

# HOUSE CHURCHES

## Training Manual

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# SECTION 1

## Vision & Flow



# Why House Churches?

People tend to come to church for a reason. Usually they are looking for a good sermon to encourage them, a good worship experience, or a nice time in the presence of God. But people also have reasons they stay in a church; when they are needed and when they are known.

House Churches are designed to help in letting people be known and learning to know why they are needed. They are the place where the church grows together in fellowship and each and every individual is equipped in their gift and matured in their calling that God has on their life.

The concept of true fellowship has been diluted in the church to simply getting together and sharing a meal and having fun; but fellowship is so much more. Fellowship is being a part of a group, sharing beliefs and experiences, working together and caring for one another as members of a family, and taking care of needs of each other.

House Churches create a place where people can become a part of a TRUE fellowship and community of believers who are all pursuing God together!

In Exodus 18, Moses was doing all the work for the people by himself and he was burning himself out. He was the judge, the counselor, he was everything for the entire group of people. Moses' father-in-law gives him advise; the way to meet needs is to delegate authority and divide the ministry so the needs will be cared for in smaller groups. He tells Moses to appoint leaders of ten, fifty, one hundred, and one thousand.

A healthy house is one where leadership is delegated so that the people are not depending on one person; rather learning how to grow together in groups of people so that all the needs of the people are satisfied and not forgotten!

Even in Acts, we see the church growing from a group of 120 people to 100,000 people in just 25 years in Jerusalem! They went from "adding" daily to "multiplying" over a 25 year period. When you have a house that large; you have to put everyone somewhere! Acts 5:42 tells us they met together in the temple courts and from house to house. Acts 2:42 tells us they believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship and sharing meals and communion and prayer.

So what we see is the need for TWO meetings –a large group celebration in the temple courts and small group fellowship in homes; we call these: the Worship Gathering and the House Church. We are called to do life together under the name of Jesus – House Churches accommodate this to help facilitate authentic relationships.



# House Church Leadership

**Hosts:** House Hosts are the ones who open their homes for gatherings. They prepare for gatherings by organizing dinner, setting the environment and maintaining a clean, safe home environment! Hosts can also lead the flow of the gatherings.

**Leaders:** House Leaders lead the flow of House Churches. They make sure that attendance is taken, connections are made, prayer requests and prophetic words are recorded, and the needs of the people are met. Leaders also identify potential hosts and leaders for establishing new House Churches

**House Church Pastors:** House Church pastors are selected by the apostle and elders of Relentless. A house church does not have to have a pastor present, but all must know who the house church pastors are so that you can point people to pastoral care and counseling. The goal is for every house church to have house pastors present and to raise up more pastors as we grow the amount of house churches we have in operation.

**House Church Pastoral Oversight:** House Church Culture is led by pastors appointed by the apostle of the house and these pastors oversee growth of house churches, hosts, leaders, and identifying more pastors in our house churches. All hosts and leaders should communicate with our House Church Pastors who oversee all House Churches.

**Structure:**

APOSTLE  
ELDERS  
HOUSE CHURCH PASTORAL OVERSIGHT  
HOUSE CHURCH PASTORS  
LEADERS & HOSTS

## House Church Culture

We want all of our house churches to maintain the same “flow” so that we are all unified in one vision; growing as one house.

**Day/Time/Etc.**

- A. Day of Week:** House Churches meet any day, Monday-Friday
- B. Time:** House Churches meet from 6:30-8pm, but allow more time if needed.
- C. Childcare:** Children are welcome in all house churches. If you want to provide childcare, you are welcome to do so, but no house church has the authority to say that kids are not allowed in the house church.
- D. Size of Meeting:** No more than 12 people. When the house church grows to 15 or more consistently, it is time to split the house church in to two.



## **Setup.**

- Have a sign on your porch/door/entrance to encourage people to “just come in” rather than having to knock; your home is an extension of Relentless on House Church nights!
- Setup chairs in some sort of circle so that all can see each other and are able to participate.
- Have music playing BY 6:30pm to create a welcoming atmosphere.

## **Dinner & Conversation.**

Every house church offer a time of dinner and fellowship for the first 30 minutes of the gathering. House Hosts can determine menu and how the cost will be taken care of; while taking the time to find out what works for the people in the house gathering.

## **Worship**

House church begins with a time of worship. We have playlists for leaders to stream so all house churches have the same sound. The goal is for there to be live worship with instruments in every house.

## **Prayer.**

Allow a time of prayer to happen flowing out of worship; Appoint someone to open up in prayer and encourage everyone to take turns as each person finished; when you sense everyone has had a chance to pray; ask for prayer requests and go ahead and pray over these needs.

## **Discussion.**

Leaders are encouraged to lead the discussion time and set up opportunities for others to lead. This will help identify new leaders for when it is time for a house church to multiply in to 2. LEAD the discussion; we always want to make sure that no one person is dominating the discussion; it is ok to communicate that and allow others to talk. Discussions can be sermon based with a guide to let Holy Spirit lead by asking “what has God put on your heart/mind this week?”.

## **Close in Prayer & Give Announcements.**

Close out in prayer and give the announcements provided.



# **SECTION 2**

## Leading House Churches



# Leadership Culture

## **Honor**

We will honor the family of this house, and God, by being on time for anything scheduled; arrive early enough so you may start promptly at the planned time. Being on time reflects your level of commitment. We live a lifestyle of honoring the decisions of leadership, and supporting the Relentless vision. We do not talk negatively about anyone in leadership or anyone in this house.

