of Christ's sufferings and a **“partaker”** in the coming glory. The Greek *koinonos* (koy-no-nos') refers to a partner, associate, comrade, or companion in anything. There's no evidence that Peter considered himself in some higher office of leadership. Instead, he's declaring we have this ministry together! There is no place in house church development for the terminology of senior pastor and associate pastor. I urge new generation leaders to avoid this false identification of leadership seniority in the church. It's not in the Bible!

The overarching theme addressed by Peter is shepherding. His instructions pertain to the admonition to **“shepherd the flock of God.”** Remember, this exhortation is given in the context of a shared responsibility. The Greek *poimaino* (poy-mah'ee-no) literally means to feed or tend a flock. In this case it's a flock that belongs to God. The concept is that God has entrusted or assigned this task to leaders. The term for pastors in Ephesians 4:11 is *poimen* (poy-mane') referring to one who takes care of a group of, in this case, people of God. Therefore, it was likely those elders with a pastoral calling were later appointed under apostolic authority to the house churches (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). However, this is with a clear understanding that the full 5-Fold ministry team shared in the shepherding and oversight. The house church elders were never operating as senior pastors with individual responsibility over a church. This single pastor shepherding oversight is foreign to the New Testament Church. The later Church erroneously viewed overseer/bishop as a separate office from elder, however Scripture does not support this. Both Peter and Paul use the terms interchangeably when referring to elders. Therefore, except for Jesus Christ, you cannot build too much on just one person's vision. On the other hand, the 5-Fold ministry is the support structure. Shepherding the flock of God is a completely interdependent task even though the other leaders usually function beyond the borders of an individual house church.

The 5-Fold ministers were partners and fellow elders with the house church elders. They fulfilled together the function of fathering the house churches. This is clear from Peter's leadership instructions. Although house church elders were on the frontlines, they frequently received apostolic instruction. Peter gives three positive admonitions and three negatives.

Positive Admonitions	Negative Admonitions
Shepherd the flock (willingly serve without being forced or pressured)	Not by compulsion (obligation or imposition)
Serve as Overseers (eagerly ready to serve)	Not for dishonest gain (greedy for money and material things)
Be Examples to the flock (entrusted or committed by God)	Not as lords (to bring under one's power)

Peter also addresses the young generation with several important exhortations. These exhortations also apply to new generation leaders and believers today.

- **1 Peter 5:5:** Submit to the elders and to one another. (yield to Godly apostolic counsel aligned with His Word)
- **1 Peter 5:6:** Humble yourself to God and throw your cares on Him. (don't rise far from the ground; lower yourself but lift up the Lord).
- **1 Peter 5:8:** Be sober and vigilant (be very attentive, actively watchful, and cautious lest you be overtaken by something).
- **1 Peter 5:9:** Resist the devil with steadfast faith amid sufferings (forcefully oppose and set yourself against the devil with strong and immovable faith).

Peter concludes his leadership training with some of the most encouraging verses in the Bible.

- **1 Peter 5:10-11** But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*. <sup>11</sup> To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

### **Paul's Leadership Training Conference**

Leadership training conferences continue to be conducted all over the world. I've learned such conferences need to be more strategic than in the past. Therefore, 5-Fold Global targets our equipping conferences toward new generation leaders. The Apostle Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem by the Day of Pentecost. He had no plans to go to Asia, but there was apparently a need for further equipping of house church elders. Therefore, he sent word to Ephesus for them to join him in Miletus.

- **Acts 20:16-17** For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. <sup>17</sup> From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

Although there is no indication of how many elders attended, this was an important training conference because Ephesus became the third major center of Christianity. It's been estimated that the population during Paul's time was as much as 250,000. Paul's mission there began with twelve disciples being baptized with the Holy Spirit, a two-year stint in the discipleship school of Tyrannus, and unusual miracles.

- **Acts 19:6** And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (Act 19:6 NKJ)
- **Acts 19:9-10** But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.
- **Acts 19:11-12** Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, <sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

- **Acts 19:17-20** This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. <sup>18</sup> And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. <sup>19</sup> Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned *them* in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and *it* totaled fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. <sup>20</sup> So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Paul kept on the move after the Ephesus ministry, going through Macedonia (Greece) for some months. This is significant because he traveled back through Macedonia all the way to Miletus with a team of leaders (Acts 20:1-16).

- Sopater of Berea
- Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica
- Gaius of Derbe
- Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus of Asia
- Luke whose “we” statements confirm his presence.

It’s clear that this leadership team was present at Miletus when Paul called for the house church elders of Ephesus. For years, 5-Fold Global has conducted leadership training conferences using such multi-national teams. I encourage new generation leaders to work together in this way.

A closer examination of Paul’s leadership training conference reveals some similarities with Peter’s instructions. Peter pointed out that elders need to lead by example and serve with humility. Paul uses his example to emphasize the same thing.

- **Acts 20:18-19** And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, <sup>19</sup> "serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

The way Paul carried out the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was characterized by humility. He had a humble opinion of himself. He didn’t think more highly of himself than he should. He was nothing more than a servant of the Lord. And this did not change amid “tears and trials.” Rather, the difficulties of ministry only served to prove his character as a humble and obedient servant of God. Paul also gives a strong exhortation that is fully aligned with the instructions of Peter.

- **Acts 20:28** "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. <sup>29</sup> "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup> "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. <sup>31</sup> "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Paul instructs them on their shared responsibility of oversight. He emphatically indicates that the church belongs to God. This means the house churches of Ephesus and those throughout the world were all **“purchased with His own blood.”** Paul reminds the house church elders of this and to

**“shepherd the church of God.”** In addition, he tells them to be watchful and sternly warns them of those from without and within that will to **“draw away the disciples after themselves.”** It’s remarkable just how consistent Paul’s training of house church elders is with Peter’s. Even the 5-Fold identity of elders is the same as the following chart indicates:

Scripture Reference	Elders, Overseers
<b>Acts 20:17</b> From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the <b>elders</b> of the church.	Elders - <i>presbuteros</i>
<b>Acts 20:28</b> "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you <b>overseers</b> , to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.	Overseers - <i>episkopos</i>
<b>Titus 1:5</b> For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint <b>elders</b> in every city as I commanded you--	Elders - <i>presbuteros</i>
<b>Titus 1:7 NIV</b> Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.	Overseer - <i>episkopos</i>
<b>1 Peter 5:1</b> The <b>elders</b> who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow <b>elder</b> and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:	Elders - <i>presbuteros</i>
<b>1 Peter 5:2</b> Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as <b>overseers</b> , not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;	Overseers - <i>episkopos</i>

One final fascinating point is that all the ministry emphases of the Early Church I identified at the beginning of this chapter appear in Paul’s training of these Ephesian elders.

Acts 20 Emphases	Training References
The Word of God	<b>Acts 20:20</b> "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and <u>taught you</u> publicly and from house to house, <b>Acts 20:27</b> "For I have not shunned to declare to you <u>the whole counsel of God</u> . <b>Acts 20:35b</b> And <u>remember the words of the Lord Jesus</u> , that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' <b>Acts 20:32</b> "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to <u>the word of His grace</u> , which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
The Holy Spirit	<b>Acts 20:23</b> "except that <u>the Holy Spirit testifies</u> in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. <b>Acts 20:28</b> "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which <u>the Holy Spirit has made</u> you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
The Name of Jesus	<b>Acts 20:21</b> "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and <u>faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ</u> .

	<b>Acts 20:24</b> "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which <u>I received from the Lord Jesus</u> , to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.
Evangelism	<b>Acts 20:25</b> "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom <u>I have gone preaching</u> the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.
Unity/Togetherness	<b>Acts 20:37</b> Then <u>they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him</u> , <sup>38</sup> sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And <u>they accompanied him</u> to the ship.
God's Authority	<b>Acts 20:24</b> "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which <u>I received from the Lord Jesus</u> , to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. <b>Acts 20:28</b> "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which <u>the Holy Spirit has made you overseers</u> , to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
Prayer/Intercession	<b>Acts 20:36</b> And when he had said these things, <u>he knelt down and prayed with them all</u> .

This is further evidence that house church development is supernaturally ordained and established by Jesus Christ. Now is the time for new generation leaders to be equipped, empowered, and sent forth by the Holy Spirit to start house churches.

