



What did the first Ekklesia look like?

Acts 2:37-45

All topics that Jesus considered important and about which He spoke are discussed in the early church. In Disciple 2 you read about walking with God. You will see the points discussed in the first church.

Peter speaks about:

Repentance and faith and baptism in water and the Spirit.

When the first believers come together in the houses, we see a number of characteristics. The teaching of the apostles which is as a foundation of these house churches. In other words, the early church was clearly taught about the Kingdom of God and the King of that Kingdom. The apostles teach the first church to:

1. Pray together.
2. Give
3. Love each other.
4. Eat together and celebrate the sacraments. When they lived this together, the good news continued.
5. Make new disciples.

The first congregation in Thessalonica.

1 Thess 1:2-10

Read this text and compare it with the 8 points from Acts 2.

Starting a house church "Ekklesia":

Step 1. The beginning of the first church, the cornerstone

➤ *Matt 16:15-20*

Peter answers the question who Jesus is: "Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of the living God".

Jesus says that on this confession the church will be built. In the confession we see that Peter calls Jesus the Messiah. Messiah means: the anointed King. The first church has the identity of Jesus who is King, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This church is given the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. The key is to bind and to loose.

In other words, the church is going to do exactly what Jesus did. Jesus spoke to many people about forgiveness, healing, deliverance and eternal life. This changed many lives. People who had long been bound by sin received forgiveness for their sins. They became free from demonic bondage and were healed. Thus the Kingdom of God becomes visible.

The church will have the same "DNA" that Jesus taught and demonstrated.

Step 2. Find a man or woman of peace

➤ *Luke 10:5-11*

After training the disciples, Jesus lets them go to various cities. The first task is to find a home with a person with an open heart to the good news. People who want to listen to your words. Jesus tells the disciples to stay in that house.

The word used here in Greek is "oikios", often translated as house. However, oikios is much more than a house. It is a group of people, for example a family or a circle of acquaintances, a community.

God has always wanted people to live and work in relationship with each other. Love is the essence of God and He desires to see that reflected in these communities. The disciples are sent to bring this DNA, the love, into the communities. These communities can be found everywhere. In your street, at work, your sports club, in the government. You can find these





principles throughout the Bible. The church is not formed in a building, but in your living environment! In other words, never think of the church as a building of stones that we go to worship God. Think of a home church as a group of people gathering from anywhere to meet, worship, and learn from God.

For further study on Oikos, see man of peace, seminar 4.2.

Step 3. Forming a community of faith where the DNA of Jesus is formed

➤ *Acts 2:37-47*

The first church met in two places. The temple was for the large gatherings and the houses for the small gatherings.

Four stages of building a healthy community:

Phase 1. Love

The community is formed as a bond of brothers and sisters, a family, with God as the heavenly father. God's love is the basis for forming a community that loves, respects, trusts and builds up one another.

So a community of faith is formed by people who love God and one another.

Unconditional love comes from God. He loves man but hates sin. Sin destroys, causes damage and bondage. The community can help to show and experience that unconditional love. This is not the responsibility of the leader, but of every person in the group. Love shows through acceptance of the person whether old, young, man, woman, rich, poor, highly educated, or low on the social ladder. It doesn't matter what you do or have done. You are welcome by God and the community. Not because of what you have done, good or bad, but because of who you are - a child of God.

Especially for people with feelings of rejection or those who suffer from fear of failure, sin and low self-esteem, it is important to experience a warm nest. But also for busy people with great responsibilities, the warm nest is an oasis of peace and a place to relax. Having time for each other is an important factor. The first home community shared their home, but also their food. Love meals were very normal.

Interest in each other is an important part, so you can empathize with each other.

Phase 2. Restore

Serve 5 and 6 deals with the restoration, deliverance and healing of man. The house church can play an important role in this. Many people are injured by life's experiences. Injured people have a bad image of themselves and, as a result, they injure others. The spiral of destruction can be broken by the word of God.

In the house church, everyone helps to encourage each other, and the value that each one has will be restored.

When you have lost a loved one or gone through a divorce, home church members can provide a warm relationship. Caring for each other, even outside the home church meeting, is an important part of recovery.

➤ *John 1: 7-9*

Confessing your sins can take place in the home church and makes you free.

Telling each other the truth in love helps us to see and adjust our weaknesses.

A person who values and loves himself can give love to others much more easily.

Phase 3. Training

The first thing Jesus did in His ministry on earth is to choose people to equip.

The apostles, including Peter, Paul, and John, also tell us that they go out with their disciples. We know that many women also associate with Jesus and play an important role in His ministry.

The house church is an ideal place for encouraging as well as training disciples.

It is important for the leaders not only to address these followers, but also to activate them. For example, by teaching the lessons about the Kingdom of God, disciples are equipped to reach others and to explain and demonstrate the Kingdom of God to them. Use Follow and Disciple to equip and release people in your home church to reach others.

The house church is also a good place to exercise the talents of the house church members. Release people to be hospitable, cook food, prepare and lead worship, share the word of God with the group, and lead prayer.

It is important to help your disciples in what they are going to do. Don't just throw them into the cold water, help them prepare and make sure there is time to evaluate.

Phase 4. Multiplication

➤ *Acts 1:8*

Just before returning to the Father, Jesus repeats His commandment to go into the world. In Genesis 1 we see that God created everything so it can multiply. Everything that is alive has a system in itself to multiply. The disciples were commissioned and the Holy Spirit went with them for multiplication.

In the beginning of Acts, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the apostles remain in Jerusalem. But after many attacks on the young house churches, believers left Jerusalem. They went to the neighboring lands and everywhere they shared the good news and started house churches. They not only shared their message, they also went to make and equip disciples.

➤ *Acts 16:6-11*

Paul leaves for new areas and tries to share his good message. Sometimes the door stays closed and he meets people who wouldn't listen or they even act aggressively. Still, Paul continues to bring the good news. Sometimes he gets a vision, sometimes he hears a voice, sometimes the Holy Spirit prevents him, but he does not lose heart. He is eager to reach the Gentiles.

In the house church it is important to send some people out to more distant areas. Or if the group becomes too large in one house, start a new group with a number of them in their neighborhood.

EXERCISE:



Start praying with other believers about where you can start your Ekklesia. It is wise to do that in your own home; invite people and put what you have learned into practice.

If you can't do it in your own home, look for the man or woman of peace. Go to their home regularly and let them invite others too.