## **Community**

We commit to trust others within healthy boundaries and to affirm, build, and encourage others and resolve conflict with forgiveness and reconciliation. We commit to walk in unity with grace and truth and being accountable to others that we might produce fruitful returns. We commit to having fun as a team and family!

## **Communicate Effectively**

Have questions? Have a new idea? Getting distracted or frustrated? Something bothering you? Talk to leadership!. Let the lead pastor or overseeing leader know of any concerns, changes in schedule, potential absences, emergencies or illness. We're here to serve and equip you to grow and succeed as a passionate follower of Jesus.

## **Have the support of family**

It is important that your family supports your involvement in this ministry and accepts the necessary time commitment, which is not insignificant. Your family should always be your priority when considering your involvement in any ministry.

## **Be Humble/Teachable**

It is incredibly easy to focus on ourselves . Always remember the One who gave you your talent/skill/abilities and serve with an attitude of humility is essential. Our talents/giftings can always be developed and improved, and we should be willing to humbly accept direction and constructive criticism from others and learn from it.

**Be modest in dress** - be aware of your appearance. Be comfortable, but be appropriate. Ask yourself – does what I wear distract others from worshiping Jesus? If the answer is yes, change your outfit.

**Be a reflection of Christ**–we ask that should at any time during your involvement you feel your personal life or conduct is not reflecting what we are about or what Christ would have, that you voluntarily step down until the situation changes.



# Qualifications of Leadership

At Relentless, we want those who serve in leadership roles within our House to understand their commitment and influence, as well as our expectations. While we believe God loves all people, and that His grace is offered to everyone regardless of his or her current lifestyle, we want those who teach and lead in our House to model the highest lifestyle standards as reflected in Scripture. We believe Scripture establishes God's requirements for leaders and that we will be held accountable for those we approve to lead.

## **Being a leader within Relentless Church means that you:**

- Have a personal, growing relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Recognize the Word of God as the authority for your lives.
- Facilitate environments where people can pursue community and spiritual growth.
- Lead and facilitate pastoral care by monitoring the spiritual health of church family and promoting participation in house culture and gatherings.
- Exercise self-control, live a life above reproach, manage their family, and all things asked of leaders in 1 Timothy 3.

## **Being a leader within Relentless Church means that you abstain from:**

- Sexual Immorality (Extramarital affair, homosexuality, pornography, etc)
- Excessive Gambling and/or Dishonest Gain
- Excessive alcohol use
- Illegal drug use
- Physical or verbal abuse
- Profanity

## **Being a leader within Relentless Church means that you understand we have ZERO Tolerance for Abuse; Abuse defined as:**

- **Physical:** A physical act directed at a child or vulnerable adult that causes injury;
- **Sexual:** Contact or interactions between a child and an adult, or another child, when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person. This includes exploitation through photographs, videos, or other communication methods;
- **Emotional:** Acts or omissions by the parent or other caregivers that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders;
- **Neglect:** Failure to provide for the child or vulnerable adult's basic needs. This includes adequate adult supervision, medical attention, housing, food, and clothing. Most cases of physical neglect involve inadequate adult supervision that has caused harm to the child or vulnerable adult, or places them in danger of such harm.

All cases of suspected abuse are to be reported to an elder and/or the apostolic leaders of Relentless Church. It is not your responsibility to investigate/confront suspected abuse.



# Healthy House Church Culture

1. **Consistency:** Same place, same time, few cancellations
2. **Transparency:** People should feel safe and know they can talk with confidentiality.
3. **Love in Action:** Meet needs in the group and find ways to serve together.
4. **Prayer:** Some are bold; others are learning; be sensitive to allowing time for people to jump in during prayer times and don't pressure those to pray that may not want to; they will come alive in this as they connect!
5. **Focus:** We are discussion the message; not introducing new bible studies. If someone has a heart for a bible study/topic; talk to them about the topic/study an environment separate from the gathering.
6. **Support:** Scripture tells us that there should be no needs in the house; pay attention and find out about needs so that this house can help meet the need. We don't want anyone overlooked in this house. Encourage people, pray over needs, find ways to support.
7. **Connect:** Encourage your group to connect outside the house gathering.
8. **Share Responsibilities:** Great hosts and pastors will empower anyone in the gathering to help facilitate the gathering: food, childcare, discussions, and more!

## Creating Safe Environments

A solid foundation is required when building anything; part of a great foundation in House Churches is the environment we set in the way we navigate steward conversations. Listed below are a few tips to create safe environments where people will feel safe and comfortable in opening up their personal stories for growth and walking in to their true identity in Christ.

1. **Pray For Your Gathering** – cover the time in prayer before anyone shows up!
2. **Be an affirming voice** - before, during, and after house gatherings.
3. **Take notice of achievements** – and celebrate at the right time (anytime, anywhere)
4. **Honoring Opinions** – people will express opinions that may not reflect this house. Honor their opinion and steer the conversation to the beliefs we hold as a house.
5. **Relationship Outside Gatherings** – Give people permission to call each other and build relationship outside the gathering. Relationships deepen commitment levels and vulnerability.



# Leading House Churches

- 1. Starting:** Start on time by announcing to the people to move from discussions and food to gathering in the circle. Don't wait for people to get ready, move the room!
- 2. Cast Vision:** Remind everyone that the house gathering isn't a replacement of the worship gathering and that our goal is to grow many small gatherings of no more than 15 people consistently.
- 3. Ending:** Honor time; if a gathering ends at 8:00pm, you have the authority to end it on time and if you feel led to keep it going, honor time by telling people they can leave or stay if they would like; but honor the time that people came expecting.

