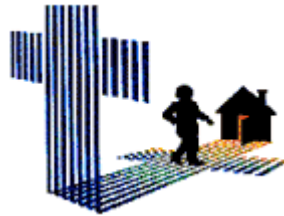


Home Fellowship



Leaders Guide

Practical help on how to start
a Bible Discussion Group
and develop it into
a Spiritual Family

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Study the lessons, not necessarily in any given order, but as the Spirit leads you.

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Open Letter to the Leaders

Greetings to you in the name of the Lord Jesus. May His grace be with you as you seek His will for your life. May the Holy Spirit confirm to you the call of God on your life.

In our days, when the Spirit of God is moving powerfully — like a flood — on the earth, the church of Christ is growing very fast. As never before in the history people are being saved by the thousand all over the world daily. “In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophecy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams” (Acts 2:17). This spiritual renewal is sweeping multitudes of new believers into God’s kingdom. These new Christians desperately need spiritual homes and spiritual families to grow and mature in their faith.

One of the aspects of this spiritual renewal is a great interest in small group ministry as described in the New Testament. We at Home Fellowship Leaders Int’l. (HFLI) see the home fellowships as a great God-given way of nurturing these new believers toward spiritual maturity.

You can become a part of this mighty move of God by becoming the leader of a home group. If you are a sincere believer who’s been seeking a vital way to serve God, this may be your unique opportunity.

We believe that the Holy Spirit will lead you into all truth as you yield yourself to Him (John 16:12). We prepared these lessons as a help to you, but you must rely and depend only on the One who is willing and able to help you always. He alone has all the answers to all your questions.

If you already decided to lead a home group — congratulations! Small groups (home fellowships, cells, house churches) have been important in the progress of Christianity since the Book of Acts. Your desire and hunger for Jesus will spark your home group — which in turn can spark a neighborhood, business, college, or even a whole community!

If you are still not sure whether leading a home group is for you — why don’t you just try? The fact that you asked for the literature on home groups speaks of your sincere interest in it. If you believe the Lord is calling you to lead a group — step out in faith!

If you see that leading the group doesn’t work for you, don’t be discouraged. Do what you are good at! Maybe you are an evangelist who is good at bringing people into the kingdom, but not that good at being a shepherd. Then start a group and turn it over to somebody else who is good at shepherding the sheep. Be what God made you to be!

With much love,

Home Fellowship Leaders, International

How to Use HFLI Lessons

Home Fellowship Leaders, International is a non-profit, inter-denominational Christian organization. It is committed to nurture and build up the body of Christ by providing lessons and instructions for the home fellowships. Its purpose is to serve the small groups of believers who meet in homes in different countries around the world.

Through the years of working with home fellowships we have seen development from a small Bible study group meeting in homes to a spiritual family of dedicated believers, disciples of Jesus Christ.

This booklet “Home Fellowship Leaders Guide” is for you to study before you start the group. It will guide you in leading the group. “14 Lessons for the Group and Instructions for the Leaders“ are for your meetings. After you have used these materials and sent us your “Leader’s Report” forms you can order more “Lessons for the Group and Instructions for the Leaders”. We need to hear from you and receive the reports in order to know your needs and also to encourage other groups by sharing your victories.

These lessons were designed to get you started in leading a home group. Most important is to learn to depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. You don’t need to be experienced or to be a great Bible scholar. But you do need to have a desire to be a spiritual father or mother. You need to discern spiritual needs of people. Then you can tailor our lessons to their needs.

Use these lessons creatively. You can change the questions or make a lesson shorter. Choose what you can cover in about 40 min of discussion. Make sure your meetings are not too long! Start with very short meetings (50 min.-1 hour) and then increase time to 1-1 ½ hours. You are free to choose any lesson depending on the needs of your group. Eventually, you will learn to just take a topic that would be interesting for the group, find a Scripture for it and study it yourself. Then, at the meeting, start asking people what do they think about it and get the discussion going. You’ll be amazed to see how the Holy Spirit will work through the believers to reveal His Word and His truth.

We offer you a book of instructions and 14 lessons free of charge. 14 lessons should be enough for about 3 months of weekly meetings. By that time, as your group grows and develops into a spiritual family, you will have to teach people about financial responsibility. The Bible teaches us to worship the Lord with tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:10-12) and to share good things with those who instruct you in the Word (Gal. 6:6). Ask the Lord if He will lead you to send offerings to HFLI as your missionary project. This will help us to send lessons not only to home groups in USA, but also to Russia, India, and other countries. This way you will be our partners in the work that we do. We would be sending out a newsletter where we’ll share with you what your financial support will be used for (leaders should not take offerings for your personal use).

In order to receive more lessons and instructions for the leaders, fill out the Partner’s request form at the end of this book and send it to us. You’ll have an opportunity to give so you can also receive (Luke 6:38).

Please fill out the “Leader’s Report” forms (available on our web site) after each meeting. Also send us your testimonies; share with us your victories and questions. Some of the testimonies of God’s work in your lives will be published in the newsletter, as well as the answers to your questions, and the progress of small groups in our spiritual family. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

In all things trust God’s promises and be led by the Holy Spirit. “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6). May the Lord richly bless your work!

The Most Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a home fellowship?

It is you and a group of people who would like to meet together to worship the Lord, study the Bible and share experiences. Together you can be a home fellowship. In the group you will pray for each other, support and encourage one another as you all grow spiritually.

2. Why do we need home fellowships?

We need them as a way to learn how to live a Christian life by example. We learn obedience to God's word, by seeing other people live a life of obedience. Apostle Paul said, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). In home fellowships new believers can follow the example of more mature brothers and sisters and grow through relationships.

3. What do home fellowships do?

You will be growing together spiritually as you build relationships with Jesus and each other. You will do it by applying the word of God in your lives, having fun together, praying together, having meals together occasionally; sharing each other's needs, joys and sorrows, and just loving each other with the love of Christ. You can meet weekly or biweekly, depending on the desire and the schedules of the members.

4. Who can be a home fellowship leader?

Any committed Christian who feels called of God to serve Him by leading a home group to build His kingdom can be a leader. There is one requirement – the testimony of the work of Jesus Christ in his (her) life.

5. What is the role of a home fellowship leader?

You will provide oversight; direction and loving care to the group. With the love of Christ and help of the Holy Spirit, you will learn to lead as a friend and fellow Christian. You can start with being a *host and/or hostess* and later can become a *spiritual father and/or mother* to the members of the group. You will pray with and for the people, and will study and learn to apply the word of God with them.

6. Can a woman be a leader of a home group?

Yes. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). If we are to discriminate between men and women, then to be consistent, we'll have to discriminate between "Jew" and "Greek" — which is of course wrong.

7. Does a home fellowship have to be under the authority of a local church?

HFLI's belief is that since it is Jesus who is building His church, so He should be free to work with His people inside or outside churches or denominations. You can start the group with or without the supervision of a local church. You *do* though have to be under the *authority of Christ* and walk daily in living contact with the Holy Spirit.

8. Is any experience required for the leader?

No. You'll learn as you go. Anyone can make mistakes. If you don't have experience, be open about it before the group. Ask for their support and prayers. This will take away the pressure of trying to be "perfect".

9. Does it matter how old you are?

No, it doesn't. Even if you are very young, but know that God called you, you can do it. The prophet Samuel was only a boy when he started ministering. David was a young lad when he defeated Goliath. If you need to defeat your personal "Goliath" — that is, fear of what people will think about you — then do it on the strength of the Lord! We at HFLI believe that the Lord will use a lot of teenagers to lead small groups successfully.

10. What is common between a "regular" church and home fellowship?

Home fellowship *is* a small church. From the book of Acts, we learn the early church met from house to house. Apostle Paul addressed home fellowships of his time as "church that meets in the house of...". Home fellowships can form congregations (clusters of groups) that would be the local body of believers, especially in places where there are no "regular" churches.

11. What is the difference between them?

"Regular" church usually owns a building; home fellowships meet in the member's homes. Home fellowships don't have a "professional" pastor that is paid a salary, so their offerings can be used for missionary projects and for taking care of the needy. In the time of persecution of churches home fellowships have much better chance to survive underground. In a large formal church, people don't always get to know each other, but in small groups, people have opportunity to build relationship with each other as they grow in the Lord, to be transparent and to become a *spiritual family*.

12. Can I start my group with making it a spiritual family?

No. New people will need time to get to know each other and start trusting you as their leader. So we recommend you to start with the role of the host and/or hostess and a *Bible discussion group* that can gradually be developed into the *spiritual family*.

13. What is the role of the host and/or hostess?

Host and/or hostess are those who invite people to their (or someone else's) home and lead the meetings. They are the coordinators and facilitators of the Bible discussion. After a period of time they can consider becoming spiritual parents to the group.

14. What is the spiritual family?

All born-again believers are a family – to us is given a high position in the Lord Jesus to be called children of God (Jn.1: 12). HFLI suggests that after 3 months of meetings groups should consider developing into a spiritual family. It would simply mean that people would agree to become more open and committed to each other, just like people would be in the natural godly family. Mutual love and care would be the goals of the spiritual family. This is not a requirement for the groups, but a vision for those who will feel called of the Lord.

