

INTRODUCTION TO THE CELL CHURCH

**BIBLICAL BASIS OF LOCAL CHURCHES
AND HOUSE CHURCHES**



THE FULL GOSPEL CHURCH OF GOD

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BIBLICAL BASIS OF LOCAL CHURCHES AND HOUSE CHURCHES

The Church, as described in the book of Acts, was vibrant; every believer was a minister, *agapé* love flowed freely and the gifts and daily the power of the Holy Spirit was evident on the streets and in people's houses. In the early days of the church there were no Bibles or Bible Schools, no Theological Seminaries, no Church buildings or Cathedrals – people just ministered to one another. Something went wrong majorly with the Church from ±300 A.D. onwards, causing the church to slide into the “Dark Middle Ages”. “Christianity” became a “religion”, the Church an “organisation”, all “religious” activities were centred round the “Cathedrals” and “Monasteries” and only the “official clergy” had access to the Bible and were allowed to minister the Word of God. The Church in the 20th Century recovered to a great extent from the lowest point of the “Dark Ages”, but was still a far cry away from the example of the Church in the book of Acts. We believe that the “Cell Church” is the closest model to the Church in the book of Acts and this concept will be unfolded and revealed through this presentation. Cell Church is not a programme. You cannot put new wine into old skins! We hope that you understand this and do not mix this oil with the tepid water of traditional church structures. This guide is not to renew existing church structures.

INTRODUCTION TO HOME CELLS

Why Home Cells?

In Jesus' ministry, He operated mainly out of homes, not formal buildings. He often taught His disciples in houses (Mark 2:1; 7:14-27; 9:33; 10:2-12; Matt 13:36). His disciples lived with families in homes wherever they went. Living in a home was part of His plan for bringing people into a personal faith experience. In Luke 10, Jesus assigned the seventy disciples to enter homes, offering peace to all who lived within. When they found a “man of peace” (one desiring to find peace), they remained in that home, eating and drinking whatever was set before them. In this way, a household would be converted to Christ and another home Church would be established. In the *non-structured* Church, one person usually dominates over others (seen in most churches today). This limits the possibility of growth. This was not possible in the early Church.

CELL CHURCH – AN AMAZING MOVEMENT

The Church in Acts 2 was able to:

- ◆ Overcome persecution
- ◆ Penetrate the world
- ◆ Equip the Saints
- ◆ Change society
- ◆ Worship
- ◆ Edify itself
- ◆ Train leaders

HOW WAS THIS POSSIBLE?

- ◆ Special Wine: The presence of Christ
Acts 2:17-21; Acts 2:25-28
- ◆ Special Wineskins: Large & small group community

Acts 2:46 – “Temple” and House-to-House
Acts 5:42 – “Temple” and House- to-House
Acts 20:20 – “Publicly” and House-to-House

CONTRAST BETWEEN CHURCH MODELS

Radical difference between traditional church and cell church:

- The first incorporates cells into its programmes.
- The second builds its ecclesiology on New Testament principles.

THE TRADITIONAL CHURCH

Has a Biblical Theology for all it does, except for the way it functions.
For its function, it draws from its roots in church history.
It seldom examines the way it functions by examining Biblical principles.

IN A TRADITIONAL CHURCH: Cell Ministry is only one of many programmes.

IN A CELL CHURCH: The cell is the basic Christian community.

STUDY IN CONTRASTS

The study in contrasts is meant to challenge and stretch. We don’t mean to insinuate that every traditional church looks like the “Church of Today”. There are many different combinations and variations. We hope you are challenged with this bit of ecclesiastical soul-searching as we study the differences between our churches and the New Testament Church. We submit this challenge to you in love.

ISSUE	NEW TESTAMENT	CHURCH OF TODAY
Location	House to house and in the temple courts.	Church buildings alone.
Relationships	Intimate relationships; encouragement and accountability emphasized.	Intimacy, notebooks, lectures, little modelling.
Discipling	Personal mentoring and modelling.	Either ignored, downplayed, or limited to professional ministers.

ISSUE	NEW TESTAMENT	CHURCH OF TODAY
Spiritual Gifts	Used by all believers to build up the Body of Christ.	Either ignored, downplayed, or limited to professional ministers.
Evangelism Motto	Go and make disciples.	Come grow with us.
Primary Commitment	Make disciples, increase the Kingdom, foster Christian community.	Enlarge the institute.
Primary Leadership Task	Model the life of a disciple via relationship and active ministry.	Building and directing programmes.
Primary Pastoral Task	Equip and disciple believers for ministry via relationship and active ministry.	Preach good sermons.
Leadership Test	Character, heart for service, fruit.	What you know.
Source for Securing Church Staff	Cycle of discipleship where leaders are raised up within churches tested before they are set apart.	Trained, professional clergy.
Prayer Life	Heavy emphasis; intentional.	Individual choice; limited.
Focus	Small groups meeting in homes.	Congregation.
Teaching	Apply the Scripture to basic needs and relationships.	Subscribe to distinctive beliefs of our church.
Support System	The small band of believers.	Pastor or staff.
Frequency of Fellowship	Daily, as an investment of life together for the Kingdom.	Weekly, before or after worship services.

UNDERSTANDING THE CELL CHURCH STRUCTURE

The cell multiplies by “Body-Life” evangelism.
The cells are guided by a Pastoral Team.

It is NOT: A denial of the need of programmes.

The Cell Church is: A strategy for a people-centred and community based programme.

It is NOT: An absence of departments.

The cell church is: A structure with departments that support the system of cells.

It is not: Only small groups.

The cell church is: A system of cells, congregations and celebration.

It is not: A group of independent house–churches.

The cell church is: A vision-driven movement of people living in basic Christian communities.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CELL CHURCH

PRINCIPLES AND STRENGTHS OF THE CELL CHURCH

- ◆ Value changes take place in the cell.
- ◆ Discipleship occurs in the context of body life.
- ◆ The cell church allows for total mobilization of every member.
- ◆ The cell church reaches out through:
 - "Body-Life".
 - "Relationships".

CONCLUSIONS

- ◆ Community is the reason for cell groups.
- ◆ The cell group church is not a "gimmick".
- ◆ It is rooted in solid Biblical principles.
- ◆ Cell groups are "clusters" of people, which are small enough to build up one another through being channels for the gifts of the Spirit.
- ◆ They are "basic Christian communities".
- ◆ They form themselves into larger units, or "clusters", for the work of Christ, who dwells within them.
- ◆ The manifestation of God's grace flows between the body members.

WHAT IS A CELL?

PURPOSES OF THE HOME CELL

- ◆ Evangelism
- ◆ Edification
- ◆ Effective Ministry
- ◆ Expansion of the leadership base
- ◆ Equipping
- ◆ Discipling

CHRIST: THE DNA OF CELL LIFE

The cell is not a social gathering, neither is it a pure Bible study group. It is a gathering of people whose focus is on Jesus, and His presence brings divine life into the cell.

CHRISTIANS BRING MULTIPLE EXPECTATIONS TO CELL LIFE

- ◆ We need to know each other and have real fellowship and body life.
- ◆ We ought to be lifting each other up in prayer and ministry.
- ◆ Discipleship is the most important thing we do together.
- ◆ We should be studying God's Word together in depth.
- ◆ The operation of spiritual gifts is what cell life is all about.
- ◆ The cell exists to reach out to the lost and hurting in the world.
- ◆ Praise and worship in the Spirit is the highlight of the cell meeting.
- ◆ We must be accountable to each other in living the Christian life.

THE TWO-WINGED CHURCH

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

- ◆ The New Testament Church in the book of Acts was powerful and we read that it grew at a great pace. Thousands were added daily.
- ◆ One main feature of this New Testament Church was that the believers met in **homes** (Acts 2:46) as well as in large assemblies.
- ◆ The Church in those days was the perfect "Two-Winged Church".

When persecution came from the Roman Empire, many thousands of Christians were killed, but the church carried on regardless. It was able to do so by going underground. The believers continued meeting in secret and the church remained as strong as ever. The very structure and nurture of the New Testament Church helped to defeat the plan of Satan for its destruction.