## Leading Discussions

- 1. Follow the 70-30 rule:** Give the members of your group room to speak up instead of doing all the talking yourself. About 70% of talking should come from members and 30% from the leader.
- 2. Ask More Than Answer:** The best leaders don't have all the answers; the best leaders facilitate discussion in the group so to encourage self-realization and revelation. People grow the most as they discover truth rather than just hearing it. Most times the disciples asked Jesus questions; he responded with questions to help them to understand. Ask questions.
  - a.** When people in the group give one-two word answers; ask them to explain more – we want to hear reasoning and understandings so that others receive the same reasons and understanding!
  - b.** Interject when needed: if you hear answers and reasonings that are not biblical/do not line up with our beliefs – this is your time to ask questions and explain truth to shift the conversation. If there is disagreement in the teaching of the house; be bold and let them know that you can have a discussion with them after the group for further understanding, so to facilitate a healthy discussion and group dynamic.
  - c.** Thank, elevate, and edify before correcting statements or addressing issues. There may be times when you have “rebellious” participants or participants with agendas – edify and correct in love; but bring order to the group.



- 3. Encourage:** Move discussions in to positive direction by encouraging and/or complimenting what people are saying.
  - a. Thank the hosts for providing dinner and creating a great atmosphere.
  - b. Talk about great things going on in the weekend gathering.
  - c. Celebrate their comments; edify them and let them know their input is valued.
  - d. Steer away from the word “but” when correcting/teaching. The word ‘but’ after affirming their statement erases the affirmation; use terms like “if I may add to that” or “may I shed some light on that”.
- 4. Discern the Flow:** A successful discussion isn’t measured by finishing the discussion guide; it’s measured by clear understandings of concepts. It is no secret that we go deeper in our understanding of the word of God; so if an entire night centers around one question; embrace it!
  - a. If the discussion is flowing; let it! However; if one person cannot understand the concept; it is ok to eventually say something like “Hey, John, let’s move on for now and let’s spend a few minutes together after the gathering to explore that topic more!”
  - b. It’s ok if you don’t finish the guide; it’s designed to guide you in to whatever Holy Spirit wants to accomplish for the night
  - c. Don’t let one person answer everything! If you see that’s happening; don’t be hesitant to say something like “Hey, John, let’s see if someone else has anything to say”.
  - d. It is ok to say “I don’t have an answer for that” – you aren’t expected to know everything. Transparency and humility are great traits of a leader. If you don’t know an answer to a question; let them know that you will find an answer for them by the next time you gather by talking to pastoral staff!

## Tips for Creating Family Environments

1. Don’t be too formal; this is family; keep order and allow for mess-ups in flow!
2. View your group as friends and family – not members
3. Plan fellowship events with your group (no, this isn’t creating a clique)
4. When you ask questions; expect silence; give people time to think!
5. Be flexible – great organizations change and grow; we will grow; be ready to implement new things under the direction of the house.
6. Pray for your group regularly!
7. Encourage testimony times in group!



# House Church Leader/Pastor Roles

## Keep Track of the People & Care for the People

This house exists to see people come alive in Christ; meaning to see people walk in what they were anointed to do by God. The term, pastor, is often associated as the head of a church and/or a title preceding a name. We are embracing the true term of a pastor; a shepherd who wants to care for the needs of the people and lead them in to understanding while supporting the vision of the apostolic function of the house.

We are not creating a culture of “Pastor John” – we are moving in to a culture of “John, one of our house leaders/pastors”. Operating as a leader/pastor is caring for the people in your house; leading them in their walk with Christ while supporting the vision of this house. You are providing care, helping to explain truths, and making sure the needs/concerns are met of the people in your house gathering.

Here are a few things to take on as a leader of a house Church:

- 1. Consistency/Cancellations** – create a culture of consistency in your meeting times; no one gets txt reminders to join us for the weekend; treat your house gathering the same way! Weekly txts aren’t needed to remind people of your gathering time because we want to create a culture where unless you send a cancellation txt; everyone can assume that your house gathering will take place!
- 2. Pastoral Checks** – contact each person in your gathering personally at least once a month to check on how they are doing so you can discover needs/concerns/praises/etc.
- 3. Attendance/Records** – make sure new visitors fill out connect cards at house gatherings and keep track on the size of your group by tracking who is at your group consistently every week using the “groups” app on planning center.
- 4. Visitors/First Time Guests** – Contact guests within 3 days of your house gathering and let them know how much you enjoyed them being a part of the gathering! It is always good to pay attention and add a personal touch to your message/call so that the visitor knows they were seen and heard!

**LEADERS AND PASTORS are often one in the same. Whether you are called out as a pastor or a leader, we encourage both of these roles to operate the same way! We hope to develop all leaders into house church pastors!**



# **SECTION 3**

## Pastoring House Churches



# Jesus Is The Perfect Pastoral Model

We see in 1 Peter 5:1-4 that Jesus is our Great Shepherd. That means pastors are shepherds serving our Great Shepherd. So, as shepherds, we are to look to Jesus as we develop our pastoral priorities and look like Jesus in how we lead people. Jesus invested time and relationship in to his people; we should do the same. As pastors, we are to embrace the responsibility to lead/counsel those among us. God has given you a front-row seat to watch Him work and move in powerful ways among his people. Let us look to Jesus and learn from Him; see his compassion for hurting people, ask Him to shape your heart to look like His, and ask the Spirit for wisdom as you listen and seek to help those under your care.

## House Church Pastors

Pastors have a passion for developing disciples and provide care/shepherding the people of this house. They focus on caregiving, visiting sick/hospitalized, counseling, mentorship, preaching/teaching, and connecting people in the house. The pastoral leaders also have a passion to raise up and train more pastors in the house so that every single person in this house is connected and growing in their walk with God; seeing people come alive in Christ!

