

General Topics ::

- posted by carters (), on: 2011/8/10 20:05

Re: Godly advice needed regarding Home Fellowship... - posted by passerby, on: 2011/8/10 21:34

Blessings to you and your family.

No comments yet, but may I ask some questions:

1. Do you meet in the same house all the time.
2. How many times do you meet in a day or in a week.
3. How many activities do you have, how long do you meet in different activities.
4. Is your group composed of people with different denominational background.
5. Do you allow non-believers to attend to your fellowship or allow those who attend to invite non-believers.
6. What is the composition of your group; families or individuals, youth, children, professionals, women, men, singles, or married? are they consistent with their attendance.
7. How old is your fellowship, what is the level of christian maturity among members.
8. How do you meet financial needs for example in 'Lords'supper', etc., is it ok for many to have a donation box.
9. How did it start, is there someone who consistently volunteers to coordinate the activities, or offers his house.
10. Personally, are you there in that island as missionaries or for other purpose.

- posted by carters (), on: 2011/8/11 0:14

Re: Godly advice needed regarding Home Fellowship..., on: 2011/8/11 1:05

Sherid in all the home groups I've gone to in the past 8 years, the pastor/preacher of the home group has desired to be under an authority, but that authority was usually not present at the meeting and sometimes lived hundreds of miles away. There were phone calls and emails to that authority from time to time and occasionally they met face to face.

That Cho guy in Korea who has a membership of like 2 or 3 million and thousands of home churches said that home groups have one problem and that is "venting". Try to discourage it. It usually takes the form of venting towards "big church" where brothers and sister may have been hurt by leadership or other people at "big church". That's all I have to add. I went to big church for 30 years, and I've gone to home groups for the past 8 years. I still go to the big church from time to time.

Re: - posted by Areadymind (), on: 2011/8/11 1:57

I have had a lot of experience in both, and my experience (though subjective) is that home groups can have a bent away from the clear meaning of scripture into a bit more of a "touchy feely" kind of vibe, and you will start to hear things like "I think this means..." (Which is not always bad mind you.) Again this has just been my experience. I also have seen a lot of good in home fellowships, a lot of prayer, encouragement and great exhortation. I have observed kind of what endzone said to a degree, and in fact had to cut myself off from a Home Group once that was doing that.

I would strongly encourage structured, Godly leadership. The type we see modeled all over the New Testament. And be just as aware of what Paul told the Ephesian Elders in the book of Acts...beware of men who would make followers after themselves. Since home fellowships can tend to be more discussion oriented, that tends to give members an open platform. If you have Godly leadership, elders for example who oversee the flock, and feed the flock, not by constraint, not for filthy lucre, but of A-Ready-Mind; and neither as being "Lords" over God's heritage, but men who are "examples" (Tupos in the Greek, meaning a "Die, or a shape that is a statue, a resemblance, model, figure, or fashion, -Zhodiates) to the flock. In other words, if God were to take these men, and use them as molds to craft other believers out of them, would they be a mold worth repeating? Secondly, these Elders should be ready at all times for the Appearing of the chief Shepherd. The younger of these men should be in submission to the elders, and all of the Elders should also be in sub

ection to one another. Completely clothed in humility toward one another, old or young. This humility comes as there is a communal recognition between them all that God resists the proud but lavishes his infinite grace upon their humility. These should be men who "cast their cares" upon God regularly, rather than casting their cares upon the sheep they are to be feeding. They also should be sober, and vigilant men who have resisted the devil steadfast in faith.

This is not my advice, but the advice of the Apostle Peter. I think he is a good source.

Re: - posted by jimp, on: 2011/8/11 6:51

hi, 40 years ago we formed a home group and it was fabulous. we met in a different home every week on a revolving basis whenever possible in order to not burden any one family. the home we met in was responsible for the message and snacks. this gave us a chance to learn and mature in preparing with prayer and study a sermon every other month or so. the older kids (teens) were responsible for baby sitting. we all grew in the Lord and His word and grew to love one another deeply. len ravenhill came to many of our meetings and shared. it was wonderful. jimp

Re: - posted by mguldner (), on: 2011/8/11 6:57

Brother Jim I always enjoy reading your posts, I am blessed by many of them as they encourage me to continue to press in. You have been a mentor to me even though you may not even know it. I am curious did your teens get involved other than babysitting?