With the conversion of Constantine (the Roman Emperor), in the late 3rd century the church started changing. Persecution of the Christians ceased and because Constantine had adopted the Christian religion, it became "fashionable" to be a Christian.

One result of this was that the church changed form regularly meeting in homes and large group open-air gatherings to almost exclusively meeting in special buildings – "Cathedrals".

In his book "The Second Reformation" William A Beckham describes the characteristics of the "Constantine Cathedral Paradigm":

- ◆ People go to a Building (Cathedral);
- ◆ On a special day of the week (Sunday);
- ◆ And someone (A Priest or Pastor);
- ◆ Does something to them (Teaching, Preaching, Absolution or Healing);
- ◆ Or for them (A Ritual or entertainments); and
- ◆ For a price (Offerings).

The above is true of many churches even today. The small group-wing disappeared and the single large-wing church was born. Community life and vibrancy in the church ceased to exist. THIS BIRD COULD NO LONGER FLY!

NATURE OF THE ONE-WINGED CHURCH

The One-Winged Church is characterized by the following:

The Pastor – The Holy Man

The pastor or church leader in a one-winged or traditional church is called on to do all the work of the church:

- ◆ Preaching
- ◆ Evangelism
- ◆ Organizing programmes
- ◆ Shepherding

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- ◆ Visiting
- ◆ Maintaining the buildings

It is expected of him because he is the paid minister, the God appointed holy man. He is expected to grow the church numerically as well as spiritually – single-handed. No church leader can do all this on his own and many fall by the wayside because of burnout or they leave the church, all of them victims of Satan’s strategy to neutralize the church and make it ineffective.

Consumerism

Statistics show that in the traditional church 80 percent of the members are mere spectators in the church. These people contribute nothing to the church. They only consume what is produced for them by the church leader. These are “warm bodies” needed by the church, as success in a traditional church is determined by “numbers”. There is very little interaction between church members or caring for each other.

Programme Based

To feed, satisfy and attract even more “consumers”, the church runs programmes. Many times these programmes have little to do with the spiritual growth of members. Programmes drive the church and all resources are employed in keeping the programmes going.

Meets in Buildings

Buildings are a priority in the one-winged church. The church needs a place to gather. Many churches build huge buildings and then try to fill them. A large proportion of their income goes towards debt repayment. Instead of focusing on feeding his flock the pastor has to focus on floating economically.

Meets Only on Sundays

The one-winged church meets only on Sundays. During the week there is little or no contact between the members, and therefore little or no relationship build-up between the members.

Growth Strategy is Based on the Condition of New Members

The one-winged church is usually sustained by the transfer of dissatisfied adult members from other churches. Very few new adult conversions take place.

Is an Organisation and not an Organism

The one-winged church needs a Chief Executive Officer to make it work. If the building and Sunday meetings were taken away, there would be no church.

THE NATURE OF THE TWO-WINGED CHURCH - THE CELL CHURCH

The two-winged church has the following characteristics:

- ◆ The cell church operates not only on Sundays but on the other six days as well.
- ◆ Everything that happens in a cell church exists to support the cells.
- ◆ The cell church first grows and then builds a building.
- ◆ Cells meet in homes during the week and are basic units of the church.
- ◆ The cell church considers each member to be a minister and equips them to do the work of the ministry.

- ◆ The lost are reached through “cell friendship evangelism”. Cells multiply causing dynamic growth.
- ◆ Church members are cared for at cell level.
- ◆ Celebration Worship Services, which take place on Sundays, are an overflow from the body life taking place in the lives of the members during the week.
- ◆ Spiritual gifts for edification, equipping and evangelism are released in the cells.
- ◆ The community of cells is a place of healing for the individual and the family.
- ◆ In the small groups, members can lose all inhibitions and can receive edification and healing.