Pastors serve as leaders submitted to the lead pastor/apostolic leader and elders of the house and are included in praying/discussing vision and moving forward as a house. Pastors see through a different lens than elders and the apostolic leaders, so, the way pastors see the people is crucial in making decisions and in moving forward. Pastors always uphold the vision of the apostolic leader and honor all decisions made by the apostolic leader and elders as we move forward as a house.

## Clarity in Calling as Pastors

Paul reminds Titus who he is at the beginning of his letter; *Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ... (Titus 1:1)*. He also informs Timothy of the same *"I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher" (2 Timothy 1:11)*. Paul knew who God had made him to be through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Paul's activity always flowed from his true identity in Christ. If you are walking in to the calling as a pastor; you must have absolute clarity on your identity. We are sons/daughters of the Father, servants of the King, adopted into the kingdom. We work from our identity, not for our identity. Leaders must know and understand what gift they steward for their church, and what gifts others possess. The Lord has not left us in the dark to discern our calling. We have been given his word, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, and we are placed in a community called the Body of Christ. All of these realities are there to offer us clarity in the call that the Lord has for each of us.



Tim Keller has said that discerning your calling is possible when we consider three factors: affinity, ability, and opportunity. To discern affinity, consider the needs of others in your community or city. What moves you? What stirs your affections for others? What needs compel you to action? Paul says to Titus that he is a servant and apostle “for the sake of the faith of the elect and their knowledge of the truth”. He felt a particular unction to serve the church of God because of his particular calling. To discern your ability, consider the ways that your talents intersect with the needs in a particular community. Many leaders have gained clarity on their calling simply by being available to serve in a way they had not previously considered. Let the voice of the community around you affirm or redirect your sense of calling as you respond to the opportunities the Lord has placed directly in front of you as you seek God in your calling.

## Pastoral Care and Responsibilities

As pastors of house churches you are responsible for:

- Communicating with regular attendees (at least once a month outside gatherings)
- Making sure needs are met.
- Communicating with the lead pastor/apostolic leader about needs of people.
- Teaching/Leading Discussions
- Developing/Finding/Raising up more House Pastors.
- Connecting with Guests and connecting guests to Home Gatherings.
- Growing Your House Church

## 4 Keys to Being a Great Pastoral Leader

- 1. Be a daily presence:** Communicate with your house church consistently. This communication may look like a phone call/txting, setting time aside for prayer, sending out an email, or any other means of communication. The important thing is to create community.
- 2. Be a calm presence:** The world is reacting to things in fear and chaos. Fear is human and understandable but also clearly talked about in Scripture that it isn't something to take as our normal. When speaking, counseling, and mentoring people, be a calm and steady presence, pointing to Jesus and the safety and protection we have in him.
- 3. Assure people of God's Presence:** It is easy to forget that God is an omni-present God; so always remind others, and yourself, that God hasn't left and that He is here and will make all things work for good for those that seek Him! Encourage seeking in times of need in addition to action steps which are guarded by His presence!



- 4. Re-Evaluate:** Always reassess the effectiveness of your pastoral care; make this an on-going weekly or monthly habit. This evaluation doesn't need to be a big ordeal. Just take a little time to consider how it's going: what's working? What isn't working? What can be better? Re-evaluating is a key to growing in to what God has destined us to be!

## Biblical Qualifications of a Pastor

Being above reproach is the overarching, summarizing characteristic of pastors. You will find similar (but not identical) lists in First Timothy and Titus. Living a life above reproach is the first requirement in both lists and Titus repeats it. The other items on the list explain what "above reproach" means. If we look through the two lists, as well as in 1 Peter, we find these qualifications of an elder or pastor who is above reproach.

1. A pastor must be devoted to his spouse. (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:2). The pastor's marriage illustrates Christ's love for His church—His bride (Eph. 5:22 ff.). A Pastor must love his wife exclusively with his mind, will and emotions and not just his body.
2. A pastor's children must be in submission, though not perfect (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:4-5). If a man does not know how to manage his own family, he will not know how to take care of God's church. The first flock for a pastor is his own family. A Pastor's qualification for the church starts in his home management as he leads them up in the discipline and devotion to God. (Eph. 6:4).
3. A pastor is a faithful steward (Titus 1:7). Here the term used is overseer (Greek episkopos). It is not another office, but a functional title. It is what he does. He is a steward, a manager of God's resources and Jesus' flock. He takes responsibility, but not ownership.
4. A pastor must be humble — not arrogant (Titus 1:7). A pastor must constantly demonstrate the gospel by admitting when he is wrong and assuming responsibility and restoring relationships.
5. A pastor must be gentle — not quick-tempered (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3). No man will be of any use in the kingdom that is quick-tempered. The difference between how Jesus demonstrated anger is that He was angry at the abuse of others and dishonoring of God. We get angry at how it affects us but we do not let anger control us.
6. A pastor must be sober — not a drunkard (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3). This is not just overindulgence in alcohol but for any behavior that fuels addictive responses.
7. A pastor must be peaceful — not violent (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3). He is a peacemaker.
8. A pastor must have financial integrity — not greedy for gain (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3; 1 Peter 5:3). A pastor is to be upright in his financial dealings and not accused of pursuing money over the kingdom of God.
9. A pastor must be hospitable (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2). A pastor's home is to be open for others to enjoy. This is how to create great relationships on a personal level.



