
PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE **HOUSE CHURCH** MEETINGS

Every house church in our network is a little different. We agree to shared core values, which are stated in detail on our web site. But each group's culture and style may vary according to the leader's personality, the location, and the gifts present in the people.

The following principles are components of healthy meetings, regardless of each house church's unique culture.

Consistency and predictability

Adhere to a strict start time. The later you start, the later people will show up. People will always be late. It is best to start on time, no matter how many are present.

Also adhere to a strict end time with rare exceptions. People will stop coming if they don't know for certain when they can appropriately leave. "Soft endings" are a great idea, closing in prayer, dismissing anyone who needs to leave, and continuing for those who want to keep meeting.

Always open in prayer. Always ensure that there's an opportunity for everyone to share who wants to. Always have something of your own to share, even if it's small.

Come to each meeting with a general goal in mind (a sense of what you feel the Lord wants to accomplish through the meeting). In time, people will notice that your meetings are consistently fruitful and worth their time.

Intentionality about the Presence of God

At Roots Church, we believe there is no such thing as a disciple of any particular minister. We are making disciples of Jesus. Regularly remind people we're here to learn from Him, and that requires that we all do our best to express Him in the meeting. What is Jesus saying and doing through His people as you meet? Pay attention and help everyone see His activity.

Beyond the conversation itself, create low-pressure opportunities to experience God. Invite people to listen for prophetic words. Lead everyone in a time of corporate prayer and worship. Expect immediate results in healing ministry.

Run your meeting in a way that if God doesn't show up, it's a flop. Attempt something in each meeting that requires Him to move. This is not about forcing God's hand. It's about joining Him in what He already wants to do. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and take appropriate risks.

Fostering Healthy Relationships

Encourage people to come early to fellowship. Serve snacks or a meal. Have people minister to each other (details coming in next point). Create opportunities for people to love and serve each other. Look for needs and trust the people in your church to meet the needs. End on time and let people linger if they want to. Create and encourage opportunities to meet up for fun outside of the house church.

Encouragement, Prayer, and Personal Prophecy

Regularly set aside purposeful time in your meetings for people to minister to each other. Change things up from week to week so that each activity is special and not mundane. A favorite activity is deliberately going around the circle and speaking words of encouragement, affirmation, and prophecy over each other; but doing this every week lessens the impact.

Most weeks it's good to break into smaller groups to pray for each other. Sometimes divide men and women, sometimes divide the room, and sometimes leave people to form their own groups. The less time you have available, the smaller you should make your groups. Always appoint a designated leader in any group you're not in.

Healthy Discussion

The distinctive feature of Roots Church house churches is interactivity. A pastor's role is to help facilitate that interactivity, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to share. Some of this comes through deliberate intervention, shutting down "over-talkers" and asking if anyone who has not spoken would like to share anything. But also, with time, you can coach the group culture toward conciseness and valuing each other above themselves. Allow room for "awkward silence" and let the people of the group break it. Give meaningful feedback when people talk.

Casting Vision

Remind everyone regularly why we meet (to learn from Jesus as His disciples and to multiply disciples and house churches throughout our region). Share testimonies of evangelism and disciple-making. Tell people when you see leadership potential in them and ask them to pray about starting a house church.

Maintaining Healthy Flock Size

Once you reach about 5-7 people, the group will start to thrive. When you reach around 20 people, the group will start to stagnate. Generally a house church will plateau in attendance at around 80% of the seating capacity in your home. There will be high weeks and low weeks, but this seems to be a component of human psychology by which groups reach equilibrium fairly quickly.

The ideal time to multiply is when the house church reaches a steady attendance of over fifteen people for about a month. Alternatively, when you see that attendance is hovering around 80% of seating capacity, multiplication is needed before group stagnation and death.

If you fail to multiply, the passionate disciple-makers in your church will become frustrated and soon leave. You'll be left with an inwardly-focused group of people who are more likely to cause problems than multiply.

