119 MINISTRIES

"The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below."

Starting A Home Fellowship

People sometimes ask us, "How do you do a home fellowship?" While we are no experts on the subject, we thought we'd take some time to share some of our experiences, some things we've done, as well as point out a few pitfalls to avoid.

This is not to be considered any type of authoritative instruction on how a group should or should not run their home fellowship, nor are we stating that Scripture dictates things be done a certain way. Every group of believers is unique with different needs and thus may need to employ different methods or strategies to meet those goals. We are only providing some of our own experiences and suggestions.

We know that at some point, the disciples of Messiah did gather together in one another's homes. We aren't given any real detail as to these situations beyond being told that they happened and often shared a meal together. In fact, there is little instruction given to us in Scripture regarding how we are to have or govern a home fellowship. The majority of what we are told can be summed up in these verses:

Hebrews 10:23-25

> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The important thing to remember is that it is a gathering of believers coming together to enjoy fellowship, maybe a meal, and for those inclined, to study Scripture. We should always be lifting up, or edifying the body, not tearing it down.

The Father has given us several appointed times, or holy days, on which we are to hold a holy convocation. Often times these are gatherings with like-minded believers, but they are not situations we will be addressing in this teaching. We are talking more about home bible study gatherings and things of that nature, relating some things we have learned through our own experiences in having a home fellowship whether it's just for a bible study or another function.

When Starting A Home Fellowship

Step 1. Define Your Purpose
It is always important for people to know why they are getting together. The purpose behind the gathering dictates, to some degree, the expectations and atmosphere of the event.

For example, it is not uncommon for people to host bible studies during the week, especially in mainstream Christianity. People attending such an event can expect to have a discussion relating to the Bible. Obvious, right? Well, yes and no. As functions within a church, sometimes such events are meant to be used as an evangelistic outreach, other times they are not. It's important to define the parameters and purpose of your home fellowship. Questions that you may want to consider would include:

- Why are we gathering together?
- Is this open to the general public?
- Can anyone invite guests whenever they want to?
- Is this meant to be just a time of fellowship or will there be a time of study? A meal?
- Is this an evangelistic outreach or isn't it?
- Is this just for like-minded people?

Such questions are important to keep in mind because they can greatly impact how the entire group of people interact.

There was a time when we discovered that we hadn't clearly defined the purpose of one of our own home fellowships, at least not to people who had joined since we'd initially started. While those who had been there since the beginning had an idea of the point and purposes behind our Sabbath gatherings, we had not clearly communicated some aspects to everyone who now attends.

Don't get me wrong, this wasn't a negative thing, no problems were caused or anything of that nature. We simply became aware that some may have had the idea that we were using our gatherings as an evangelistic type of outreach, at least in part. We were not. It isn't that we were against it, it just wasn't one of the things we focused on for our own home fellowship. However, this was what some seemed to have thought, which showed us we hadn't been clear in defining the purpose. So, we recommend having a clear purpose and communicating it to all who you invite to your gatherings.

Step 2. Planning, Expectations, and Respect
While defining the purpose does set up expectations, they don't touch on all expectations. Different social situations present different types of expectations. Even as individuals we have our own internal standards on what we expect from others and how they behave, etc. This can be even more true when inviting others into private homes. Remember, a home fellowship is within someone's home. Our homes are our personal spaces and it's wise to keep that in mind when planning a fellowship, inviting others to it, and even if you're a regular attendee. This is especially important if you are not the one hosting the event; everyone needs to remember that they are a guest in the host's home and behave accordingly.

When setting up your own home fellowship, or attending someone else's, it's wise to set up or be mindful of some of the basic necessities for gatherings. Depending upon how the group functions and its intended purpose, here are a few questions you may want to consider:

- What time do we meet?
- Are we sharing a meal or snacks? If so, what should be brought?
- When do we start the study portion of the fellowship?

Now here's an important one:

- What rules or behavioral expectations does the host have for guests in their homes?

In our own experience these are all important questions to keep in mind because they help set the tone and atmosphere. Some individuals are very punctual. For example, if I say I will be somewhere at 2, I like to be there at least 5-15 minutes early. However, that is not a realistic expectation for me to set on others, even if I'm hosting the event. It's good to set up a start time, but we would suggest allowing flexibility in that. Life happens everybody and sometimes people run late, we need to be flexible enough to allow them to run late when life demands it. At the same time, if you're the one running late, it's respectful to let the others know.

