

An Introductory Word

The House Church: A Model for Renewing the Church was first published in 1988 by Herald Press. Since then, the years have brought about significant challenges and changes within Christ's church. As a result, in 2009, a revision is being released as an eBook titled, *The House Church Book: Non Emerging New Testament Prototype*.

One of the new subjects being addressed is the rise of postmodern philosophy that is directly influencing our way of thinking about New Testament theology. A second is the emergence of the "emergent church" that challenges old ways of doing church and promotes new interpretations of Christianity. Because of these realities, I thought it helpful to make Chapter 9 available early on, even though it is in fact the final chapter. However, the overriding emphasis in the revised edition remains the quest for the New Testament house churches and how they inform us in the twenty-first century. Chapter 1 will become available soon, followed by each succeeding chapter.

New Testament prerequisites for today's church life will be studied in a section titled "The Pentecostal Plumline" based on the Acts. These prerequisites can easily be used to measure the life of our own churches. And what does the New Testament say about the liturgy of worship and the functioning by personal giftedness; about servant leadership and the ministry of women; about Christianity as a renewal movement and about backsliding and heresy? Also included is an update about today's worldwide house church movement that is producing effective renewal and astounding growth.

Christians today are still stunned to learn that every apostolic letter in the New Testament was written to a house church. What were those households like? What were their strengths and weaknesses, and why did they so wondrously succeed? In the revision, we will survey the quintessential stages of the New Testament household communities to grasp their uniformity within diversity—revealing an equalization trajectory of gender equality, generic giftedness, and corporate ministry.

The New Testament Christian gatherings may rightly be called house churches because the first century Christians met in "the church in your home" to do their ministry of worship, teaching and hospitality; and from their home base did the work of evangelism. In today's church life, any gathering in a home to share happy times, personal experiences and private interpretations may not be worthy of the name house church, since a facile and frivolous group may only reach the level of obtuseness and not meet the prerequisites required of a true New Testament house church.

What I have written reflects a serious and deliberate attempt to build a vital relational theology on an evangelical revelational foundation. The need to balance the vertical theology of revelation with a horizontal theology of relationships informs the content throughout this book.

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