



HOUSE CHURCHES STUDY GUIDE
*A Biblical Model and Apostolic Pattern with a
Contemporary Impact!*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the
New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible.

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Introduction to the Study Guide

It is interesting to note that the original House Churches Training Manual was published in 2018. Not long after that, most of the global population faced restrictions on both movement and assembly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is wisdom in learning more about biblical strategies, such as the development of house churches, that might allow the body of Christ to not only function but flourish during challenging times.

The purpose of this guide is to help you apply what you are learning from the training manual. You can use this study guide on your own or with others. If you have the opportunity, we encourage you to attend a group training session that presents this material through video or in-person teaching. We are excited that you desire to learn new things from this study.

How do you learn a new thing? This may depend upon the outcome you desire. For example, let's think about how you learn to ride a bicycle. You might first watch your friend ride, but then you need to try it yourself. If you never go outside and put your feet on the pedals, you won't be able to demonstrate that you really know how to ride that bicycle.

In a similar way, you can read the House Churches Training Manual or listen to someone tell you about house church ministry as demonstrated in the New Testament. You might even observe as someone models how to activate house church strategies in a 21st century setting. But, if you never go out and personally apply what you've learned, it's only another piece of knowledge in your head.

Some people learn to ride a bicycle very easily and quickly. Others need more time to develop this ability. If you get going and then fall down, you don't stop riding bicycles. You get up and keep going! If you are struggling to ride successfully in a new environment, it helps to have friends to encourage you.

Likewise, you might understand some of the ideas in the training manual very quickly. You may need more time with some of the concepts. If you struggle with how to apply these ideas in your setting, don't give up on what you are learning. Spend time in prayer with others who are also involved in this study.

Ask God to give you all a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (Ephesians 1:17)

LORD, may we prayerfully consider the house church strategy and receive clear vision regarding its implementation within our own home and in other homes throughout our region. Prepare us to expand and multiply to bring in the harvest of souls within our nation and beyond.

Heidi Daniels

Practical Use of the Study Guide

This guide is organized into sections that correspond to each chapter of the training manual. Use these practical steps to gain a deeper understanding of the content.

- ❖ **READ** - Read each chapter of the training manual. Read for details as well as for the main idea in the passage. Read everything, including the words in each chart or diagram. The purpose of this reading is to get information. Until you have gathered accurate information, it is difficult to make an appropriate response.
- ❖ **PAUSE** - In the Psalms, the Hebrew word *selah* is sometimes used at the end of a phrase or thought within the psalm. Remember that psalms were songs. *Selah* indicates for the singer to suspend the music or to pause before continuing. Perhaps you have read the House Churches Training Manual already. Maybe it is brand new to you. As you read each section, take your time. Absorb what the Lord is showing you through the reading.
- ❖ **REFLECT** - Think of a mirror and how it shows a person's reflection. Allow the mirror of the Word of God to show you things in a clear way that is not blurred by personal agendas or traditions of men. Take time to look at how the biblical examples given in this strategic manual may apply to you and your leadership team. Be open to fresh observations. Jot down words or sketch out pictures that are meaningful. Be willing to invest your time in this element of reflection. You might reflect on your own, and then gather with others who are also reading the manual. Prayerfully share your reflections. Be sure to pass them through the lens of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ **RESPOND** - After reflecting on what you've read, it's important to give a response or take action. This response should help you to absorb and work out what you have learned. You will be presented with ideas for application that encourage you to do something. Develop practical steps with your team for how to use what you are reading about in the manual.

Reflection 2: Photos on Cover Page - A photo captures a moment in time. We are unable to see everything that is happening in that place. However, what we can see here may give an insight into the nature of each house church.

1. This Armenian house church has many more women than men in attendance. What could be some of the reasons for this?

2. Those attending this Chinese house church each appear to have their own Bible. Does this surprise you? Why or why not?

