

Why Some Think This Strategy Is the Body of Christ's Only Hope for Revival

In the past few weeks, I have read several very powerful articles, each making the point that the only real way for us to reach this new generation is to transition, at least in part, from larger congregational models to home-gathering models of worship. The cases were made using both biblical text and anecdotal evidence, and by the time I finished reading these articles, I was convinced they were correct. It is true that the only real hope we have of reaching the current generation of seekers as well as the generations that will follow is to focus on home meetings as the primary source of outreach and the community building.

However, while I agree that the establishment of home meetings is the only hope for a healthy, biblically sound body of believers, I differ in the understanding of home meetings and their role from those who authored these articles. A few years ago, a group of visitors from a local church visited our synagogue. After the service, one of the men in the group, who happened to be a Jewish believer in Yeshua, came to speak to me about our congregation. As we discussed our services and events, he asked if we had cell groups or home groups established, because he had been a very active part of a cell group in the church he had been attending. My answer was that we had many cell groups that met every week, but, that we called them families instead of cell groups. His response was exactly as most people respond: a kind of sideways smile and a look as if he thought I was making a joke, or worse, making fun of cell group ministry.

This could not be further from the truth. I absolutely believe in home groups and cell groups. However, I believe that they

have to be established not by having a couple invite people from around their area to their home for a study. They must be established around the family group. The cellular structure of any congregation starts with the family. The father and mother are the spiritual leaders of their family—that is their cell group or home group. Regular devotional time, study time and prayer time as a family must be the foundation to a home group. Once this true cell group has been established, then the family is in a position to invite others to come and join them in their times of study or devotion.

The generation of those who are seeking today are only seeking because many of them have not found what they are looking for in their homes. Studies show that they are looking for a sincere group in which they can belong. They have a desire to be world-changers and are looking for ways to affect radical social change. The answers they seek are both in the Bible and in the body of Messiah. The problem is that there is a distinct disconnect between these young people and the congregations they see around them, and that disconnect is that there is only a tenuous connection between their family and their congregation. I am not saying their parents don't go to worship services and events at their congregations. I am saying that their families do not operate as a functional part of the cellular structure of the body. In other words, when they are at their house of worship, they don't feel a unity with the people there, because their life outside those walls does not resemble their life inside those walls. They don't necessarily feel like those around them are hypocrites. Most believe that those people that they see in their worship services are sincere and honest-hearted about their faith and their beliefs. Not only do they believe that those people are sincere, they want to experience that same level of commitment and conviction to faith. They just don't know how they can be a part of that because they have never been taught by example at home.

Let me provide an example. When I was young and would attend synagogue, I would hear the older members of synagogue talking in Yiddish. These were the pillars of my faith, the examples I was to follow. I was Jewish, and this was the synagogue that my family was a part of, yet at the same time, I was an outsider within the very walls of the place where I should have felt most included. Why? Because I was never taught at home this language of my people. I knew where I belonged, I knew and agreed with the goals and purpose of my synagogue, yet no matter how much my heart longed for the very feeling of community and greater family that synagogue provided, I was still an outsider because the language of the synagogue was not what my family spoke at home.

I watch as congregation after congregation hires youth leaders and has special youth services and events to attract young people. They do community service work and get involved with social justice program to attract young people. They have concerts with musical artists to attract young people. They even have special services with speakers to designed to reach out to young people. Every conference I have attended over the past 10 years or more has had at least one speaker whose topic was how to reach the next generation. We have spent large amounts of money and invested in everything from movies, water parks, and short-term missions trips hoping our young people would find their reason to join in and commit to the body of Messiah.

Yet, the very thing that is purposefully designed to do exactly what we want to see is given little or no attention and is actively replaced by a manufactured imitation model: the "cell group." Yes, we need cell groups and home groups. They are our only hope for a healthy, powerful body of believers. However, these home groups must be based upon the family and not become a replacement for the family. {eoa}

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How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry.