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TRAINING UNIT 41 (40.35 MINUTES)

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Discipleship group, community of faith, spiritual family .....

12 core functions of a spiritual family (1-4) .....

Jesus, the sent one.....

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The twelve core values of the house church .....

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Training Unit 41

Discipleship group, community of faith, spiritual family

12 core functions of a spiritual family (1-4)

Definitions

1. Discipleship group
This is a group of new believers who have been baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit. They are regularly discipled as a group. In the New Testament, these discipleship groups are not yet called a church.

2. Spiritual family, community of faith or house church
When a discipleship group makes a committed decision to live out Acts 2:42-47 together, we call them a spiritual family, a community of faith or a house church. The New Testament calls such a group a "church that meets at their house".
(1. Corinthians 16:19: Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. Colossians 4:15: Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.) In our everyday lives, we would call this a (nuclear/core) family.

3. House church/networked house church
When a group of 3 to 5 house churches, communities of faith or spiritual families join together and have a leadership (elders and deacons), we call it a networked house church. In our everyday lives, one would call such related groups of core families a clan.

Jesus, the sent one

Jesus is the sent one. All important things about the ministry of sending can be learnt from him. For every step in the ministry of sending, Jesus is our example.

1. We see how he went out and called a group of disciples. The following example shows how Jesus called five disciples.

   John 1:35-49
   The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. (…) Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. (…) The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (…) "Come and see," said Philip. (…) Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

2. Jesus trained these 12 disciples as a group in houses and on the road, in villages and towns, because full discipleship can only happen within a community. It is not possible to separate discipleship and community.
3. Therefore, Jesus formed a community with these 12 disciples. This discipleship group was Jesus' spiritual family ("these are my brothers"). It was his church.

4. When Jesus returned to the Heavenly Father, he sent his disciples out and they preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God. They planted and formed churches that meet in houses.

- How does a New Testament house church function?
- What do the meetings look like?
- What is done there practically?

The core text about the New Testament church

Acts 2:42-47
*And they continued steadfastly **(1) in the apostles' doctrine** and **(2) fellowship**, and in **(3) breaking of bread**, and in **(4) prayers**. And fear came upon every soul: and many **(5) wonders and signs** were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and **(6) had all things common**; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, **(7) as every man had need**. And they, continuing daily **(8) with one accord (9) in the temple**, and breaking bread **(10) from house to house**, did **(11) eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart**, **(12) Praising God**, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

The twelve core values of the house church

- In the ministry of sending, we look for a person, a house or a group of peace.
- After we explain the gospel of the Kingdom of God to this group, we baptize them and start to disciple them as a discipleship group.
- During the discipleship meetings or in extra meetings (predecessors to house church meetings), in which we do not necessarily teach a discipleship lesson, we begin to 1) hold a Discovery Bible Study (DBS), (2) share about our lives and (3) we pray for each other.
- These three spiritual fields are essential aspects of a house church.
- This is like a pre-version of a house church.

- Already at an early stage in the discipleship process we begin to look at, teach and understand the core text from Acts 2,42-47 together with the discipleship group.
- As soon as the discipleship group has understood the 12 core values of a New Testament house church and is ready to live these values in a committed way, the time has NOW come to start a house church.
- The actual formation of a house church can be done with a simple ceremony.
- Every participant of the discipleship group declares before God that he wants to live the twelve values with the other group members in a committed way. The house church is established with this mutual commitment and vow.
- Before we look at these values with our disciples and before they make a commitment to live them together, we want to understand the 12 core functions of a church that meets in houses.

The first four core values form the center and heart of a house church.

1. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings

Acts 2:42
They devoted themselves to the (1) apostles' teaching and to (2) fellowship, to the (3) breaking of bread and to (4) prayer.

- They remained within the teaching of the Apostles. This means that they held onto the word of God, they occupied themselves continually with the Word in different ways, because faith comes by hearing of the word of God. However, we do not only want to hear but to do as well. Discipleship is all about hearing the word of God and carrying it out in faith.

- For example, we hold a practical Discovery Bible Study (DBS) as a group (see Session 12).
- Studying the word of God together should be an important part of every house church meeting.
- Actually, this core value is the core value of discipleship.
- This part probably requires at least 30 minutes of a house church meeting.

2. They devoted themselves to fellowship

Acts 2:42
They devoted themselves to the (1) apostles' teaching and to (2) fellowship, to the (3) breaking of bread and to (4) prayer.

God's great desire for us is to be conformed to the image of his Son.

Romans 8:29
For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

- Being conformed to the image of Christ happens mostly through the following three processes:
    - by seeing HIM as he is (1 John 3:2)
      Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)
    - through thorough discipleship and
    - through real fellowship
- The fellowship is about practicing love.

