

Ring around the Rabbi

Home Bible Fellowships
– One **Bite** at a Time



Small Groups

You hear a lot about **small groups** these days; churches of virtually **every** denomination **practice** them and **sing** their praises; but some consider them a waste of time that distracts people from church business

No matter what you **think** of them, you **ought** to know that God **invented** small groups and **wrote** the book on them



After Pentecost

⁴²The disciples were devoted to **apostolic teaching**, to **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread**, and to **prayer**.

Acts 2:42

The early church

- Let the **apostles** set the standard for what they believed
 - Lived like one family
- Celebrated the Lord's Supper
- Spent quiet time with God



After Pentecost

⁴³A sense of **wonder** came over everyone as many amazing things and miraculous signs happened **through the apostles.**

Acts 2:43

The early church

Was filled with awe because of the impressive way God **displayed His** jaw-dropping **power** through **its** **inspired** leadership



After Pentecost

⁴⁴**All** the believers **kept meeting together**, and they **shared everything** with each other.

Acts 2:44

The early church

Regularly shared each other's **company** and considered whatever they owned **community** property



After Pentecost

⁴⁵From time to time, they **sold** their **property** and other **possessions** and **distributed** the money to **anyone** who needed it.

Acts 2:45

The early church

Gave away **every** penny from the **sale** of their *personal* stuff to **those** who **needed** it



After Pentecost

⁴⁶The believers went to **the temple every day** with **one passion**. They **ate at each other's homes** and gladly **shared** their food in **heartfelt harmony**.

Acts 2:46

The early church

Visited **God's house daily** with the same **motive**, and **gladly** invited one another to **share a home-cooked meal** with their families



After Pentecost

⁴⁷At the same time, they **praised God** and had **the good will** of all the people. **Every day** the Lord **saved** people and **added** them to the **group**

Acts 2:47

The early church

Expressed admiration for God, got **rave reviews** from **everyone** in town, and **grew daily** as God **rescued** people from **eternal destruction**



The **Early** Church

Serves as a **model** for **every**
Christian congregation

Any church would be **happy** to:

- **Experience** its exemplary **lifestyle**
- **Achieve** its impressive **results**
 - **Grow** at its fantastic **rate**



The **Early** Church

What was the **secret** of its success?

The **purity** of its doctrines?

The **wholesomeness** of its diet?

The **correctness** of its lifestyle?

The **rightness** of its rituals?

The **morality** of its leaders?

The **version** of its Bible?

And the answer is...

NONE of the above!



The **Real** Secret

Was the **unity** of the **early** church represented by **all-inclusive** words, like:

The disciples were devoted

Wonder came over **everyone**

All the believers kept meeting **together**

They sold...and distributed to **anyone**

The believers went...with **one** passion

They ate at **each others** homes

They praised...and had the good will of **all**

The Lord...added to the **group**



The **Real** Secret

And **where** did they **get** this **unity**?
How did they **maintain** it?

Through **intimately interactive**
small groups!

How else could **3,120** members:
Have room for **fellowship**, **gather** for the
Lord's Supper, keep meeting **together**,
fit around tables in **homes**, and **absorb**
new members daily—when they weren't
meeting at a **big** place like the **Temple**?



The **Real** Secret

Luke's traveling companion, Paul also mentions several **churches** that **met in homes**...

Aquila and Priscilla greet you...and so does **the church that meets at their house**. 1Co 16:19

Give my greetings to...Nympha and **the church in her house**. Col 4:15

To Philemon...and to **the church that meets in your home**. Phm 2



Biblical Small Groups



- **Meet in Homes**
 - **Separate** from other groups
 - In a **cozy**, friendly atmosphere
 - To develop **close** relationships
 - To become a **team** for Christ
 - To get along **on their own**
 - Without a **storefront** presence in the community

Home Bible Fellowships

Include...



Families



Relatives



**F
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Strangers

and even...