3. What words would you use to describe the atmosphere in the NE India house church photo? Why?

Reflection 3: Information Page – The 5-Fold Global Mandate is to *“Equip and empower a new generation of leaders and believers who will fulfill the book of Acts in the power of the Holy Spirit and multiply the harvest through strategic prayer, power evangelism, Spirit filled discipleship, and church planting aligned with God's word.”*

1. Do you know how your group or leadership team first connected with 5-Fold Global? If you don't, ask them to share some of that story with you.
 - We recognize that not all can have easy access to the internet, but many do have this opportunity. If you do, are you signed up for the free 5-Fold Global app?
 - If yes, take time to browse the content of the app and consider the resources available to you. Explain how these resources could help you.
 - If no, consider how your team could connect to this resource and benefit from the materials available there.

Chapter 2: The House-to-House Ministry of Jesus

In this chapter, we will see how Jesus trained His disciples to do house-to-house and city-to-city outreach.

❖ **READ** the entire chapter. If you are able, do this in one setting.

❖ **PAUSE**

After you read, go back and review the text. Take time to consider what you are reading. Again, there is a lot of detail in this chapter, including many passages of scripture. It may help to break this review into short sessions. Understanding Jesus' ministry model will help lay a good foundation for the next several chapters.

❖ **REFLECT and RESPOND**

Reflection 1: When it comes to the house church, local church, and global church, “*God continues to use and bless all three to reach the population. This is important to acknowledge as we look at the development of house churches in the Bible into citywide church movements connected with the global Church.*” (p. 17)

1. In your own words, describe the key elements of a house church as described on page 17 of the manual.

2. Do any of these elements surprise you? Why or why not?

Reflection 2: Consider on pages 17-18 the three types of locations where Jesus conducted His ministry: open-air meetings, the synagogue or Temple, and domestic houses. As you reflect, use the scriptures to support your responses.

1. Open Air Meetings. What are some of the things we see Jesus doing here? Describe some open-air meetings that you have attended or led. Where were they held? Were similar activities occurring there?

2. The Synagogue or Temple: What are some of the things we see Jesus doing in these locations? The modern-day equivalent here would be community churches and mega-churches. What experience have you had with these settings? What were some of the primary activities you observed?

3. Domestic Houses: What are some of the things we see Jesus doing in homes? Consider your own experience with meeting in houses. What were some of the primary activities you observed?

Reflection 3: *“Peter’s house became a place of instruction and miracles ... Although Jesus continued to enter the synagogues to teach and cast out unclean spirits, it was in the house of Peter and Andrew that most of His miracles took place.”* (p. 19)

1. Describe the prophetic significance of Jesus choosing to locate ministry in Galilee. (see Matthew 4:14-16)

2. We see that Jesus took up residence at one location, but continued with his itinerant ministry throughout other key cities in the region. Consider whether you know anyone who operates in a similar model today. What is the fruit of this person’s ministry?

Reflection 4: *“Jesus’ missional approach consisted of finding a house and a household willing to commit themselves to his kingdom message. With this house as a social and material basis, he, along with his newly recruited followers, attempted to reach the entire town of Capernaum and from there the surrounding area within and beyond the ‘evangelical triangle’ by traveling from house to house and village to village.”* (Roger Gehring Quote, pgs. 22-23)

1. Read Luke 10:1-20. Review the practical points on pages 21 and 22 of the manual related to this passage.

MISSION INSTRUCTION	IMPORTANCE
Teams of two	Safety and accountability
Travel light	Able to respond and move quickly
Don't get distracted along the way	The focus is on the mission
Identify and stay in a house of peace	Not having to relocate for provision
Eat and drink what you are given	Honors those who are hosting you
Heal the sick and share the Kingdom of God	The focus is on declaring the Word with power
Handle rejection with a declaration	Power of the spoken word Affirms your attempt and calls the people to account for their rejection of the Kingdom
Return to the house of peace	Reporting, debriefing, and proper perspective of what has occurred

2. Perhaps some of these practical points are things which you have done in the past. Maybe some of these are new ideas for you. Is the Holy Spirit highlighting any particular items to you? Why?

