

Instruction in
Practical Tactics
for Lay House Church
Leaders

by

Dennis H. McCallum

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I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to create a graded course of instruction on how to carry out a house church ministry. The course of study must be suitable for existing House Church leaders and for leader trainees. It must incorporate both theoretical and theological groundwork, as well as usable ideas for practical ministry.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Leadership teams composed of laymen and laywomen are currently involved in operating house church ministries in Columbus, Cleveland, and Dayton Ohio. These ministries are carried out under the oversight of the board of elders of Xenos Christian Fellowship, of which this author is a member.

These lay leaders need a practical plan of action that:

1. is consistent with biblical teaching on church life, and will not compromise fidelity to the truth.
2. is within the capabilities of those who have not received formal seminary training.
3. will not substitute manipulation for persuasion.
4. will allow Christ to have His rightful place as the master shepherd and head of the Church, without denying the importance of human agency.
5. will be effective in accomplishing the task of building up the Body of Christ on both the qualitative and the quantitative levels.¹
6. will not take longer to teach than the time that can realistically be expected from lay leaders who are working at a secular job, and are involved in demanding Christian work at the same time that they are taking this instruction.²

It is difficult to compose a study program or course within the limitations inherent in the situation described. The study will tend to become a simplistic manual that might be abused. It will be essential that a proper balance be struck between a purely theoretical study of ecclesiology

¹In this connection, the study will have to offer plans ranging from evangelism, to advanced discipleship, and leadership training. It will not be possible to include counseling in this study, except as it relates to leadership development and supervision of other's ministry.

²It will be necessary to formulate an estimate of what this time amount is. It will also be necessary to assess requirements and academic prerequisites.

and anthropology on the one hand, and a purely pragmatic "steps" oriented approach on the other.

The connection between theology and practice will have to be understood by the student in a way that will enable him/her to devise new methods in the future without violating important biblical principles. It will be important to ascertain that such understanding exists.

This author has had some experience in this area of teaching before, but the results were unsatisfactory. As a result, the house church methods course, which used to be offered annually, has been suspended for two years. Now, the failures of the past will have to be addressed, and the growing number of upcoming house church leaders will have to be given some assistance in forming a theoretical and practical vision for their ministries.

III. DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

The first step will be to conduct a limited survey of contemporary and historical literature on the subjects of evangelism, personal discipleship, and pastoring house churches. In this survey, the focus will be on sources not previously read by this author. The sources will have to be evaluated not only for theological integrity, but also for applicability to the current situation in Columbus, Cleveland and Dayton. It will also be necessary to selectively review certain portions of books and periodicals

which this author has already read, in order to clarify certain positions that have been held.

Secondly, past writings on related subjects by this author and his colleagues, including class handouts and position papers, will have to be re-evaluated in the light of new reading and recent experience.

Thirdly, a study course will be devised. It will have to include a lecture plan, and old and new handout materials which will have to be selected and/or developed. The course will then be taught to willing house church leaders and trainees by this author.

Finally, a paper will be written reviewing the research steps taken, the conclusions reached, samples of materials used, and an evaluation of the course's effect on the students.

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