In past Shabbat gatherings, we have set a time for everyone to arrive, but also realized that people typically fellowship for 30-60 minutes upon arrival, occasionally even longer! Depending upon your mix of people, you can adjust things as you go, and set a loose schedule for the gathering as to when people arrive, when you eat, and when you begin your actual time of study as applicable. Flexibility is typically appreciated by all, within reason.

Whenever there are new people coming, make sure they are aware of whatever schedule you set up for arrival. If you have a meal they need to know if it's before or after your Bible study, and what time the study portion of your gathering begins in case they don't want to participate in the meal or need to bring snacks for their kids or something. When food is involved, let them know how you work whether you do it potluck style where everyone brings something to share, is everyone on their own or maybe there's a sign-up sheet to bring certain food types. For some groups potlucks work, for others it may not; it all depends upon the needs of the group members. Each group needs to decide for themselves what works best. This may take some trial and error, so again, be flexible.

As mentioned above, one very important question to ask is what the expectations are of the hosting family. Sometimes we have been in groups where we rotated between 5-7 different households and no two were identical. It's very important to be respectful of the "house rules". Some examples would be where one family may ask that your shoes be removed before entering, another may prefer to have at least met everyone before they invite new people into their house. When children are involved, one family may require that young ones are never left alone without supervisions but at another home they may be free to go play. Every family is different and we need to respect the wishes of anyone willing to open up their homes for fellowship.

Respect for one another is so important, and when rules are broken things can get tense or trust can disappear. If breaking the rules, or not respecting their rules becomes a pattern, people can end up pushing the violators away or they may no longer want to host or even participate in a group event. Causing division because of a lack of respect for someone should never be something that occurs.

Remember, these people (possibly your close friends) have opened up their home, their own personal private space to you, for the purpose of fellowship and Bible study. This should be a blessing for them, not a burden. Respect them and their own house rules. We cannot stress it enough. Be a gracious guest, be a gracious host. We are all to be one body and to love one another. Part of loving one another is respecting them.

Step 3. Enjoy
In truth, having a home fellowship should not be burdensome but a joy, something to look forward to. The concept of a home fellowship is simple, it's people that complicate things. The larger the group, the more complicated things can get, even if it's just for the logistics.

Chances are that not everyone in the group will be best of friends; some people will always gravitate toward others due to shared interests, personalities, or even just their age group. This should be okay; we shouldn't let our feelings be hurt if one person is closer to another than they are with us. These things happen; don't let jealousy or your own desires get in the way of sharing in the joy that should be present when the body gets together.

If you are part of a Bible study, encourage discussion and participation by everyone, but don't try to require it. People should share and engage as they feel comfortable doing so.

Once again, we need to bring up respect. Respect one another's thoughts and opinions, even if they differ from your own. You don't have to agree with everything a person says, but you don't need to get into a heated argument about it either. Good healthy discussion benefits everyone, a heated argument breaks down relationships and causes division. There are many potentially divisive topics in Scripture depending on the understanding a person has. For more on having profitable discussions with others, we would recommend our videos Talking Torah, How to Share Truth, and Theological Junk Food.

Remember, no one has all of the answers; no one has everything 100% correct, we all have something to learn. Scripture, like people, has great depth, and we can gain new insights and revelations from studying it together. We are one body, but there are many different parts like Paul mentions in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:12-25).

Just because someone says something you don't necessarily agree with right away doesn't mean you should just automatically dismiss it. Remember Paul's admonition.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21
> Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good.

Enjoy the fellowship that you share with your fellow believers letting the Holy Spirit guide you into Yahweh's truths. Remember we are called to love our neighbors, not despise them.

Some Pitfalls to Avoid

Like you, we are only human which means we make mistakes. Based on some of our own experiences, here are five potential pitfalls we recommend being on the lookout for.

Pitfall 1. Facilitator versus Leader
Every group needs someone to help keep things organized to some degree. However, it can be very easy to have one person become the leader. Leaders are good things, when done properly, but in our experience, it's better to have a group of individuals working together rather than one central authority figure. We have found the model from Scripture to be the best. We go over it in detail in our teaching: The Church: His Model. It is the model we tend to gravitate toward even in our own home fellowships. There isn't one person who's in charge.

