



# THE HOUSE CHURCH MOVEMENT

A COMMUNITY OF JESUS FOLLOWERS ON MISSION TO MAKE AND MULTIPLY DISCIPLES

GATHER • PRAYER & WORSHIP • WORD • MISSION • MULTIPLICATION

# WHAT IS A HOUSE CHURCH?

Throughout the history of the Church, churches have regularly met in homes.

We read in Acts 2 that the early church had a rhythm of gathering in the temple to worship together as well as meeting in homes to share meals, pray and discuss the Scriptures.

A house church wasn't a replacement for the temple gathering but a complimentary expression of church that provided a smaller context for people to be known, disciplined and equipped to make disciples.

For the 1st century Christians, church wasn't just showing up to the temple on a Sunday to sing songs and listen to a sermon. It was an active participation in a vibrant community of disciples who were committed to sharing their lives together around a table. They gave of their time, giftings, and possessions to one another along with devoting themselves to the apostles teaching. They also lived their faith out in such a way that others were being drawn in, disciplined and then sent out as missionaries to start their own house churches.

When you look at the early church and the birth of the original house church movement, we see 5 practices that were central to the identity of these house churches:

**Gather**

**Prayer & Worship**

**Word**

**Mission**

**Multiplication**

We believe each one of these practices are essential expressions of what it means to be the Church as modeled by the early church. Therefore, we desire that each of our house churches would value and embody these same practices.

# WHY HOUSE CHURCH?

As disciples of Jesus we have been entrusted with the Great Commission to go and make disciples who make disciples (Matt. 28). This commission isn't just for the experts, but the ordinary individuals who have said "yes" to the call of following Christ.

In this cultural moment, we believe a house church provides the best environment to equip, empower and release disciples to make and multiply disciples in the contexts God has placed them (e.g neighborhood, workplace, school, sports team, etc). Also, with increasingly fewer people being drawn to enter the front doors of a church building for a weekend service, a house church provides a much needed side door entrance for people who wouldn't set foot into a traditional church setting but would enter someone's home.

This isn't just about getting bigger and adding more numbers to our attendance; it is about multiplying the number of people entering the Kingdom of God and experiencing the love of Jesus. We believe that as ordinary individuals embrace this mission of making and multiplying disciples in the contexts that God has placed them, we will move closer to fulfilling our vision of seeing Salem a city at peace with God.

# GATHER

**“AND ALL BELIEVERS MET TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE AND SHARED EVERYTHING THEY HAD...” - ACTS 2:44**

In the beginning of Acts we see the birth of the church and with that, the emergence of house churches. These gatherings involved disciples of Jesus meeting in homes, eating together and sharing what they had with one another.

## **AS YOU LEAD YOUR HOUSE CHURCH, WHAT DO YOUR GATHERINGS INVOLVE?**

### **FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:**

- Where are you going to meet?
- What are you going to eat?
- How are you going to share with one another?
- How are you going to use your gifts to contribute to the community?
- How often will you come to Salem Alliance to gather with the larger church?

### **PRACTICAL IDEAS:**

- Start your gathering with an icebreaker\*
- Set up a meal rotation for different people to bring food
- Ask your group to take a spiritual gifts test and discuss the results
- Organize social gatherings outside of your house church meeting time\*
- Set up a group text/email where people can share their practical needs with the house church
- Invite others to share the responsibility of leading the house church
- For HC's watching livestream together on the weekend, consider joining an in-person service once or twice a quarter

\*See HC Resources

# PRAYER & WORSHIP

“THEY ALL MET TOGETHER AND WERE CONSTANTLY UNITED IN PRAYER...” - ACTS 1:14

Consistent prayer and worship preceded the house church movement and continued to propel it forward.

## AS YOU LEAD YOUR HOUSE CHURCH, HOW IS GOD INVITING YOU TO ENGAGE IN CONSISTENT PRAYER & WORSHIP?

### FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

- When are you going to pray together?
- Who/what are you going to pray for?
- What different ways can you engage in prayer and worship?

### PRACTICAL IDEAS:

- Engage in the B.L.E.S.S. 5 Prayer\*
- Go on a prayer walk in the place that God has planted you\*
- Spend time in listening prayer as a group
- Pray through the Lord's prayer together
- Anoint the sick with oil and pray for their healing (James 5:14-16)
- Set up a group text/email and share weekly prayer requests
- Pray for CMA international workers
- Review "Worship Ideas"\*

## "ALL BELIEVERS DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES' TEACHING..." - ACTS 2:42

These house church gatherings also included listening to the teaching of the apostles, reading the words of Scripture, and taking communion together.