BENEFITS OF THE TWO-WINGED CHURCH

- ◆ *Effective Management Units:* The cell is manageable because it is self-contained. Every task of the church can be implemented through this one basic unit. The cell also has a simple leadership structure, which cares for and develops the members of the cell.
- ◆ *An effective caring system:* The cell structure ensures that hurting members are taken care of at any time and not just on Sunday.
- ◆ *Church growth:* The key for the two-winged church to multiply and grow is the cell unit. As the cell members reach out to the lost, the cells grow and multiply.
- ◆ *Raising up leaders:* The cell structure provides the opportunities for members with a calling on their lives to fulfil their calling without necessarily entering the ministry full-time.
- ◆ *The world can be reached:* In the cell structure, every member is a minister. They touch the lives of the hurting and the lost people out in the world.
- ◆ *Spiritual gifts can be properly exercised:* In a cell setting everyone can exercise spiritual gifts.

CELLS AND CELEBRATION

The two-winged church is the ideal setting for God to reveal His nature:

- When we meet on Sunday as a congregation we celebrate and worship the most high God. Who is Holy, Great, Awesome, Eternal and Exalted.
- During the cell meeting we experience God’s immanence or most high nature: Intimate, close, indwelling, involved, friend, comfort, accessible and humble.

Purpose of cell life:

- ◆ *Cells form the basic building blocks of all forms of life.* The cell is also the basic life form of the Church. Participation in cell churches takes place by joining a cell.
- ◆ *The cell is where people are nurtured and cared for.* It is in the cell where each member discovers his/her particular gifting and learns to use it to edify the body of Christ. Every member is equipped through the discipling process to serve and minister to one another’s needs and take care of new converts.
- ◆ *The cell community of believers is called to be accountable to each other.* This is not always a comfortable situation, especially when people are wrestling with sin in their lives. There is a continuous conviction and challenge to every believer to pursue godly values, holiness and righteous living. Through this

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transparency Christians are able to grow and mature in the Lord and through the washing of the water of the Word, they become effective disciples for the Kingdom. Life-long friendships are established and valuable relationships are formed.

THE IDEAL SIZE OF THE CELL

Research in group dynamics reveals two critical factors which affect the size and multiplication process of cell groups: (1) the maximum size of a cell group should not exceed 12 regular members (2) the communication lines between members become too complicated with more than 12 members. When cells stabilize around 12 members they should multiply into two cells of 6-6 members respectively.

PURPOSE OF CELLS

- ◆ *Evangelism:* Is vehicle of friendship evangelism. Environment is non-threatening and new converts can join this body of believers with ease and comfort. Provides fellowship, follow-up and nurture for new Christians.
- ◆ *Edification:* Because of non-threatening environment, spiritual growth is more readily encouraged and strong bonds of Christian fellowship are being built.
- ◆ *Effective Ministry:* Is a place to equip believers for the work of the ministry. A cell practises the Biblical principle that everyone is a minister. (Eph 4:11,12)
- ◆ *Expansion of the Leadership Base:* Is for selection, training and mobilization of every believer.

CELL LEADERS' PREPARATION

- ◆ Prayer and Praise.
- ◆ Read through the Material.
- ◆ Make Decisions Regarding the Material.
- ◆ Decide on the Ice-breaker.
- ◆ Make a List of all Requirements.
- ◆ Go through Cell meeting in your mind.
- ◆ Pray for each cell member.
- ◆ Pray for the freedom to flow in the Spirit.
- ◆ Preparing the Worship.

THE CELL AGENDA

The cell meeting is divided into 4 stages:

Welcome	(usually 15 minutes)
Worship	(usually 15 minutes)
Word and Edification	(usually 40 minutes)
Works (Evangelism & Vision)	(usually 20 minutes)

Welcome

When you begin your cell meeting, you need time to prepare group members to forget the worry and activities of the day and concentrate on the Lord and those in the group. This should be an activity that requires every person in the group to participate and

open themselves to the group. This works best when you use an icebreaker. This method also helps newcomers feel at ease in the group.