15. What is the role of the spiritual father and/or mother?

Just like natural parents are in charge of the family, spiritual parents are responsible for the spiritual well being of the members of the group. Development of a spiritual family doesn't happen overnight, it takes faith and perseverance. The leader of the group does need to have a heart of a shepherd, a father's heart toward the group members. He will lead them to become a spiritual family, not only by the formal commitment of the members, but also by the spirit. The spirit of love manifested at your meetings will make it a desirable place for anyone coming from the outside.

16. Are there any costs involved?

Though we send you this book cost free, we trust the Lord to supply the needs of our ministry. If you are led of the Lord to send your offerings to HFLI, we'd appreciate and welcome that. If your group would like to become partners in our work, you'll be given an opportunity to make financial contributions on continuous basis.

17. What is the mission of HFLI?

The mission of HFLI is to spread the Gospel using home fellowships.

18. If I attend a home fellowship will it interfere with my involvement at my local church?

No. Usually home fellowships don't meet on Sunday mornings, so participation of believers in home group meetings would not interfere with their church involvement. In some places home fellowships consist of people who attend different churches but live in the same neighborhood.

19. What services does HFL provide?

A booklet, "Home Fellowship Leaders Guide" and a book of 14 lessons and in English (Russian and Spanish versions are in work). After you have used this book, you can order the next batch of 14 lessons. You can send us questions and request limited counseling through E-mail. We will keep any reports you send us on file and might send you personal counsel when the Lord would lead us to do so. Also, we are publishing a quarterly newsletter where you'll see testimonies, articles about small groups, some tips on how to lead your group effectively and how to deal with problems.

Our address: Home Fellowship Leaders International
198 Wabash Road
Ephrata, PA 17522

E-mail: mail@homefellowshipleaders.com

The steps of development of house fellowships

You start as a born again Christian (accept Christ as your Savior.)
Become a disciple of Christ.
You hear God's call to start a prayer and Bible discussion group (as Host and/or Hostess.)
Send your testimony to HFLI and ask for the "Home Fellowship Leaders Guide" booklet on how to start a group. Also receive 14 lessons for Bible discussion – all free (send \$3 postage.)
Study the book "Home Fellowship Leaders Guide" which instructs you on how to lead the group.
Start the group by inviting people who are interested in Bible study and prayer for weekly meetings at a set time. You will meet in your home, or someone else's, with you acting as Host and/or Hostess.
As Host and/or Hostess pray and trust Jesus for your weekly meetings. Look for leadership qualities among the group members. After each meeting fill out the "Leader's Report" form for your records and at the end of each quarter fill out the quarterly form and send it to us.

**You are
host
and/or
hostess**

After 12 meetings (about 3 months), prayerfully consider if it's time for your group to start becoming a spiritual family. That would mean more accountability, transparency and closer relationship between the members. Ask them what they think about it. Nobody should be compelled to do that. "Thou shall not push" should be the "eleventh commandment" of the leader. If you have the agreement of the majority of the group you can become spiritual father and/or mother and the member's brothers and sisters.

**You are
a spiritual
father
and/or
mother**

Send for new, additional 14 lessons for the next 3 months. Send your reports about the meetings to HFL. Please tell us if your group decided to become a spiritual family.
Pray and consider as a group to start taking offerings. The offerings are not for the leaders, but to take care of the needs among the group members and to be involved in missionary work. Ask the Lord if He is directing you to send offerings to HFLI and become partners with us in our work in the US, Russia and other countries.

Prepare new leadership within the group by training your volunteer apprentice. When he/she is ready send him/her out to start a group of his/her own. They can take 1-2 people from your group. Pray for them. Counsel and support the new leadership if they want it (they are not your disciples, but Jesus'). You will not have authority over the new group, but will continue with your original group.

**You are
A spiritual
"grandfather"
and/or
"grandmother"
"**

In the natural your grown-up children would have their own family, but also still be a part of your family. The same in the spiritual: your apprentice, your spiritual "child" starts his/her own family, but doesn't stop being a part of your original group. This way he/she never loses the benefit of being under your pastoral care. Your group and the new group can meet on different days of the week. First the new leader meets with his/her original group and discusses a particular lesson, then meets with his/her own group to discuss the same lesson. This way he/she will be confident about what he/she is doing in the new group.

Continue to grow and multiply, trust the Lord for the increase. Keep your original group and continue training new leaders within it. By sending them out to start new groups you become a spiritual "grandfather" and/or "grandmother." You can also have a circuit ministry. The person you send out would go from village to village and house to house teaching and evangelizing. They would bring people to Christ. They would develop new leaders to take on the responsibilities of Host and Hostess. And the cycle described above repeats from there. This is a mighty working of the Holy Spirit.

Vision for the Home Fellowship

1. Receive a Vision

Just as a captain of a ship knows the destination of the trip, a leader of a small group needs to have a vision of where the group is going spiritually. Without a vision people perish (Pr. 29:18). If there is a lot of fog on the road, you can't see clearly where you are going. That's why you need to have a **clear vision** of where you are going — so you'll get there safely without being lost on the way.

A leader of a house fellowship must have a vision of: 1) where the people are now; 2) what the group should become in process of development; 3) how to get from "here" to "there" without being lost on the way.

God has a specific vision for your Home Group on His heart. He speaks to us **heart to heart**. When you open yourself to the Holy Spirit He will impart His ideas and thoughts into your heart.

God has a plan for the whole group and for every member individually. He will give it to you if you ask Him. A vision for a small group, in general, is to edify believers and reach out to non-believers, to be a spiritual family and a source of light to the community. The Holy Spirit might even give you a name for the group that would reveal your vision — like The Lighthouse, The Resurrection Power, Joel's Place (see Joel 2:28-29), New Hope, Abundant Life, The Grapevine (see John. 15:5), The Harvest Fellowship, etc. Write down your vision for the group in simple words (Hab.2:2) and share it with the group. Then keep this vision in front of the people by reviewing it often.

As you share the vision you received with the group trust the Lord to put His thoughts and ideas into the hearts of people. Let the vision flow **FROM HEART ...TO HEART**.

Vision is God's map for the group's journey.

1. Write in your own words: what is a vision and why does your group need it? _____

2. From the Great Commission of the church (Matthew 28:19-20), what would be the 3 things you will do in your group? _____

3. How did the people react when the prophet Nehemiah shared his vision? (see Neh. 2:17-18) _____

4. What do you need to do with the vision (revelation) that the Lord will give you? (see Hab. 2:2-3) _____

Vision for the Home Fellowship

2. The Jesus' Pattern of Home Fellowships

During Jesus' ministry on earth He ministered to multitudes of people. Yet He always had those who followed Him closely and watched Him work. The Twelve disciples were His family. He ate with them, worked, traveled, slept and laughed with them. He poured Himself into them. After Jesus' death and resurrection He commissioned the disciples to do what He did. It was up to them to preach the Gospel and establish the church. **The disciples were the first small group in Church's history.**

Jesus Christ is our example in everything. We must learn and practice His teachings. The main part of Jesus' plan for spreading the Gospel and making disciples was a small group.

When the Holy Spirit came to continue the work of Jesus on earth, He followed the same pattern. In Acts 2:42-46 we see that the early church met in the Temple and in house fellowships or house churches. The small groups of believers met in homes for fellowship, shared meals and prayer. **They encouraged and edified one another through the use of spiritual gifts.**

The early church faced strong opposition. In spite of that it grew very fast. In house fellowships people were instructed, encouraged and cared for. The reality of God's power was demonstrated there as they worshiped and prayed.

In our days, again, the home fellowships are playing an important role in spreading the Gospel and making disciples of Christ. The congregation of the Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, Korea now is getting close to 1,000,000 members. Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho, the pastor of that church, says that their church is the largest and smallest in the world, because it is built on the system of cell groups. The whole city of Seoul is being evangelized through their small groups. Home fellowships are not a passing fad. It is a pattern of Jesus Christ that we should follow.

**Jesus started the first small group.
The early church met in home fellowships.**

1. What was happening in the early church? (Acts 2:42-47) List here some of the things that you want to happen in your group. _____

2. In whose houses did the early church meet? (Acts 16:40, Rom. 16:3-5, Philemon 2) _____

3. Where did the early church gather to pray for Peter? What was the result of their prayer? (Acts 12:1-19)

Vision for the Home Fellowship

3. “How Do I Start?”

The most important aspect of starting and leading a home group is your trust in the Lord. It is **to the degree that you personally can trust the Holy Spirit to lead you that you will see success**. You have to know that God is able and willing to guide you. He promised that the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth (John. 16:13).

If you are starting your group within a church, work with your church leadership. People will come to your home (or someone else’s home where you meet). Plan evangelistic outreaches, bring the unchurched people into your meetings and demonstrate the love of Christ to them. They will be won over not by your words only, but by your care and love. Expect God to perform signs and miracles in your group (Mark 16:17-18) as a witness to the unsaved.

If you are starting a group on your own, we can give you some practical suggestions.

