

Missionary Families of Christ

HAVING A LIFE-GIVING HOUSEHOLD

Households are small pastoral groupings of members. They are *essential* to the life and mission of our community. They are where members are cared for, and where members continue to grow in the Lord.

A household is led by a leader assigned to it. However, every member of the household needs to take responsibility for the good conduct of the household, and help ensure that it becomes life-giving for everyone. If there is anything amiss, household members should speak up and discuss the problem, and together, under the direction of the leader, take steps to change the situation. The leader, being a servant, must be open and even desirous of such inputs, as a way of ensuring that the household members themselves find the household life-giving.

What makes for a life-giving household? **First** are the **technical** aspects.

- (1) It must be regular. Household meetings are never cancelled, unless getting to the meeting becomes physically impossible, such as in the case of flooding.
- (2) It must be on time. There is an arrival time, and there is a starting time, about 15 to 30 minutes after. Members should strive to be at the meeting venue at the arrival time. This gives some leeway to unexpected traffic.¹ If one arrives early, then all the better, so that there is some fellowship time. One does not arrive and immediately jump into the worship portion. Further, the meeting should start on time at the agreed-on starting time, or at most just 5 or 10 minutes later, even if not everyone has arrived.
- (3) It must have the three basic ingredients of worship, discussion/sharing and fellowship.² It must follow the prescribed times for each aspect. Worship is about 30 minutes, discussion/sharing is for one hour, fellowship is for 30 minutes to an hour. Overall it should be from two to three hours.
- (4) It must NOT become a service meeting.³ There are other designated times for service meetings.
- (5) It must end on time, and not too late in the evening (if it is on an evening).⁴ A household meeting certainly should not spill over into the next day (that is, after midnight).⁵

In all the above, the household leader must be the one to ensure these happen. Members who violate the above must be reminded and encouraged. If they continue to do so, they must be corrected more forcefully.

¹ When someone is late, he often says it is because of the traffic. Indeed there was traffic, but if you ask him what time he left his home, you will see that he left already late.

² Unless it is just a time for fellowship, which normally happens once a quarter.

³ If there is an urgent need, the fellowship portion can be turned into a service meeting.

⁴ For example, 8pm to 11pm. If members can meet earlier and end earlier, all the better.

⁵ When it is already the time of fellowship, those who need to leave earlier than the rest should feel free to do so.

Secondly, what makes for a life-giving household is the **fraternal** aspect. The household members are brothers and sisters in Christ. They are journeying together along the path of Christ, which is the way of holiness. They have a responsibility, as they themselves grow in the Lord, to help the others grow as well.⁶

A relationship as brethren in Christ can mean a number of things.

- (1) It is a relationship of love. Household members are to love each other as Christ has loved them.
- (2) There is fraternal correction. Such is not just left to the household leader, but everyone else takes responsibility to correct whatever is amiss.
- (3) It is a relationship of friendship. Household members should desire to grow in their friendships and to the ties that bind. It should be such that they look forward to being together for the household meeting, and eagerly anticipate it.
- (4) It is a relationship of loyalty. Household members guard their hearts from anger, resentment or the like. If there is any personal problem, it is resolved quickly.
- (5) It is a relationship of trust. Household members trust each other enough to become vulnerable, such that they can openly share their lives, especially their challenges and shortcomings.⁷ The principle of confidentiality is to be strictly observed.

Thirdly, what makes for a life-giving household is the **pastoral** aspect. We have households so that we will grow in the Lord. The household, normally being held in the church that is the home, is a school of spirituality.

Thus a number of elements are important.

- (1) Worship should be alive and vibrant. Household members must participate actively in the singing and the prayers. They should be open to receiving and sharing the word from the Lord. They must have the faith to know that they are in the presence of Jesus, and accord him the praise and worship that is his due.
- (2) There should be serious discussion and sharing. Normally the men meet separately from the women.⁸
 - (a) For the first year, the discussions follow a specific track, based on the teaching courses that are taken up.
 - (b) For the succeeding years, there is flexibility as to content. It can be Bible sharing, personal sharing, or discussion of a particular topic.

⁶ While the household leader is the basic pastor, every member, sharing in the priestly ministry of Christ, ministers to everyone else.

⁷ It is not necessary to bare all secrets.

⁸ This is very important. Only in rare times should the men meet together with the women for this portion. This is basically so that the men will grow together as men of God, and the women as women of God. Men and women have different needs, and different dynamics in relationships. Further, this allows them to take up different topics for discussion and sharing.

(c) For discussion of topics, there are many resources available. The Home Office normally comes up with household topics for the two meetings in a month. In addition, the books and writings of the Servant General can form topics that can be taken up.

(3) The household leader must strive to be a true servant leader.⁹

Finally, since the household meeting is basically a spiritual activity, there is the needed **spiritual** preparation. All members of the household, especially the leader, should spend some time, before arriving at the household venue, praying to God about the meeting.

(1) Ask God to bind any spirits that are not of Him, and to send His angels to stand guard along your way and over the venue.

(2) Ask for wisdom and discernment.

(3) Ask for the grace by which every member of the household will be joyful and loving.

There are many life-giving elements in community. There is our personal prayer and Bible reading. There are the many teachings, formation tracks, and leaders training. There are the assemblies and other activities. But the household is unique in that the receivers are also the givers, and vice versa. The household is thus the basic cell of community—for formation, for fraternal relationships, for moving the whole community forward.

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⁹ Let your other “bible” be the books of the SG on *Servant Leadership*.