## Chapter 6: Activating the House to House Mission of Jesus Today

### House Churches, Cell Groups, and Local Churches

Early Christianity was characterized by two aspects at any given location: the house churches and the whole church. Therefore, you don't find references to a local church in the New Testament. The church is known by its city. It is known in any location as the Church in Jerusalem or Antioch or the Church of Ephesus, etc. Remember, there were no local church buildings like we have today. The composite number of house churches, therefore, in any city made up the whole local church. This concept has been somewhat diminished by the denominational identity of the modern church, but there are references to both in the Early Church.

House Churches	The Whole Church
<b>Romans 16:3</b> Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup> who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. <sup>5</sup> Likewise <i>greet</i> the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.	<b>Romans 1:7</b> To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called <i>to be saints</i> : Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
<b>1 Corinthians 16:19</b> The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.	<b>Romans 16:23</b> Gaius, my host and <i>the host</i> of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.
<b>Philemon 1:1-2</b> Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy <i>our</i> brother, To Philemon our beloved <i>friend</i> and fellow laborer, <sup>2</sup> to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:	<b>1 Corinthians 14:23</b> Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in <i>those who are</i> uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?
<b>Colossians 4:15</b> Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that <i>is</i> in his house.	<b>Colossians 4:16</b> Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the <i>epistle</i> from Laodicea.

These passages are speaking of a plurality of house churches within the whole church of a city or region. The new generation of leaders need to rediscover this important connection.

Cell groups are not the same as house churches. Although there are similarities, the cell group system is typically a part of a church program overseen by a senior pastor. Although some ministries have been very successful with this strategy, there remain several important differences.

Cell Groups	House Churches
Managerial style organization	Communal/family style organization
Vertical chain of authority (top down). Senior pastor as key man.	Team/shared leadership from within with apostolic/prophetic foundation & oversight.
More task oriented (multiply every 4 months).	More relation building communal bonds over longer period of time.
Part of a conventional church program.	A living church in all aspects.
Grows by dividing itself similar to a cell in the natural.	Grows by sending forth those called to plant new churches.

I believe house churches are the best way for Kingdom Advancement based upon the impact of the house church networks in the Early Church.

## Key Strategic Points about House Churches

There are some very important and strategic points to keep in mind before beginning house churches. Although we've looked at most of these in previous chapters, it's valuable to look at them together. Otherwise, some may be tempted to seek more to establish their own position and authority even preventing women from fruitful ministry. Therefore, do a quick review of these key points:

- Houses were the source and basis for the mission to the city and surrounding regions
- Key householders were targeted for evangelization with their entire households baptized
- Houses served also as a mission support and operational base for citywide and regional impact
- Houses were a significant meeting place and a source of many more evangelistic contacts
- Houses were a training ground for future leaders
- Women were also co-workers with Paul in the house, city, and regional outreach. (12 listed by name: Euodia, Julia, Junia, Lydia, Mary, Nympha, Persis, Phoebe, Priscilla, Syntyche, Tyrphaena, and Tyrphosa)

We also learn some important things from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> letters of John. These are two short books of the Bible. I suspect are rarely discussed, but a closer examination reveals some valuable lessons about house churches.

- Two house churches are represented: one led by Gaius and another by Diotrephes  
**3 John 1:1 THE ELDER, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:**  
**3 John 1:9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.**
- House churches can be susceptible to false doctrine.  
**2 John 1:10-11 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; <sup>11</sup> for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.**
- Different house churches received and sent out itinerant ministers.  
**3 John 1:5-8 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, <sup>6</sup> who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, <sup>7</sup> because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup> We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.**
- Itinerant ministers were still following the mission instructions of Jesus  
**3 John 1:7 because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.**
- Itinerant ministers depended upon the hospitality of host homes to support the ministry.  
**3 John 1:6 who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well.**

There is an emphasis on sending that we've seen before. The Greek *propempe* means to send before, to send forward, bring on the way, accompany or escort, to set one forward, fit him out with what's required for a journey. Notice it's the responsibility of the brethren who receives or hosts the ministry

team to provide for their needs. Remember, this responsibility is identical to the mission instructions Jesus gave to His disciples when He sent them out. Diotrephes did not abide by these instructions. He would not receive the apostolic team from Ephesus and he would excommunicate any member of his house church that wanted to receive the team.