1. **Pray daily** that God will draw the people He wants. Pray for the “unity of the spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Commit your ways to the Lord — it is His work.
2. Develop **personal contacts** with your neighbors, co-workers, students from your college etc. Meet and accept them where they are at in their spiritual life and make friends with them. Share the Gospel of peace with those who are hurting.
3. Personally **invite people** to your group and show concern for them as individuals. Group life is built on relationships. Be an evangelist – invite your neighbors!
4. One of the ways to start a home group is to tell some people about your interest in starting a **Bible discussion group**. Invite them to your home or a home where you’ll be meeting.
5. You can **start meetings** when you have 2-14 people who are interested in learning the Bible.
6. **Be relaxed and sociable**, enjoy the people. Show your attention to everyone equally, without spending too much time talking to one person. Watch what their spiritual needs might be.
7. Try to provide a **comfortable room** and a friendly atmosphere, free from distractions (pets, radio, TV, ringing phones etc.). Provide good lighting, ventilation and temperature.
8. If **children** will be present, make sure their needs are met.
9. **Remind** everyone personally of the first meeting of the group a few days in advance and ask them to bring a Bible, pencil and paper.
10. In the beginning, we suggest not to make the Bible discussion too deep. You can use **Friendship Questions** or **Ice-Breakers** (at the end of this booklet) to make the atmosphere more relaxed. They will also help people to get to know each other better.
11. Keep the meeting **orderly and short**. On weekdays, meetings should be dismissed by 9 PM. This is a way to show your care for those who have to get up early the next morning.

Commit your ways to the Lord!

1. How to make sure your plans will succeed? (Prov. 16:3) _____

2. How to be sure that the Lord will be with you at your meetings? (Matt.18:20) _____

3. Does God love us only if we do everything right? (Rom. 5:6-8) _____

4. What ways of witnessing do you see in John 13:34-35? _____

Vision for the Home Fellowship

4. The Host and/or Hostess Role

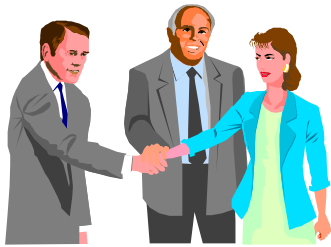
Though your goal is to become a spiritual father and/or mother to people in the group, you would have to start with being just a host and/or hostess. Meet people where they are. They don't know each other and are not ready for deep commitment yet. Give people time to develop trust in you as a friendly, caring leader. It might take **three or more** months of weekly meetings and other activities before the group can start trusting you and each other to be their spiritual family.

The host and/or hostess welcome people who are looking for meaningful relationships. They help people to establish their relationships with the Lord and with each other. You should be a **sociable, friendly** person who enjoys spending time with others. As the members of the group start trusting you more and more they will begin to be open with you about their problems. Pray for them and help them. Always look for a way to meet their needs.

The host and/or hostess are **facilitators** of a Bible discussion group. They love Jesus and love people. In the future their group can become a spiritual family of brothers and sisters united by the blood of Jesus. They lead people gently toward the higher levels of, 1. Relationships; 2. Application of the Word of God in their lives; 3. Awareness of their place in the family of God; 4. Deeper commitments to Jesus and to one another.

The host and/or hostess are sociable people who invite others to their home.

Host or Hostess



Bible discussion group

Developing relationships takes you from here to there



Spiritual father or mother



Spiritual family — brothers and sisters

Opening your home to others is very biblical. The Bible is full of examples of people offering hospitality as a way of being a blessing to others. Many opened their home to Jesus and His disciples as they traveled. Showing hospitality to others brings blessings and refreshing from God to those who open their home (2 Tim. 1:16-18). When you are getting ready for the meeting, focus on the Lord — don't be consumed with preparing the house for the meeting or serving a variety of snacks and beverages, etc. Keep it simple.

1. In what way can inviting guests be a blessing to you? (Prov.11: 25) _____
2. What is true hospitality? (Rom. 12:13) _____
3. What was Martha's mistake? (Luke 10:38-92) _____
4. Is developing a spiritual family a quick process? How long might it take? _____

Goal and Vision of The Leader's Role

5. The Leader's Responsibility

If you believe that God has called you to lead the group, than you need to remember that it is God's group, not yours. Know that it is God who gives you this awesome privilege to be a shepherd of a small flock, and you are accountable to Him for the way you cared for His people. He is the owner and the provider. You are a servant and a caretaker. Jesus will carry your worries, problems and cares as you cast them on Him (1 Pet.5: 7). He also will be your source of all that is necessary for you to have: strength, wisdom, the Fruit of the Spirit and anointing. All the glory for the accomplishments will belong to the Lord. With the privilege come responsibilities. These are basic responsibilities that leaders of home fellowships have:

1. Set a Christ-like example.

You need to strive to be a model of Christ to those in your group. You are responsible to grow with the group members into a mature disciple of Jesus Christ. You have to set and an example by your own character, speech, and behavior. It can be done only if you keep yourself in good spiritual shape.

2. Keep yourself in good spiritual condition.

Your own relationship with God must come first in your life. You need to be continually strengthened in order to carry out your ministry. This includes Bible study and prayer. It also means being in the process of deepening your spiritual relationship with your spouse and family. "David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them." (Ps. 78:70-72)

3. Shepherd those in your care:

- **shepherd is a guide.** Just like Jesus leads His sheep - to the place of rest, nurture and security (Ps. 23) you, following Him, will develop with the group members to grow in spiritual truths that will change their lives. You will become a "man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." (Numb. 27: 15-27)

- **shepherd doesn't seek self-exaltation.** Being a shepherd is a lifestyle of servanthood. It involves staying small in your own eyes. "The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (Matt. 23:11-12)

- **shepherd nurtures.** Through the application of the Word of God in their lives you'll be enabling the group members to become more spiritually mature. Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." (John. 21:17)

- **shepherd protects.** You will expose the group members only to sound biblical teachings and protect them from falsehood as the Lord reveals it to you. "Watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of the Lord which he bought with his own blood...even from your own number men will arise and distort truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!" (Acts 20:28, 30-31)

- **shepherd cares for the needs.** Pray for God's will in their lives. Pray for their peace and well being. Help the group find lost sheep.

Set an example! Stay in shape! Shepherd the flock of Christ!

1. What do you need to watch for in order to be a spiritual leader? (1Tim. 4:16) _____

2. How can a shepherd be an example to the flock? (1 Pet. 5: 1-4) _____

Goal and Vision for the Leader's Role

6. Showing Care to People

To care for people means to give them attention, to be concerned or interested, to help if possible.

A good shepherd takes good care of the sheep. Sheep are not very smart animals. A shepherd has to know their needs and lead them to eat and drink in time. Sometimes sheep will be found dehydrated on the bank of a river—they even need help to start drinking!

People are not always aware of their spiritual needs. Let people get a taste of the good things of the Lord as you facilitate the Bible discussion. Gently lead them to start drinking the “pure milk of the Word” (1 Pet.2:2). When you start seeing the spiritual needs of your small flock, you can be tempted to “unload” all your knowledge of God on them as fast as possible. **Be patient.** Give them only as much as they can take without being overwhelmed and turned away. Jesus leads His sheep to “still waters”, that are not frightening to them.

Allow the Holy Spirit to make you a gentle and humble leader. People will start trusting you. Little by little they will become more open. Show your genuine concern for them and your loving care by:

- **Spending** time together individually and in the group.
- **Listening** to them talk. Remember the names of their family members. Become aware of their spiritual and physical needs (somebody is sick, another one is looking for job etc.).
- **Discerning** where they are spiritually. Don't put too much expectation on them too quickly.
- **Learning** to be absolutely non-pushy, relaxed with people when presenting spiritual truth. Plant seeds and water them. Don't try to reap a harvest when it's not ready.
- **Maintaining** a good order at the meetings. Start and dismiss meetings on time. Deal with those who disrupt or dominate discussion. People feel more secure when they are in predictable environment.
- **Praying** for people and with people.
- **Making phone calls** to those who were absent at the meeting. Tell them you missed them, if they have a problem pray with them over the phone.
- **Discovering** spiritual and natural gifts in people and encouraging them to use them.
- **Encouraging** all members of the group to care for one another.