Reflection 5: “New generation leaders need to have a vision for multiplication from the outset rather than a vision for position, land, and buildings. God’s way results in these things multiplying from house to house and city to city.” (p. 24)

1. The chart from Simson on page 23 gives a sample of the multiplication that can occur in 20 years from the start of one house church with 12 people. Do you believe this is possible? Why?
2. Take time to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give you a vision for multiplication. If you already have that vision, ask Him to expand it! List here your primary prayer points.

Chapter 3: House Church Strategy of the Jerusalem Church

Here we look at how the early apostles continued in the pattern of Jesus' ministry.

❖ **READ** the entire chapter. If you are able, do this in one setting.

❖ **PAUSE**

After you read, go back and review the text. There are many scriptures here, primarily from the book of Acts. Allow time for the Holy Spirit to speak to you through these verses.

❖ **REFLECT and RESPOND**

Reflection 1: *“The first Christians in Jerusalem met in at least two houses: the house with the upper room and the house of Mary.”* (p. 26)

1. Consider these points on page 25 regarding the activity based on the upper room. Have you experienced these things while meeting with believers in a house church? Check those activities below that were most noticeable.
 - **Prayers**
 - **Fellowship in Christ**
 - **Worship and Praise**
 - **Breaking of Bread**
 - **Teaching and Preaching**
 - **Receiving the Power of the Holy Spirit**
2. Many factors indicate that these two homeowners had significant resources and made them available for larger gatherings of believers. Brother Michael notes, *“They also practiced a community of goods on the one hand and the establishing of a plurality of house groups on the other. It was not, nor should it be compared to, a system of communism or socialism, but one of looking out for the needs of each other.”* (p. 28)
3. Reflect on the various house churches you have either heard of or been a part of in your region. What were these homes like in terms of physical resources? Were believers looking out for the needs of one another? Have you ever seen evidence of supernatural supply in certain situations?

Reflection 2: “It is important to point out here that the larger part of modern church services limit the scope of these operational areas.” (p. 28)

1. Consider how the scope of each activity might be limited in many modern church services. (Acts 2:42) How effective are you and the church you serve in these primary activities?

ACTIVITY	LIMITS
The Teaching	How well can they provide comprehensive, systematic instruction to the level that all could become teachers?
The Fellowship	How well can relationships be built upon a spiritual foundation in Christ among all?
The Breaking of Bread	Can time be set aside for a communion celebration built around a common meal?
The Prayers	Are all prepared to pray in the Spirit at a strategic level, including extended periods of intercession?

2. The early believers followed the pattern of Jesus by using homes as their headquarters. They also regularly gathered around Solomon’s Porch, the Temple, and on the streets of Jerusalem. The gatherings were marked by unity among the believers, focused on evangelism, and often many healings occurred.

- How might a house church reach out in public settings in your area?

- What would be the purpose of this outreach?

- Pray and ask the Holy Spirit for divine wisdom and strategies.

Reflection 3: *“After the stoning of Stephen and the severe persecution that followed... It’s significant to note that those fleeing Jerusalem ‘went everywhere preaching the word’ (Acts 8:4)” (p. 29)*

1. Samaria was the land of ‘half-breeds’ that were no longer considered Jews because of their intermarriage and their choice not to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. The apostles specifically traveled to this area to ensure that new believers had received the Holy Spirit. Are there families or people groups in your area that are treated as outcasts by the larger society? Is this status due to being a believer in Christ or for some other reason? Pray and ask the Holy Spirit if He desires you to reach out to these groups in a specific manner. Describe how you would do this?

2. When Peter baptized Cornelius and his family in Caesarea, they became the first non-Jews to believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit had to prepare Peter to be open to this idea. (Review Acts 10) Is there any person, family, or group that would be difficult for you to accept as a fellow believer in Christ? Why or why not? Seek prayer support from your team if this is an area of challenge for you.