Neighbors

Home Bible Fellowships

Share certain characteristics

1. Subscribe to **apostolic teaching**

- Share the apostles' fellowship with the Father and the Son, by faith
- Take the LORD's Supper in their homes
- Pray without ceasing

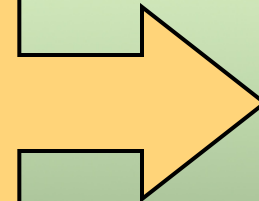


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2. Gather **around** Christ

- To **learn**
- To **serve**
- To **worship**



HIM

Home Bible Fellowships



- People come together because of their **relationship** w/Christ
- This relationship **binds** them to one another
- The **nearer** they get to Christ, the **closer** they get to each other
- Ultimately, the **Christ-bond** makes these groups virtually —**indestructible**

Home Bible Fellowships



- Jesus told His disciples: *When 2 or 3 gather in My name, there **I am** [present] in the **midst** of them*—Matt 18:20
- David said to the Lord: *In your **presence** there is fulness of **joy***—Ps 16:11
- Small groups **enjoy** themselves when they practice God's **presence**

Biblical Small Groups

3. **Study** the Bible **with Jesus** **as the Teacher**

- **First**, disciples study alone with the Master
- **Then**, they come together in the Master's presence to share their discoveries
- **Finally**, they confirm what others share with *them*— with *Him*



Home Bible Fellowships



- To **organize** an HBF
 - **Invite** people to a home
 - **Make** them feel welcome
 - **Share** *Ring around the Rabbi*
 - **Show** them Quik**est**Skills, Quik**est**Steps, and Quik**est**Tools
 - **Pass out** Quik**est**Study materials
 - **Choose** a passage to study
 - **Covenant** to study **alone** *daily* and to meet *weekly* as a **group**
 - **Set** location, time, and day
 - **Offer** a *consecration prayer*

Home Bible Fellowships



- **Get ready** for meetings
 - Do your **homework** to *practice* skills and *prepare* for discussion
 - Go the **extra** mile to *know* your material **better** and to **bring** in *special* helps for others
 - Prepare a *practical* **lesson** plan to *maximize* meeting time (see, “**Growth-Group Guidelines**” for all sorts of helpful forms)
 - Bring things **others** *may* forget

Home Bible Fellowships

- **Getting Started**
 - *Start* the meeting **on time**
 - Help **everyone** to *get* acquainted
 - Focus *everyone* **on Christ**
 - With a **peppy** *introduction* to the evening's text
 - Develop a **discussion question** that will trigger *honest* reactions
 - Pray for **Christ's leadership**
 - Complete the **transition** to the text with a **question** that *draws* brief, broad answers about the lesson **in general**



Home Bible Fellowships

- **Get on with it**
 - **Connect** everyone with the Master
 - Ask a **variety** of questions that will **plunge** the group into the world of the Bible book
 - Show them **how** to get **answers** from the *text, notes, and book*
 - **Challenge** the group to bring in what they've learned so far
 - **Summarize** from time to time to prevent information overload



Home Bible Fellowships

- **Class is in session**
 - Lead by **example**
 - Encourage **freedom** of expression
 - Promote **learning**
 - Don't treat **everyone** the **same**
 - Give **each** one **time** to learn
 - Focus on **understanding** rather than **finishing** the exercise
 - **Equip** rather than **indoctrinate**
 - **Mentor** rather than **dominate**
 - Be a **facilitator**–leader



Home Bible Fellowships

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Make sure everyone understands that the group will *discuss* what they have studied.** No one will lecture the group, or dominate the discussion.
2. **Explain that God always has the *last word*;** neither the leader nor the majority rule. The group will turn to the Scriptures for the final outcome of every discussion. The group will honor the sanctity of personal conviction.



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- 3. No one should jump ahead of the group and introduce advanced information from later steps into group discussions.**

It is unfair to the rest of the group to discuss something as a group that the group as a whole has not studied for itself.



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4. The group must agree to Berean rules for every discussion.

Like the legendary Bible students from Acts 17, the group must listen when others speak and save their questions. Not only is it rude to draw conclusions or interrupt others before they finish speaking, but it also wastes the group's time to grill people based on incomplete info.



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4. The group must agree to **Berean rules for every discussion (cont' d)**

Explain that, if they' ll wait until the speaker is through, their questions will probably get answered, or they will have enough info to properly consider what was said.



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5. **Discussions will focus on the text *at hand***, and the group must confine itself to the text rather than bring in outside authorities. No one should invite a speaker to come and “set the group straight,” quote resources that back up their positions, or repeat what others have said about the text...



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- 5. Discussions will focus on the *text at hand* (cont' d.)**
unless they can trace their thoughts to someone or something actually in the text. God's Word and its personal investigation by the group take precedence over anything else.