**People don't care how much you know
till they know how much you care.**

1. How does Jesus show His care for His sheep? (Ps. 23) _____

2. What do you need to do with your own cares and worries? (1 Pet. 5:7) _____

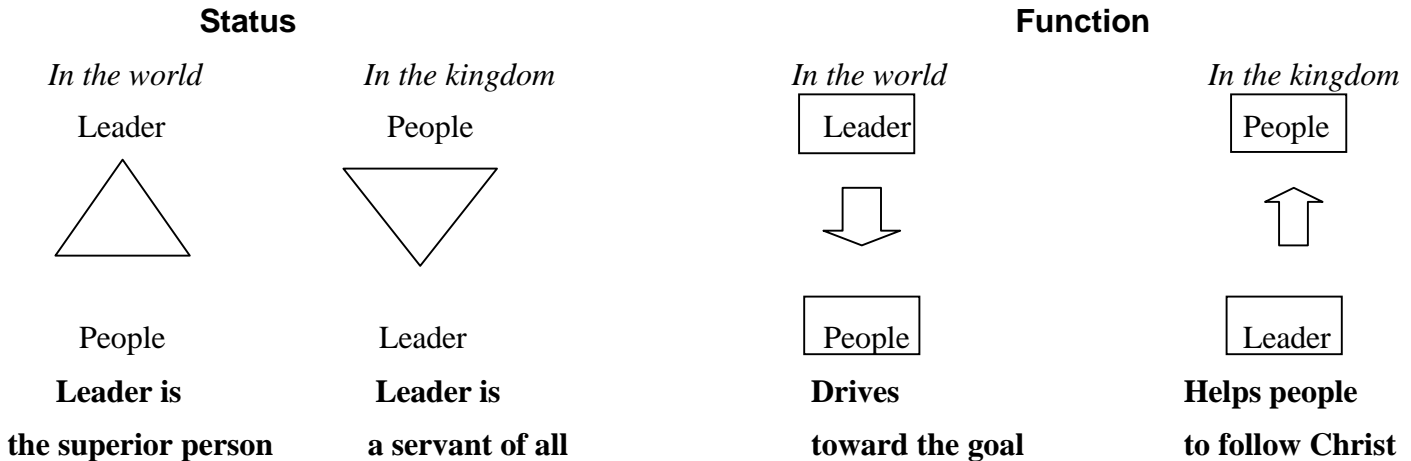
4. What if you start feeling weary of your work? (Gal. 6:9-10) _____

Goal and Vision for the Leader's Role

7. Becoming a Servant to the Group

Most people in the world measure greatness by high personal achievement. Leadership in the eyes of the world is not just a function, but a *superior status*. In the kingdom of God, **the leader is the servant of all and he puts himself last**. The interests of others become more important to him than his own interests.

The *function* of the leader in the world's system is to tell people what to do, to control them and to *drive them* toward the goal. In the kingdom it's just the opposite: **the leader leads by example**, as he follows Christ, people follow Christ too.



To be a God-kind of leader you will need to **renew your mind with the Word of God** and become a servant to every member of the group. Jesus showed us an example of attitude that leaders should have. Being the Son of God, He humbled Himself in front of His disciples by doing the work that the lowest servant of the house was supposed to do. He washed the disciples' dirty, stinky feet! (See John. 13:1-5) He didn't rule over them, but served them with humility.

**If you want to be great in God's kingdom,
become a servant of all.**

1. What attitude did Christ, the Lord of all, have when he came to earth? (Mark 10:45, Phil. 2:5-8)_____

2. How did Jesus show His love to His disciples? (John. 13:1- 5)_____

3. What status did Paul, the founder of the church in Corinth, take upon himself? (2 Cor 4:5)_____

4. What are the status and the function of the leader of a home fellowship?_____

Goal and Vision for the Leader's Role

8. Becoming a Disciple Maker

A disciple of Christ is a learner, follower and worshipper of Christ. Being a disciple of Christ means we help others to become disciples of Christ.

Jesus commissioned those who believe in Him (that would include all Christians!) to *make disciples*. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20). It is for everyone – to be involved in building others up. To become responsible for others is part of our spiritual growth.

How does one make disciples for Jesus? First, you need to *be a learner*. You cannot teach something you didn't learn yourself. Then pass what you learned on to someone else. You can be profited yourself in the process. When you start passing what you learned on to others on a regular basis you will enter a new level of Christian maturity.

Most people grow and change by *watching others*, not just by reading books. Every person needs someone to help spiritual growth to occur. Do you remember Christians who made an impact on you in life since you were born-again? Even though they were not perfect you still learned something, right? When you, in turn, start training others don't worry about making mistakes. Give the Lord your very best – and He will do the rest!

Stick to the Word no matter what! Imitate the Lord; ask yourself the question, "What would Jesus do?" A student is not higher than his teacher; so in order to make strong disciples of Christ you yourself need to become strong and have a victorious life. Spend time in prayer and in the Word, be spiritually fit for the task.

We *make disciples not for ourselves, but for the Lord*. People have a tendency to follow a leader they like. Paul had to deal with just such a situation in the church of Corinth, where they started to follow different teachers and it brought disunity among them. "One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?" (1 Cor. 1:12-13). In the Muslim religion teachers have their own disciples. The disciples try to imitate their teacher in every little detail. In the world people follow and shape their lives after famous people. They copy their favorite movie, sport, or singing star. They even dress and act like them! In Christianity denominational traditions started with people following great teachers. As long as people follow people it brings disunity in the body of Christ.

Expect your disciples to follow the Lord – not you! Don't make disciples "in your own image" (For example, if you are an evangelist, don't expect all members of the group to become strong evangelists as you are, but discover what Jesus wants them to be). Jesus Himself said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (John. 10:27)

Only Jesus can have disciples – not men!

1. Who is really a disciple of Jesus? (Jn.8: 31)_____

2. How can the disciples of Jesus bring glory to God? (Jn.15:8)_____

3. Who is a disciple maker? (in your own words)_____

Goal and Vision for the Leader's Role

9. Developing Apprentices

An Apprentice in a home fellowship group is a helper-trainee, a future *shepherd* of a new group. From the very beginning of your meetings you need to work on equipping your apprentice.

We can find the pattern of developing apprentices in 2 Tim. 2:2. "*And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*" Timothy

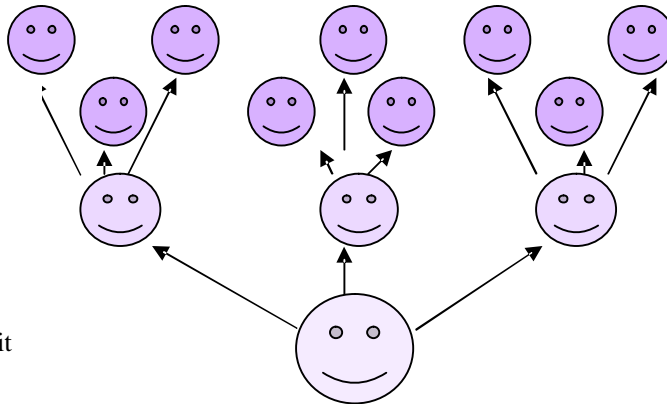
was Paul's apprentice. Moses trained Joshua as an apprentice. Jesus' disciples followed Him around, helping Him and learning from Him. Apprenticeship is the Biblical way of developing future leaders.

In about three to four months after you start meetings your apprentice could be ready to start his/her own group. Before letting your apprentice start leading a new group you will have to make sure he/she is capable of doing that. Allow your apprentice to watch you closely as you lead. Let him/her practice leading the discussion sometimes. After he/she starts a new group he/she still will be a part of your original group, meeting on a different day of the week. The work of training an apprentice is very rewarding. It is the way for the kingdom of God to grow in *geometrical progression* as you train future shepherds and they, in turn, train others.

Home fellowships can *expand geometrically* as trained believers train others and commission them, in turn, to train still others.

Pattern for developing apprentice:

1. Your apprentice watches you.
2. You explain what you did and why you did it.
3. You observe as your apprentice does the same thing.
4. Notice his (her) strengths and weaknesses and discuss it later.
5. Provide encouragement to strengthen the weaknesses.
6. Turn your task over to your apprentice.
7. Start "neglecting" him on purpose.
8. Monitor him closely as he trains his apprentice (after the group multiplies).
9. Remain a close friend, now treating your apprentice as your equal.



Checkpoints that would help you to evaluate your apprentice:

1. Relates well to visitors and also brings visitors.
2. Actively participates in discussions.
3. Sensitive to the needs during discussions.
4. Lovingly cares for people with problems.
5. Prays consistently for members.
6. Helps to evaluate meetings and fill out "Leader's Report"
7. Takes constructive criticism well.
8. Well prepared to lead discussion.
9. Is training his/her own apprentice.

Tips for working with your apprentice, related to group sessions:

1. Discuss in advance what you are going to do in each meeting.
2. After each meeting discuss what you have both learned. Then plan the next one together.
3. Discuss problems such as discussion dominators etc.
4. Take your apprentice with you everywhere you serve.
5. Let him (her) lead the meeting when you discern he (she) is ready for this experience.
6. Evaluate his (her) strengths and weaknesses.

1. Why do we need to develop an apprentice? _____

Goal and Vision of the Leader's Role

10. Principle of authority in the group

Authority is a right to exercise power. All authority is delegated or given by somebody (a policeman has a right to exercise some power over the suspects because the chief of police delegated it to him).

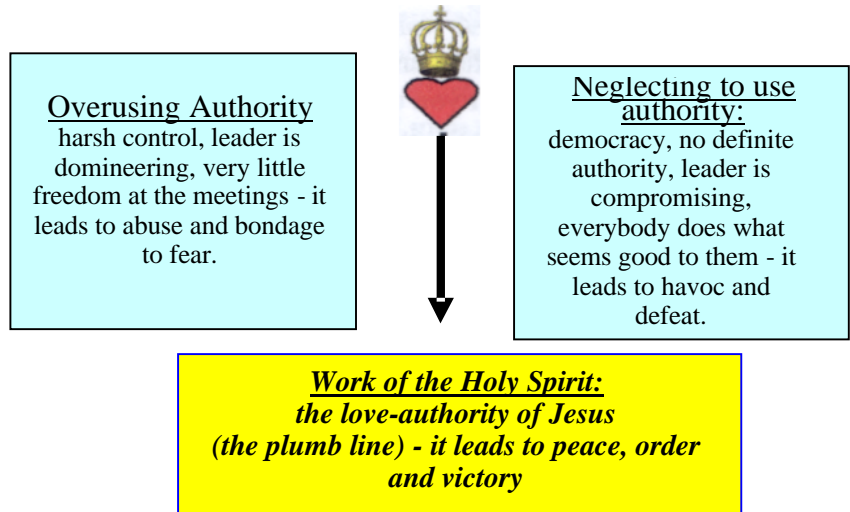
God has the ultimate authority. He created the earth and gave authority over it to Adam and Eve (Gen. 1: 28). By disobeying God they surrendered it to Satan, who became god of this world (2 Cor. 4: 4). Jesus Christ took the authority back from Satan and delegated it to those who would believe and obey Him (Matt.28: 18-20). Jesus is the king over all kings. We have His authority to do God's will on earth in the name of Jesus.