Chapter 4: House Church Strategy of the Antioch Church

This chapter focuses on a pattern of advancement in the early Church that aligns with the ministry of Jesus. Here we begin examining the scriptures that show this.

❖ **READ** the entire chapter. If you are able, do this in one setting.

❖ **PAUSE**

After you read, go back and review the text. Take time to consider what you are reading. This is a shorter chapter but includes many key verses and examples. Ask the Holy Spirit for insight into what you are reading.

❖ **REFLECT and RESPOND**

Reflection 1: Read Act 11:19-30.

1. “By no means was Antioch an easy city for Kingdom Advancement.” (p. 31) What are some challenges in your village or city when it comes to advancing the Kingdom of Christ?

2. Consider the roles of Barnabus, Paul, and Agabus during this time. What can their example teach us about the place of teamwork in discipleship and establishing the citywide church?
 - **Barnabus – an encourager who witnesses the need**
 - **Paul – sought out by Barnabus to help fill the need**
 - **Agabus – prophetically speaks of a need to come**

Chapter 5: Leadership Structure of the New Testament House Churches

This chapter takes us even deeper into the **Book of Acts** and some of the letters written by **Paul and Peter**. Our focus is on what was emphasized in the **Early Church leadership structure**.

❖ **READ** the entire chapter. If you are able, do this in one setting.

❖ **PAUSE**

After you read, go back and review the text. This chapter includes many charts, lists, and quotes. Choose not to feel overwhelmed by the details or attempt to absorb all the information at once. Focus at this point on what the Holy Spirit is highlighting to you.

❖ **REFLECT and RESPOND**

Reflection 1: Consider the seven ministry emphases listed on page 36.

- **The Word of God**
- **The Holy Spirit**
- **The Name of Jesus**
- **Evangelism**
- **Unity/Togetherness**
- **God's Authority**
- **Prayer/Intercession**

1. It is good to receive encouragement for what we are doing well in ministry and correction for what we may be lacking. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you regarding how these areas are currently emphasized (or not emphasized) in your ministry.

2. Pages 36-42 of the manual offer detailed examples and biblical results around these 7 areas of emphasis. Accept the challenge as a team to emphasize what will lead to good fruit in your ministry. Pray together and determine to move forward in agreement on these things.

Reflection 2: *“The local house churches are then networked into a movement by the combination of elders and members of the so-called fivefold ministries (apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers) circulating from house to house, like blood circulating in a human body...”* (Wolfgang Simson quote, p. 43)

1. Many churches today focus heavily on pastoral ministry. How does this contrast with the model of the Ephesians 4:11 leadership gifts and the plurality of elders overseeing house churches? For example, the pastoral model may emphasize one ministry over the others. It may appear to value the pastoral role more highly than scripture allows. It might see the others as helpful or not even necessary.
2. We often see a model where a pastor is the “set man” of the church who oversees the itinerant apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers. Does this model align with the New Testament Church? Why or why not? Consider the challenges of this model when it comes to equipping the saints and multiplying leaders.
3. Have you seen any churches that are attempting to operate with circulating ministry teams? If yes, describe what you have seen.

Reflection 3: *“Today, new generation leaders must break with the individual and competitive nature of church leadership and fully embrace the operational mindset displayed in the Early Church. We are coworkers in partnership with God and one another to do ministry His way. And we need to remind the people of God to view us as nothing more than ‘servants of Christ.’”* (p. 45)

1. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to more fully reveal to you what it means to be a servant leader.
2. Consider any individual or competitive nature within yourself that has led you to have an ungodly approach toward leadership in the body of Christ. Repent, then purpose to move forward in humility and understanding.

Reflection 4: “The 5-Fold ministers were partners and fellow elders with the house church elders. They fulfilled together the function of fathering the house churches...Although house church elders were on the frontlines, they frequently received apostolic instruction.” (p. 48)

1. Review I Peter 5:1-11. Peter gave many clear instructions to house church elders. Consider the practical application of a few of those instructions.