Re: Godly advice needed regarding Home Fellowship... - posted by twayneb (), on: 2011/8/11 8:33

Carters:

Ha Ha! It just hit me that your question is really a bit like, "If we found ourselves alone on a tiny island, how would we worship God." It is sort of a cliché question. Don't know why I found that so amusing.

To answer the question I would have a few observations.

The basic Biblical unit of the church that is manifest on a local level would be the church in the city. In your case it may be the church on the island. In that respect you are part of a body of true believers who live on your particular island. So when you meet in a home a part of that body on the island is meeting.

I met in a coffee shop yesterday with a man who is serving as a pastor in a local body that meets in a very traditional sense. I currently meet in my home with a small group of people. We fellowshiped, encouraged one another in the Lord, and began setting up a scenario in which I will use his building one night a week in the near future to teach to the body, both his small group and anyone else in the city and surrounding area that wants to come. I am in submission to this brother and he is in submission to me. I am also in submission to the people in my home group as they are in submission to me. It is in those relationships that accountability occurs. We are part of one another's lives and we take seriously the responsibility we have to hold one another to genuine Biblical living. We are called Biblically to be in submission first to Christ and secondly to our brothers and sisters. Never are we called to be in submission to an organization or to an established "ministry". I am not saying it is bad to have those relationships and I am not saying if you submit to a person who, let's say, planted or feeds your particular group that you are wrong, but I have seen a lot of problems with that model.

You do not have to start a "traditional" building based fellowship with all of the trappings in order to have a genuine fellowship. Fellowship is ecclesia, simply the gathering of the believers to seek God and edify the body. The Bible tells us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. It does not say don't forsake going to a building on a set schedule.

As to eldership I do not see one elder over a work as a scriptural concept. Paul and the other apostles always appointed a plurality of elders. Interestingly enough he never seemed to do it when he established the church in the location but rather at some later date when he came through. It is as if the leadership that was ready for that responsibility would rise to the top and upon his return Paul would ordain them officially. I suggest choosing out the most mature men among you spiritually and as a group setting them in as elders. This should be preceded by much soul searching prayer among the whole assembly and any impure motives dealt with in prayer before proceeding.

That being said I would look at the level of spiritual maturity of the people you lead. If there are those who are spiritually immature you may need a weekly teaching meeting that is designed to bring them into doctrinal maturity. This regular meeting might look a lot like a traditional church structure and the regular meetings for prayer, worship, fellowship, and etc

. may continue in houses here and there.

Just my two cents. Proceed with MUCH prayer but realize that you are the church regardless of how you choose to organize.

Re: Godly advice needed regarding Home Fellowship... - posted by Lysa (), on: 2011/8/11 9:23

Quote:

-----I would like stability. I want to know what God's Word says about running a fellowship.

Here is a link to Zac Poonen's free book, "A Day of Small Beginnings" part 1 and 2; Zac took it all from the Bible:
http://www.cfcindia.com/web/mainpages/book_window.php?book=the_day_of_small_beginnings_volume2

CFC church in India started with and is run by a plurality of elders. I don't even think that Zac is a "head" elder! And they have many churches throughout India fashioned the same way: led by elders who are not paid. Their website is: <http://www.cfcindia.com/>

Now, has the Lord appointed elders in your small group? Perhaps you all should fast and pray to hear from the Lord on this matter and see who He appoints.

God bless you on this matter,
Lisa

Re: - posted by passerby, on: 2011/8/11 10:01

I do not mean to give you advice on what to do, these are just ideas that came to my mind after reading your posts.

It seems that you can have an eldership of four men. The women can serve as deacons.

If you will consider to do that you might as well count the cost now on what are you willing to commit. Consider carefully the biblical characteristics and attitudes of elders or deacons and if you can commit with the help of the Lord to abide by them or if there are incumbrances.