Home Bible Fellowships

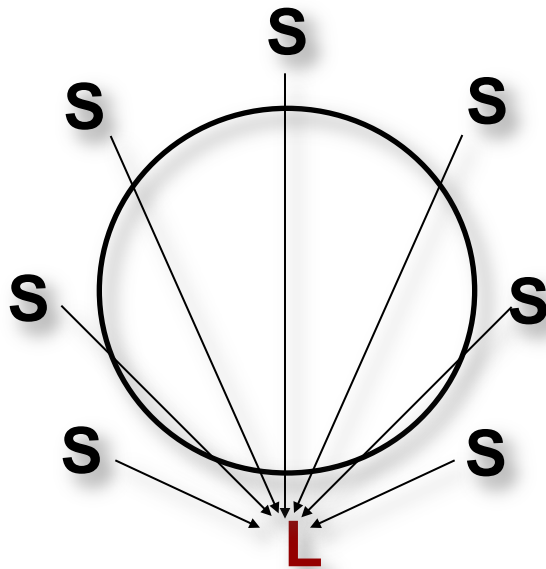


6. **Encourage the group to pray for each other and to affirm one another.** This way everyone will experience loving respect from the others in the group.
7. **Urge members to prepare for meetings.** True discipleship requires one-on-one time with the Master. True, they will experience Christ as a group during meetings, but nothing replaces a personal tour of the Word with Jesus. Everyone should personally investigate the text, so they will have something to contribute to the meeting.

Open the Door

Traditional Study Groups Focus Too Much On Their Human Leader

They put him
or her in the
place of
Christ

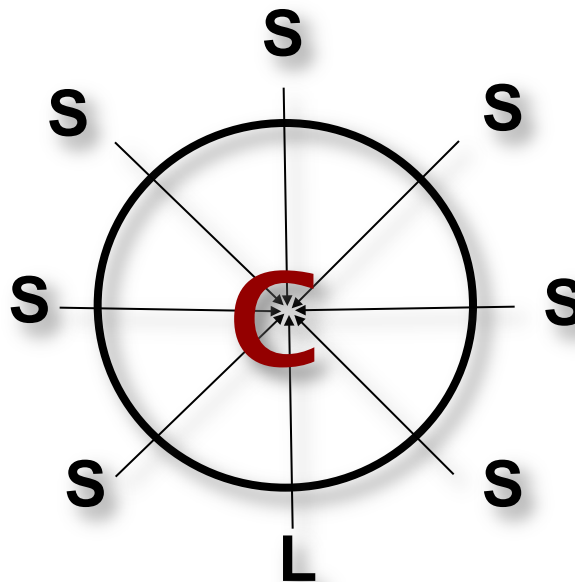


He or she
controls the
group and any
outcomes

Open the Door

Interactive Inductive Study Groups, On
the Other Hand Focus On Christ

Christ is the
center of
everyone's
attention



The human
leader **serves** —
Christ, who
directs any
outcomes

Open the Door

A TYPICAL MEETING

After years of presenting seminars and conducting workshops, we've learned that you can count on three things to happen at each event:

- (1) Some people will get **bogged down** from the **baggage** they bring to the meetings;
- (2) Most people will get **fired up** and spend more **quality** time with Christ in His Word; and
- (3) Leader-types will want some kind of **format** to follow at their meetings. Used to disciple-led **lectures**, they want us to **spell out** a hard and fast way to *configure* every group **discussion**. We show them, instead, how **Jesus** led **His** small group, in a **variety** of situations

Open the Door

Key Elements

Rabbi Jesus was the greatest small group leader of all time. He always conducted successful meetings: and those who attended always benefited from His leadership.

Since we want Him in charge of our group get-togethers, we should pattern our fellowships after His model meetings. A study of Christ-led gatherings shows the Master's approach to the study of Scripture in the small-group setting.

Open the Door



Sermon on the Mount

On this occasion, Christ met with His small group, the twelve disciples, **plus** a large number of visitors. Let's look at His blueprint for successful spiritual interaction with outsiders to the group:

Open the Door

1. Christ set Himself up as the only Teacher

Rabbis **stood up** to read Scripture (Luke 4:16); but they **sat down** to teach (Luke 4:20) in Moses' seat—a **chair** carved out of rock (Matthew 23:2). Jesus sat down atop a rocky **mountain—a** Moses seat with dimensions that matched His status as the greatest Rabbi—and began to teach (Matthew 5:1).

Open the Door

2. He taught the lesson

Jesus taught the lesson to His disciples, so that the rest could hear His Word (Matthew 5:2-7:20).

3. He issued a challenge

Jesus summed up His lesson by challenging everyone to live by what they heard Him say (Matthew 7:21-27).

4. The outsiders reflected on His Words.

When Jesus finished teaching, the visitors easily saw the difference between Him and the rest of Israel's run of the mill teachers: **After Jesus finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at His teaching, for He was teaching them as someone with true delegated authority—unlike the official teachers of religious law** (Matthew 7:28, 29)

Open the Door



Parable of the Sower

This time, Christ spoke to His small group—the twelve disciples—as **part of** a larger group, including a substantial number of visitors.