Matthew 22:37
Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

John 13:35
By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

- Practicing love in the community: love needs a you (Martin Buber). Love has to become practical. Love needs community to express itself and to be lived out.
- Community is God's tool to shape our character. Only diamonds can polish diamonds.
- Watchman Nee: "Thank God for difficult people in your life. They are God's tool to work on you and to conform you into the image of his son."
- Community (Greek: koinonia) is a very radical concept for it means the total sharing of all worldly and spiritual goods. We not only share our material goods but also what we have spiritually.
- This koinonia is a huge challenge!
- WE now come next to ME.

John 13:35
By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

What does a house church do very practically during the time of fellowship (which we also call "community meetings" in this manual)?

1. We regularly meet together (in houses or outside) to study the word of God, to have fellowship, to eat and break the bread, to pray and to worship (Hebrews 10:25 / Acts 2:42+47).

2. Everyone brings something along and contributes something to build each other up spiritually (1 Corinthians 14:26).

What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

The New Testament contains about 60 verses that explicitly mention the word “each other” or “one another”. They are therefore also called “one another” verses. 18 of them are listed below:

1. Corinthians 14:26
What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.

1. Advise each other, spur one another on and consider one another (Hebrews 10:24)
2. Help each other when in need (Acts 2:45)
3. Build each other up (Ephesians 4:29/1 Thessalonians 5:11)
4. Do nothing that could be a stumbling block for a brother (one another) (Romans 14:13)
5. Encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13)
6. Cry and laugh together (Romans 12:15)
7. Help each other to carry the burden (Galatians 6:2)
8. Not groaning against each other (James 5:9)
9. Correct and rebuke each other (2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:16)
10. Forgiving one another and be reconciled to one another (Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4,32)
11. Discipline each other when necessary (Matthew 18:15-17)
12. Serving one another with the gifts we have received (1 Peter 4:10)
13. Not slander one another (James 4:11)
14. Submit to each other (Ephesians 5:21)
15. Confess sins to one another (James 5:16)
16. Pray for one another (James 5:16)
17. Not bite and devour each other (Galatians 5:15)
18. Wash each other’s feet (John 13:14)

- These are a few very practical “one another” verses that we can practice during the community meetings. It is all about sharing our hearts and our lives. These 18 points are an expression and different facets of what it means to love one another.
- The commandment to love one another can be found in the New Testament almost as often as the sum of all “one another” verses.

1 John 3:16-18
This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

- This second core value is basically about **love, serving and humility**.
- The appendix to this 41st lesson contains an extensive overview of all the “one-another-verses” of the New Testament.
- This second part of the community meetings requires about 30 minutes.

3. They devoted themselves to the breaking of bread

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the (1) apostles' teaching and to (2) fellowship, to the (3) breaking of bread and to (4) prayer.

- What is described here not only means the Lord's Supper or eating together.
- It is a combination of **both**: a love feast.

1 Corinthians 11:20-25
So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. (…) For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Jude 12
These people are blemishes at your love feasts.

At the Jewish Passover celebration, there was a meal with the family the evening before. The house father broke bread and gave one piece to each member of the family. Then the cup was passed around and everyone drank from it. Then they broke bread again and drank again from the cup and so on. When Jesus ate this meal with his disciples he made an announcement before the third round. He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and said: "This is my body broken for you…". In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Breaking bread thus means: we eat together as a spiritual family and during this meal we take the bread and the cup, give thanks and remember what the Lord Jesus did on the cross.
Jesus commanded his disciples to regularly celebrate the Lords' Supper. Therefore, it is also a commandment for our disciples and for us. Jesus commands: "Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." This means that every follower of Jesus can and should hand out the Lord's Supper.

- This core value in a community meeting is actually about remembering the cross, forgiveness, grace and holiness.
- This third core value requires about 30 to 60 minutes of a community meeting.

4. They devoted themselves to prayer

Acts 2:42
They devoted themselves to the (1) apostles' teaching and to (2) fellowship, to the (3) breaking of bread and to (4) prayer.

Prayer is a very important part of every community meeting. The original text actually speaks not of prayer but prayers, plural. Prayers could mean that they prayed a lot or that they practiced different forms of prayer.

Different types of prayer
1. **Prayer type: Our Father** → memory verses: Matthew 6:9-13
2. **Prayer type: Requests** → memory verse: Luke 18:1-8, Matthew 7:7-8
3. **Prayer type: Thanksgiving** → memory verse: Ephesians 5:20
4. **Prayer type: Intercession** → memory verse: 1 Timothy 2:1
5. **Prayer type:** Prayer for **authorities** → memory verse: 1 Timothy 2:2
6. **Prayer type:** Praise – Worship – Psalms → memory verse: Acts 2:47; Psalm 1

7. **Prayer type: Prayer for healing** – **Deliverance** → memory verse: Matthew 10:8
8. **Prayer type:** Praying in tongues → memory verse: 1 Corinthians 14:1-18
9. **Prayer type:** Praying and **fasting** → memory verse: Mark 2:20
10. **Prayer type:** Prayer for the **harvest** and for workers → memory verse: Luke 10:2

There are further types of prayer. These ten listed prayer types lay a good foundation.