Because your group is open to attendance of non-believer friends or acquaintances, your fellowship can be a good platform for evangelism by formal preaching or through the ordinary course of your interactions. If you will call it a disadvantage, your group can indeed grow fast.

If you are really bent to evangelism or re-evangelism of 'lost Christians' the venue which will be a neutral ground for the Lord

(I said this because sometimes in a home church the host family has a tendency to have a domineering or inhospitable attitude) could be rented so that the disturbances to the privacy of your own homes is minimal.

But if one of you has means and is willing without reservations to give a neutral ground where you can have your assembly then consider it prayerfully..

There are many other things to consider but let me end for now.

- posted by carters (), on: 2011/8/12 2:40

- posted by carters (), on: 2011/8/12 2:44

- posted by carters (), on: 2011/8/12 2:54

Re: , on: 2011/8/12 3:49

Hi Sherid. I know of one good home fellowship that basically uses this format ...

Eph 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Eph 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Eph 5:21 *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

Scripturally, what was done in the book of Acts was not called "doing church" but just an "assembling" of the Church, which are the believers.

There was no structure as in liturgy, but each week a different brother would share from the Word what GOD had laid up on his heart. A different brother each week. That part I believe they'd set in order ahead.

All of the men were able to share. Only those who were babes in Christ didn't.

They would pray and come to consensus by the Holy Spirit, if a decision needed to be made.

What I fear with becoming a satellite 'church' is conformity to something that didn't originate from the Holy Spirit for your particular area where you live. The Holy Spirit has to preside over a meeting and sometimes someone else's "structure" is not what HE wants to do. Each meeting of the Saints should be somewhat ready for the Holy Spirit to move in a way that may differ from the Sunday before.

For instance, if it's your husband's Sunday to share something and he prepares something, yet when that Sunday comes, he feels the Holy Spirit leading him to just pray together because only HE knows what the needs are - then your husband would be in GOD's perfect will for the Church.

In the days we're living in - we don't know if the man we're following will stay on the straight and narrow.

The first time you posted here about leaving your Church, I recommended that you consider going into the ministry yourselves. It seems you are and I think your husband has a good handle on truth and there's possibly more in your group than do as well. I believe you all need the freedom to be completely led by GOD and not under anyone who doesn't live where you live or is dealing with the people you're meeting with. Each Church in the NT were local assemblies, by 'where' they lived - as in - The Church at Ephesus, the Church at Corinth, etc. There was no pope over them all and after the Apostles were gone, each Church had to be independent. The basic doctrines were in place from the Apostles and they followed them - until later, as you know from the ECFs thread.

"And The LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved"

Your island needs that. It will be Him that will do this work and it will be the closest to the book of Acts type assembling of yourselves as you can get, if you follow His guidelines from The Book.

Structure can be good - but sometimes not good, if the LORD through His Spirit leads in another direction that day.

Unless all the mature men of your fellowship can pray together and come to a joint conclusion, then there is no "submitting one to another". People can begin to want a boss when the Holy Spirit is left out from the decision making process that is Scriptural.

In time, those who are called to teach, pastor, etc will be proved for their calling and then the elder, deacon, pastor, etc p

ositions will naturally fall into place.

I like how they did it, locally, in the book of Acts.

Blessings, Protection and His Divine Guidance through the men of your group, with undergirding prayers by the Sisters.

Praying you'll both be encouraged by hope from The LORD, Himself.

Re: - posted by mguldner (), on: 2011/8/12 5:58

Brother I don't know how much advise I can give, but here is what I find the Word says with some of my thoughts added, take them as you wish.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40 would address this I believe.

Brother what you have going right now is a beautiful thing but like all beautiful things Satan likes to stand against it with all his might, through division and disunity. This is why the Unity of the Church must be protected which is why Paul addresses the issue found in 1 Corinthians 3-4

Follow Paul as he exhorts in the book of the Philippians chapter 2. Satan loves religious pride so check yourself for it (not saying you have this but its always good to check)

Also I would have your brothers and sister whom you fellowship with check their hearts for hurts from the false teachings they came out of, moving from a possible spirit of bitterness to a spirit of humility and mercy.