### AS YOU LEAD YOUR HOUSE CHURCH, WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO DEVOTE YOURSELVES TO THE WORD?

#### FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

- Do you plan on watching the sermon together or separately?
- Will you use the sermon discussion questions or Bible study guide or a mix of both?
- How often will you take communion?
- Are there other biblical resources that would benefit your house church?

#### PRACTICAL IDEAS:

- Review "Facilitating Discussion"\*
- Use the sermon discussion questions or Bible study guide to discuss the sermon series
- Incorporate communion as part of your meal times together
- If your house church has questions about faith or are new to the Bible, talk to your coach about using the Alpha and Beta materials
- Recap the previous week's discussion to see how people have applied what they have learned

# MISSION

“AND EACH DAY THE LORD ADDED TO THEIR FELLOWSHIP THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED.” - ACTS 2:47

The outcome of these house church gatherings is that people were coming to know Jesus.

## AS YOU LEAD YOUR HOUSE CHURCH, WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO ENGAGE IN A COMPELLING WAY WITH THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW JESUS?

### FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

- In what contexts could you spend time getting to know people who don't go to church?
- Who are the people in your relational networks that you desire to know Jesus?
- What missional rhythms will allow you to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel to those around you in the ordinariness of life?
- Is there anyone you know who is spiritually curious that you could invite to your house church?

### PRACTICAL IDEAS:

- Identify the people in your life who don't know Jesus through using the Relationship Mapping exercise\*
- Engage in the B.L.E.S.S. rhythms and check-in each week to hear stories\*
- Use the 4H questions to develop meaningful relationships with your neighbors, co-workers, classmates, etc\*
- Use the conversation starters provided in the Bible study guide to spark spiritual conversations
- Invite non-Christian friends to a monthly social gathering with your house church
- Visit the “On Mission” webpage to see what opportunities there are to serve as a house church
- Support a CMA international worker

# MULTIPLICATION

“SO THE CHURCH THROUGHOUT ALL JUDEA AND GALILEE AND SAMARIA HAD PEACE... AND WALKING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD AND IN THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, IT MULTIPLIED.” - ACTS 9:31 (ESV)

Throughout the rest of Acts we see the house church movement multiply, as disciples are making more disciples and sent out to start their own house churches.

## AS YOU LEAD YOUR HOUSE CHURCH, WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR MULTIPLICATION?

### FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

- Who could you apprentice to lead another house church in the future?
- What responsibilities can you give your apprentice to equip them as a future leader?
- When will you evaluate if it's time to multiply?

### PRACTICAL IDEAS:

- Share from the beginning of your house church that multiplication is an essential part of disciple-making
- Encourage each person that they have the potential to lead their own house church in the future
- Pray about who you think God may be calling to be an apprentice and initiate a conversation
- Use the Leadership Square as a guide to apprenticeship\*
- Allow apprentices opportunities to lead the group in a variety of ways
- Set dates to evaluate if your house church is ready to multiply



## **I USED TO LEAD A BIBLE STUDY OR COMMUNITY GROUP THAT HAS NOW BECOME A HOUSE CHURCH. HOW DOES LEADING A HOUSE CHURCH COMPARE WITH LEADING A BIBLE STUDY OR COMMUNITY GROUP? WHAT NEW ELEMENTS SHOULD I LOOK TO INTEGRATE WITH MY HOUSE CHURCH?**

In a number of ways, leading a house church is similar to leading a Bible Study or Community Group. It involves planning and leading regular gatherings that promote being known in community, seeking God in prayer and growing in our understanding of the Word.

There are also may be some new elements to integrate. With the understanding that we are all called to be disciple-makers (Matt 28:18), every house church leader is encouraged to disciple and apprentice those in their house church with the perspective that one day those individuals have the potential to multiply and lead their own house church. This could involve asking individuals to help host the house church, lead the discussion or prayer time, plan ways for the house church to serve their neighborhood/community and so on. (Look at the Leadership Square in the HC Resource booklet for a helpful framework in apprenticeship)

House church leaders are also invited to prayerfully discern what it looks like to be on mission with their house church in the neighborhoods and communities God has placed them in. This could include a variety of things such as developing relationships with neighbors, praying for children and grandchildren who don't know Jesus, planning social gatherings to invite friends who wouldn't normally attend church as well as serving the poor and marginalized in your community. Whatever age or stage of life you find yourself in, we believe that God has specific ways for you and your house church to engage in mission by demonstrating and declaring Jesus to our city.