Apostolic Instruction	Practical Application
Shepherd the flock	Be willing to protect the flock of God, even lay your life down if necessary.
Serve as overseers	Be eager to serve, not treating it as inconvenient to your schedule.
Be examples to the flock	Commit to your own spiritual health so that you can be a good example.
Don't lead by compulsion	Don't put an excessive demand on others that only leaves them feeling defeated.
Don't allow dishonest gain	Don't focus on getting a nice house or money because of your position.
Don't act like a lord	Don't exercise control over the people because you are their 'anointed leader'.

2. In Acts 20:31, Paul reminds the Ephesian Elders how for three years he did not cease warning everyone day and night with tears. We should take these warnings very seriously. How can you take heed (or be aware and ready) to face these difficulties as a humble and obedient servant of God?

- Acts 20:29 *Savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.*

- Acts 20:30 *Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.*

Chapter 6: Activating the House-to-House Mission of Jesus Today

This chapter helps to review the prior chapters and offers suggestions for how to practically apply what we have learned.

❖ **READ** the entire chapter. If you are able, do this in one setting.

❖ **PAUSE**

After you read, go back and review the text. Take time to let the Holy Spirit show you how elements of this chapter connect to what you have already been studying.

❖ **REFLECT and RESPOND**

Reflection 1: “Early Christianity was characterized by two aspects at any given location: the house churches and the whole church. Therefore, you don’t find references to a local church in the New Testament. The church is known by its city.” (p. 53)

1. A common practice in many areas is for a group of churches to come together to support a citywide event or evangelistic crusade. Have you ever seen or participated in the planning of such an activity? What was the purpose and outcome of the gathering?
2. There are numerous New Testament examples of the church being known by its city. Have you ever seen the church being known primarily by its city?
3. If you are entering a village, city, or region where no church currently exists, how might you promote the idea of the church being known by its geographic location rather than by a particular person or denomination?

Reflection 2: Cell groups are different from house churches. (p. 53)

1. Use the chart below to review how these are different. Discuss any practical examples that you have seen in your region.

Cell Groups	House Churches
Managerial style organization	Communal/family style organization
Vertical chain of authority (top-down structure); Senior Pastor as key person.	Team/shared leadership from within with apostolic/prophetic foundation & oversight.
More task-oriented (multiply every 4 months).	More relation-building communal bonds over a longer period of time.
Part of a conventional church program.	A living church in all aspects.
Grows by dividing itself similar to a cell in the natural.	Grows by sending forth those called to plant new churches.

2. In comparing the cell group to the house church, what differences stand out the most to you? Why?

Reflection 3: Here are some questions to help you review the key characteristics of house churches. These are based on the summary listing on page 54 of the manual. As you reflect on these questions, consider any house churches you are currently involved with or those that your team is preparing to establish.

1. How are those meeting in the house reaching out to those in the city and the region?
2. How are you determining which houses will be the base for meetings and support?
3. How is the house used as a training ground for future leaders?
4. How are women included as co-workers in the house, city, and regional outreaches?

Reflection 4: Read 2 John 1:10-11 and 3 John 1:9-11.

1. In 2 John we see clear instructions on how to handle those who come with false doctrine. Would this be a difficult action for you to take? Why or why not?

2. The verses from 3 John describe a house church leader who liked to have ‘first place’. Have you ever experienced a situation similar to this? What, if any, action was taken to address the situation?

3. Have you been a part of house churches that have provided for the needs of visiting apostolic teams or sent them forth? Describe how this was done.

Reflection 5: *“House church planters must be aware of these challenges. They cannot ignore them. They must prepare beforehand to overcome them.”* (p. 55)

1. Consider this list of challenges with your team. Are you currently facing any of these things? How have you been dealing with those situations? Take time to pray and ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and unity on how to address these kinds of issues when they arise. Record your insights in the practical application column.