- **3 John 1:9-11 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.**

I've observed aspects of the Diotrephes spirit in many ministries when it comes to provision for 5-Fold Global teams sent by God. In fact, I've had to carry extra money to care for our teams due to disobedience in this area. You might recall that Paul reminded the Ephesian house church elders of the words of Jesus: ***"It is more blessed to give than to receive."*** (Acts 20:35). Fortunately, several of our key global partners have begun to obey the Word of God regarding receiving and provided for apostolic teams. Don't follow the example of Diotrephes!

### **Strengths and Challenges of House Churches**

New generation leaders called to partner with the Lord in house to house ministry that involves establishing house churches face several challenges. Here are some of those challenges:

- Size limitations
- And incubator for conflict with personal and emotional hurdles in members
- Tendency toward divisiveness with existing local churches
- Unhealthy dependence upon a leader and his/her personal views
- The temptation to give higher value to personal fellowship with each other than to the relationship of each individual to Christ.

House church planters must be aware of these challenges. They cannot ignore them. They must prepare beforehand to overcome them.

There are also important strengths in house churches. You've seen most of these strengths in our examination of house church development in the New Testament. The following list highlights many of these strengths:

- Thrive in times of persecution
- Low cost operation with economic mission strategy for the city
- Deeper penetration into the community
- Increase of participation and operation of spiritual gifts among members
- Higher motivation for material support of those in need
- Increase in trained leaders
- Reaching the unchurched (only 1% of US churches are growing by reaching the unchurched)

- Training ground for Christian behavior
- Greater lifestyle accountability
- The life of the church
- There are twice as many strengths as challenges in developing house churches.

There are twice as many strengths in starting house churches. I believe this is a very advantageous biblical strategy for young leaders.

One of the most needed strengths in every place, including America, is the spiritual transformation of the family. House churches provide the best avenue for this transformation. There are household ethics that reflect a home that has undergone spiritual transformation: i.e., between husbands and wives, children and fathers, and workers and employers. House churches strongly impact the home in this way. Many believers have lost the reality that there is a Christian lifestyle we are accountable for. Believers can more effectively help each other in living the Christian life in a house church. The New Testament contains a wealth of guidance on moral and ethical behavior. For example, what is referred to as the “*household codes*” in the Bible still have application today. This would make an interesting study and dialogue at house church gatherings. The Bible references below contain these “*household codes*”.

- Colossians 3:18 – 4:1
- Ephesians 5:21 – 6:9
- 1 Peter 2:11 – 3:7
- 1 Timothy 2:8 – 6:2
- Titus 2:1-10
- Colossians 3:18 – 4:1

Pastors universally call for more member participation in the life of the local church. However, conventional churches are structured in such a way that results in more spectators than participants. The Barna Research Group conducted a remarkable study on house church participation in the United States. This is what they discovered:<sup>36</sup>

- 68% are completely satisfied with the leadership (only 49% of those attending conventional churches)
- 66% are completely satisfied with the faith commitment of the people involved in their gathering (only 40% in conventional churches)
- 61% are completely satisfied with the level of community and personal connectedness (only 41% in conventional churches)
- 59% are completely satisfied with the spiritual depth they experience (only 46% in conventional churches)

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<sup>36</sup> Barna Research Group under the title, “*House Churches Are More Satisfying to Attenders Than Are Conventional Churches*,” January 8, 2007).

They also examined how often those attending house churches engaged in spiritual practices.<sup>37</sup>

- 93% have spoken prayer during their meetings
- 90% read from the Bible
- 89% spend time serving people outside of their group
- 87% devote time to sharing personal needs or experiences
- 85% spend time eating and talking before and after the meeting
- 83% discuss the teaching provided
- 76% have a formal teaching time
- 70% incorporate music or singing
- 58% have prophecy or special word delivered
- 52% take an offering from participants that is given to ministries
- 51% share communion
- 41% watch a video presentation as part of the learning experience

I believe this research demonstrates that house churches are God's way of bringing the priesthood of all believers back into the church.

