

Key Word or Phrase: **"HOUSE CHURCH' —Good or Bad?"**

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Is the "house church" phenomenon a good thing or a bad thing? It can be a good thing, but most house church experiments fail. The burning question is why do they typically fail? I mean, after all, the 1st-Century Christians met in private homes, didn't they? So, with hoards of long-time churchgoers now abandoning the visible church, shouldn't someone start finding out how to make the small Bible study group thing work? House church can be a great alternative to the visible institutional church—so long as instruction, correction and reproof are interactive and truly reciprocal.

Although, at any given point, some will be more advanced in their accumulation of knowledge and understanding than others, they and the others must work diligently to avoid any perception that they're somehow "special." Without such diligence, human nature (i.e.: the sin nature) will quickly cause the group to default to the unfortunate characteristics of the visible institutional church. For long-term success, everyone in the group must work to keep the playing field level.

My wife and I are part of a small Bible study group. Although we typically meet in our home, my conclusions are frequently challenged and that's the way I want it. Why? Because that's the way I get to learn, too! I have possibly learned more over the last nine years from people who have disagreed with me than from those who have agreed. They're the ones who force me to keep studying and re-studying. (Iron sharpens iron, you know.) Our mutual challenge, then, is to always respond in the style of the Bereans at Acts 17:11.

Got a small Bible study group? Wanting to start one? The critical guidelines at <http://dypk.org/how-to-study> can become the worthy foundation for a highly productive series of organizational studies for you – to substantially increase the likelihood of your long-term success.

Finally, follow this link to learn what one really smart guy has concluded about WHY record numbers of people are choosing to leave the visible institutional church: <http://www.churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-articles/244545-dear-church-heres-people-really-leaving.html?print>. Although I can't agree with *all* of his observations and conclusions, I honestly couldn't have written a better article. (I think you'll find his writing style refreshing, too.)

—Scribe *pro tem*, an informed layman

"A wonderful blessing of *informed* Christianity is the easy destruction of profoundly popular doctrines by beautiful Bible facts." —T. C. Newsome