When it comes to "running the meeting" so-to-speak, typically the head of the hosting household is the one who facilitates it. There is a difference between a leader and a facilitator; here's a short description for each.

A leader typically sets the tone and purpose then expects others to come along with them; they lead the way and are in charge.

A facilitator helps the group to find the meaning, their own understandings, and they work to get people engaged. They often keep things moving along or on topic.

It's not uncommon for hosting head of households to perform both roles to some degree, especially if the goal is to get through a particular reading or discussion and minimize the rabbit trails.

Many times, when we haven't had someone in our group keeping us on topic, we could spend 30-45 minutes on unrelated sidebars! They're still good discussions, but not quite the Torah discussion we were trying to get through. The person helping to keep the group on task is not always the host, nor should it have to be that way.

A good facilitator can help everyone get more out of discussions than someone simply providing a bunch of answers. Sidebar discussions can be great and lead to some great insights and revelation, so we are not saying they are bad. It's just good to have a facilitator who brings the discussion back to the topics intended when necessary.

Sometimes sidebars prevent a group from finishing a discussion on the entire Torah Portion because they're getting caught up in the rabbit trails. When one of the goals of the group is to get through the whole Torah portion, we found a good facilitator helped to make that possible.

Pitfall 2. A Single Source of Knowledge

What we mean by not having a single source of knowledge is that we shouldn't rely on just one person to have all of the answers. It's great to have questions, and many groups likely have one or two people who are more knowledgeable than the others. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. The problem comes when everyone simply asks their questions to these individuals instead of having a group discussion.

When someone has more knowledge, it's great for them to share it!

The discussion on the question shouldn't always end there. It's definitely easier for us to ask a question, receive an answer, and then move on, but it doesn't necessarily provide the most benefit.

There have been times in our own fellowships where one of the teachers from 119 was there and people basically just asked all of their questions to that one person; and no one else really participated.

Again, yes, it's great to have someone with knowledge, but not a lot of discussion or growth for everyone else was occurring. In a way, it can easily become a one-man show and we can put that person on a pedestal of sorts. That isn't healthy, it's the beginning of making a person an idol, lifting them up. Because we noticed this tendency, others in the group worked hard to take a more participatory role. Once that happened, we started to have a lot more discussion with others' thoughts and ideas being brought up. More participation from everyone vs having a question-and-answer session with a teacher

allowed everyone to go deeper in their own relationship with the Father and in their personal understanding.

We are all on this journey and all accountable for what we know, not what someone else tells us. We need to study and test everything for ourselves to show ourselves as approved.

Pitfall 3. Bringing A Personal Agenda into the Group

We all have our own lives and things we want to accomplish. Many of us have some sort of "baggage" that we carry with us wherever we go. Sometimes that baggage may be interpersonal issues with others in the group, past experiences, or any number of other influencers. All of these things can affect dynamics and discussions in the group.

We need to be careful not to allow such things to become hindrances to the group and the discussions. Sometimes people come in with a personal agenda. It may be something as simple as wanting to prove themselves an equal or they're more knowledgeable than another individual or they want to force their own understandings upon the group. None of these things are beneficial to anyone, not even themselves.

If you have differences in thoughts and understandings, it's great to discuss them; but don't try to "convert" someone or bully them into taking your side. We are one body, but we all have our own individual walks and relationships. It's okay if not everyone agrees with you, if you have the truth then perhaps a discussion will help reveal it to them with the help of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, what you have may not complete fullness of "the truth", but it's your understanding and what the Father has revealed to you up to that point.

A good discussion may help to show you something you didn't know or realize before. If part of the purpose of your home fellowship is to study Scripture together, then you need to go into it with your heart and mind open to what YHWH may want to show you. Many of us in this walk may have once held beliefs we were certain would never change (such as that the Law of God no longer applying to us), yet today, after study and revelation from the Father, we find we have a different perspective.

If we aren't open to what the Father may show us through discussions with another individual, then we are really missing out; and depending on how we interact with others, we may be preventing them from seeing the truth. YHWH is the author and finisher of our faith, it's not us and we should not try to be the Holy Spirit for someone else. Be open to testing everything, even your own beliefs and understandings. We would recommend not "thumping" someone over the head with the Bible to get them to agree with you. You could be doing more harm than good.