### **Starting House Churches**

Young leaders should already have an idea about how to start house churches from the mission instructions of Jesus and the house to house missions of the Apostles Peter and Paul. These were team missions: Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, Barnabas and John Mark, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, Paul, Aquila and Priscilla, and many other 5-Fold leaders. The traditional way of church planting seldom recognizes this apostolic and prophetic teamwork, but the experts in starting house churches do. Robert and Julia Banks identify four phases for starting house churches.<sup>38</sup>

1. Sending – calling out and sending church planting teams of 2-3 believers who have the same love, spirit, and purpose (Phil. 2:2). Their task is intercession and seeking out unbelievers to build new relationships.
2. Gathering – start a group of unbelievers and new believers where they can bring their families in the home to hear about Jesus (Acts 16). The team prays and works toward 2-3 family units who put their faith in Jesus, are baptized, and desire to form a church. They also begin to identify future leaders of the emerging house church.
3. Covenanting – the team talks about what the church is as the body of Christ, the function of the church and its members. Spiritual gifts are discovered and come into operation.
4. Reproducing – build momentum for continued church growth and multiplication. Send out teams to continue the church planting process. Evangelism and edification are the emphasis in this phase.

This is an excellent development plan providing the apostolic and prophetic foundation of Christ's doctrine is properly laid down. Biblical quality and servant leaders are two essentials for house church

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Robert and Julia Banks. *The Church Comes Home* (1998).

development. The call to intercession from the outset is very important because it was the pattern in the Early Church. The Early Church also made it a priority to minister water baptism and the baptism with the Holy Spirit to all new converts. This is often overlooked in modern church planting efforts, but it was at the top of the ministry agenda of the apostolic teams in the New Testament. Those starting house churches should follow the same pattern of ministry. In addition, those starting house churches must keep in mind that house churches will send out teams under the direction of the Holy Spirit to continue the evangelistic pattern.

House church planting teams need to have a clear vision for how house churches function before they attempt to start them. Larry Kreider and Floyd McClung, another team of house church experts, list five steps for how house churches function.<sup>39</sup>

1. Pray – Leadership lays a foundation of prayer. We hear from God and gain compassion and energy to “live out” Christ’s redemptive mission. (i.e., Leadership team of the Lancaster Micro-Church Network, LMCN, prayed for two years before starting the first house church)
2. Meet – House church participants engage a lot of people who do not know Jesus. It is like the John 4 pattern where Jesus befriended one woman that introduced Christ to her whole town.
3. Make Disciples – Participants not only meet with non-Christians, but they begin to pour into them, pray together, and grow together.
4. Gather – The people meet from house to house and share meals together as a community of Christ. Leaders lead as facilitators and exercise spiritual authority from “beside” rather than a top-down paradigm.
5. Multiply – House church leaders train others and give responsibilities away. They “dream big and build small” with the vision of multiplication.

Floyd rightly concludes that the above steps follow a natural progression.

*“Successful house churches follow the example of Jesus and imitate the natural progression of what He did. He prayed, He met people, He made disciples as He gathered them close to Himself, and then He selected leaders to multiply the impact of His kingdom.”<sup>40</sup>*

The focus of these steps intentionally targets unbelievers where they live. These steps mark a significant paradigm shift from traditional church planting methods. I agree with Wolfgang Simson who correctly defines the difference.

*“The congregational system of church can be defined as “plot plus building plus pastor plus salary plus programs.” The house church is “people plus ordinary houses plus faith plus shared life,” all of which is undeniably cheaper.”<sup>41</sup>*

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<sup>39</sup> Larry Kreider and Floyd McClung. *Starting a House Church: A New Model for Living Out Your Faith*, 2007

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Wolfgang Simson, *The House Church Book*, p. 13.

The shift in understanding and in practical day-to-day ministry will require a renewing of the mind for many young leaders. It's time for what Simson calls, "*House-church Christianity*." He explains what this Christianity is all about:

*"House-church Christianity is the body of Christ in ordinary houses, the society of the "three-times converted": those who are vertically converted to God, horizontally converted to each other (like the more than thirty "one another" verses in the New Testament exhort us to be), and broadly converted to serve the world in love, compassion, and power."<sup>42</sup>*

In conclusion, house church development is God's plan. For this reason, those who engage in His plan encounter the supernatural power of God. I pray on behalf of 5-Fold Global Apostolic Teams that this equipping manual on house church development has been of service to you. Statistics show that the new generation is searching for the real meaning of church. I agree with Larry Kreider and Floyd McClung among others who say they are looking for something of value that they can give their lives to. According to them, there are four basic values of churches: relationship, authenticity, the freedom to be creative, and intergenerational connection. In Christ, young leaders can give this to the next generation and more if they are willing to hear from God and follow God's way. House churches and networks are nothing new from a biblical perspective; however, they do represent a new paradigm model rapidly expanding in 21st century America, as well as around the world. I leave this final word of advice to new generation leaders that Wolfgang Simson gave to a young pastor who asked him what he should do.