- 10.** A pastor must be a lover of good (Titus 1:8). A pastor genuinely loves what is good. He does not just think he should love it.
- 11.** A pastor must be self-controlled (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2). Self-control is a characterization of every area of a pastor's life: diet, time, mouth, exercise, relationships, sex, and money.
- 12.** A pastor must be upright (Titus 1:8). He has integrity in his relationships and in how he treats others.
- 13.** A pastor must be holy (Titus 1:8). His life is devoted wholeheartedly to Jesus externally and internally.
- 14.** A pastor must be able to teach (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2). All of the other qualifications are character qualities. This is the only ability-based requirement. He is to be able to teach sound doctrine, not just be able to communicate in an excellent manner.
- 15.** A pastor must be spiritually mature (1 Tim 3:6). Positions of authority without spiritual maturity lead to the trap of pride. When pride grows in a man, sin abounds.
- 16.** A pastor must be respectable (1 Tim 3:7). That does not mean that everyone must like him or even appreciate him. It means that there is no credible witness to an ongoing sinful behavior.
- 17.** A pastor must be an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Elders/Pastors are examples of biblical expressions sexually, time management, marriage, parenting, worship, relationships and any other way. A pastor should be someone your sons could pattern.

## Healthy Pastoring.

A pastor's health is necessary in building a healthy body of believers. If we're always busy and struggling to carve out time for physical, spiritual, or emotional health, why would we expect the people we pastor to be any different? How can we encourage and lead others to have healthy spiritual lives when we don't? How can we challenge them to grow in their marriages when we neglect our own marriages? How can we lead them to glorify Christ above all else while we're chasing after other loves? Jesus said, "Follow me," and Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ." God calls us to a life of disciple-making, serving, and hospitality so we can demonstrate a life that loves and glorifies God above all else! One of the dangers in pastoring is to separate yourself from the people; don't do that! Invite people in and let them see you! Authenticity and Accountability are keys in all of us growing at a healthy pace.



# SECTION 4

## Hosting House Gatherings



# Setting Great Environments

- 1. Environment:** We want people to know they feel “at-home” the moment they walk in to a House Church. Make sure your porch light is turned on with a sign that says “don’t knock, come on in” or something of that nature! Have music playing 10 minutes prior to arrival time to set a great atmosphere!
- 2. Resources & Flow:** Make sure a table, or something of that sort, is located as soon as people walk in with all the resources your house gathering will be equipped with. This should be plain and in clear sight. (Tithe baskets/envelopes, worship guides for notes, pens, invite cards, etc) Most resources available at our main campus will be available in house churches!
- 3. Dinner:** Hosts are responsible for making sure food is ready 30 minutes prior to house gathering start times. You can offer this at your own expense, set up rotations of people willing to help provide dinner, encourage potlucks, or take up dinner offerings; This flow is totally up to you! Feel your group out to find what works best!
- 4. Group Area:** Set up enough chairs to create an even circle where everyone can see each other and no one is excluded from the group.
- 5. Childcare:** Childcare is set-up based on each individual house church. You can have kids in a room in your house OR you can allow the kids to be involved in the gathering; we leave this up to you! **No House church is permitted to say kids are not allowed!**
- 6. Finding New Hosts:** The best way to find hosts is to empower responsibility. See who helps the most and who shows up early to help; these are great indicators of who may want to be equipped to host a gathering!

## Hospitality.

As we live a life in Christ; we are led to extend ourselves to love and care for anyone he places in our lives. As we embrace hospitality we become mirror images of God’s welcome when we create space to receive friends, strangers, family, and even those with whom we disagree. Opening our front door and setting the table of invitation doesn’t come without cost. We have to be willing to lay aside our preferences and comfort to be present. Preparing meals, creating welcoming environments, praying for others, and learning each other’s stories are all part of laying aside our comfortability for the sake of community.

Romans 12 tells us that we are to pursue the love of strangers, not just hang out with best friends. Biblical hospitality doesn’t stop with creating a welcoming environment. It is intentionally making the stranger feel as welcome as the friend; someone coming to your gathering for the first time; yet feeling like they have known you all their life.

### A few tips for creating great environments of hospitality:

- Invite someone for coffee/lunch outside the gathering
- Collect and file food/beverage favorites
- Watch – why are they not eating? Do they have dietary restrictions? Invest the time to find out.
- Turn the porch light on, light some candles, put up a sign that says “don’t knock, just come in” – make them feel at home
- Have music playing that invites conversation instead of having awkward silence!
- Create a circle of seating so everyone is seen and included.



# **SECTION 5**

## Growing House Churches



# House Church Growth Goals

- 1. House Churches Must be Growth Oriented.** One of the greatest difficulties that you will have is multiplying groups. Part of the problem is that people become comfortable in their group and they want things to stay just the way they like them. It's ironical, but groups that do not birth new groups end up becoming ingrown and usually dissolve after a period of time. All groups should be open to new people at all times. Birthing new groups should be seen as a primary purpose from the very beginning.
- 2. House Churches Must be Small in Size.** No more than 10-12 in a gathering; when you have a consistent group of 15 or more coming; it is time to split the group in two locations. If a group gets too large most homes become a problem, you can end up with too many children and it ceases to be conducive for adding new members to the group or it can actually become more like a small local church plant, which is not the goal.
- 3. Grow the House Church;** if you are together 12-18 months and have not gotten to the "multiply" point; then you've been together too long. Grow the gathering, multiply disciples, empower new leaders. Encourage your house to church to always be inviting new people!
- 4. Always be Raising up New Hosts and Leaders.** Find those in your gathering that stand out with a hospitality and pastoral culture. Give people a chance to prepare the food, ask them to come and help you set up, give people an opportunity to lead discussions, give people a chance to handle needs that need to be met; you will discover the ones that you are raising up in to new host and pastoral roles!