Open the Door

1. Christ set Himself up as the only Teacher

Again, Jesus sat down to teach—only this time, aboard a ship on the sea (Matthew 13:1).

2. He taught the lesson.

Jesus taught the lesson to everyone along the shore (Matthew 13:2). While the disciples separated themselves from the rest of the people on the mount, Jesus separated His disciples from the rest by speaking in parables (Matthew 13:3-8).

3. He issued a challenge.

Jesus climaxed His lesson by challenging everyone to hear what He said (Matthew 13:9).

Open the Door

4. The disciples discussed His Words with Him

When Jesus finished teaching, His disciples wanted to know why He spoke in parables (Matthew 13:10). Jesus explained that parables separate the disciple from the casual classmate (Matthew 13:11-17).

5. Jesus led them into deeper investigation.

Then, Jesus explained the terms and the parable, but each disciple still needed to *hear* Him in order to understand it (Matthew 13:18-23).

Open the Door



The Last Supper

This time, Christ spoke to His small group—the twelve disciples—alone, **without** visitors.

Open the Door

1. Christ set Himself up as the only Teacher.

Once more, Jesus sat down to teach (Matthew 26:20), after His disciples prepared refreshments and secured the location according to the Master's instructions (Matthew 26:17-19).

2. He warmed up the group.

Jesus separated the group from the world by seating them and focusing them on the matters at hand (Matthew 26:20-25).

3. He taught a deep lesson with a challenge

Jesus taught a lesson that only His disciples would appreciate. He issued instructions, challenging them to live by what He said to them (Matthew 26:26-29).

4. The meeting ended with a song

The meeting ended with the singing of religious music (Matthew 26:30).

Home Bible Fellowships

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

- Jesus was always the Teacher
- The disciples gave Him their full attention, and discussed what He said with Him
- He expected disciples to make an effort to understand what He said and to dig deeper, later
- He picked the time and place, made them feel welcome, separated them from the world, and focused them on the subject for the meeting
- He supplemented lessons with refreshments and music



Home Bible Fellowships

A **CHRIST-CENTERED** MEETING

- The Master's approach to small groups suggests the following format:
- **WARM-UP TIME** [10-15 minutes]
 - Refreshments
 - Icebreaker
 - Introduce the study
 - Discussion question
 - Prayer for Christ's leadership
 - Consideration question



Home Bible Fellowships



- **CONNECT WITH THE MASTER**
[10-15 minutes]
 - **Questions**
- **GROW FROM YOUR TIME WITH THE MASTER** [30-45 minutes]
 - **Share Discoveries** [*answers to the questions*]
 - **Respond Daily to experiences through the text** [*journal entries*]

Home Bible Fellowships

- **WRAP UP** [5 minutes]
 - **Summarize the Lesson**
- **FOLLOW UP** [5-10 minutes]
 - **Plan the next week's meeting with the group** (*date, time, location, purpose, format, and individual tasks*)
 - **Closing Prayer** (*express concern for everyone—from group needs to personal study time*)



Conclusion

- From our brief look at the **early church** and the way **Jesus** led His small group we have learned, **that small groups:**
 - Organize disciples so **Christ** can **lead** them the way He always intended
 - Provide **opportunities** for people to **support** one another in this life, as Christ **prepares** them for the next
 - Maximize the church's **efforts** now, as they **prepare** to be the house churches of tomorrow



The **Last** Word

Dissatisfied with simply settling members into pews, John Wesley said: **"How grievously are they mistaken who imagine that as soon as the children are born they need take no more care of them."**

Convinced that converts need intimate, ongoing care, he also warned that people awakened by the Holy Spirit who are not settled into small groups [his, "classes of 12"], were **"like sheep prepared for the slaughter."**



The **Last** Word

Now is the time to **organize** and **launch** Home Bible Fellowships. Instead of waiting for our doors to close, we should **take charge** of the situation by **proactively** gathering people in our biblical homes, around Rabbi Jesus, to *worship* and *serve* him.



The Final Word

Home Bible Fellowships transform our homes into outposts for our **churches**. Not only will our churches enjoy the *immediate* benefits of Christ-*led* and -*centered* fellowships



The Final Word

But **each of us** will appreciate them even more in the *long run* when they enable our families to expand their influence to the community, prepare them for eternity, and *finish* the mission Christ has given to us.

And all God's people said:

AMEN!

