

ROLE OF A HOUSE CHURCH LEADER

Rad Zdero, Ph.D.

As house church or small group leaders, our job is not simply to organize a weekly meeting, but rather to build community between members, facilitate spiritual growth, and create an inviting atmosphere for newcomers. Our job is not unlike that of the apostle Paul, who wrote, “we delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thes 2:8). The house church elder has two roles, namely that of Shepherd and Strategist.

*****Principle. What is common sense *must* become common practice*****

Shepherd (nurture, protect, “heart”)

- **Set tone, boundaries, safety**
 - set out protection for people in the group
 - e.g. at the start of each new group or when new people join, I usually state that (1) anyone can say anything but with respect, (2) group confidentiality
- **Stimulate Relationships**
 - bad leader – creates a group whose primary relationship is with him/her
 - good leader – stimulates relationships b/w members
 - e.g. test – from time to time I’ll leave the room during group to see if conversation continues
- **Resolve Conflicts**
 - do not need to be ‘police’ but will need to be arbitrator from time to time...encourage people to resolve it themselves first
 - e.g. I have had to ask someone to leave a group b/c they were way too disruptive continually
- **Pray for People**
 - nurture an environment of prayer as far as the group depends by praying one-on-one, during group time, and encouraging others to pray
 - e.g. seekers group – I had quiet time at end of group as opportunity to pray...some started to...
 - e.g. shy people - I ask people before hand to if they’re willing to open/close in prayer or even the day or week before
- **Be Aware of Special Needs**
 - be aware of people and their individual needs and wants
 - e.g. intellectual needs – learning tracks – resource individuals with books, seminars, videos, etc
 - e.g. physical – if the person is a shut in or in a wheel chair you can still involve them greatly (I had a friend host our group in his home because he was in a wheel chair and was shut in during cold months)
 - e.g. emotional – does someone need professional counseling that you can’t give?

Strategist (vision, direction, "head")

- **Conduct, Lead, and Organize the House Church or Cell group**
 - can share facilitation, it is important that the HC leader actually lead...primary leader needs to be there, otherwise nothing will get done or way too slowly...don't be afraid to lead and make decisions
 - BUT, look for opportunities to involve people - we remember 10 % of what we read, 20 % of what we hear, 30 % of what we see, 50 % of what we hear and see, 70 % of what we say ourselves, 90 % of what we do ourselves (Wolfgang Simson, *Houses that Change the World*, p.86)
- **Mentoring or Peer Mentoring with House Church co-leader**
 - right from get go, start 'training' your junior co-leader...look for delegation opportunities...
 - get together regularly to talk about, plan, and pray for the group, pray for each other...
 - e.g. alternate leading the discussions from week to week (or part of the evening) or calling or organizing
- **One-on-One Mentoring of Others in the Group**
 - need mentors: non, new, or growing Christians, people in pain, emerging leaders
 - this doesn't have to be only you, can be your co-leader or someone else in the group
 - e.g. I had 2 mentors/spiritual dads who met weekly with me for 2 years and 4 years, and I have mentored a number of folks too over extended periods of time, several months to years
- **Identify Emerging Leaders**
 - right from your first get together, look for potential leaders
 - not necessarily the most vocal or gifted person, but rather **F.A.T.**
 - Faithful (keen and eager, they fulfill their promises, consistently do prep work if required)
 - Available (make time to be there and get involved in other ways...not the person who is last to arrive and first to leave)
 - Teachable (open, not big complainer, willing to try things, learner's attitude)
- **"Open Chair" – new people, evangelism**
 - be open and deliberate about inviting new people and encourage others in the group to do so
 - model it, pray about it, encourage/talk about it
 - e.g. some groups literally have an open chair during their time as a reminder, and spend some time together to pray for the new person who will one day fill it
- **Know when to Multiply your group, Plant a new group, or End your group**
 - is your group willing to multiply or plant? what are the obstacles?
 - multiply or plant when...
 - group gets big (20 or so)
 - when there are 1 or 2 who want to plant a new group (at work or school or neighbourhood)...encourage them...commission them officially during the group time to start a new one...pray for them
 - in some cases it is best to end your group temporarily or permanently, if...
 - group gets stale/boring or is together way too long...usually if a group does not multiply/plant in 1-1.5 yrs, it probably never will

About the Author

Rad Zdero, Ph.D., earned his doctorate in Mechanical Engineering from Queen's University in Kingston, Canada. He has been starting and leading small groups and house churches for 15 years and is currently part of a team starting up 'House Church Canada', which is intent on birthing a multiplying network of house churches in the greater Toronto area. He is also the author of *The Global House Church Movement*, available from William Carey Library, www.WCLbooks.com

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