- ◆ Icebreakers help to relieve strange or strained relationships.
- ◆ Icebreakers are not games, but activities that help people to take the focus off themselves so that they will feel at ease with one another.
- ◆ They may require each person to participate.
- ◆ They help bind people together.
- ◆ They break the initial resistance of everyone present.
- ◆ They are tools to help members of a cell take the first step to enter into another person's life.
- ◆ They are not a waste of time and must not be considered unspiritual as they release laughter and the Bible calls laughter a medicine. Christians need to have fun and release from mundane activities.
- ◆ Icebreakers are used for mixing and achieving group participation.
- ◆ Icebreakers can also have the purpose of getting acquainted with one another in the group.
- ◆ Icebreakers help to start communication
- ◆ Icebreakers can be used for encouraging teamwork or group relations
- ◆ There is a book on Icebreakers available.

How to handle new members: All cell members must be briefed beforehand to make a fuss of newcomers. It is critical that you have song sheets for newcomers, as they will often not know the songs you are going to sing. Be sensitive to newcomers, they might not understand the works of the Holy Spirit. Be prepared to give a short explanation about singing in tongues or clapping of hands or anything that they might not be familiar with, and make an appointment to visit with them if they want to learn more of the working of the Holy Spirit. Be careful not to pose difficult questions to the new members the first time they attend the cell. Make sure you get their personal details so that you can contact them during the next week.

Worship

What is praise and worship?

- ◆ Praise is adoration towards God and usually dynamic, vocal and even loud.
- ◆ Praise is focused on God and all the good things He has done.
- ◆ Praise is an energetic acclamation accompanied by singing, shouting, proclaiming, dancing and playing of musical instruments and other external forms of bodily action. Praise involves your emotions and feelings.
- ◆ Worship means to ascribe worth or value, or to count as worthy.
- ◆ When we worship we declare Him as the One deserving all the glory.
- ◆ Worship is conversation between God and man.
- ◆ Worship is giving ourselves over to God and is based on our love for Him.
- ◆ Worship is intimate, involving communion and fellowship with God.
- ◆ In worship God mingles with His children.

Pray, Plan and Practise

You need to plan the worship carefully.

- ◆ Seek God for a focus or a theme.
- ◆ Set a goal for what you are trying to achieve.
- ◆ Select the songs carefully.

- ◆ Meditate on the lyrics (words) of the song.
- ◆ Practise these songs over and over.
- ◆ Determine how you are going to link the songs. It is preferable that once you start the worship, you have no interruptions. If there is an interruption between songs prepare someone to read a Scripture.
- ◆ Determine approximately how many times you would like to sing the songs.
- ◆ If you have another musician who is leading the worship, meet before the time to ensure that you are moving in the same direction. You are still in charge and the musician has to follow the leader.

Things that will negatively affect the worship

- ◆ Never begin the cell without knowing what songs are going to be sung. Cell members will quickly notice when you are not prepared.
- ◆ Don't use long introductions or long pauses between songs, as this will disturb the worship flow.
- ◆ Avoid choosing songs that you or your cell members are not familiar with.
- ◆ Don't choose songs that have a varying tempo or beat.

Tips when leading worship

- ◆ You lead by example. Your cell will never worship unless you worship with all your heart.
- ◆ Be in charge; never let anyone know that you are nervous.
- ◆ Focus on God; if you truly worship Him the cell members will definitely follow your example.
- ◆ Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Worship involves faith, always expect God to be there.
- ◆ Always try and end the worship on a high, don't use the least known song to end the worship. Use a song that you know will bring the anointing down.

You can lead the worship instruments. If you don't have any instruments you can lead it with your voice only. You can also use CD's of songs regularly being sung during the celebration services.

Word and Edification

The Word section of the cell meeting is not intended to be merely a Bible study or another preaching session. It is meant to be a time of edification and sharing. In order for this to happen the following must take place:

- ◆ Each person in a cell must learn to become an edifier, actually using spiritual gifts in building up the body (1 Cor 14:26)
- ◆ Flow into edification from worship. Close the worship time by praying for the edification.
- ◆ The focus will be on the application of the Scripture passage preached in the previous Sunday's Services.
- ◆ You must facilitate, not teach. Teaching is the leader doing all the talking. Facilitating is the leader getting the people to talk and directing the interaction and conversation where necessary.
- ◆ Discussion and sharing: In facilitating the discussion and sharing, lead the people to applications that are specific and practical.
- ◆ Discussions and sharing should lead to a time of ministry through prayer and exercising of spiritual gifts.

