



## Tips for Incorporating Teaching into Your House Church

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First, we need to remember how we define house churches. These are interactive groups of Christians where the primary objective is to experience and be discipled by Jesus through the spiritual gifts and revelations He has given to each person in the meeting. It is a time for questions, discussion, testimonies, Bible study, prayer, and all the gifts of the Spirit. The more people who share in a meeting, the more fully everyone will experience Jesus (because each one is a part of His Body).

Given this: long-form, systematic teaching (like you might hear in a 40-minute sermon or an hour-long Bible Study or Sunday School class) is **not** a regular component of the house church meeting. Instead, we prioritize short-form teaching with an emphasis on interactivity, dialogue, and practical application.

While this is the priority, occasionally long-form teaching can be important in the process of pastoring people. This document is intended to help you think through how and why you might include a longer teaching time in your meeting.

House churches will take on different flavors depending on the gifts and personalities of the people in the meetings. If a particular house church has a lot of people with teaching gifts, there simply isn't enough time for everyone to share a long-form teaching. Similarly, sometimes the person with the teaching gift is someone different than the house church pastor, but it's not healthy to have one person in the meeting monopolize the majority of the time each week. By modeling and encouraging short teachings, everyone learns to get to the point and value each other above themselves.

I like to say, "What Jesus has spoken to you is more important to me than what Jesus has spoken to me. Why? Because I already know what He has spoken to me! I want to experience as much of Him as I can." In doing this, I remind everyone why we meet and how to honor others above themselves. In this culture, people learn not to teach for the sake of teaching. Instead, we teach for the sake of revealing Jesus and growing in Him. It's love-based teaching rather than vanity-based teaching. And people gather not to follow some charismatic leader but to learn from Jesus.

## Pointers for Teaching Your House Church:

**(1) HUMILITY.** Prioritize group interaction up front. Help people see that you're more interested in what they have to say than what you have to say. (This also encourages people to show up on time because if they come in late, they might miss their opportunity to share.)

Also, when you do teach, do so with humility. Present your teaching as "my best understanding" or as "something I'm processing through right now." Avoid phrases like "God told me this" or "God showed me this" or "God told me we need to do this tonight." When we make such claims, we immediately shut down interaction (because no one wants to challenge "God") and subtly communicate to the rest of the group that if they disagree on any point, they're not hearing God. The end result over time is a group of people who are not confident in hearing the Lord and instead look to you like some sort of Old Testament prophet. That's not the New Testament church. It's a cult. Make sure people know you trust them to keep you rooted in Scripture and that you're okay with being wrong.

**(2) BREVITY.** Keep the teaching time as concise as possible while still giving people enough meat to chew on. If you feel like it's too much material to cover in about 10-20 minutes, it's better to break the teaching into a series and cover one point each week.

It is okay to occasionally (and rarely) teach longer, but you need to guard that this does not become the culture of your church. There's an old saying that "what you win them with, you win them to." In other words, if people start coming to your house church because they like the long-form teaching every week, then you'll need to have a lesson every week to keep them there. But if people come to your church because they experience the love and power of Jesus there, then the teaching becomes less important than the overall experience, and you (as a pastor) can focus more on leading people into encounters with the Lord than on a particular form of communication.

**(3) INTERACTIVITY.** Make sure there's room/time for people to discuss, debate, challenge, or engage with the teaching either during or afterward (or both). The more interactive, the better. I usually ask (at least once), "Any thoughts? Ideas? Questions?"

Whenever possible, try to help people draw their own conclusions. Tell just enough information to give everyone a framework for thinking through the subject, then process through it with them. Jesus often taught by telling stories and asking thought-provoking questions. If you read a passage of Scripture in order to convey a point, try to get the people to discover your point themselves. Read the passage and ask questions that help them see what you see. It will "stick" better if they say it than if they merely hear it from you.

**(4) FLEXIBILITY.** Play it by ear. If the conversation is roaring in a good direction and the teaching doesn't seem to fit, just save it for the next week. Many times you'll find the teaching fits naturally into the topic of conversation. Other times, the conversation dies down after an hour or so and no one else has anything to say. This can be a great time to introduce the teaching.

On rare occasions, there may be a specific topic that the Lord lays on your heart with prophetic weight, and it simply needs to be interjected. In other words, perhaps the conversation is staying lively because people (or the enemy) are consciously or subconsciously avoiding something that needs to be addressed. In these cases, it's fine to interrupt the conversation and say something like, "There's something on my heart for tonight that I can't seem to make fit, and I think I just need to make it happen before we talk further..." Again, be careful about playing the "God told me" card, and keep things interactive and concise.

**(5) SIMPLICITY.** Whatever you teach in your house church should be something everyone in the meeting can clearly understand and teach to others. If you feel like what you have to share is "too deep" to meet that qualification, you probably need to refine it a bit more. Try to explain things in a way that a child would understand. If you can't, study the subject further until you can.

Also, "how" you teach in a house church should be something others can replicate in the house churches that spin off of your group. If every teaching is a complicated deep-dive into 30 different scriptures, people will feel intimidated that they could never produce anything of similar quality. And if people feel inadequate, you'll have a hard time multiplying other house churches. Instead, if you teach with humility, brevity, interactivity, and flexibility, people will most likely find what you do simple to replicate.

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## Special Teaching Meetings

If you really want to unpack a topic at-length, invite the people in your house church to join you for a special meeting at a different time during the week. Those who really want to hear you teach the subject will make time for that meeting.

And if no one shows up, it's probably a good thing you didn't try teaching that way in your house church because apparently no one wanted to hear that long of a teaching from you anyway! I joke, but I'm also serious. Some of us think more highly of our public speaking skills than we ought, and we should take a clue from how interested people are in what we share.

Have enough emotional security that you don't need to be "the" teacher or the one with all the answers. And realize you don't need to be an amazing teacher to be an amazing house church pastor. Seek to grow, but also be secure where you are now.