Challenges	Practical Application in Your Situation
Size of the home	
Personal conflict among members	
A tense relationship with another local church	
Unhealthy dependence on a leader	
Providing for personal fellowship as well as individual growth in relationship with Christ	
Lack of resources to supply the physical needs of members and for their spiritual growth.	

Reflection 6: “There are also important strengths in house churches. You’ve seen most of these strengths in our examination of house church development in the New Testament.” (p. 55)

- I. Check which of these you have seen to be true in the house church. If there are any items you have not seen to be true, consider why that is so.
 - We thrive during persecution.
 - We operate at a low cost
 - We have a strategy for funding mission outreach in the city.
 - We have been able to more deeply impact our community.
 - We see more members operating in spiritual gifts.
 - We are more active in supporting those in need of material things.
 - We have increased our number of trained leaders.
 - We are reaching people who are not involved in any other church.
 - We are being trained in Christian behavior.
 - We have greater lifestyle accountability.
 - We experience a greater fullness in our Christian life.
 - We have seen entire families spiritually transformed.
 - We have seen an increase in moral and ethical behavior among members.

Reflection 7: “Pastors universally call for more member participation in the life of the local church. However, conventional churches are structured in such a way that results in more spectators than participants.” (p. 56)

- I. In what ways have you seen house church members grow in their participation? If you have not yet experienced a house church, consider how a home might provide an opportunity for these things to occur.
 - Praying for the sick and casting out demons
 - Reading from the Bible
 - Serving people from outside of their group
 - Sharing personal needs or experiences
 - Receiving and sending forth Eph. 4:11 ministers
 - Eating and talking together before and after the meeting
 - Being present for a formal teaching time and discussing that teaching
 - Operating in gifts of the Spirit
 - Singing or making music in praise to the Lord
 - Prophesying or giving a special word
 - Taking an offering that is given to ministries
 - Sharing in Communion

Reflection 8: *“Successful house churches follow the example of Jesus and imitate the natural progression of what He did. He prayed, He met people, He made disciples as He gathered them close to Himself, and then He selected leaders to multiply the impact of His kingdom.”* (Larry Kreider and Floyd McClung quote, p. 58)

- I. Consider these 5 steps as presented on page 58 of the manual. What practical application would these have in your setting?
 - 1) Lay a foundation of prayer.
 - 2) Meet with people who don't yet know Jesus.
 - 3) Make disciples by pouring your time and love into these people.
 - 4) Gather in set homes and share meals, leaders coming alongside to facilitate growth in the community.
 - 5) Multiply by training others and sharing the responsibilities.

Final Reflections

“House-church Christianity is the body of Christ in ordinary houses, the society of the “three-times converted”: those who are vertically converted to God, horizontally converted to each other (like the more than thirty “one another” verses in the New Testament exhort us to be), and broadly converted to serve the world in love, compassion, and power.” (Wolfgang Simson quote, p. 59)

Are you ready to become the body of Christ in ordinary houses?

What will this require of you? Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare you.

“In conclusion, house church development is God’s plan. For this reason, those who engage in His plan encounter the supernatural power of God. I pray on behalf of 5-Fold Global Apostolic Teams that this equipping manual on house church development has been of service to you. Statistics show that the new generation is searching for the real meaning of church. I agree with Larry Kreider and Floyd McClung among others who say they are looking for something of value that they can give their lives to. According to them, there are four basic values of churches: relationship, authenticity, the freedom to be creative, and intergenerational connection. In Christ, young leaders can give this and more to the next generation if they are willing to hear from God and follow God’s way.” (p. 59)

Has this manual helped you to further understand the real meaning of church?

Seek the Lord to show you how to build relationships, live authentically, be creative, and connect with many generations.

About the Author

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Dr. Heidi Daniels from Ohio, USA has been working in partnership with 5-Fold Global Ministries since 2007. She has served as a teacher and educational consultant in the church, in business, and in government organizations. Her passion is to see the body of Christ equipped to make disciples throughout the world.