

Ten Years in a House Church

by Jim and Cathy Mellon

From mega church to home church -- find out how and why this couple made the switch.

Ten years ago, I asked the Lord a question: “What is the church?” I asked the question partly because of a stirring in my spirit, but also because of the fact that I was part of the leadership of a thousand plus member church with a million dollar a year budget. Although our church and Christian school generated a million a year in income, money was tight. When we didn’t have the money to help a member family through a rough time at Christmas (the husband out of work) I said to myself, “There is something wrong with this picture!” Hence the question!

I read the New Testament again, especially the book of Acts, with new eyes. I read scriptures such as these:

- *Acts 4:34a* – “There were no needy persons among them.”
- *Romans 16:5* – “Greet also the church that meets at their house” (Priscilla and Aquilla).
- *Philemon 2b* – “To the church that meets in your home” (Philemon).
- *2 Thessalonians 3:7-9* – “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this not because we do not have a right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.”
- *1 Corinthians 9:18* – “What then is my reward? Just this, that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.”
- *Acts 10:33-34* – “I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. For you yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.”

Reading these and many other verses led us to resign our leadership position and embark on a journey called “house church.”

Instead of “going to church,” we started to “be the church” that meets in a home. As time went on, we realized that a house church movement was appearing on a national level. This seemed to us to be confirmation that God is doing something with this model of church on a larger scale. In America, this modern day model of house church is only in its first generation.

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A short time later, we started networking with house churches in different parts of Texas. We read books like “Open Church” by Jim Rutz and “Where Do We Go From Here” by Ralph Neighbor. I went to a house church conference in California. On my flight home, we were flying across the desert and the Lord spoke to me. He said the pioneers had to travel across the desert and over the mountains to discover and settle beautiful California. He said, “That’s how it will be with the pioneers of the modern house church movement.” It will be exciting, but a tough trip: exhilarating, but sometimes confusing. Sometimes we may get lost on our journey, but we will get there.

Ten years later, we still travel the road. We have a network of home churches in central Texas. Because we use 80% of our income for benevolence and missions, we support 10 local ministries and have planted 220 churches in India. Not bad for a small band of about 100 pioneers! The book of Acts ends with the apostle Paul preaching and teaching in his own rented house (Acts 28:30-31). Could we now be picking up where the book ended 2000 years ago?

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