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TRAINING UNIT 42 (36.50 MINUTES)

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

12 core functions of a spiritual family (5-12) .....

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Training Unit 42

Discipleship group, community of faith, spiritual family

12 core functions of a spiritual family (5-12)

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.

At this point of the sending training, we plant a house church with the disciples.

- How does a New Testament church that meets in houses look like?
- How do these community meetings look like? What is done there practically?

Core text about the New Testament church

Acts 2:42-47
*And they continued stedfastly **(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.*

Summary: how a house church is planted

1. Going, finding and baptizing a person, a house, a group of peace.
2. Forming that group into a discipleship group and starting to disciple them.
3. At an early stage while discipling the group, we begin to do a Discovery Bible Study (DBS) as a group, to share and to pray together. Sometimes we hold extra meetings besides the regular discipleship meetings.
4. The Word, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and prayers constitute already all core functions of a house church.
5. By practicing these four core values, this group has become something like a pre-version of a house church.
6. Already after a short while during the discipleship process, we read Acts 2:42-47 as a group. It is about understanding the core values.
7. As soon as the discipleship group has understood the twelve core values of a New Testament church and is ready to live these values in the discipleship group in a committed way, the time has come to officially plant a house church.
8. The actual founding can be celebrated in the context of a small ceremony.
9. Everyone in the discipleship group declares before God that he wants to commit to live the twelve values together with the others of the group. The house church is founded through this mutual declaration, vow and commitment.
10. 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.

In the past lesson we discussed the first four functions and began to live them with the disciples:

1. Studying the Word
2. Fellowship
3. Breaking of bread
4. Prayers

These four functions are essential and are enough to have a functioning house church. However, now we want to look at the remaining eight functions/values that belong to a New Testament church and therefore also today belong to a real house church.

5. Signs and miracles

Acts 2:43
Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

- There was much space for the supernatural in the New Testament house churches.
- In Acts 2:47 the house churches were only a few days old and the Apostles were the first disciple makers.
- This also explains why the miracles and signs at the very beginning happened primarily through the Apostles.
- Later, however, it became a normal part of a house church that signs and miracles would happen through all members of this church.
- Practically this means that
    - healing happens when someone is sick.
    - deliverance happens when someone experiences demonic oppression.
    - we are open for visions, dreams, guidance and prophecies from God.
    - we experience miracles in the everyday life of believers and share these.
- This core value of a house church is about the **supernatural**.

6. Having everything in common

Acts 2:44
All the believers were together and had everything in common.

- The Old Testament says that all the gold and silver belongs to the Lord.

Haggai 2:8
'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty.

- And also with regard to the land says the Lord:

Leviticus 25:23
The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers.

- From a Biblical viewpoint none of our possessions belong to us, but to the Lord. We are just good and faithful stewards. Everything comes from the Lord, belongs to the Lord and he can also have it at his disposal.
- This was the exact heart attitude of the first Christians towards their possessions. It's like <u>owning as if you had nothing</u>.
- Having possessions is not wrong; the first Christians had possessions too. Barnabas, as well as Ananias and Saphira sold a field.
- Peter said to Ananias:

Acts 5:4
Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

- It is definitely about the heart attitude.
- This core value is actually about the values generosity, big-heartedness and enjoying giving.

7. Giving to everyone in need

Acts 2:45
They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

- The church is a spiritual family. Just as one helps each other in a natural family, it should also be in the house church.
- It is primarily an obligation towards family members (committed members of the house church) and not towards guests. This core value of a house church is about these values: **giving, sharing, social engagement, and deaconry**).

8. With one voice

Acts 2:46
And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple…

- The expression "with one accord" does not mean that everyone had the same opinion or that all were in the same life situation.
- This expression actually means that all looked in the same direction, towards the same point, on the same person: Jesus. They knew that he had all the wisdom and insight.
- They looked to Jesus and his words for council, guidance, insight and wisdom.
- This core value is actually about true unity.

9. Daily in the temple

Acts 2:46
And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple…

- The first Christians in Jerusalem visited the temple daily.
- 9 AM was the time of the morning sacrifice (lamb) and 3 to 5 PM was the time of the evening sacrifice (lamb).
- These times were also the temple's prayer times.
- As is clearly evident from other texts in Acts, the Apostles also evangelized in the temple.

Acts 3:1-2
The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.

Acts 3:11-13
While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.

