



Christian **share-** **households**

the MINISTRY PAPERS

from chaos to community...

It's pretty safe to say the people you live with have a fairly big influence on the way you live your life.

Like a lot of us, when I became a Christian I was living with people who weren't Christians. They certainly had a big influence on the way I lived my life. From keg parties to spiteful conversation, bed sharing to food stealing, the influence was exactly the opposite to what I needed at this crucial stage of my life. It was hard enough to turn to God already without practically living in the palm of Satan's hand.

A couple of my new friends from church and I decided we should move in together, into our own share house. It seemed like an eternity before it came, but finally I moved out and moved in. It was great. Not perfect, but great.

I'd like to think that all Christian households were like this, but I know they're not. We read the Bible together a lot, we prayed together a lot, we ate together a lot and we just hung out. It was like I'd gone from chaos to community. Somehow I found myself in a situation where I was being reminded nearly every day of the great relationship God had invited me into through Christ's death on the cross.

I'd like to think that this situation wasn't a one off or even that it's one we can all emulate. As a matter of fact, it's what the Bible tells us we should be like as Christians. Through devotion to the word of God, prayer, hospitality and fellowship we will build households that bring praise to our great and glorious God.

LEADERS:....before taking someone through this paper, review the two key introductory MINISTRY PAPERS: 'the ministry training church' and 'meeting one to one'.

Connect. Grow. Serve. After **connecting** to God through trusting in Christ, a vital way we can **grow** is through a growth group and a vital way we can **serve** is through a ministry team. This '**Christian households**' paper recognizes that another key way we can serve is in our household. It was originally written for uni student share houses—& can be used by a uni accommodation ministry leader to introduce you to that ministry. It can also be used by a growth group leader for broader application to what it means to be Christlike in your household, whatever that situation might be.



investigate

"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" Acts 1:8

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Everyday they continued to meet together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." **Acts 2:42-47**

1. What did the believers devote themselves to?

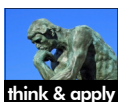
2. What did the believers have in common?

3. How often did they meet together? What was it like?

4. How did the Lord act through their community?

5. What are some of the things your household has in common with the community described in this passage?

6. What are some things you could do to be more like this community?



think & apply



pray

pray about things arising from the study:

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the apostles' teaching

"they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching..." **Acts 2:42**

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you have learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." **2 Timothy 3:14-17**



1. When did Timothy learn the Scriptures?

2. Who taught him the Scriptures? (see also 2 Timothy 1:5)

3. Who is the real author (of the Scriptures)?



4. Why is it so important to read the Bible together as a household?

5. How can you make the Bible more a part of house life?

THE word around the house...

It's so important to kick on with studying the Bible together as a household. Get together and pick a book of the Bible and start reading through it together. Read a chapter at a time and ask each other questions like:

- what do you think the thrust (Big Idea) of that chapter was?
- what's the basic flow of the passage. Investigate it and do a bit of think & apply.
- what did you find encouraging/challenging about that passage?
- how can what we've read help us to grow as a Christian household?

Another great way of keeping God's word a big part of your home environment is by physically making God's word a big part of your home...

- make sure at least everybody in the house has a Bible (preferably the NIV) and that there are a few spares for guests. Leave them laying around the house.
- stick verses the house have been looking at together on the fridge or in the loo or on the bathroom mirror, they're good reminders.



pray about things arising from the study:

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it's a bit like the flu...

It's not just sickness. When someone in your house gets into any habit it can also be quite contagious.

Ian came back all pumped up from a Christian convention as keen as anything to read through the book of Romans, "I'll do it every morning" he resolved. I shoveled some Weetbix into my mouth thinking 'yeah right'.

"I'll read it as well and we can talk about it" Simon piped up.

Time would tell how they went.

Sure enough each morning out on the front steps below my window Simon and Ian would sit with their coffee in one hand and the Bible in the other ploughing through the book of Romans...all the way to the end, discussing each chapter with each other as they went.

Apart from the fact that it woke me up every day from my slumber, it also woke me up to how important it is to read God's word daily as I noticed the great commitment the boys had to it in their life. Before too long I'd decided I needed to jump on this daily bible reading band wagon. It really helped keep me accountable. I knew other people were watching out for my relationship with God.

It's definitely one of the better things I've picked up from my housemates.