Pitfall 4. Handling Disagreements

At one time or another, most of us have been in a discussion with an individual that escalated beyond where it should have. We're all human and we all make mistakes and most of us get offended at one point or another. When these things happen, we should be quick to forgive and slow to anger. If someone offends you, or wrongs you in some way, Scripture tells us to go to that person and discuss it with them. Unsurprisingly, we have found this to be the best method of handling things. The biblical model can be found in Matthew 18.

Matthew 18:15-17

> "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others

> along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

So, if there are issues within your group, they needs to be addressed biblically. We need to work out disagreements and hurts with the people involved; that is the only way things can truly be resolved.

Going only to others outside of the problem, a non-involved party, rarely solves the conflict and can often create additional issues as we'll discuss in the next section.

For more on handling being offended, we recommend our teaching titled It Was A Matter of Self-Offense.

When we allow feelings of contention to fester and grow, we risk fracturing the body and needlessly breaking fellowship. There is already too much divisiveness in what should be the one unified body of Messiah.

Disagreeing with someone's spelling or pronunciation of "the name", which calendar they follow, or how someone worships (whether they sing, dance, etc. or not) does not lead anyone to salvation and the truth of the Word. It doesn't bring any unification at all; most often, it divides.

A final note in this section. Coming out of mainstream Christianity, many of us are conditioned to believe we need to just accept any and everyone into our gatherings. While there is a degree of truth to this, that doesn't mean there are not still requirements for right living.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, if someone in your group (this would need to be a believer) is in sin, we are to go to them about it. There is a protocol to be followed we already mentioned. If the individual refuses to repent and turn from their sin, there are biblical steps to take.

If after following Scripture, the person refuses to turn from their ways out of simple rebellion, there is nothing wrong with asking them not to return. In fact, in such situations it may actually be best to ask them to leave. While we do not want to break fellowship, there are situations where it may be best to do so.

Romans 16:17-18

> I appeal to you, brothers, to **watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them**. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ [Messiah Yeshua], but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

It's important to note that this isn't just a one-time event. If someone has a pattern of this unwanted behavior, then it is probably best to avoid them.

Titus 3:9-11

> But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. **As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him**, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

However, what we are not saying here is that if someone has sin in their lives, and they are learning and striving to follow the Torah but have a particular struggle they have not yet been able to overcome, that you should remove them.

Some like to reference the four requirements found in Acts 15 as justification to cast people out; saying if they're in sin, then they need to be removed from the group. But Acts 15 was about very specific sins that related to false god worship practices. Someone who is caught in an addiction or a habitual sin that can be harder to break is not someone necessarily someone who is worshiping other gods. Acts 15 was about ceasing worshiping other gods immediately, and then go to the synagogue to learn how to live righteously before YHWH. It was not about setting conditions on who could enter into a fellowship or synagogue and who could not.

We all have our struggles, we all sin. If we are working to overcome and no longer commit those sins and we repent, then there is forgiveness and grace afforded us through faith in Messiah. Who are we to withhold the grace of God from another person?

Just because someone has something in their life that they are struggling with does not mean we should break fellowship with them. Messiah dined with sinners on a regular basis. We do not see where he commanded immediate abandonment of sin and condemnation if they committed it again. Yes, he said to sin no more, but that didn't mean they would never sin again and if they did that he would no longer love and fellowship with them.

We cannot be a light showing love for our neighbors if we push them away until they remove all sin from their lives. It would be a very lonely existence for everyone if we were told to no longer fellowship with someone until they were perfectly sinless.

Personal differences and understandings will happen, we are all on a journey. Don't let such things fracture your home fellowship unnecessarily. If you do end up having to part ways, we highly recommend not maintaining an "us vs them" mentality. For more on the subject of unity, please see our teaching titled Echad: The Necessity of Unity. We also strongly recommend studying Ephesians chapter 4 as a reminder about how we are to act as children of YHWH.

Pitfall 5. Gossip and Slander

It's unfortunate that this needs to be listed, but the reality is, we are human and gossip happens, especially if there is conflict between people in the group. Remember how in Step 3 we discussed enjoying your gatherings?

Gossip and talking poorly about others behind their backs (or even if they're around) is one sure way to kill the joy in any fellowship. It only serves to bring division, hurt feelings, and can demonstrate a lack of love for our neighbors which goes back to Pitfall number 4 about handling disagreements. If you are having an issue with someone, then you need to go to that person about it, not just to others inside or outside of the group.