*"Do you know what? If I were you, I would stop pastoring in the traditional sense. I would realize, in your case, that I have a more apostolic role, lay down my office, get my hands free, and start fathering and equipping a new generation of house-church planters."<sup>43</sup>*

I pray for the multiplication of a new generation of house-church planters! Amen.

**Acts 20:20 NIV You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.**

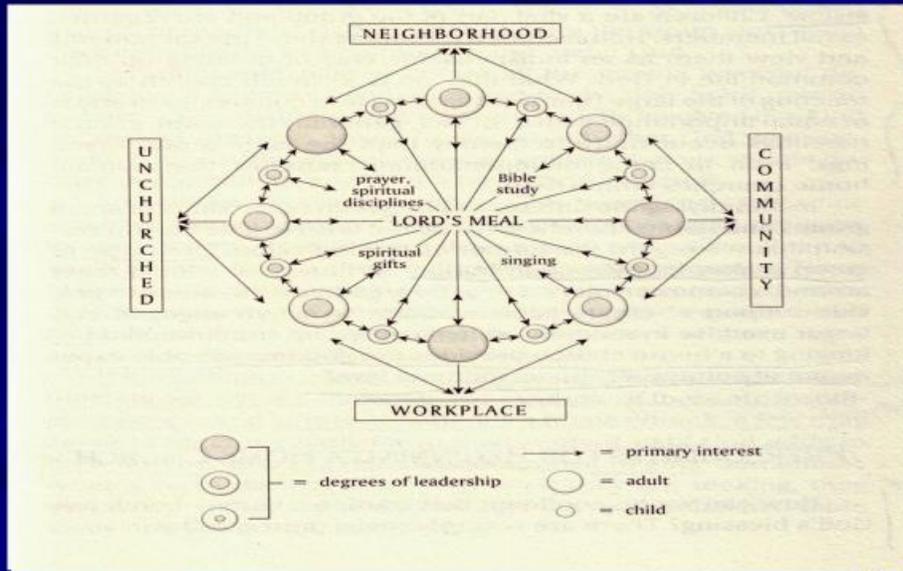
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<sup>42</sup> Wolfgang Simson. *The House Church Book* (2009), p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

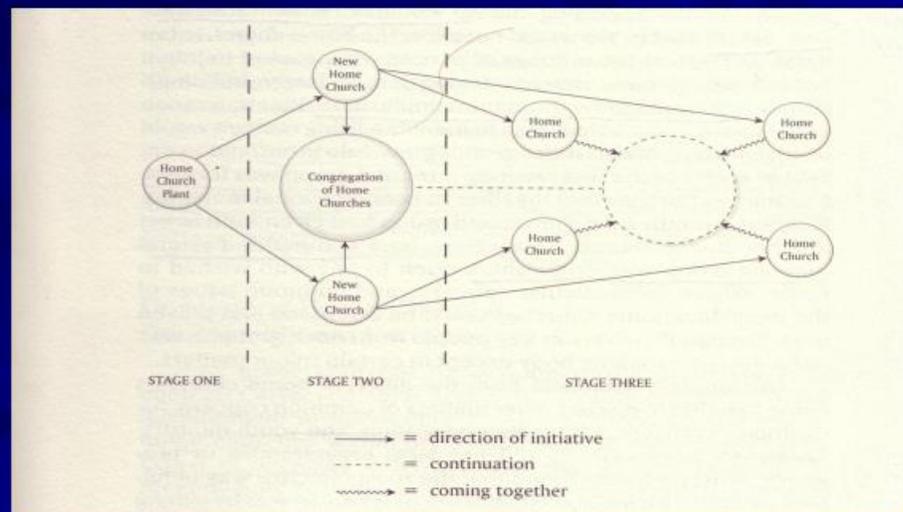
# Appendix: House Church Development Transition Charts