## Methods of Multiplication

One of our goals is to always multiply house churches. Multiplying house churches accomplish a couple of things; it keeps them fresh with new connections and fellowship, it empowers more leaders, and it prevents a house church from becoming its own entity which can cause church splits. There are a number of different ways to multiply!

### **50/50 Model**

This is the simplest and most obvious approach. One House Church becomes two smaller House Churches of roughly equal size. The advantage of this approach is that both groups start with a good core group and can build from there. The disadvantage is that it can be a significant strain on group life, and much of the energy and excitement of having a larger group can be lost. Embrace the idea that the larger the group grows, the more chance you have of having the "silent" gathering members. A smaller group encourages 100% engagement with every member of the house.



## **“Planting” Model**

In this model, you recruit a team of 2-4 people to head out and plant a new house church while the original gathering remains mostly intact. The new group gets the advantage of a fresh start and a core group of motivated leaders who can gather others around them. The main gathering can carry on without feeling like there has been a huge interruption in the life of the house church. Also, it is often easier to find 2-4 people who are willing to plant a new house church than to convince the whole gathering that it’s time to multiply.

## **New Members in House Churches**

One of the many great things about house churches is they can be the front door of Relentless for many looking for a church. This can be advantageous and can be a disadvantage if you do not keep to the culture of Relentless House Churches.

Make sure that your House Church:

- 1.** Consists of mainly people that consider Relentless their home. We always encourage new people to join, obviously, but don’t let your gathering turn in to a group of people where everyone goes to a different church. The purpose of House Church is to pastor, disciple, and facilitate the people of Relentless Church.
- 2.** Always encourages anyone that missed the worship gathering the previous weekend to be ready to discuss the message by listening to the podcast, which is available by Monday mornings at 8:00am or to watch the worship gathering on YouTube by searching for “Relentless Church Savannah”. Encouraging them to listen/watch the message keeps everyone on the same page and unified in the sermon discussion.



# SECTION 6

## Managing Conflict



# Let's Talk About Conflict

Conflict happens. You can't always anticipate it, but you know when you have stepped in it! The temptation is to avoid the conflict, but the best way to manage conflict is to deal with it head on! Proverbs 27:5 says it is better to openly rebuke than to have hidden love. The honest love of an open rebuke lets the person know you care enough to address it than to sweep it under the rug! Conflict always tries to do one thing; cause division. If we manage conflict effectively, conflict can be the very thing God uses to draw out authenticity of each and every person connected in this house.

Team studies show that "Conflict doesn't destroy strong teams because strong teams focus on results". When you focus on results, you aren't trying to prove a point right; but find balance in a disagreement for the purpose of reaching the result. In the same way, our goal as leaders is to manage conflict in such a way to accomplish the end result of what house gatherings are trying to achieve: developing a healthy community where everyone can seek understanding and connect with Christ-like relationships while growing in their walk with God and find their purpose.

A great leader doesn't always think "let's solve this problem" although sometimes it is necessary to solve a problem. A great leader tries to manage the tension in conflict in such a way to find common ground while pointing out what may or may not be wrong, or conflicting, in one's opinion/thought.

Embracing "conflict" is understanding that WHEN there is tension; our goal is that both sides feel valued rather than one side being dismissed.

Before we can talk about conflict; we have to make sure we cultivate a kind of culture that allows healthy conflict that the leader can properly handle.

## Conflict To Manage Or Problem To Solve

A great question to help decide whether you are facing a conflict to manage or a problem to solve is to identify the maturity in both sides of the conflict. In mature disagreement; it is not about one side winning, rather maximizing what both sides are right about and can agree on and minimizing what they're wrong about. A leader is an advocate for both sides. However; if there is one side that only seeks to win and always tries to win- that person is a problem to solve. We will talk about solving a problem later on in this manual, but for now let's talk about how to manage conflict in a House Church!



# Cultivating Healthy Conflict

1. Remember that conflict is good. It's what leads to being closer. Shallow relationships never have conflict; growing relationships do.
2. You don't have to agree, only reach an understanding you can all live with.
3. Communicate: "If you see something, say it." Don't allow group members to keep their thoughts about a proposed direction to themselves, even if they are critical or contrary. They at least deserve to be heard and considered, even if dismissed later.
4. Hold group members accountable to that norm. If you find out later that someone was able to "see around the corner" on an issue but didn't voice that perspective, confront it, first privately and then perhaps letting the group know. You can always talk about a perspective one has without pointing it out to the group who had/has the different perspective.
5. Play the role of "devil's advocate". Search for problems, shortcomings, and oversights with every statement so that everyone can come to a well-rounded thought on a particular discussion.
6. Challenge ideas and thoughts, not the person. Never allow an attack on someone or allow people making sarcastic comments that may belittle someone. The goal is not to prove someone right or wrong; the goal is understanding the word of God.

# Resolving Group Conflict

1. Acknowledge the "elephant in the room" by addressing awkwardness or a conversation that has crossed the line. Pause the conversation to address the tension.
2. Pay attention to your emotions and to the emotions of others. If you experience a strong emotion internally, or notice that someone else is, acknowledge it, and allow each person to express what they're feeling and why. Treat one another's feelings and perspectives as legitimate topics of concern and conversation. Don't necessarily point out what you are noticing on an individual, but bring up what you are discerning so the group can talk about it.
3. If you are offended by what someone has said, consider alternative interpretations, and be willing to offer the benefit of the doubt. Seek to not be offended.
4. Engage in enough conversation so that your group can either resolve the conflict fully—if that can be done quickly—or get back on topic while communicating that the conflict can be more fully addressed later.
5. If the conflict is not resolved quickly, work it out fully in individual conversations between the persons with the conflict until they can come to a place of reconciliation.