Kingdom of God is not a democratic state; it is the kingdom of authority. But our king is not a tyrant. He is gentle and humble in heart; he wants to take heavy yokes off of our necks and to give us rest (Matt. 11: 28-30).

Believers have authority over the evil spirits in the name of Jesus. But our authority over people is very limited. God, who created authority, gave a free will to individuals. We are free to obey or disobey. God offers people to choose between life and death, blessings and curses (Deut.30:15-20). We can only teach people, give biblical counsel and pray for them. It is up to them to take our advice or not. God doesn't violate the rights of individuals to choose. To give advice and then try to make sure the person followed it - is control that is not of God.

The leader of the group should promote freedom for people to express themselves. Even if their opinions are not biblical, don't correct them on the spot. Yet you have authority and responsibility to deal with those who disrupt your meetings or dominate in discussion. You must be loving and self-controlled all the time.

As a leader of a Bible discussion group you shouldn't neglect your God-given authority. Maintain order in your meetings. Use your authority in love, acting in the best interests of people in the group. You should speak truth in love. Don't be bossy but be humble and kind to everyone.



In old times builders used a rope with a weight on the end (plumb line) to check if the wall is straight. We have our "plumb line" in the Word of God. It tells us that we must exercise authority, but do it in love, always remembering that we are dealing with people for whom Christ died. There are 2 extremes in using authority, both are the work of the flesh and are wrong. The work of the flesh is when a leader uses his/her own "plumb line". The result of it is on one side - fear, on the other - havoc.

You have authority over people's behavior in the place of meeting, not over their lives.

1. Who created authority? (Col. 1: 16) _____
2. What is the difference between godly and ungodly authority? (Pr. 29: 2) _____
3. How did the apostle Paul want Titus, the young pastor, to use authority? (Titus 2: 15) _____

The Bible Discussion Group

11. Typical Meeting

The purpose of the home fellowship meeting is to create a friendly and effective atmosphere: for the believers to grow in the Lord and for nonbelievers to come to know the Lord personally. It's a family gathering. There are no teachers and students, but brothers, sisters and friends. Trust the Holy Spirit to manifest His Presence always, even if you have to change your regular way of leading the meeting to accommodate his move. We are suggesting a plan of the meeting for you, but it is up to you to change it in order to flow with the Spirit.

Suggested plan of the meeting.

1. Start with 10-15 min. of *fellowship* and snacks (if you serve them). Some groups do it at the end – it is up to you. If you serve snacks and drinks ask everybody to bring some. Introduce people to each other and help them to start a conversation. Greet people by their names and make them feel welcome as part of the family.
2. Have 5-10 min. of *praise* and worship (after you meet for a while increase the time to 10-15 min.). Sing uplifting songs. You might want to stand in a circle, not very crowded, so people will have room to raise their hands and clap. If you can't provide copies of the songs, sing only simple songs that everyone knows. Appoint somebody to lead the worship and ask them to prepare the songs ahead of time, lead the worship yourself or sing along with a tape.
- 3., Hold hands and let each person say a short *prayer* of thanksgiving, going around the circle. Start yourself and set an example of a one- or two-sentence prayer. (E.g., "Thank you, Lord that you made us all a family in Jesus"). Tell people ahead of time that if someone is not comfortable with praying out loud, they can just squeeze the hand of the person next to them to let them know it's their turn.
4. The most important part of the meeting – *Bible discussion*. You are facilitating the discussion, letting people share deeply from their hearts.
5. At the end of the discussion give your *wrap-up*, bringing also your own insights and illustrations.
6. During the prayer ministry, pray for one another in small groups of 3, or sit somebody on a chair and gather around him or her. Lay hands on people according to Mark 16:17-18.
7. *Dismiss* the group, continue to fellowship. The meeting shouldn't go on longer than 1.5 – 2 hours. Make sure that everybody will leave the house you are meeting in by 9 PM, especially if people have small children.

**The key to a successful meeting is to follow
the Holy Spirit's guidance**

1. What is the purpose of believers meeting together? (Hebrews 10: 24-25) _____

2. Why is Bible discussion the most important part of the home fellowship meeting? (John. 8:31-32) _____

3. Explain the biblical basis of laying on of hands. (Mark 16:17-18) _____

4. What do the following scriptures add to your understanding of worship? (Psalms: 34:1, 95:2 and 103:1-14) _____

The Bible Discussion Group

12. Bible Discussion

One of the goals of a Bible discussion is the application of the Word of God in your lives. As the discussion goes on, the Holy Spirit will speak through different people, reveal the truth and write God's law on your hearts. A good Bible discussion should result in a change in your life. You don't need to be a Bible scholar or teacher, but you need to be a **facilitator**. Your job is to: **1. Prepare ahead** of time so you can be on top of the discussion: read the lesson, think about the Scriptures used, pray for the truth to be revealed, make notes; **2. Present the discussion topic to the group**. Ask questions; find out what people think about it. Have volunteers read the Scripture out loud and then ask, "What do you think now about this question?" The principle of discussion is to lead people *from the known to the unknown*. Learn what people already know about this topic and take it from there; **3. Facilitate the discussion**. Let the members of the group discover the truth themselves. Don't give them the answers, but help by restating questions, asking additional questions, giving hints if necessary; **4. Encourage people to interact with each other**. Ask questions like, "Does everyone agree with that? Are there any other opinions?" People don't have to talk only to the leader, let them talk to each other, but only one person at a time; **5. Maintain order**: watch for the dominators, involve the non-participants, remind people of the three basic rules of good discussion. Watch your time. Start with 10-20 min, and gradually get to 30-40 min. of the Bible discussion - not longer; **6. At the end give your wrap-up of the topic**. Listen carefully to what people say during the discussion and use their answers for the summary.

True group discussion is:

Three basic rules of good Bible discussion:

1. Wait your turn.

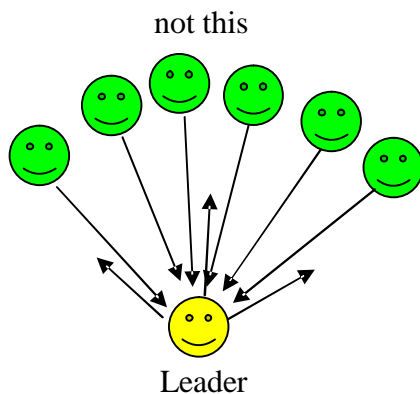
There shouldn't be two people talking at once.

2 Stay on topic.

All comments should relate directly to the topic.

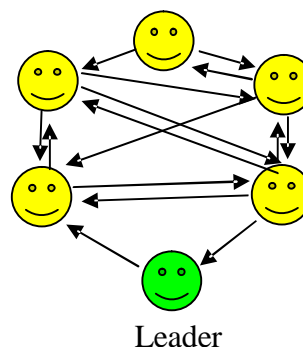
3. Keep it brief.

Every group member should have a chance to discuss.



Group members are interacting only with the leader, responding to his or her questions

...but this



Group members are interacting with each other, expressing their opinions to each other while the leader is acting as moderator

Your life can change as a result of a good Bible discussion

- 1 What is a model of true Bible discussion? _____
2. State briefly what the job of the leader is during the discussion? _____

3. What were some of the rules in the early church meetings? (1 Cor.14:26-33) _____

The Bible Discussion Group

13. Discussion Problems

Most discussion problems can be solved by the use of questions. Using questions patiently and tactfully you can accomplish a lot! Here are some examples of common problems and solutions.

Dominators. These are people who talk too much. They might be too impatient to listen to others, trying to get attention or think they have all the answers. If you leave the problem unchecked it would rob other members of sharing time and eventually would result in boredom and frustration in the group.

Tell people the “three basic rules of good Bible discussion”; remind them often, especially when you have new people in the group. If someone’s answers are too long deliberately look at your watch. Be tactful but firm; do not allow anybody to dominate the discussion. You can interrupt the “chronic talker“ saying something like, “Thank you, brother (sister), now let’s hear what others think about it.”

Speak to the “chronic talker” privately. Be kind to them, but say firmly that their answers are too long and robbing others of their time. Ask them to help you stimulate group discussion by giving others a chance to speak.

Non-participants. These are people who do not contribute to the discussion. They are too shy to speak publicly or not sure if they can say anything of value to others. Encourage them privately. Be sensitive with them; give them time to just observe others for a while. During discussions direct a few questions at them specifically. Ask them to comment on the answers of others. Affirm them; let them know they shared valuable things with the group.

If the conversation drifts away from the topic bring it back using questions like, “Can we discuss this some other time?” or “Do you think we should get back on the topic?”