One last thing, Submit to one another, this is what a church is Believers encouraging and submitting to one another, I believe this is true Spiritual authority where everyone is simply accountable to everyone. When you read Matthew 18 you don't see Jesus saying Go to your Spiritual authority but He says Go to the Church, a pastor is not a church. The People are as they operate in Christ's Love for one another.

God Bless Christ's Flock on your little island may it grow and prosper 100 times over and flourish all over your area and spill into New Zealand.

Re: - posted by passerby, on: 2011/8/12 6:42

Let's rest the case for now in the Lord sister perhaps in prayer and meditation. The Lord will surely guide us as we seek Him. May the Lord bless you and give you wisdom and a heart after Him as you ponder about it.

Pondering too.

Re: - posted by jimp, on: 2011/8/12 6:51

hi, another tid bit as that if one home is being used, the church should do something spiritual and help with the upkeep of that home, e.g. painting etc. jimp

Re: Godly advice needed regarding Home Fellowship... - posted by passerby, on: 2011/8/12 14:36

QUOTE: What is the biblical definition of "church".

I thought that a home fellowship, believers meeting together every week is "church".

QUOTE: I think there is a problem and that is that the other spiritually mature couple (who started this thing with us), don't seem to think that what we doing is "church".

The christian concept of the 'church' is generally thought in two ways:

a. kuriakon - meaning 'belonging to the Lord', 'the body of Christ' consisting of all those who are saved both living and the departed.

b. ekklesia - local assembly of christians.

When the concept pertains to ekklesia, the bible is not lacking about its:

- a. structure/doctrines/leadership.
- b. purposes and activities.
 - 1. preaching/teaching/discipleship/evangelism/deliverance.
 - 2. fellowship/prayer/praise&worship/admonition/encouragement.
 - 3. sharing of spiritual and material blessings.
 - 4. baptism/Lord's supper.
 - 5. etc.
- c. conduct - towards other believers, outsiders, leadership, other churches, 'deceivers', etc.
- d. diversity of gifting and services of its members.

Where you do your assembly, usually is decided upon by the leadership or in appropriate cases by the local assembly as a whole. Keeping in mind that is not for the sake of some cherished doctrines that we have our local assemblies but for the service and glory of God.

The church is the body of Christ, we are His hands, His feet, His mouth, His face here on earth we have to grow to be Christlike in our heart, thoughts, actions, and words.

With the plethora of what is written about the church, it is not surprising the older ones have a more than a simple concept about it.

- posted by carters (), on: 2011/8/12 19:07

Re: Thanks WOW - posted by Grace_Saved, on: 2011/8/12 21:42

That is some great advice. I am only new on here so I humbly come and offer some advice. Please do not feel you need to accept it or listen to it - as said, I am new on here (can I add quickly how I am loving this site!).

Anyway, I am not so sure of reading out the posts in the group may work. It is possible some might resent you going "out side" for help and advice - I am not sure. I think for sure you should bring up points as you see fit but reading out what we have all said might be liable to cause some friction. That is my opinion though.

I think what you want from a home church or home fellowship or whatever it gets called (it really does not matter) is that you are accountable to each other and that you can have the opportunity to be able to help each other in all manner of ways - sin, doubts, depression, etc - and to be able to do it lovingly and without breaking the unity of a special situation.

To be sure, if someone is in sin, they need to be confronted (privately initially I would say). But the whole group needs to be able to submit to one-another in providing that opportunity.

Sin in sin - it needs to be dealt with and I would hope that even in my "normal" church, people would lovingly confront and walk with me in my sin to get me out (though, sadly, I doubt it works that way anymore as this is unpopular!). The same as I would humbly come alongside another who was struggling too. If that doesn't work, then the Bible is clear about the process and discipline.

Anyway, I am not saying that anything has to be dealt with in this regard because from what I have read, this sounds like a sweet meeting of saints. Whenever saints are gathered together, that is church. As such, the Bible reigns supreme in providing the means to grow in Christ.

I would only caution you on not trying to "formalise" things too much. It is far better to still be meeting together in unity and

d bring things more into line as time goes on - much like God is patient and brings us gradually into line before Him through our sanctification. for that I am eternally grateful! I am unfortunately a slow learner and have learned things the hard way, through this the Lord is gracious and patient and when I look back, I can see myself getting closer and closer to Him - even when it does not seem so at the time!

