

## **KEEP CELL GROUPS AND HOUSE CHURCHES ALIVE WHEN AN ELEPHANTINE CHURCH STARTS NEARBY**

The Lord Jesus loves elephantine churches and rabbitine churches alike. Both big and little churches have advantages and inconveniences, strengths and weaknesses. Large congregations often start cell groups as a way to win the lost, make new disciples, and train new leaders.

Tiny churches that learn together to obey Jesus' commandments, usually win new believers, grow rapidly, experience spiritual joy and power, and start many new house churches. Eventually, house churches will occasionally enjoy coming together in big gatherings.

Big congregations that have cell groups must find ways to keep those cell groups active, and ways to get members and attenders to participate in cell groups. When house churches begin coming together in big gatherings, they must find ways to keep their house churches active.

Some of the following suggestions might prove helpful to keep old and new believers active in their cell groups or house churches. Ask the Lord Jesus for wisdom, discuss these and other ideas, then lay plans, and coach group leaders accordingly, all the while listening for the Spirit's direction.

1. Hold big gatherings but not too often. If believers and seekers abandon their cell groups or forsake their house churches, then hold big gatherings less often. Some movements have folk go to small groups and to big groups on alternate weeks. Others hold big gatherings monthly or quarterly.
2. Celebrate the Lord's Supper and hold discipleship instruction mainly in cells and house churches. In this way, believers will keep on experiencing mutual love and the Presence of Christ in face-to-face fellowship.
3. Keep cells and house churches foremost, even in big gatherings. Hear reports from small groups, mention the groups often, have coaches and cell group leaders teach and preach on small group life, ministry, multiplication and mission.
4. Have currently active group leaders lay hands on newly-appointed cell group leaders and house church shepherds, in big gatherings. Doing so will increase respect for small group leaders and shepherds, and encourage others to seek coaching to start and lead more new groups.
5. Conduct baptisms outside of chapels or big church buildings. Let cells and house churches baptize new believers. Several cells and churches may hold baptism together at a same venue.
6. If your ministry or denomination has clergy, then have these publicly authorize cell leaders and house church shepherds to baptize, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and to teach the Bible.
7. Provide most pastoral training on-the-job for those individuals who start and lead cell groups or house churches. Maintain a decentralised structure, officially enroll leaders in extension courses, workshops and seminars, and coach them, providing lessons that meet the urgent needs of groups and churches.
8. When other missions, ministries or denominations preach against having cell groups, against starting house churches, or against coaching non-ordained leaders, then help all small group leaders and members to be ready to give firm, gentle, biblical answers.
9. Keep all methods, practices and activities simple, affordable, available and culturally suitable, so that any new leader may imitate them in their new groups and churches, teaching others to do the same, in turn.