There is a difference between venting to a trusted confidant, discussing a situation seeking the counsel of the elders in your group, and simply talking about someone and problems you're having with them. Having some appointed elders in your group, *those you trust to be upright before God, and will point you back to Scripture whenever possible*, is highly beneficial when internal problems arise. They can help to resolve conflicts and restore peace and unity within the group.

It's also important to remember how we are to always treat our brethren.

Leviticus 19:11-18

> "You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord [YHWH].
>
> "You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord [YHWH].
>
> "You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord [YHWH].
>
> "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord [YHWH].

Ephesians 4:29-32

> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

As a final reminder on this topic, let's reread Hebrews 10.

Hebrews 10:23-25

> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

For more on gossip and related topics, please see our teaching, The Evil Tongue - What Is Lashon Hara?

What We Do or Have Done

Through the years, members of our staff have been involved in different home fellowship groups, and no two are ever alike. There are aspects that are beneficial in each of them, as well as things that were not as beneficial. We are by no means experts nor have everything figured out, but we would like to share some of what we have experienced in case it may be of benefit to you.

Food

Many home fellowships involve food in some way whether it be snacks or sharing a meal. Groups we have participated in typically prefer the potluck method where everyone brings something to share so as

to help defray the costs of feeding everyone. It also brings a variety of food, something for everyone to enjoy or to share a dish they make particularly well.

Personally, a good potluck is one of my favorite things about home fellowship! I love to eat and try new things! For whatever reason, it seems YHWH's people are almost all excellent cooks!

In the past we have eaten meals before our Bible discussion, and that worked well. We also shared meals after the discussion, and that worked well. Other times we have simply had snacks out. Each group needs to figure out what works best for them and go with that. There is no set formula or specific foods or drinks that must be served at each meal.

To help with organizing and coordinate things, we have used private social media groups for ease of communication or group text messages. The group is largely used to announce where the fellowship is meeting that week and what each family is bringing to share so everyone doesn't bring a dessert (*not that I'd complain if they did*).

Facebook groups are also helpful to let others know when they won't be attending, or to make prayer requests, or to post interesting articles or insights relating to whatever reading or study is going on. You can use it however you like, we have found it to be a valuable tool to help keep us connected and organized.

Torah Study and Discussion

The primary purpose for our home fellowships on Shabbat is to discuss Scripture whether it be a weekly Torah Portion reading, a topical study, etc. Members of our groups have done this a variety of ways in the past.

At one point we read the entire weekly Torah Portion aloud, popcorn style meaning we would take turns reading sections of Scripture aloud. Using this format helped those who had not read or listened to the portion prior to the gathering. Since we don't require specific Bible translations to be used, one of the biggest benefits of this method was hearing the various translations. Sometimes what may be confusing in one translation is made clear in another. In that way, reading aloud brought some great insight for individuals and allowed them to grow.

There were multiple occasions where, after reading and studying on my own prior, I would listen to someone read a verse in a different translation and I would see it in a new light or gain a new understanding. There is a drawback to reading aloud though, reading the entire Torah Portion can be time consuming, especially on the weeks where there's a lot to read. If you try this method, you will need to decide if it is something that works for you as a group. Once the reading was completed, we would go back through the Torah Portion chapter by chapter and ask questions or discuss it. Sometimes we would read a section and then discuss it, but often we didn't make it all of the way through the weekly reading then.

Another thing that has been tried is splitting up the men and women for a period of time. We first came together and opened in prayer, but then the men would go upstairs and the women remained downstairs. In this scenario, we were to already have read the Torah Portion individually and we would take this time to discuss any questions or comments we may have had. One of the big advantages to doing this split was that not everyone is comfortable asking questions or speaking in a large group.

Breaking into small groups allows for more intimate conversations, it can foster an environment for mentorship, at least more so than typically occurs with everyone together. I can only speak from my own experience, but with the men, sometimes there were subjects that some of the guys would not want to bring up in mixed company. Splitting up allowed them to be more open about personal or gender specific topics and even just questions about how to be a better father or spiritual leader in their home. In this way, splitting up was a huge benefit to them. Similarly, some of our youth, such as my own daughter, enjoyed the time split apart because she could ask questions, or hear discussions about topics she wouldn't necessarily hear in mixed company.

After both the men and women finished their separate discussions, we would come back together and discuss any unresolved questions or share some great insights and discussion points we'd had.