6. When a new person comes and asks a question – discern the person’s reaction. Some times; they may not want everyone giving opinions/directions; sometimes they do; gauge the situation and lead accordingly.
7. Pat yourselves on the back. Bring to surface that it is a great thing the group can talk about different perspectives. The group needs to leave with a focus on the up-side of the conflict, rather than leaving thinking that the group discussion was worthless.

## **Resolving Individual Conflict** (between you or helping others resolve)

1. Your relationship is more important than this single issue. Determine that you're going to stay committed while you work through the issue.
2. Keep talking to each other. Relationships dissolve when we isolate. Compromise and commitment come when we stay at it.
3. Talk to each other, not everybody else. We want to validate our feelings by finding people who'll back our position, but this leads to gossip. Talk out conflict with the people involved, not people who aren't.
4. Keep to the facts. Very often conflicts escalate to places that end up being all about hurt feelings and egos, not the actual issues. Recognize your feelings, even voicing them, but remember that the other person has been emotionally affected as well. Keep a cool head, or take a break until you are able to have one.
5. Stay away from low blows or cheap shots. Respect the other person and speak in a way that expresses your concern without placing blame. It really goes a long way toward reaching a resolution.

## **Navigating Through Tough Conversations**

1. Be authentic – have a sincere desire to understand what the person is dealing with.
2. Listen for Understanding – don't try to come up with a solution without giving yourself to understanding what is being said. Don't let your emotions get in the way of understanding.
3. Empathize – try to feel as if you are in their shoes so you can address the issue or concern in an empathetic way; being led by Holy Spirit.
4. When advice/opinions are given to a situation by the group; weigh it and make sure it's biblical – navigate through the advice and highlight positives and give new perspective.
5. Take a moment to encourage, uplift, and pray for the situation; don't be scared to interrupt the flow of your group to pray in to a situation.



# When It's Time to Solve a Problem

If what you are facing is NOT a conflict, then there may be a time to solve a problem. All of us desire grace and love to be extended to us. We long and need to be welcomed as we are, but how do we know when it's time to extend grace and when it is time to redirect someone who is causing issues in our house gathering? How do you know when to minister to someone and when to ask someone to find a place that suits them better?

1. Always get approval from elders or the lead pastor before you ask someone to leave your House Gathering. Make sure to provide adequate information so that leadership can help you navigate through the problem.
2. Know When to Accommodate - go to the person, one on one, and address the issue in an appropriate manner. If it's simple error, teach them but don't take it further. They were just ignorant. If it is a matter of maturity, then mentor them and be very patient, because maturity takes a while to arrive. If they have a different vision than the church has or different belief, then address that as well. If it's a fundamental conflict in visions, help the person understand our vision or find a church that shares their vision.
3. Addressing Differences in Beliefs – There are “open-handed” theological ideas and “closed-handed” theological ideas. Open-Handed ideas are left up to interpretations and never a reason to ask someone to leave; interpretations of end-times, creation, etc. Closed-Handed ideas are not left up to interpretation; sexual immorality and sin, Jesus being the only way to salvation and serving a Triune God, etc. Know the beliefs of this house and respectfully ask those with different beliefs to keep it to themselves if it doesn't align with the house. If they keep on trying to prove a point; have a conversation with them in private asking them to kindly stop trying to prove their point or find another place to connect.
4. When asking someone to leave; do it personally and in-person, gently, and consistently. Don't ask one person to leave but allow someone you like better to do the same thing. It isn't necessary to tell them everything they did wrong; share enough to let them know why they are bringing division to the group and the church.

The goal is to never ask someone to leave; rather stand on the vision and beliefs of this house so that the person either connects and submits to teaching or removes themselves. We will encounter many with different ideas our goal is that truth will help transform them in to the true image that God created them to be!



## Correction Protocols

What would you do if a leader violates one of these requirements? 1 Timothy 5:19-20 warns us not to accuse an elder flippantly. Matthew 18:15-18 gives us the steps: 1) Go to the person alone, 2) If still unsatisfied, go with another person, 3) If still unsatisfied, let the greater leadership know. If accusations are verified and the leader remains unrepentant, the next step is to ask the leader to step down and make it known.

## Preparing for Confrontation

1. Do your “plank-check” (Matthew 18:15-17): take some time to reflect and/or write down how you respond to this person, what your issues are that make you react so strongly.
2. Meditate on the person in question:  
Condition – Does the difficulty stem from a medical condition that is causing the issue?  
Crisis – Is the person going through a season of life that is particularly difficult?  
Character – Is something broken inside of the individual that needs to be mentored and developed?
3. Pray for the person
4. Think about a reasonable outcome and plan your conversation to that end.
5. Talk to other leaders for input.



# **SECTION 7**

## Worship, Prayer & Communion



# Worship Time

As we discussed in House Church flow and vision, every gathering will have a time of worship. This is how we begin every gathering after a time of fellowship and dinner. Below you will find ways to host worship times during house gatherings.

1. **Length/Time:** Plan for 1-2 songs (about 10 minutes) and allow Holy Spirit to lead. If this time is extended, let it not be because the worship leader of the group is “feeling it” rather extend it if the group as a whole is embracing a time of intense worship.
2. **Prepare Before the Gathering:** Have songs and lyrics ready before the gathering so everyone can participate.
3. **Worship on YouTube:** Find the week’s House Church Worship Set by accessing the Relentless Church YouTube page by searching “Relentless Church Savannah” on YouTube. If you are not using live worship, you don’t get to decide on songs; those in leadership will put songs on the YouTube channel that fit the culture of our house gatherings.
4. **Live Worship:** All worship leaders for house gatherings must meet one of two requirements. They must be a current worship leader at Relentless or be approved by senior leadership (lead pastor and elders) to lead in your house church.
5. **Worship Culture:** As with everything in this house, unity is always the goal; whether you use YouTube, a Relentless Worship Leader, or a Worship Leader approved by leadership, all must be using songs from our worship library which will be provided to all worship leaders or YouTube Channel managers.

