



Home Fellowships That Serve Our Father's Goals and Purposes

Did You Know?

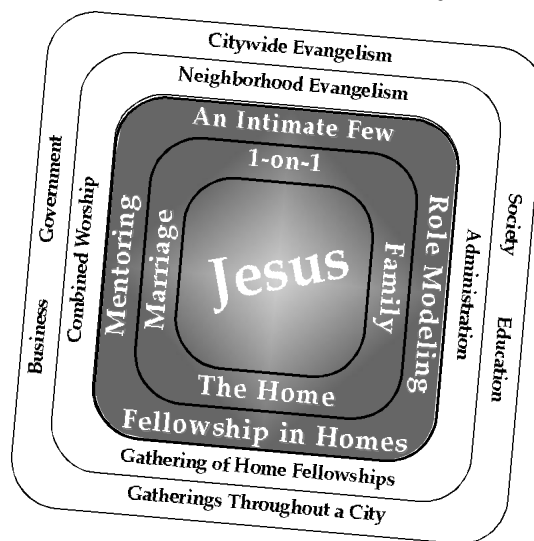
The earliest followers of Jesus gathered in homes for relational accountability! These family-style relationships were key to fulfilling our Father's goals and purposes.

Did You Know?

These fellowships meeting in homes were:

- a seven-day-a-week relational commitment
- extended family — spiritual relatives
- the first line of support for marriages, families, singles, and widows
- intergenerational, with collective responsibility for training the next generation

Relational Priorities of the Early Church



Devotion to **Jesus**, the One they were willing to die for, was at the center of relationships in the earliest Church. Each **home** found support through a **home fellowship**. And today it's crucial that load-bearing fellowship in homes be re-established as our Father ordained so that His children may *fulfill His purposes*.

WHY DID GOD HAVE THEM MEET IN HOMES?

1. Uphold communal righteousness.
2. Provide load-bearing relationships.
3. Prepare succeeding generations to follow Jesus.
4. Multiply through actively sharing the Gospel.

1. Uphold communal righteousness.

Man is bent on sinning — no surprise there. But because our Hebraic forefathers knew God from the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament), they understood His conditions for answering their prayers: *righteousness*, and *trust* in His faithfulness. Peter pounds this requirement in as he repeats Psalm 34:16,17: "*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil*" (1 Peter 3:12). Our Father's condition for answering prayer was echoed by a blind man healed by Jesus: "*We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will*" (John 9:31).

The earliest Church also understood that they were their "*brother's keeper*." This meant that they were *collectively responsible* for upholding righteousness. In other words, one person's unrepentance in their midst hindered the Father from answering all their prayers.

Fellowship in homes provided the mutual accountability for unrepentance to be confronted. **Confession** and **repentance** are always the key to maintaining ongoing prayer that brings divine answers: "*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective*" (James 5:16).

Our spiritual ancestors in Jesus approached our Father to *worship* Him and to have their *prayers answered*. This may sound like a small point, but think about it. It wasn't just the act of praying, but *answered prayer* that got the early Church noticed! Are you seeking our Father for something that only He can bring about? Are you in a home fellowship that supports righteousness?

2. Provide load-bearing relationships.

Followers of Jesus are family—we *share the same blood tie* through the indwelling Spirit of Jesus with all who are in covenant with Him! Jesus unabashedly affirmed this: "*Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother*" (Matt. 12:50). True spiritual family is evidenced by trust-filled obedience.

The fruit of upholding righteousness in a home fellowship results in serving each other — the "load-bearing" you see in the 54 "*one anothering*" passages in the New Testament.

Followers of Jesus in a home fellowship are *spiritual relatives* — family you look forward to being with, family with whom you are developing an ever-deepening, load-bearing relationship. Extended spiritual families are *determined* to fulfill our Father's goals and purposes!

3. Prepare succeeding generations to follow Jesus.

"*For I have chosen Abraham [the father of all who put their trust in Jesus—see Rom. 4:16] so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just...*" (Genesis 18:19).