- This core value of a community meeting is really about prayer, praise and worship.
- This fourth part of the community meeting also requires 30 to 60 minutes.
- These are the first four core values and functions of a church that meets in houses.
- With these four core values (the Word, fellowship, Lord's Supper/love feast and prayers), the house church is not fully developed yet. However, the heart is formed. This is enough to continue autonomously and can be called a real house church.
- Introducing these values does not happen at once. As discipleship makers, we will demonstrate several times what such a community meeting looks like.
- However, the group of disciples should learn as early as possible to lead the meetings themselves.

Part II: Application

a) Someone from the group summarizes this teaching in his own words. If anything is missing, the others can add to the summary.

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_____

_____

_____

_____

b) Group discussion

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

c) Write down personal insights from the teaching

_____

d) Share with the group who exactly you want to train in this lesson

e) Each group presents what they learned and the specific goals they want to pursue now: (outreach/group meeting).

Part III: Outreach

Prayer (4 hours/week), going (4 hours/week), discipleship (4 hours/week), community of faith (3 hours/week).

1. PRAYING:

   A) Prayer walk with a partner or the team for 2 hours every week ❑

   B) Pray 1 hour for your disciples before every discipleship meeting ❑

   C) Pray 1 hour before every community meeting ❑

2. GO: to the unreached you have a heart for ❑
3. Look for persons of peace ❑
4. PREACH: the gospel of the Kingdom of God ❑
5. EXPLAINING: the way of salvation ❑
6. Evangelistic Bible studies with interested people ❑
7. Share your personal testimony with five other people ❑
8. Call to repentance and to follow Jesus ❑
9. FAITH, REPENTANCE, BAPTISM AND RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT ❑
10. Pray for sick people during an outreach ❑
11. Raise a dead person if you are led to do so ❑
12. Seek to hear God's voice and the guidance of the Holy Spirit ❑
13. Pray for the 200 million persecuted Christians in the world, pray for your "persecutors" and bless those who are cursing you ❑
14. Continue to teach all 16 lessons to the discipleship group and coach them in it ❑
15. Discuss with your disciples this lesson that aims to officially plant a church. Deliberately meet for such community meetings besides your discipleship meetings. ❑
    - do a DBS (45min)
    - have fellowship (45min)
    - eat together (love meal) and have the Lord's Supper (45min)
    - pray (45min)

BEsent is a training - without practice it is almost useless!

The one-another-verses in the New Testament (19 times LOVE one another)

Mark. 9:50 Have peace with one another
John 13:14 Wash each other's feet
John 13:34 You shall love each other (1)
John 13:35 By the love you have for one another (2)
John 15:12 You shall love each other (3)
John 15:17 You shall love each other (4)
Romans. 12:10 Be devoted to one another in love (5)
Romans.12:10 Honor one another above yourselves.
Romans. 12:16 Live in harmony with one another.
Romans.13:8 that you shall love each other (6)
Romans. 14:13 Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another.
Romans. 15:7 Accept each other
Romans. 15:14 filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.
Romans. 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
1 Corinthians 11:33 When you gather to eat, you shall wait for each other.
1 Corinthians 12:25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.
1 Corinthians 16:20 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
2 Corinthians 13:12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
Galatians 5:13 Serve one another humbly in love. (7)
Galatians 5:15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.
Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.
Ephesians 4:2 Be patient, bearing with one another in love. (8)
Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another.
Ephesians 4:32 Always ready to forgive each other.
Ephesians 5:19 Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit.
Ephesians 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
Phil. 2:3 In humility value others above yourselves.
Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to each other
Colossians 3:13 Bear with each other
Colossians 3:13 Forgive one another
Colossians 3:16 Teach one another
Colossians 3:16 Admonish one another
1 Thessalonians 3:12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other. (9)
1 Thessalonians 4:9 For you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. (10)
1 Thessalonians 4:18 Encourage one another.
1 Thessalonians 5:11 Encourage one another.
1 Thessalonians 5:11 Build each other up.
Hebrews 3:13 Encourage one another daily.
Hebrews 10:24 Consider one another.
Hebrews 10:24 Spur one another on towards love. (11)
Hebrews 10:24 Spur one another on to good deeds.
Hebrews 10:25 Encourage another not to give up meeting together.
James 4:11 Do not slander one another.
James 5:9 Do not grumble against one another.
James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other.
James 5:16 And pray for each other.
1 Peter 1:22 Love one another deeply, from the heart. (12)
1. Peter 3:8 Be compassionate with one another.
1 Peter 4:8 Love each other deeply. (13)
1 Peter 4:9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.
1. Peter 4:10 Use whatever gift you have received to serve one another.
1 Peter 5:5 All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.
1 Peter 5:14 Greet one another with a kiss of love.
1 John 3:11 Christians should love one another. (14)
1 John 3:23 To love one another as he commanded us. (15)
1 John 4:7 Let us love one another. (16)
1 John 4:11 We also ought to love one another. (17)
1 John 4:12 But if we love one another God lives in us. (18)
1 John 5 We should love one another (19)