## **IS HOUSE CHURCH A REPLACEMENT FOR WEEKEND SERVICES?**

House church is a smaller gathering that complements the larger weekend services and we believe participation in both is beneficial for our encouragement and growth as disciples of Jesus.

## DO I HAVE TO STOP ATTENDING WEEKEND SERVICES IN ORDER TO LEAD A HOUSE CHURCH?

Many people who lead house churches also attend weekend services and will meet with their house church during other times of the week.

If your house church decides to meet during service times, we encourage you to join us for a weekend service once a month or so to help your house church stay connected with the larger church.

## WHO SHOULD I INVITE TO MY HOUSE CHURCH?

Anyone who desires to learn more about Jesus and grow as his disciple. Examples of this could include (but are not limited to):

- A Christian neighbor or friend
- A neighbor or co-worker who isn't a Christian but has shown interest in spiritual conversations
- A friend who has been hurt by their experience of church and may find it difficult to attend a weekend service
- A person who you are mentoring or discipling

If you would like to be put on our house church finder so that people can find out about your house church and register for it on our website, contact your coach.

## WHAT IF I'M NOT ABLE TO HOST THE HOUSE CHURCH IN MY HOME?

We encourage all of our house church leaders to consider meeting in homes. There's something about sitting down on someone's sofa, drinking a cup of coffee and engaging in meaningful conversation that fosters community in a way that other environments may not. Homes also provide a great context for people who wouldn't feel comfortable to enter a church building to experience and participate in church.

If you are not able to host your house church in your home, there may be someone else in your group who may like to instead.

We understand that this might not be an option for everyone therefore other options may include meeting on our church campus or over Zoom.

## WHY DO WE ASSIGN YOU A COACH AS A HC LEADER?

Whether you are a veteran leader or are brand new to this, we believe that leading a house church is both a joy and a challenge. As you start out on this journey of making and multiplying disciples, there are going to be times when you need assistance along the way. Coaches are assigned to you to help support processing group dynamics, equip you with tools to help facilitate spiritual formation and challenge you to think about the next steps for your house church.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A COACH?

The 3 primary roles of a coach are:

- **To support**
  - Coaches are committed to listening to, praying with, and encouraging you as you lead
- **To equip**
  - Coaches will provide you with a variety of tools and resources that will help develop your skills as a HC leader and facilitate spiritual formation in others
- **To challenge**
  - Coaches will ask intentional questions that help you think beyond the present, push you out of your comfort zone and keep you focused on making disciples who make disciples

## HOW OFTEN WILL I MEET WITH MY COACH?

Your coach will meet with you once a quarter (once every 3 months). If you are interested in meeting on a more frequent basis, make sure to let your coach know in your initial coaching session. You can also communicate with your coach any time via email as needed.

## WHAT WILL MY MEETINGS WITH MY COACH LOOK LIKE?

For your initial coaching session, your coach will ask you questions to learn more about your story, help you discern who you feel called to disciple, as well as talk through some of the practical details of leading a HC.

In follow-up sessions, coaches will check in with you to hear how you are doing, gather stories of how God is at work in your HC, and provide any relevant information to equip and challenge you as disciple-makers.

These quarterly coaching sessions will include meeting with other HC leaders as we believe that there is tremendous value in connecting, dialoguing, and learning from each other. For some that may not be possible due to scheduling conflicts, in which case an individual coaching session can be scheduled instead.

"ALL THE BELIEVERS DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES' TEACHING, AND TO FELLOWSHIP, AND TO SHARING IN MEALS INCLUDING THE LORD'S SUPPER, AND TO PRAYER. A DEEP SENSE OF AWE CAME OVER THEM ALL, AND THE APOSTLES PERFORMED MANY MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND WONDERS. AND ALL THE BELIEVERS MET TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE AND SHARED EVERYTHING THEY HAD. THEY SOLD THEIR PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS AND SHARED THE MONEY WITH THOSE IN NEED. THEY WORSHIPED TOGETHER AT THE TEMPLE EACH DAY, MET IN HOMES FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER, AND SHARED THEIR MEALS WITH GREAT JOY AND GENEROSITY ALL THE WHILE PRAISING GOD AND ENJOYING THE GOODWILL OF ALL THE PEOPLE. AND EACH DAY THE LORD ADDED TO THEIR FELLOWSHIP THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED."

**ACTS 2:42-48**