The down side to that method, though, is that sometimes great points would be forgotten when we came back together. Sometimes there wasn't as much discussion about things both genders would benefit from and we'd not even realize it because the men are so different from the women and see things differently. So there are trade-offs; again each group needs to decide what is best for themselves.

Another way of doing things is to not read the Torah Portion aloud, but to come together with an expectation that everyone has already read it. Doing this uses the time once taken up by reading out loud to be used for our discussion and questions. It's easier to get through the entire Torah Portion, or other study material, chapter by chapter while still allowing for good discussions on each section. This isn't perfect either, of course, as not everyone has read everything beforehand.

Also, if a group is a bit too large, it may hinder some from asking their questions. Not everyone wants to ask questions in front of such a large number of people; like those who have a bit of a stage fright. It can also be easy to get caught up on a bunch of rabbit trails which makes it harder to get back to the Torah Portion itself. This is where a good facilitator may step in to help keep everyone on track.

In groups where a meal is shared after the discussion, and the discussion went long that day, sometimes some of the women get up to heat their food up or put it all out so that it's accessible once it's time to eat. When this happens, they can miss out on some of the discussion. So, like anything else, there are pluses and minuses. Just go with what works best for your particular mix of people.

Children

The final topic we want to address is children. When we are parents, we are instructed to teach our children the Torah, to help them grow up learning the ways of YHWH and prepare them for living in a fallen world. When it comes to a fellowship group, having young ones around can create other challenges. At times we have worked to include the children in our discussions, but we've also had it where some parents were designated to watch over them while the adults had their discussions. At one point when we had quite a few small children and we were reading the portions out loud, we would have all of the small children sit quietly on the floor between us. Some would color, others would draw, or maybe play with a toy. This way they were hearing the Word while learning to be respectfully quiet and calm while others were speaking and the Word of God was being read.

Once we were finished praying and reading out loud, we would ask if any of the youth had questions. Some families required their older kids to ask questions, and this would be the time they did so. Once all of the youths' questions were answered, they would then be released to go do other things and then the "adult" discussion would begin.

Remember the house rules we discussed earlier? Well, here is the place where that would come into play. At some houses the kids would be required to sit while the Torah Portion was read, but at others they were permitted to play outside. It all depended upon the host's preference. As parents, it's always a good idea to keep an eye on your own children instead of forcing others to do it for you unless there is some prior agreement.

Conclusion

To recap, when it comes to starting a home fellowship, there are not any hard rules that must be followed. Every group is different because every group has unique individuals in it. Just as there aren't any specific rules to create one or that dictates how you manage yours, there isn't any one specific thing that will make your home fellowship grow either. Ultimately, what you need is a love for YHWH, love for your neighbor, an open heart with an open mind, and a desire to continue to grow. Trust that the Father will bring into your circle those He wants there.

If you are planning to start a home fellowship, or to join an existing one, there are a few things to consider and figure out.

- You need to know the purpose of the group (What are you, or they, working toward or looking to accomplish from the fellowship?)
- How do you want the group to function or how does it function (What are the logistics such as time and place, food or not, etc., and social expectations?)
- Does it bring joy and edification of the body and the Creator, or is it a stress and something you dread doing or attending?

From our own experiences, there are also five primary pitfalls that you want to try to avoid. If you can't avoid them, then it's important to know how to handle them when they come up.

These pitfalls are:

- Having a group leader versus a group facilitator
- Having a single source of knowledge
- Bringing a personal agenda to the group and striving to force it on others
- Mishandling disagreements
- Allowing gossip and slander to occur

These are 5 important areas that need to be monitored closely within your group whether you're helping facilitate it or if you're simply attending. If you start to see these types of issues occurring, make sure you bring it up to the group and try to stop them before they take hold and potentially tear the group apart.

In the end, your home fellowship will be what you make it to be. Strive to keep YHWH at the center, hold fast to Scripture, and test everything to it. That is really all that any of us can do.

While we are not experts, we have been a part of a number of groups over the years. This has been a bit of what we have learned through our own experiences. We pray that we have provided some value to you if you are seeking to start, or participating in, a home fellowship group.

Need help finding someone in your area? We'd recommend checking out the Fellowship Finder on our website.

We hope that this message has blessed you.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom.

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries
WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net
TWITTER: www.twitter.com/119Ministries#