- The Lord himself commanded to <u>evangelize</u> in the temple through an angel!

Acts 5:19-20
But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."

- There, in the temple, the first Christians probably met many open people, family heads, and persons of peace, to whom they could preach the Gospel and who probably invited them to eat with them after the time in the temple.
- This core value is actually about **"outreach", evangelism and public prayer**.

10. Daily in their homes

Acts 2:46
And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

Illustration: Florian once was in Punjab, India, and visited a house church there. It was in a village in a rural region. The children went to school in the morning and the men and women worked in the field. When they returned from their work, they did not go home, but met daily at one house. There they cooked, prayed, and sang together and heard a word from the Bible. There were also unbelievers present, who were invited, and heard the Gospel. This is a good example for "meeting daily".

As a house church in a post-modern and urban context, we too meet not only on Sunday morning. We also meet during the week, eat together, have fellowship, pray together and do a DBS. On some weekdays, we meet for early morning prayer. There are days on which we work together or celebrate feasts, inviting unbelievers. We celebrate a 'Neighbor's Day' to get to know them. In short, we embrace every opportunity.

- During the time of the first Christians, whole families came to faith (Zacchaeus and his house, Cornelius and his house, the jailer from Philippi and his house, Lydia and her house). Since these natural families also became spiritual families, it was normal for them to meet daily in the house.
- Since they were daily in the temple and at home, it was possible for them to often invite unbelieving guests, evangelize daily at home and to experience daily conversions.
- This core value is all about **spiritual family** and **evangelism**.

11. Sharing meals

Acts 2:46
And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

- Here we find the Lord's Supper and eating together a second time. Again, the love feast is probably meant to be incorporated into the Lord's Supper.
- Since it is mentioned twice, this shows the high significance and importance of the love feast in the homes of the New Testament churches.
- During the Lord's Supper we look back at the cross and what Jesus did for us.
- The banquet feast must have been a really good meal, since they ate it with joy. Every banquet feast is a sign to the coming great feast banquet in the Kingdom of God at the wedding of the Lamb.
- The daily meals were also an excellent opportunity to invite guests and to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Revelation 19:7
Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

- This core value is really about **joy and celebrating feasts.**

12. Praising God together

Acts 2:47
praising God together…

- The worship of God is one of the core values in the spiritual life of every follower of Jesus and also of every house church.
- Praising God means honoring and praising God for what He is doing. Worshipping God means to honor and praise God for who He is.
- This core value is about **praise and worship**.

Acts 2:47
…enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The effects of the twelve core values

- The reaction from people around them was great: they enjoyed the favor of all people.
- Daily being in the temple with the people, the daily invitations to the houses and the daily common meals and feasts of the Kingdom of God obviously produced daily conversions very naturally.

- We have now looked at the twelve core values and functions of a church that meets in the house. When a house church has these twelve core values, it is fully developed.
- Introducing these values does not happen within one or two meetings. As disciple makers, we must show several times what such a community meeting looks like.
- However, the group should start to lead these meetings as soon as possible.

Remarks

- Everyone who converts to the Lord and is born again shall be trained to be a disciple.
- For this discipleship process everyone should be in a discipleship group.
- Most discipleship takes place in the group.
- It is not possible to separate discipleship from community.
- The discipleship group becomes a spiritual family and a church that meets in the house.
- The spiritual family becomes the church of the disciple.

Where is the church of a sent one?

There are two answers to this question. The New Testament describes two models. It depends on whether:

a) I work organically
b) or work in a team

➢ **Organically, locally**

- I live and work in a place and there I find a person or a house of peace.

- I start to disciple this group and form a house church with them.
- I live the twelve values with this house church according to Acts 2:42-47.

➢ **Systematically, mobile**

- The Lord calls me to appoint and form a sending team.
- This sending team now looks for persons and houses of peace.
- The team starts to disciple this group and to form a discipleship group with them, training them until they become a real house church that lives the twelve core values autonomously.
- However, the home of the sending team members is not the newly planted house church but the team.
- In a sending team, the team is both. It is a team that helps one another to live the commandment to make disciples and at the same time also a mobile church "in the house", in which we live the twelve values as a team.

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

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c) Write down personal insights from the teaching

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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 not only meet to discuss the twelve values but to also live them as a spiritual family together with the disciples.
    - Make a commitment and have a ceremony to officially plant the house church.

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