## House Church Structure



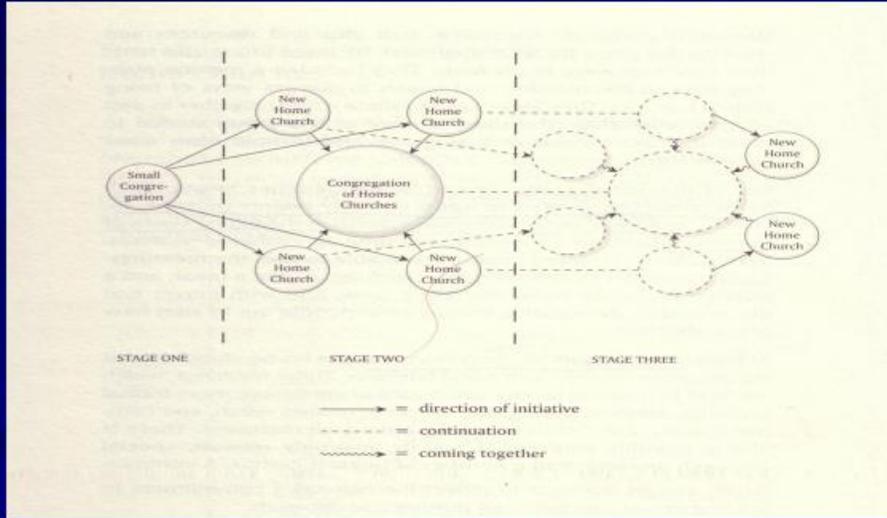
Robert and Julia Banks, 1998. <sup>24</sup>

## House Church Plant



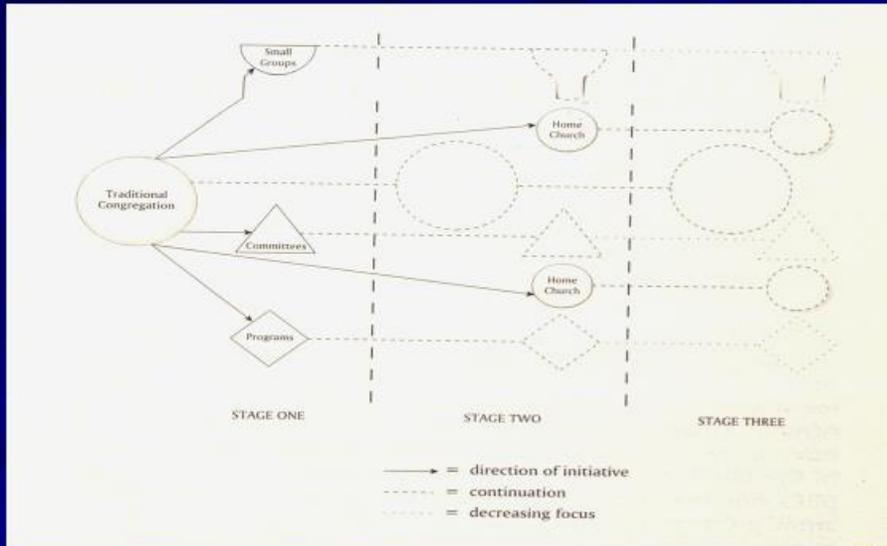
Robert and Julia Banks, 1998. <sup>28</sup>

# Small Church Transition



Robert and Julia Banks, 1998.<sup>27</sup>

# Traditional Church Transition



Robert and Julia Banks, 1998.<sup>25</sup>



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## Web links

<http://www.house2house.net/>

<http://dawnministries.org> (Note: Type "house church" in search at top)

<http://www.dcfi.org> (This site has many excellent resources)

<http://www.apexchurch.org/>

[http://sojourner.typepad.com/house\\_church\\_blog/2004/02/house\\_church\\_b.html](http://sojourner.typepad.com/house_church_blog/2004/02/house_church_b.html)

<http://www.therockcc.us/>

<http://www.hccentral.com/>

<http://www.bccn.com> (A site for cell churches)