Our spiritual father Abraham was chosen by God because He could trust him to carry out an important intergenerational responsibility: to prepare *successors in the faith*. How tragic that this directive to Abraham has been so neglected today, contributing to the downfall of many children raised in Christian homes but indoctrinated in government-sponsored schools.

A recent study indicated that only 23% of children raised in Christian homes follow Jesus after they leave home. Painful, isn't it? Is that what we want for our children? our grandchildren? our spiritual family's children?

Humanism is the religion of government-sponsored education today. Humanism directly opposes God-centered child-raising. Exalting man as the center of all things, humanism denies the Creator of the universe and all moral absolutes. Sunday schools and youth groups have been inadequate to counter this influence.

Communally Preparing the Generations to Come To Serve and Bring Glory to Our Father

Beginning with the elders, the home fellowship has *intergenerational responsibility* to support the home as the primary building block for training the next generation. The *whole faith community* shared the responsibility to raise succeeding generations to follow Jesus.

In biblical times the purpose of learning was to train up individuals *to love and to serve the Lord* their whole lives. Learning was a life-long pursuit of studying God's Word and applying it to every situation in life. It wasn't until *age fifty* that both men and women were regarded as having the wisdom and experience to counsel others.

We today as followers of Jesus must rekindle the determined emphasis our God consigns to each generation to ensure that succeeding ones follow in the *way of the Lord*.

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands [what you do] and bind them on your foreheads [what you think]. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (see Deuteronomy 6:1-9).

4. Multiply through actively sharing the Gospel.

Fellowships that gather in homes multiply by *planting, safeguarding, and extending* perimeters of righteousness. Remember, the first reason for fellowship in homes is to help one another uphold righteousness. Communal righteousness results in answered prayers! Our Father's heart is to expand His Kingdom with those who love and serve Him. To do this:

a. Plant a perimeter of holiness around each home of your faith community.

Each family in your fellowship needs to prayerfully go through their home and get rid of anything or any activity that leads to ungodliness.

- Perimeters *secure a sanctuary* of spiritual refuge.
- People dwelling within the perimeters *experience unity* as they pay the price of forfeiting fleshly desires in order to please their Lord.

b. Safeguard your perimeter, protect it from infiltration.

When holy perimeters are established, Satan will scheme to infiltrate. Sin will seek you out like never before as an aggressive demonic weapon. One common snare: He'll use unconflicted bitterness, slander, or gossip to split your spiritual family. Be vigilant!

c. Extend your perimeter.

Answered prayer provides testimony as you personally share the love of Jesus with others. Pray for your neighborhood, school, workplace, and look for opportunities to establish relationships with unbelievers to reach their hearts.

- Make a prayer list of the unbelievers with whom each person in your faith community has contact and is burdened for their salvation.
- As a community and in your own prayer time, regularly intercede for each person who has yet to follow Jesus. Weaken the power of the enemy by praying for them!
- In Jesus you have authority over demonic spirits that will try to interfere with the salvation of the ones for whom you're praying: "*Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name!*" (Luke 10:17). As you pray, bind and gag the spirits in the name of Jesus.

- Ask those in your faith community to put a sign on their homes to indicate that theirs is a house of prayer, and that they'll pray for any of the needs in their neighborhood. Watch our Father work!

d. Destroy Satan's domain — Multiply your faith community.

What will you do when our Father brings you new believers? Provision for new faith communities is critical.

Keep in mind:

- In your expansion you are developing *extended spiritual family*. Plan ahead to nurture and disciple new believers.
- Mature shepherds should be purposefully training *successors* to protect, nurture, and equip the new flocks.

How to Get Started

This is a call to each and every person who desires to belong to the type of home fellowship that made the early church relationally intimate and spiritually powerful. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, or single, everyone has a part to play. You are vital in preparing the next generation to follow Jesus *and* in extending our Father's Kingdom for the praise of His Name!

The relational responsibility and personal intimacy shared in home fellowships are counter to today's impersonal religious culture. You'll need *forceful determination* and *trust-filled prayerful reliance* on our Father to fulfill His plans. Are you and your family ready?

For more information on how you can re-establish fellowship in homes that fulfill our Father's goals and purposes, contact:

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