Inward and outward look

The inward vision and ministry of the cell is to help cell members grow and mature into their special gifts, and the outward vision is to help cell members penetrate their 'oikos' through evangelism and win as many souls as they can to expand the Kingdom of God. All cell members have one of three ways of viewing the edification of the cell. (1) Some want it to happen; (2) others want to be edified; and (3) others are making edification happen. All cell members must be encouraged to adopt the paradigm of making edification happen.

The golden rule for any use of the spiritual gifts in the cell is that these gifts are for the edification, exhortation and comfort of cell members.

The group should regularly be reminded that by participating in the cell group every person guarantees the confidentiality of situations shared.

Works (Evangelism & Vision)

Each cell session must include a time where the cell is reminded that they are not only there to enjoy the presence of the Lord, but also to extend the Kingdom of God. The focus must be moved from how God wants to minister to us to how God wants to minister through us.

The following topics could form part of the works section of the cell meeting:

- ◆ Cell members pray for one another, which automatically follows the word session.
- ◆ Cell members could share a testimony of what God has done in their lives.
- ◆ Each cell member, can in unity with the cell, pray for unsaved family or friends.
- ◆ Each cell member can name the person they would like to approach within the next week. The cell members can pray to God to show them who they should approach. Even if the person does not accept Jesus as Saviour, progress is still being made.
- ◆ During this section of the meeting the cell could even plan activities by which they can befriend unbelievers.
- ◆ The cell can decide how they are going to work towards special harvest events planned by the church.
- ◆ The cell plans prayer walks.

WHAT IS A HEALTHY CELL

- ◆ Sharing Lives
- ◆ Regular Outside meetings
- ◆ Leadership Development
- ◆ Active Outreach
- ◆ Participation in Church Celebrations

THE NINE VALUES OF A CELL CHURCH

Evangelism: Praying and reaching out to the lost for Christ's sake.

Relationships: Building strong bonds between members of the local body of Christ.

Transparency: Being open to others in a trusting environment. People need to be able to release inner conflict and anxiety.

Trust: Promoting confidentiality and security because of transparency of members of the group.

Availability: Being there for each other as the needs arise in our lives.

Purity: Living pure and honest lives before God and each other for the testimony of Christ and the Group.

Awareness: Being sensitive to each other's needs and concerns.

Accountability: Being responsible and answerable to each for words and actions both in and away from the group.

Growth: Knowing that God's will for the group is to be fruitful and multiply and being willing to release others in the group to pursue their ministry and call.

STRATEGIES INTEGRATING NEW VALUES IN YOUR CHURCH

- ◆ Personal Prayer
- ◆ Group Prayer
- ◆ Sermon Series
- ◆ Leader Involvement
- ◆ Discuss Application
- ◆ Report to Members
- ◆ Intercessory Prayer

The practicality of the Presidential Pastor will eventually lead to the congregation becoming practical thinkers. If not, you are not sharing your vision. It is important that every Pastor shall have a vision for his church and communicate this vision to his church.

Leadership development is one of the most neglected areas in the church today. We must remember that it is not the shepherds who give birth to new sheep, but sheep birth sheep. Therefore, the Pastor must be the "possibility- thinker" and his dynamic leadership has to catalyse the entire church into action for growth. A well-mobilized laity must discover, develop and use all their different spiritual gifts for growth.

Cell church works on the concept of: Monkey sees, monkey does. People learn through seeing what their leaders do. The growth of your church lies directly in the hands of the leadership of your church. Get your church excited about God and about their ministry.

In many churches today there is much activity – but no productivity. The activities in some churches are like that of a spastic child; a spastic child has no controlled muscle movement, because their minds cannot control the muscle movement. We must be controlled by the mind of Christ and make sure that our movements are a result of that. Bring excitement back into your church. Invest time in your leadership. Let the church come to life, not only on Sundays, but also on each day of the rest of the week.