If people get into arguments about interpretation of the Scripture (this is not common, but can happen) intervene asking them to hold it for a while, do more study at home and pray for the light of revelation to come. Get back to the discussion; ask other people to express their opinions.

Use questions to solve the discussion problems.

Three “don’ts” of leading the discussion.

1. **Don’t** answer questions yourself. Restate your questions, put them in different words, and give a hint in the form of question if necessary.
2. **Don’t** allow anybody to monopolize the conversation.
3. **Don’t** correct anybody on the spot. If someone interprets the Bible wrongly, ask others, “Do you think it’s wrong? Do you agree with it?”

Be-attitudes of a leader

- Be** interested in people’s answers. Listen carefully to what they have to say.
- Be** patient, give people time to think.
- Be** sensitive to people’s feelings.
- Be** positive; pursue the goals of discussion - application of the Word and encouragement.

1. What are the goals of the Bible discussion? _____
2. How would you handle a person whose answers are too long? _____
2. How can you involve all the people in a discussion? _____

The Bible Discussion Group

14. Children in the Group

Welcome children to the meetings. They can be a blessing to the group. The kingdom of God belongs to children. Their faith is very simple. The Father takes pleasure in revealing His secrets to the children and adults who trust Him like little children.

Children are dependent and trusting by nature. They trust adults; they have faith in their parents. Earthly parents represent God to the children. They have strong faith in what God promised. It's a great responsibility to be around children because they learn from us. Even though the children are weak in the natural, they have a mighty defender in God. Jesus warned that parents and adults, who influence children, are held accountable for the way they affected these little ones' ability to trust.

There are different ways to care for children. There can be Bible discussion groups with: 1) very small children who can be blessed by being with adults during worship, but wouldn't be benefited much by the lesson and discussion; 2) children 5-6 years and older can be included in worship, thanksgiving prayer, discernment and wisdom to decide what is best for the children and adults in your group.

Possible decisions. 1) Ask volunteers to watch the children after the worship and thanksgiving prayer in another room. They can teach children separately using children's books. Children should be informed about the rules of the house (don't run or make noise, the parents' bedroom is off-limits, etc).

2) Before dismissing the children, bring them up to the front of the group and teach them yourself for 5-10 minutes. You can teach on the same topic for tonight's meeting if it's a good topic for them. Speak to them in very simple phrases and use illustrations from their everyday life. The easiest way would be to use children's Bible storybooks. Then let them go with a responsible adult to another room to play (color books, watch TV quietly or play table games; older children can help to take care of the younger ones-read them books, etc)

3) Let older children stay for the lesson and discussion time, if the topic can be beneficial for the children. You'll have to use discernment to decide if it will not hinder adults from being open about their problems. Try to adapt the lesson and rephrase the questions to help the children understand.

If children are important to God they should be important to our groups! We need to welcome and bless children, as we would welcome Jesus. We can involve them in praise and worship and prayer ministry and see how the Holy Spirit moves through them. Since they have great faith, God can use them mightily.

Sometimes, with the agreement of the group, have a special meeting, where the activities would be adjusted to the needs of the children. You can have snacks and take turns reading Bible stories. Then the children can sit on chairs in a circle facing out. Adults can sit on the floor facing a child, and tell them stories about their lives when they were the age of the child. The adults can ask the children questions like, "What's your favorite food" (game, animal, etc.). Be childlike, have fun!

Children have great faith and humility!

1. What were some of the ways children in the Bible ministered to God? (1Sam. 3; John 6:1-15; Matt. 21:8-27)

2. How can we welcome Jesus? (Matt. 18:5)

The Bible Discussion Group

15. Praise and Worship at the Meeting

Praise. Times of singing, and other forms of vocal praise, are very beneficial for the group. Faith is built, burdens are lifted, God is glorified and the believers are encouraged. To praise means: to admire, lift up, give a compliment. Praise is expressing back to God our appreciation and understanding of His worth.

The Bible is full of exhortations to praise God (Ps. 96:8-9, 113: 1-2), to “declare the praises of him, who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9). It is not an option, but something we are expected to do. Even if we don’t feel like praising God we still should bring “the sacrifice of praise”; obedience brings a blessing.

Worship. Worship centers our attention on God Himself. Worshiping God is acknowledging him as Lord and Master of our lives. We give him our highest adoration. Our heavenly Father seeks those who would worship Him in spirit and in truth (John. 4:23). We worship God as our Creator, our loving Counselor, Prince of Peace. We express our love to Jesus as our heavenly Bridegroom when we worship Him.

You as the leader have to make sure that people know the words of the songs. Prepare the songs ahead of time and practice them. Sing simple uplifting songs with not a lot of words, it will allow people to focus on the Lord. If you don’t lead the worship yourself, appoint someone to do it in advance. The leader sets the example for worship. You can lead singing, call for enthusiastic vocal praise, and allow for times of quiet meditation. In all these things the leader must be sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Wisdom. Use wisdom and never allow persons of opposite sex to minister to one another apart from the group. You also have to remember when you pray for persons of opposite sex: 1) make sure that other people can hear you; 2) don’t make inappropriate contact with their bodies; 3) if you need to visit them make sure somebody else is present.

From praise and prayer comes strength!

1. What can we learn about worship from the following references? Ps. 33:1-3, 40:3, 96:2-3, 148:2-3? _____

2. What are some of the purposes of singing praises to God? (Eph.5: 19; Col. 3:16) _____

3. What do we need to do in order to receive wisdom from God? (James 1:5) _____

The Bible Discussion Group

16. Prayer at the Meeting

Prayer of thanksgiving. By giving thanks to God we recognize His authority over us and His good will toward us. While we are giving thanks, our hearts are softened and our minds focused on thanking God. After you finish praise and worship time, while standing in a circle, you can hold each other's hands and pray short (1-2 sentence) prayers of thanksgiving. As the leader, start with yourself, setting an example, and then go around the circle clockwise. Tell people that if someone is not feeling like praying out loud, they should lightly squeeze the hand of the person next to them. This way the people can keep their eyes closed, thinking about the Lord and not worrying if it's their turn to pray. Include and encourage the children to pray too.

Prayer Ministry. Ask the members of the group if they received any answers to their prayers. Hearing praise reports will help faith arise in the group. Then ask people if they have any prayer requests: what needs do they have? Pray for one another in groups of 3-4 people.

Also you can ask the members of the group if today's discussion prompted someone to be prayed for: to make it right with God, to be set free from bondage, to be healed etc. Sit them on a chair and gather around them. Pray and lay hands on them – be channels of God's power and love for them!

Involve children and young Christians to pray for people. They have simple strong faith that the whole group can benefit from.

Prayer of the righteous is effective and powerful!

1. What is the way we are told to pray for the sick? (James 5:14-15) _____

2. What should we pray if people are facing troubles and persecutions? (Acts 4:24-31) _____

3. What should we do if an answer to prayer doesn't come quickly? (Luke 18:1-8) _____

4. What can we pray for others? (Col. 1:9-11) _____

The Bible Discussion Group

17. The Fruit and the Gifts

The Fruit of the Spirit comes with the salvation experience. This is something that can be expected in the life of every believer. Jesus commanded His disciples to “go and bear fruit”. Jesus compares Himself with the vine, believers with branches on the vine, and the Father with the gardener. Apart from Jesus, we cannot produce fruit. By remaining in Jesus, and keeping His Words in our hearts, we can produce much fruit. This glorifies the Father. We show ourselves to be disciples of Jesus when we bear fruit. (Jn.15: 1-8; 16)

There are 9 Fruit of the Spirit mentioned by the Apostle Paul. (Gal. 5:22-23) We can put them into 3 groups.

1) Three *spiritual* fruit: love, joy and peace. Love is the central fruit. It is evidence of a Spirit-filled life. The Spirit-filled life is described in 1 Cor. 13, “the love chapter.” Joy is happiness that doesn’t depend on the circumstances of life. As you fellowship deeply and intimately with the Lord it bubbles up inside you. Peace is a result of reconciliation with God, through the atonement of Christ’s death. We have peace with God (Rom. 5:1), with other believers (Eph. 4:3) and with all men. (Heb.12: 14)

2) Three *social* fruit: patience, kindness, and goodness. Patience is calm endurance in the face of trials or putting up with other people. (1 Thess. 5:14) Kindness is friendly, warmhearted, tolerant treatment of others (Eph. 4:23). Goodness is positive, desirable and attractive qualities in dealing with others. (Eph. 5:9) It is expressed in undeserved generosity.

3) Three *personal* fruit: faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Faithfulness is a steady, reliable, loyal character, even to the point of dying for Christ. (Rev. 2:10) Gentleness is tenderness and sensitivity, the opposite of anger and harshness. (1 Thess. 2:7) Self-control is the ability to control your emotions, desires or actions. (Titus 2:2)

To have the Fruit of the Spirit, Christians need to maintain a daily living contact with the Lord. Only His Spirit in us can produce that powerful Fruit of the Spirit. The Lord promised that He will supply everything we need for fruit bearing — it’s His part. Our part is to yield to the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit inside us. We need to listen to His voice and obey His Word. God’s Word is the tool to prune or cut off the unproductive branches from us. Through pruning, our Father makes sure that our lives will be useful, victorious and will bear much fruit.