# Leading Prayer Times

As we discussed in House Church flow and vision, every house gathering will have a time of prayer after worship. After worship, transition by saying we are praying over needs, requests, or whatever Spirit leads. Give enough time for anyone and everyone to participate. Don’t assume long silences are the end, give people time to pray as they feel led and break through their own nerves! Below you will find ways to host prayer times during house gatherings.

1. **Designate a starter and finisher:** Before the gathering find someone to begin and another person to end the prayer time. We encourage the House Pastor to set this flow and be the “finisher” that way you can discern proper amounts of time to give to allow anyone to pray. Having someone designated to begin helps break the “awkward silence” in group prayer times.
2. **Ask People to Close in Prayer:** At the end of every house church; we will always end in prayer. Part of discipleship is helping people to grow in their ability to pray out loud in a group setting. Always find someone other than yourself to close the gathering in prayer.



3. **Pray over Prayer Requests:** If people have prayer requests, write them down so that they are actually prayed for. Encourage them to write them on the prayer cards so that leadership can be in agreement for prayer as well as our house prayer team. We take every request before the throne of God in this house!

### **If you need help in ministry calls, prayer meetings, and more.**

We have prepared a resource for you that has scripture ready for a variety of topics! You can find this resource at [relentlesschurchsav.com/resources](http://relentlesschurchsav.com/resources). Listed Below are all the topical prayers in this help manual!

**Prayers for:** Fear, Depression, Unsaved Family/Loved Ones, Guidance, Finances, Salvation, Suicide, Joy, Sexual Perversion, Babies, Holy Spirit Fire, Jobs.

**Scriptures for:** Comfort, Backsliding, Deliverance, Depression, Discouragement, Faith, Falling under Power, Fear, Forgiveness, Guidance, Guilt, Healing, Loneliness, Peace, Prayer, Prosperity,

## **Leading Communion**

Looking for a wonderful means of worshipping as a group? Why not lead your group in sharing the Lord's Supper? This can be a powerful way to experience God together as a group, as you remember what Jesus has done for you on the cross.

### **Steps in Serving Communion**

1. Out of the context of your own experience, say something brief about God's love, forgiveness, grace, mercy, commitment, tenderheartedness or faithfulness. Connect your words with personal stories for your group. For example, "These past few weeks I've experienced God's mercy in the way he untangled the situation with my son." If you prefer, you can write down ahead of time what you want to say.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. \*

"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.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

3. Pray silently, and pass the bread around the circle. While the bread is being passed, you may want to reflect quietly, sing a simple praise song, or listen to a worship song.



**4.** When everyone has received the bread, simply remind them that this represents Jesus' broken body on their behalf. Simply state, "Jesus said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' Let us eat together," and eat the bread as a group.

**5.** Pray silently and serve the cup. You may pass a small tray, serve people individually, or have them pick up a cup from the table.

**6.** When everyone has been served, remind them that the cup represents Jesus' blood shed for them. Simply state, 'The cup of the new covenant is Jesus' blood shed for you. Jesus said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' :Let's drink together.'" Then drink the juice together as a group.

**7.** Conclude by having a time of prayer in thanks to God.

### **Practical Tips in Serving Communion**

1. Prepare the elements simply, sacredly and symbolically.
2. Be sensitive to the timing of when you have communion in your meeting.
3. Break up pieces of cracker or soft bread and use juice instead of wine.
4. Have all elements prepared ahead of time.

### **Here are some other good communion passages that can be used:**

Matthew 26:26-29

Mark 14:22-25

Luke 22:14-20

1 Corinthians 10:16-21

1 Corinthians 11:17-34



# **SECTION 8**

## Outreach & Meeting Needs



# Outreach

We are changing the way we reach the local community at Relentless Church. We want to reach the local community through house churches! As the people in House Churches begin to grow together, leaders are encouraged to raise up people in the gatherings to lead outreach opportunities as you learn the gifts, talents, and passion of those in that particular house church.

Most people that attend your house church will be local to your area in which you live. This gives us a great advantage in hearing the needs of the local community represented in the house churches.

Below are ways to plan outreach events for your house church:

1. Identify the “who” you will reach and the demographics of the community.
2. Identify the “why” behind the project.
3. Assess the gifts and talents of everyone in your group in order to accomplish the task.
4. Partner with local organizations/causes.

We are not doing outreach to promote our church; we are doing the outreach to influence a change in the community as the light of God on the earth. Try to build relationship through every outreach project with the people you are reaching and partnering with!

If your group has an idea that the entire house of Relentless can participate in, let us know!

## Meeting Needs of People in House Churches

Part of the goal of house gatherings is for no one in this house to go unnoticed and this includes meeting needs in the house. Below you will find tips and ways to find/meet needs.

1. **Pay Attention:** You will hear needs in casual convo that appears to be casual, take the opportunity to pray and see if the need can be met.
2. **Ask Your Gathering:** Explain the need, take up an offering that is not a tithe, see if someone has provision for the need.
3. **Ask Leadership and Elders:** if the need is too large for the house gathering to meet; ask leadership to get involved. You are the eyes and ears of the house!

**Let us grow in fellowship and discipleship through House Churches!**

