

Christians Gather in Large Groups and In Homes

Anchor command: Make disciples. “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.” *Hebrews 10:24-25*

Anchor promise. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity! ... The Lord commanded the blessing—life forever. *Psalm 133:1-3*

Anchor story. The birth of the first church. *Acts 2:37-47.*

Prayer: “Lord Jesus, you have made us alive by your own resurrection. Help us, a living Body, to reproduce in daughter, grand-daughter and great-grand-daughter bodies.”

Anchor verse. “Attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes.” *Acts 2:46*

Learning goals. Know what believers are to do together when they gather.

Growth goal. Believers increasingly appreciate group worship.

Skill goals. Make gatherings edifying for both experienced and new believers.

Outcome goal. All congregations keep birthing daughter churches that gather wherever it is practical and convenient.

Basic Study

Read the story of Acts 2:37-47, and find in verse 42 four things that the believers did together.

Find in Acts 2:46 where believers broke bread (to celebrate the Lord’s Supper).

Find in Acts 20:20 where the apostles taught about Jesus.

Compare elephants and rabbits. Some congregations are like big elephants that are strong and can do a lot of work. Other congregations are like little rabbits that are not strong, but can reproduce rapidly. Rapidly growing movements for Christ usually grow by multiplying “rabbit churches.”

Elephants

- Mature in 18 years
- Bear 1 baby per pregnancy
- Fertile 4 times a year
- 22-month gestation
- Family increases from 2 to 3 in three years



Great elephants multiply very slowly.

Rabbits

- Mature in 4 months
- Bear an average of 7 babies per pregnancy
- Almost always fertile
- 1-month gestation
- Family can increase to millions in 3 years



Little rabbits multiply very rapidly.

Plan with your co-workers the up-coming worship. Choose activities that fit current needs.

Have the children present to the adults any skit and questions that they have prepared.

Explain and ask questions about the things you studied in this lesson.

Advanced Study

1. **Plan with your co-workers** how you and they will keep forming new churches in homes.
2. **Discuss** with your co-workers some advantages of house churches:
 - They can reproduce more easily than big groups.
 - Novice shepherds can lead them
 - They allow everyone to encourage one another with their spiritual gifts.
 - They can practice all the “one-another” commands of the New Testament.
 - They need no money for a chapel.
 - They are almost invisible to hostile authorities.



Family, friends and neighbours can start new churches together.

3. **Discuss** with your co-workers how you and they will guide and mentor novice shepherds who serve the house congregations.
4. **Read** together Paul-Timothy Leader Training study #3, “Guidelines for Trainers” (24 pages).
5. **Discuss** with your co-workers who might become novice shepherds. Visit those persons and agree to train them while they lead new house congregations. Good shepherds will come from those who:
 - Lead their families in worship.
 - Are able to get others to meet together.
 - Have a good reputation in their community.
6. **Plan** activities that you will train the novice shepherds to help the new house groups to do:
 - Worship God
 - Pray using Jesus’ name
 - Baptize new believers
 - Break bread together
 - Give to meet urgent needs.
 - Learn Scripture together.
 - Encourage one another
 - Serve others

- Share the Good News
- Cooperate closely with other house churches.

7. **Plan** where and how often the house congregations will come together occasionally in big meetings, in order to...

- Hear strong Bible teachers and gifted preachers.
- Share reports on what God has been doing in their small groups.
- Enjoy talented musicians and learn new songs.
- Meet other believers and build friendships.
- Learn about opportunities and plan new ministries.
- Praise God and pray and public officials.

Caution: If big groups meet too often, then some believers will no longer come to the regular worship in homes.

8. **Read** and discuss from 1 Corinthians 14:26-32 what kinds of activities the believers can do together.

9. **Practice** together activities that the believers can do in their families and house congregations.

10. To introduce the **Lord's Supper**, read 1 Corinthians 11:18-34.

11. **Memorize** together Matthew 18:20

12. Have the believers gather in **groups** of three or four to listen to each other and to pray for one another.

13. If you train new shepherds and have not yet read **P-T study #3** Guidelines for Trainers of Novice Shepherds, then please do so now.

14. **Find** in Acts 16:40; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15-16; Philemon 1:1-3 where New Testament churches normally met.