

The House Church Movement

- I. There is a difference between churches that meet in houses and "house churches."
 1. Many of the early churches met in homes (**Rom 16:5; 1Co 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 1:2**).
 - A. There are advantages to meeting in a house.
 - i. It's more personal.
 - ii. It can be more welcoming.
 - iii. It's cheaper.
 - B. A church meeting in a house is fundamentally no different than a church meeting in its own dedicated building.
 - C. The difference is only in size and atmosphere, but not in substance.
 2. Most "house churches" are not churches.
 - A. Most "house churches" are organized by some unbaptized, unordained guy with a bright idea.
 - B. If a church is not constituted by a validly ordained pastor, then it is merely a Meetup group and not a church.
 - i. The only way a man can be a validly ordained minister is to have been ordained by a validly ordained minister (**1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6; Tit 1:5; 2Ti 2:2**).
 - a. The Holy Ghost makes a man a pastor (**Act 13:2 c/w Act 26:16 c/w Eph 3:7; Act 20:28**).
 - b. No man takes this honour unto himself (**Heb 5:4**).
 - ii. Ordained ministers (**Act 21:8 c/w Eph 4:11**) start churches (**Act 8:5,12 c/w Act 9:31**).
 - iii. Ordained ministers add members to churches through baptism (**Act 2:41-42,47**).
 - iv. Ordained ministers ordain other men as ministers and send them to oversee churches (**Act 14:23; 1Ti 1:3; Tit 1:5**).
 - v. If a "house church" was not started by an ordained minister, then it's not a church.
- II. Many "house church" advocates despise the "institutional church."
 1. Jesus built a *church*, not a "small group."
 2. Jesus' church is an "institutional church."
 - A. Jesus *built* His church (**Mat 16:18**).
 - B. Build v. - 4. *fig.* a. With reference to immaterial objects: To construct, frame, raise, by gradual means (anything that is compared to an edifice, as a philosophical system, a literary work, a reputation, an empire). Often with up. In religious use, after N.T., *to build up* (the Church, an individual) = to edify (also absol.). *to build up* (any one's health, strength, etc.): to establish it by gradual means.
 - C. Institutional *adj.* - 1. a. Of, pertaining to, or originated by institution; having the character or function of an institution; furnished with institutions, organized.
 - D. Institution - 1. a. The action of instituting or establishing; setting on foot or in operation; foundation; ordainment; the fact of being instituted.
 - E. Institute v. - 1. *trans.* a. To set up, establish, found, ordain; to introduce, bring into use or practice.

- F. Jesus *set up, established, and founded* His church; therefore Jesus *instituted* His church; therefore Jesus' church is an *institutional church*.
 - 3. Their problem is that most of the "institutional churches" that they despise are not churches.
 - A. The Catholic Church is not the church of Jesus Christ.
 - B. The Protestant churches are not the churches of Jesus Christ.
 - i. They came out of the Catholic church and are her harlot daughters (**Rev 17:5; Eze 16:44**).
 - ii. A clean thing can't come out of an unclean thing (**Job 14:4**).
 - C. Nondenominational churches and community churches are not the churches of Jesus Christ because they were started by some Protestant guy with a bright idea, not an ordained minister of Jesus Christ.
- III. Most "house churches" don't have Biblical church government.
- 1. Most "house churches" don't have a pastor in authority over them.
 - A. "There are no sanctuaries to buy and maintain, and frequently there are no pastoral salaries to sustain." (House Church, [Wikipedia](#), 4/26/17)
 - B. "Those of us in a house church do not have a single pastor leading a congregation. We believe there is safety in plurality of leadership." (The Growing House-Church Movement, [Ministry Today](#), 10/31/2000)
 - C. "All the functions normally associated with a sanctuary (communion, baptism, healing prayers, Bible study) are conducted in the homes by laypeople." (The Growing House-Church Movement, [Ministry Today](#), 10/31/2000)
 - 2. Lay people should not be baptizing or serving communion; only ordained ministers are authorized to perform these ordinances.
 - A. Only ordained ministers can baptize.
 - i. Jesus commissioned His ordained ministers to baptize (**Mar 3:14 c/w Mat 28:16-20**).
 - ii. All the examples of baptism in the Bible were done by ordained ministers (See sermon: [Basic Bible Doctrine \(Part 12\) - Baptism \(Part 1\)](#)).
 - B. Only ordained ministers can serve communion.
 - i. A pastor is the steward of God who supervises the service of His table (**Tit 1:7**).
 - ii. Steward *n.* - 1. a. An official who controls the domestic affairs of a household, supervising the service of his master's table, directing the domestics, and regulating household expenditure; a major-domo.
 - iii. The Lord's Table is the communion table (**1Co 10:16,21**).
 - iv. Consider the example of the Old Testament: only the priests and the Levites performed the ordinances of the tabernacle and temple.
 - v. The same pattern is continued under the New Testament.
 - 3. Many "house church" adherents have a problem with pastoral authority.
 - A. God has ordained that a pastor has the authority over the local church (**Heb 13:7,17**).
 - B. Pastors are supposed to "preach the word" (**2Ti 4:2**).
 - i. Paul "preached" long sermons during church services (**Act 20:7**).
 - ii. "House church" worship services are more like informal Bible studies where everyone has their say.
 - C. Pastors are supposed to rebuke and reprove the brethren (**1Ti 5:20; Tit 2:15**).

4. "House church" advocates need to ask themselves by what authority they start "churches," baptize people, serve communion, etc.
- IV. People who attend "house churches" instead of real churches (which could meet in houses or other buildings) have forsaken the assembling of the church (**Heb 10:25**).
1. Those who refuse to be baptized by an ordained pastor and added to a local church have rejected the counsel of God against themselves (**Luk 7:29-30 c/w Mat 21:31-32**).
 2. Even worse than "house church" adherents are individual "Christians" who think that they don't need to be a member of a church or to meet with other Christians for public worship.
 3. If a man doesn't assemble himself with a church when he can he is not a Christian (**Act 11:26**).
 4. The "house church" movement is an attack on the true church of Jesus Christ and on pastoral authority.