Anyway, brother, I pray for you and I hope that this whole process works out well and that God is glorified, pleased, and honoured - I can see this in your heart, it is obvious my friend.

Bless you all and thank you for reading this terribly long-winded post!

Re: - posted by Cooksta (), on: 2011/8/12 22:02

Hi All, I am Sherid's (carters) husband. I also would like to thank you for the advice and support.

Sometimes I guess, for people outside of our context and situation, this looks like a minor issue. People may be thinking, "what are they worried about?" I think my wife has detailed well about our situation. We are not in a normal church because the situation in churches here is untenable. We often joke that the only churches here are cults, catholics, and false teachers. But, that is not inaccurate.

For us, the group has been a breath of fresh air. It has been a chance to meet regularly with like-minded believers, to pray, listen to a sermon, and to worship our God. It has definitely been an answer to prayer. We were worried about what to do.

However, in the last little while, we have got to the point where we wonder about the accountability in the group. There has been no issues which have come up to prompt these thoughts (no one that we know of is falling into deep sin etc). But we do want to be held accountable in our life before the Lord. We would like (though at the time it might chafe) to have people pull us aside quietly about things that need addressing.

For some people in the group, I kind of feel it might be a way to pass the time on the Sunday morning. They know they are here on the island temporarily whereas, my family and I are here long-term (well that is currently our intention). I think Sherid mentioned this above.

We just want to be right by God and His Word. We want to do the things which please Him and glorify Him.

Anyway, I did just want to say that your prayers and your advice are very appreciated. And Grace_Saved, you are new (so I am really) but that does not mean you have to keep your mouth closed. If you have some godly counsel and wisdom, we all would love for you to give it - on any thread that you want. I have found that people here are generally gracious and very welcoming which does foster a lovely spirit and really helps people to work out things as needed.

God bless you all.

Re: - posted by Grace_Saved, on: 2011/8/12 22:22

Thank you Cooksta, for your kind words! I would like to think I can contribute in ways to help the body. I have belonged to the Lord for over 40 years and it do desire to pass on wisdom humbly and contritely where I can. I had never heard of this site until recently.

I do feel for your situation on the island. I am not sure how far away the mainland is - perhaps some advice and support from churches there could be helpful too?

Anyway, I have been involved several times in my life in home churches or something very similar. They are great times of blessing. There is a such a sweet intimacy which the Lord can work into. People seem more closely involved with each other as opposed to larger churches (which I have been involved in too). The larger churches obviously have other advantages. I think I have found there are pros and cons of each type and model.

Sometimes in these smaller groups, egos show up more easily. This is especially so when someone is being challenged in their walk with God (indirectly as well as directly). Sometimes resistance is caused by that. Sometimes also ignorance and apathy.

Like I said to your wife earlier (whom I thought was a man! I must apologise for any offense caused!!). I said, it is very obvious that you desire to please God and that you also seem to not just focus on the "big" issues but are prepared to examine yourselves in the smaller issues that are so often neglected. I commend you on that.

However, do not let the group you have got fall apart if things don't go your way. Sometimes the Spirit of God is resisted by others and they may take longer to come around (if at all!). By the sounds of what you said Cooksta, there does not seem to be much other choice apart from what you have got going. Unless there is easy access to churches on the main and as an alternative? That can become a hassle in working out transport etc on Sundays (most cities offer reduced services and so forth).

But anyway, I do pray that the Lord gives you guys wisdom and will keep on speaking into your hearts.

Bless you all!

Re: Carters, on: 2011/8/13 9:26

Brother went back and read your original post but have not worked through the thread. Consequently this counsel is off my head. But I would say enjoy the moment of his fellowship with Jesus and one another. All too often fellowships start with a life of the Spirit. Then that life is destroyed when the fellowship tries to define what they are. Let the Spirit lead you. Let him guide you. Pray together as a fellowship and see what he desires. Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their mind set on what the Spirit desires. If you do this I think your group will be truly blessed.

Blaine