The leader of the group needs to bear the fruit of the Spirit and to serve the body of Christ. The quality of your leadership can be measured by how much fruit you have. This fruit is a result of your relationship with the Lord and service to the members of the group.

Gifts of the Spirit teach the believers about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They are supernatural abilities given by Jesus to the church, the Bride. Our salvation does not depend on us manifesting the Gifts of the Spirit. Every believer should be given the opportunity to receive the Baptism.

Jesus promised all His disciples that they would be “clothed with power from on high” and only then become His witnesses. (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8) Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a necessary experience for those who want to serve others and to have the supernatural power of God in his/her own life.

There are 9 Gifts of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul describes their operation in 1 Cor. chapters 12 and 14.

The fruit and the gifts are for serving the Lord and others

1. What are the Gifts of the Spirit? (1 Cor. 12:7-11) _____

2. What should you do about the operation of the gifts in your group? (1Cor. 14:39-40; 1Thess. 5:19-20) _____

The Spiritual Family

18. Becoming Spiritual Parents

A spiritual father* is a leader who is deeply committed to the Lord and to his spiritual family, who provides love, nurture, care, sound biblical instructions and, if necessary, correction. In the natural family parents give birth to the children and care for them. A spiritual father is reproducing the life of God in others by **bringing newborn children** into the kingdom and caring for them while they grow in the Lord. He sows and waters the seed of the word. A certain level of maturity and wisdom characterizes his personal life. He enables and equips the members of the spiritual family to live victoriously and to minister to one another.

In order to become a spiritual father you have to be a **servant** to the group and a **disciple maker**. You need to be manifesting the **Fruit of the Spirit** (see Gal.5:22) in your life. We are aware that not all the groups will decide to become a spiritual family. You as the leader have to know the right time when you and your people are ready for this.

Spiritual fathers are much needed in the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For although you may have ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, remember that you have only me as your father. For I was the one who brought you to Christ when I preached the Gospel to you.” (1Cor. 4:15, Living Bible) Paul started the church, so he could be trusted to have it’s best interests in mind. When you start the group, **you will be trusted by the members to become a spiritual father to them.**

When your group starts becoming a spiritual family, than your spiritual authority will increase. You will start assuming **more responsibility for those members of the group who are less mature than you** in the Lord (even if they are older than you in the natural). You’ll start loving them and caring for them, as a godly, compassionate father would in the natural family. A spiritual father is not a title but a responsibility.

We can learn about spiritual fathers in 1 John 12-14. The believers who experienced only forgiveness of their sins through Jesus are addressed as “little children”. The “young men” are more mature. They had struggles with Satan’s temptations and had won. The “young men” are spiritually strong; the Word of God is the final authority in their lives. The “fathers” are those “who have known Him who is from the beginning.” In 1 John. 1:1 we see that the one “Who was from the beginning“ is Christ Himself, the Word of life. The word “have known” is a Greek word “ginosko” that means to know, recognize, realize and understand. Such knowledge is received not by mere intellectual activity, but by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. This Greek word also means union as between man and woman. To summarize it we can say that ***the “fathers” are those believers, who have a deep and intimate revelation of Christ as the Word of life. Because of that they are able to impart (to breathe in) the life of God into others.***

**Any time we mention “father” we also mean “mother” if a leader is female and “father and mother “ if it’s a couple.*

Spiritual fathers are those who have a revelation of Christ as the Word of life. They reproduce the life of God in others.

1. In I John. 2:12-14 who are the children? _____

Who are the young men? _____

Who are the fathers? _____

What category would you place yourself in? _____

2. Is it OK for anybody in the group to call you “father”? (Matt. 23:8-12) _____

The Spiritual Family

19. Developing Family Relationships

Often it's hard to develop meaningful close relationships with people in a large church. Home fellowships provide a perfect setting for this. It is in the small home groups where we learn to communicate intimately and share on a deep spiritual level. We learn to trust each other and believe the best about each other.

Developing a group of believers into a spiritual family is not difficult. The fact of the matter is – **we are a family!** We just need to recognize the truth. By the precious blood of Jesus we are made children of God, members of His royal family. It is a high position that we are freely given. It is up to us to appropriate it by faith in our lives – individually and corporately. All it takes is faith and perseverance, to stick together “through thick and thin”.

Members of a spiritual family should live in harmony. This does not mean there cannot be differences in opinion. However, brothers and sisters will love each other despite their differences. It's an art - **to disagree agreeably.** We can admit we have different opinions, but not show resentment to the one we disagree with. When we make Jesus the center of our lives, disagreements with others will not bother us much. Jesus commanded us to love one another “no matter what.” He provides strength for us to do it. Decide for yourself, is Christian love a feeling, or a commitment and a matter of choice?

An example of the “household rules” of the royal family of God is found in Colossians 3:12-15. In this Scripture there is a strategy to help us **to be at peace with each other**. 1) Imitate Christ's merciful, forgiving Spirit. 2) Let love guide your life. 3) Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. 4) Always be thankful.

The Apostle Paul left us a beautiful example of relationships of spiritual father with his family of believers. (Acts 20:31, 36-38) He loved them, cared for them, even cried over their needs. They responded with love and care for him and sorrow over his leaving. **They prayed together and comforted one another.** Like Paul, you can build strong relationships with the members of your group. This comes by sharing, caring, sorrowing, rejoicing and praying with them. You encourage people to trust you as a leader by giving of yourself.

Some believers have difficulty being involved meaningfully with others. Because of the hurtful experiences in the past they may refuse to open up or try to hide their needs from others in the group. You, as leader/father of the family need to rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Be sensitive to their needs. Your patience, and trust in their ability to open up, will help them a lot.

Time spent together in the group can really bond people to each other. In the lessons for the group (leader's guide part) you will find some tips on creating different, meaningful, gatherings (agape meals, communion service, half-night prayer meeting etc.).

Family is a place where we learn to love no matter what.

1. Why should you believe the best about a “bad” person? (1 Cor. 13:7) _____

2. How can you love “no matter what”? (1 Cor 13:4-5) _____

3. In what manner should members of the spiritual family speak to each other? (Eph. 4:29; 5:4) _____

The Spiritual Family

20. Financial Responsibility

Why should we give? “The earth is the Lords and everything in it” (Ps.24:1). “Silver is mine and gold is mine, says the Lord” (Hagg.2:8). It is clear from the Bible that all money and all earthly possessions belong to the Lord. Yet He doesn’t want us to just be His slaves, but has given us a privilege to be *stewards* of His money and His possessions. He could have demanded 50% or 80% of what we earn. Instead, He offered us to bring Him only 10% of our income as a proof of our faith. He doesn’t *need* our money!

It is God’s will is for everyone to prosper. He said to His people, “There should be no poor among you...for the Lord your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations, but will borrow from none” (Deut.15:4, 6). Why there is so much poverty in the world then? Well, isn’t it God’s will for everyone to be saved? (2 Pet. 3:9) Yes! Is everyone saved then? No. We see that God’s will on earth is not always done in the lives of individuals. Since the fall of men spiritual death, sickness and poverty is working in the world. “The whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John. 5:19). Jesus said, “the thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John. 10:10). God prepared the way out for those who believe. He even said that we could test Him in this: to bring our tithe into His house and see if He will not throw open the gates of heavenly blessings for us. He also promised to rebuke the thief for the tither’s sake (Mal. 3:10:11).

Giving is a way of receiving. God’s ways are opposite from the ways of the world. While we were in the world’s system of values, we were looking for a way to earn more so we can spend it on ourselves. In the kingdom we are generous and cheerful givers as God Himself is. He already gave us His most treasured possession – His only son Jesus. “Give and it will be given to you.” - is God’s principal that works the same way in any country. Because we receive God’s provision just like we received salvation – by faith in His promises, it’s very important to give in faith. Avoid legalistic approaches and don’t make members of the spiritual family feel that they have to give before they can believe God for receiving. Do not introduce financial responsibility in the group too early.

We receive so we can give again. We should give with pure motives in our hearts. The wrong motives to give would be: 1) trying to “deserve” a place in heaven, 2) to get rich yourself, 3) so people would praise you. God wants us to be prosperous so we can be His channels of provision to others. Jesus came to preach the Gospel to the poor and He commissioned us to do the same. When we serve God with our money we are: 1) proclaiming Jesus as Lord over our finances, 2) spreading the Gospel in our neighborhoods and around the world, 3) taking care of the needs of the poor among us.

Where should we give? That would depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Home fellowships can give to: 1) a local church, 2) support missionaries and ministers of God’ Word, 3) take care of the needs in the group. The best may be to collect money and then make contributions together as a body. Pray for wisdom and direction.

Give, receive and give again!

