

## Christian Leadership 3 – Week 7

### Healthy Home Church Meetings

There is an intangible, yet powerful atmosphere at home group meetings. Some meetings have a palpable sense of God's presence (in various ways), while others are stale and even boring. What is the main factor that accounts for this difference? While many suppose it is the teaching, or the presence of new people, the main factor is *how many people come filled with God's Spirit and ready to praise God and build others up in love*. This is an important role that every one of us can play.

#### Before the meeting

- During the day, don't be surprised if you experience spiritual opposition or special circumstantial difficulties. You can fight back with prayer, asking God to help you bless others in spite of your own weakness. You can pray for the meeting, for one another, and for guests who may be coming.
- Hebrews 10:24 urges us to "consider how we may stimulate one another to love and good deeds." You can ask God how he wants you to do this tonight. Are there friends who need encouragement? Are there insights or questions or experiences that God wants you to share? Are there people you should get to know? When you come prepared, you will edify others and you will enjoy the evening more!
- If you have invited a guest, would it be helpful to offer him/her a ride, meet beforehand for dinner or coffee, etc.? Are there home group friends you could ask to be praying for your guest?
- If possible, you can get together with another home church member before the meeting. You can build each other up and pray together for the night. In this way, you can help each other come ready to serve.
- If possible, you can come a little early. This is a great time to catch up with other friends, greet guests, help set up the house, pray with the Bible study leader, etc. When several of us do this, it creates a warm atmosphere for those who arrive on time.

#### During the meeting

- You can pray aloud at the beginning of the meeting. When we genuinely thank God for being together and express anticipation that he will speak to us, this helps to set the proper tone for the meeting.
- You can pray silently during the meeting for God's Spirit to speak to us through his Word. You can pray especially for the one leading the Bible study, and for those God puts on your heart.
- Good meetings do not follow a predictable sequence. There is a freedom for people to speak up spontaneously—asking questions, making comments, offering insights, etc. As God prompts you to speak up, you can put aside your fears and say what is on your mind or heart. And you can affirm others who do this.
- You can be aware of others during the meeting. Don't focus on those who didn't come, but on those who did. Does someone seem confused, upset, joyous, etc.? Maybe you should talk with him/her afterwards. If God puts someone on your heart during the meeting, you can follow his leading!
- Prayer at the end should be the high point of the meeting, not a formalistic afterthought. God has spoken to us through his Word; now we can speak to God in response. Does He want you to express praise and gratitude to him? Does He want you to express your need for his help? Does He want you to pray for others who are present? God may speak through your prayers to powerfully affect others! You can attend to and affirm others' prayers.

## After the meeting

- In many ways, the meeting is the “appetizer” that sets up the “main course”—loving interaction with the people God has brought. Stated differently, it is an aberration for brothers and sisters to be in the habit of leaving immediately after the meeting ends. You can model this kind of service, and you can urge others to do it, too!
- Christian hospitality means that no guest or newer person should be neglected. You can engage them in friendly conversation, taking genuine interest in them as an expression of God’s love. Inquiring about their spiritual beliefs or questions is usually appropriate, since they have chosen to come to a Bible study. But no guest should feel pressured.
- You can try to serve other home church members. Did God put someone on your heart earlier in the week? Did He draw your attention to someone during the meeting? When you initiate other-centered interaction, offering encouragement, comfort, counsel, exhortation, prayer, etc., you are building others up in love (Eph. 4:15,16).
- You can resist the tendency to just hang out with the people you already know, and instead take this opportunity to build up other home church members. This kind of relating contributes greatly to healthy loving unity.
- If possible, you can end the evening with other workers—discussing what happened that night, rejoicing in what God is doing, considering how to meet needs that arose, etc.

## Other Thoughts

1. Is the host couple reliable? Are they true workers?
2. Discourage moving the meeting location around.
3. Provide for smaller conversations after the meeting (lighting all rooms, snacks, etc.).
4. Start on time!
5. One hour from sit-down to stand up; this leaves time and energy for both prayer and fellowship afterward.
6. Watch for “Christianese” in the teaching and discussion, and privately correct it.
7. Encourage members to bring hardcopy Bibles. Provide Bibles for guests.
8. Screen and discourage long and/or multiple announcements.
9. If the meeting is “in a rut,” consider making format changes.