

# WHY THE HOUSE CHURCH

A Bible Study by Dr. Victor Choudhrie

Dr. Choudhrie is an extremely well known surgeon in India, who the Lord challenge in 1993 to lay down his professional life to establish the church in Madra Pradesh. Starting from scratch, the Lord has prospered the work over the past 7 years to where it now represents around 3000 churches in homes with an estimated 50,000 people involved. Next issue, Lord willing, we will look in greater depth at how church planting movements such as this one are initiated and continued.

- a. Pentecost took place in a house. (Acts 2:1- 2)
- b. The Last Supper took place in a house (Luke 22:7-13)
- c. J Most of the miracles took place in homes.
- d. The wedding at Cana took place in a house.
- e. Jesus taught in many homes.

"Greet the church in thy house" was a common greeting of Saint Paul to various House Churches started by him (1 Cor. 16:19; Col. k. 4:15; Philemon :2, Rom. 16:5 and so on). He visited house to house and taught them everything (Acts 20:20.).

The House Church is the original New Testament Church. The disciples went to the temple regularly and taught the people, bringing the seekers to their homes. They gave them food and disciplined them (Acts 2:42). Soon they were jailed and punished by the temple authorities and banned entry into the temple but by

then they had reaped a large harvest and many House a. Churches had been established. "And the Lord added to the Church daily those who were saved." (Acts 2:46-47, 4:1-4).

The intimate friendly environment of a home provided the ideal situation for interaction, resulting in the rapid conversion and maturing of believers into discipl-ers. Multiplication of discipl-ers led to explosive growth of the church (Acts 6:1).

The informal environment of the House Churches gave opportunity for rapid maturing of "lay leaders" like Stephen who was the first Christian martyr and Philip who was the first evangelist to evangelize Samaria. The net result of handing over of the baton to the seven Greek speaking ordinary men resulted in the conversion of priests which in turn caused exponential growth of the church. (Acts 6:7.)

The rapid growth of House Churches (Acts 8:3) resulted in severe persecution of the believers and Peter ended up behind bars. The Church gathered in the house of Mary the mother of John Mark for an all night prayer meeting which led to the dramatic release of Peter from jail. (Acts 12:5; 12).

There was no formal Sunday service. The meeting could last all day and all night. Believers therefore came equipped with lamps for such an eventuality. (Acts 20:7).

Signs and wonders including raising the dead Dorcus took place in homes.

Baptism of the household of Cornelius and the Philippian jailer took place in their homes

## HISTORY

It is significant that other than teaching and confrontation with the temple authorities by Jesus and the disciples, no noteworthy activity, not even worship or prayer, took place in the temple precincts.

In the church's first three hundred years the entire Roman empire was Christianized.

The church was severely persecuted until 310 AD when King Constantine became Christian and built the first Cathedral. Paid clergy were employed, one of whom later became the Pope. Constantine converted "Daily Christians" into "Sunday Christians" by declaring Sunday a holiday. He also gave Christmas and Easter festivals to Christians. Constantine was only a nominal Christian as he built other pagan temples as well. Later a spate of cathedral building took place in Europe with domination of the professional priesthood, resulting in the demise of the House Church movement. The church then went into dark ages for more than a thousand years, looting and killing ordinary believers. It is estimated that the established church killed 25 million people calling them "heretics." The church today is truly founded on the blood of the martyrs. No well meaning man has done more damage to

Christianity than the king Constantine. But for him the world would have been evangelized a long time ago.

In the last three hundred years of active Protestant missionary activity in India, we have only reached 2.5% with lukewarm Christianity. It is said that in the best churches in India there are not more than 2 or 3% of Great Commissioners, whereas in the persecuted Chinese House Church model there may be as many as 80%. What can God do with lukewarm Christians except spit them out. In effect there are hardly any quality Christians in India today.

## OPTIONS

India lives in Villages. There are six hundred thousand villages. Additionally most of our cities are a conglomeration of villages. As of today we need at least one million (Ten Lakh) churches. Many villages are big and have many castes living in them and therefore the real number is substantially higher. No one, not even Uncle Sam has the capacity to build that number of church buildings. Nor do we have the capacity to maintain them even if someone gave them free to us. But we don't really need them as all the houses we need are already available to us in villages and in the cities. Being the Bride of Christ, the house churches rapidly multiply so we do not need big houses. Finance is also not a problem as most House Churches run on "low" or "no" budget. There are simply no maintenance bills and salaries to be paid. So instead of frequently sermonizing on stewardship and tithing, the leaders can focus on completing the task of the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations. (Matt.28:18-20.)

If our Lord is willing to be born in a cowshed then where is the problem with the humble House Church? The first worship of Jesus took place in a cowshed church.

We also need hundreds of thousands of Pastors/Elders for the church who cannot be produced in seminaries but can easily be equipped in the House Churches.

A House Church does not produce lukewarm Christians but quality Christians who quickly Learn to be fruitful (Acts 16:5.) This is because peoples of other faiths e. f. .. House church meeting at a park under the gazebo. We all know that the congregational model has failed and the denominational model creates division within the Body of Christ. The empty cathedrals in Europe are silent witnesses to the barrenness of the church. Why continue to imitate a failed model?

The seminaries equip pastors for a single congregation while house churches follow the 222 formula (2 Tim. 2:2). They equip disciples to plant multiplying churches by multiplying leadership.

The House Churches are fulfilling the mandate of our Lord and reaching the "ends of the earth" Therefore, God is blessing them. Barrenness is a curse in the Bible. Therefore, The Bride of Christ must reproduce, multiply and fill the earth. The House Church is by nature an immensely fertile model. find it easier to go to a friendly house than a formal Sunday church service which in any case does not cater to them. (Mark 11:17.)

Let us pray to the Lord of harvest that He will send forth His laborers into every village and every colony of every town and city to establish His Church.