1. Why does God want us to give? (Mal. 3:8-12) _____
2. Did the New Testament cancel tithing? (Luke 11:42) _____
3. Should poverty prevent us from giving? (2 Cor. 8:1-5) _____
4. What does God desire to do for us as we give in faith? (2 Cor. 9:8-11; Luke 6:38) _____
5. How did the early church handle financial responsibility? (Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-37) _____

The Spiritual Family

21. Having Spiritual Children

When someone receives Jesus as his Savior and Lord – he becomes a born again child of God. “To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (John. 1:12). **It is part of the vision of the group — to reach out to non-believers.** There are so many creative ways to present this wonderful news of salvation! You can go door-to-door witnessing and invite people to your meetings. You can watch an evangelistic film and discuss it with non-churched people. You can have a picnic in summer, a get together dinner, tea or just get together for fun and games. Let someone share a testimony of a changed life and then present the Gospel. Give an invitation to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Most important, **let the outsiders see the unity and love among the members of the group.** Make new people comfortable and relaxed at your meetings. Try to make friends with them. When the group is having an outreach meeting, have some games, snacks and informal fellowship instead of the regular routine.

When your group is on the way to becoming a spiritual family, all the members will be actively involved in your outreaches. Plan your Gospel outreaches ahead of time and ask everyone (including children) to contribute some ideas on how to present the Gospel the best way. **Make it a fun event.** It can and it will become a second birthday for those who receive Jesus.

The good news is that Jesus did it all and we cannot add anything to the work of the cross. **Yet there is something we must do — RECEIVE.**

The new birth is not the only Good News we give to the dying world. There is also deliverance, healing and wholeness. These are Greek words used in the New Testament that are translated “to save” or “salvation”. *Sozo* means to heal, make whole, preserve, save. *Soteria* means health, salvation, deliverance, preservation. Jesus never sent His disciples to preach only the new birth. He sent them to preach and teach the kingdom of God, heal and deliver people. **Be bold in presenting the whole uncompromised Gospel!**

**Christianity is not about what we DO,
but about what was DONE.**

1. Jesus sent the Twelve and then 72 believers to present the Gospel. What did He tell them to do? (see Luke 9:12 and 10:1,9) _____

2. Study the presentation of the good news done by the early church (Acts 10:36-43). Write the Gospel message in your own words. _____

3. The prophecy predicts that the Messiah (Jesus) will come to redeem the whole man: spirit, soul and body. Study Isaiah 53:4-5 and list the things that Jesus carried in our place to the cross. _____

4. What do the Greek words, sozo and “soteria,” mean? _____

The Spiritual Family

22. Spiritual Family is Growing and Reproducing Itself

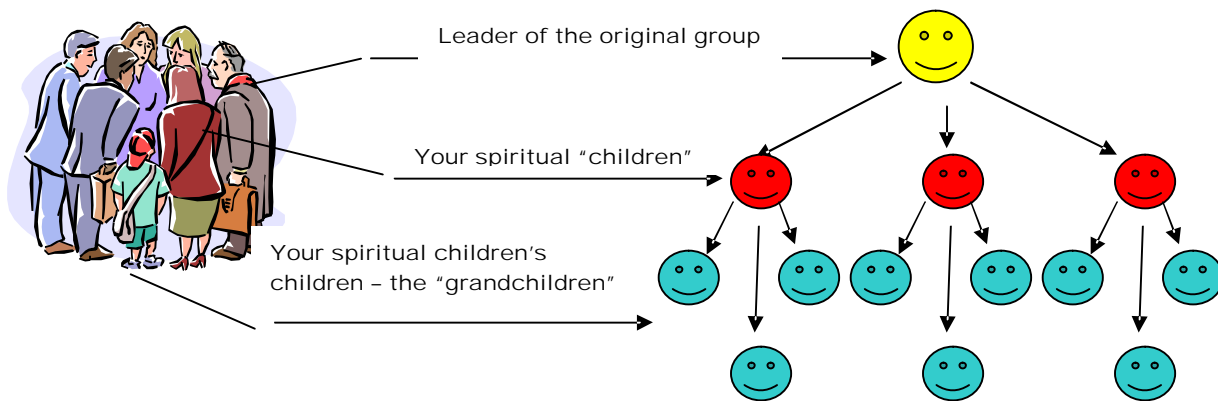
Living human body cells are the basic building blocks. They are joined to each other and function in harmony with each other. They also grow and multiply. In the same way your home fellowship needs to grow, reproduce and form other groups. All this is important for your home fellowship's life and health.

Growth of your home group is vital. The group grows spiritually by developing closer relationships with the Lord and with one another. This growth usually results in becoming a spiritual family. Here the members can be transparent and caring toward one another.

The group grows physically when new members are added. Evangelism is a must for a home fellowship group. No true progress ever takes place when believers focus on one another, ignoring the suffering world around them. Never stop evangelizing and bringing visitors to your meetings. Witness to your friends and neighbors. Pray for God to bring spiritual awakening to your area. Go out on the streets to meet other people. Preach to them the uncompromised Gospel in the open air. Witness to people one on one.

Reproduction. It's just like in the natural family. Children are born, grow, and develop. One day they are ready to have their own family. Your family reproduces itself. In the natural, your grown-up children get married, have their own children, and are still members of your family. It is the same in the spiritual. Your apprentice is spiritually "your child". His (her) children would be your "grandchildren". You don't have spiritual authority over your "grandchildren," the parents do. Yet, if "the parents" would ask you to help or to give advice, you can do that.

When your apprentice is ready you can send him (her) out to start another group. While your apprentice leads his (her) group, at the same time he (she) is still part of your original group (that meets on a different day of the week). This way he (she) never loses the confidence, because of being in the group, receiving help and being nourished. The lesson you discuss in your original group meeting can be discussed at the meeting of the new group. Your spiritual child will not have problems presenting this topic because he (she) is already familiar with it.



Developing an apprentice prepares your group for reproduction.

1. What did the master, in the parable, tell his servants to do with those whom they find on the roads? (Luke 14:23) _____

2. What did God tell Adam and Eve their purpose on Earth was? (Genesis 1:28) _____

Friendship Questions or Icebreakers

1. What's the most important thing that happened to you this week? (*You can use this question many times*)
2. What one animal do you like most?
3. If you could change one thing about your school (job), what would it be?
4. If you had one wish what would it be?
5. Who is your role model?
6. I've always wanted to _____.
7. To me Jesus means _____.
8. Do Christians experience anger differently than non-Christians?
9. If I could be an animal, I'd be a _____.
10. My biggest fear is _____, because _____.
11. In one word, what are your friends like? Why?
12. In one word, what is your family like? Why?
13. What do you think is the biggest problem facing people your age?
14. Do you have a job? If so, where do you work? If not, where would you like to work?
15. Tell how you are feeling today in the form of a weather report. (For example, partly cloudy, sunny with a chance for showers etc.)
16. Tell about a time when you felt very loved.
17. What makes me the happiest is _____.
18. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would it be?
19. If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be, and why?
20. One thing that the group doesn't know about me is _____.
21. Who is your favorite performer?
22. If I had a million dollars, I would _____.
23. What is the greatest regret of your life?
24. The greatest compliment I ever received was _____.
25. Let me tell you about my best earthly friend _____.
26. The hardest thing I have ever done was _____.
27. The gift I will never forget (apart from my conversion).
28. If you could not fail, what would you like to do?
29. What is your favorite Bible verse?
30. Are you outgoing, or reserved, and do you wish you could change that?
31. When I was little my favorite sit-com was _____.
32. What makes you angry and why?
33. I think a friend should be _____ (for example, loyal, caring, good looking etc.)
34. Finish this sentence: a) on the way to this meeting, I was feeling _____.
b) One real strength I have is _____.
c) One area of my life in which I'm proud of myself is _____.
d) A talent or skill I have is _____.
e) An adult who had an impact on me as a teen was _____.
35. If you could jump into any book ... what would it be and why?
36. When you like someone, how do you get a date with him/her?
37. What is your favorite thing to do on a date?
38. My dream is _____.
39. Describe your most embarrassing moment.
40. I'm most aware of God's presence when _____.

“Home Fellowship Leaders Guide”

is a practical help on how to lead
a Home Fellowship. It takes you all the way from starting
a Bible Discussion group to developing it into
a Spiritual Family.

Jesus Christ is building His Church today.
Are you called to build with Him?
If God is calling you to start a small
Bible Discussion group in your home this book will help you learn how
To be led by the Spirit of God.
It will help you to build your group on a solid Biblical foundation.

About the author. Harold Zimmerman is founder of the Jesus ministries and organizer of Jesus Festivals, which he directed from 1973 to 1980. These ministries were aimed at huge masses and as many as 30,000 at a time were ministered to. Thousands were brought to the Lord. He was on the board of Teen Challenge and is past president of the Reading PA Chapter of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International.

His special interest from early on has been church operation with particular burden of counseling church leaders spiritually and financially. This has led to his extensive travel all over the world seeking to serve the body of Christ.

Harold is founder and president of Zimmerman Industries, Inc., builder of mobile cement mixers. His patented truck-mounted units are sold in the U.S. and abroad.

At the present time Harold is ministering to hundreds of home fellowships in Russia and in other countries by supplying them with lessons, instructions for the leaders and other literature.

Associate author, Barbara Kashkan, came to the U.S. from Russia in 1990. She learned English by listening to sermons and reading her Bible in English. Since then the Lord has been using her in creative writing in English and Russian.

She received the call of God to serve Him in prophetic-intercessory capacity, to bring spiritual birth and renewal and to build up the body of Christ.

Her vision is to be a bridge between the broken parts of the body of Christ; to unite sincere believers from every denomination in their preparation to be a pure Bride of Christ.