

# Restoring the Household for Equipping and Evangelism

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"It is often forgotten that the Christianity which conquered the Roman Empire was essentially a home centered movement." Robert and Julia Banks

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? On hearing this, Jesus said, It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Matt 9:10-12

We need to restore the role of the household that we see in the ministry of Jesus and the expansion of the early church. As Michael Green has said, "One of the most important methods of spreading the gospel in antiquity was by the use of homes" (Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, p223).

The home in the New Testament was the center of spiritual activity. Even a casual reading of the New Testament reveals that the home was a haven for prayer, healing, Biblical teaching, breaking of bread, hospitality, ministry to the sick and happy genuine relationships. In short, it was a place to display the truth, justice, mercy and goodness of God.

It is clear from scripture that the home was designed by God to be a place of ministry fueled by the compassion of Christ for broken and lost people. In the gospels, we constantly see Jesus ministering in homes. On one particular occasion, the hunger for the ministry of Jesus in a home was so sought after that some men tore off the roof to lower their friend so that he could be near Jesus. Jesus had compassion on him and healed him on the spot.

Here are some places in the New Testament where the word "house" or "household" is used. In almost all of the cases in the following list, the idea of a person's network is not the context but the actual events taking place in a physical house or a specific family unit.

## Healing

Matt 8:14 "When Jesus came to Peter's house he saw Peter's mother in law lying in bed with a fever and the fever left her and she got up and began to wait on him"

Principle: Sensitivity to the sick in the house you are visiting can result in their healing.

## Love for unbelievers in their households

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Principle: Visiting the house of an unbeliever gives opportunity to demonstrate the love of God. No uptight Christians need apply.

## Prayer for sick people while you are in their houses

Luke 7:6-10 "He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ... Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well"

Households that view themselves as far from God are reachable when we pray for the inhabitants.

Principle: Pray for the people in the houses in your neighborhood that need healing, no matter how lost they seem on the outside..

## Prayer for sick people in their own houses

John 4:49-54 "Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, 'your son will live.' So he and all his household believed. This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee."

Principle: Prayer for the people in homes other than your own is effectual.

## Bring unbelieving friends into the atmospheres of grace in your household

Luke 7:36 "Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as when stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears..."

Bringing sinners into your home to rub shoulders with righteous people exposes them to the mercy of God.

Principle: Arrange for your unbelieving friends to join with your Christian friends in your household.

Be intentional

Focus relationships on gladness, sincerity, praising God and evangelism as people are in your home. Be intentional. Get everyone focused on being this kind of household.

Acts 2:46 "They broke bread together from house to house and ate together with glad and sincere hearts praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added daily to their number those who were being saved."

Principle: Believers were experiencing happy times together in their homes with genuine, honest and open relationships with a focus on God, and the result was salvation of the lost.

Insure that teachers frequent your home and make it an ordinary part of your home life.

Acts 5:1-42 "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."

Principle: The home is a great place for teaching of your family and neighbors by godly visitors.

Encourage unbelievers to pray in their households.

Acts 10:30 and Acts 11:13 "Cornelius answered: Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter... 11:13 He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter."

He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.

Principle: Prayer at home opens the household to the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Relationships built through tough experiences can open up opportunity for salvation for a whole family.

Acts 16:31 "They replied, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved – you and your household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole family".

Principle: Faithful messengers who keep their focus on God in times of crisis can be used to transform whole families.

Your home could serve to establish a church in your community?

Romans 16:5 – "Greet the church in his house"

Churches met primarily in homes in the first 3 centuries of church history. Your home can become a church where believers meet for prayer and instruction. Do you think God could use your home to launch a church in your community?

Principle: Your home can be a place for the meeting of the church

Be aware of false teaching that ruins households and take action

Titus 1:11 "They must be silenced because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach – and that for the sake of dishonest gain."

Principle: The teaching that goes on in a household can ruin it. And, don't forget that the TV brings a host of false teachers into your home.

Focus on the important things and know the difference between essential and non essential

I Cor. 10:27-33 "If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience."

Principle: Eating meals with unbelievers in their homes should give them a sense of the winsome grace of God. No uptight Christians allowed.

The Lord should direct the agenda of the household.

Ps 127:1 "Unless the Lord builds the house its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for he grants sleep to those he loves."

The Lord should be the source of everything that happens in the household. Also, too much work will take you away from your task of working with the Lord to build your house.

Principle: Unless you work with Him, it is a labor in vain.

The compassion of Christ is the most important aspect of our home's usefulness in bringing healing to your community.

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem

Principle: The tender heart of Jesus in your household will not cause you to reject but to invite.

The term "hospitality" is key in understanding how to use your home as a center of evangelism. Romans 12:13, I Peter 4:9, Hebrews 13:1-2, I Timothy 3:2, I Timothy 5:10.

In the early church the work of evangelism and equipping was regularly staged in the context of a home. The home was the cradle of the church.