BIBLE briefs

The 'Bible Brief' section in the Briefing contains 20 short Bible readings. With questions, brief

background notes and ideas for prayer, the goal is to help Christians to spend 15-20 minutes each day (or most days!) reflecting on God's word and being stimulated to pray.



fellowship

"they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship,..." **Acts 2:42**

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Hebrews 10:23–25

brothers...

'Fellowship' is one of those funny words that has different meanings in different contexts. In the case of Peter, Paul, Dan and Dave it meant hanging out together.

Living with people can be quite intense, and the guys knew that. They thought in order for things to work they just had to catch up with each other on a regular basis.

In their case it meant making sure one night a week was set aside to communicate with each other. They'd share a meal, and sit around the open fire, talk, read the Bible together, pray and maybe have a sleep out in the lounge room in front of the fire. Quite a bonding experience really.

One thing is certain though, the guys really gave the time priority. Most of them were quite busy. And if they didn't give the time together priority it would never have happened. They would have stopped meeting together 'as some are in the habit of doing'.

Let us not do that as members of Christian households. Let's make the effort to spend time together, communicating with each other—encouraging one another and all the more as we see the day of our Lord approaching.



1. What is the hope we profess?

2. What are we to consider?

3. Why is it good to meet together? Why is it bad not to?



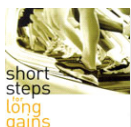
4. How does meeting with your household help you to hold unswervingly to the hope you profess?

5. What are some things you can do as a house to make your time together more 'encouraging'?

Why not take the time now to plan some intentional time together to encourage one another...

reading on

There are some really great resources at the bottom of these pages. Why not buy three or four as a house and share them around with each other. The same thing could be done with good evangelical Bible studies and other resources.



fellowship

'Short steps for long gains' is a series of discussion type Bible studies. It's a great little book to have

sitting around the lounge, with each of the 26 pages having a study on a different Bible verse related to a topic, starting with A for Assurance and going all the way to Z for zeal.



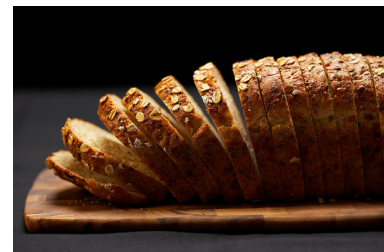
pray about things arising from the study:

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the breaking of bread

"they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread..." **Acts 2:42**

"The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen" **1 Peter 4:7-11**

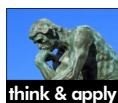


1. Above all, what should we do to each other?

2. How does love cover over sins?

3. What do things like 'hospitality' and 'serve others' have to do with God's grace to us?

4. How should we serve? Why?



5. How can your house be better at loving 'each other deeply'?

6. In all things is God 'praised through Jesus Christ' in your house? How can you grow in this?

the breaking of bread...

Eating is something that comes easily to us so it should be a fairly easy thing to do to serve God. Offering hospitality to someone, sacrificing your own time and money in order to offer someone food and comfort, is a great way of helping someone to feel loved. Here are a few tips to get that happening:

- set aside a night once a week or once a fortnight to have people over.
- don't just invite your best friends over all the time. Think of people you can have over who will benefit most from your hospitality – people who aren't necessarily already in relationships with the rest of the household. Pray about it beforehand.
- invite your non-Christian friends over. It can be a really great way of introducing them to the church family.
- when you say 'grace' before a meal, take the opportunity to incorporate the gospel and also pray for conversation that's full of grace and seasoned with salt, that is conversation that's godly (keep it short though!!!).
- don't be afraid to get the Bible out if and read it with your guests if you think it would be appropriate.



pray about things arising from the study:

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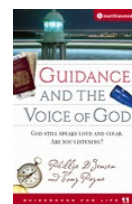
now that *is* 'bright' street...

Rachael, Christie & Alice share a house in Bright street. They don't have a whole lot of money but they do have a whole lot of love. This is one of their stories of godly hospitality...

"At the start of the year we had someone new to town over for tea. It was really great. We ate together and talked together and got to know each other. Then we all chipped in and washed up together. I think she had a good time and really appreciated it because she was living by herself at the time.

Now we're good friends and we hang out together and she's really enjoying being part of our church family.

We do have people over from time to time and we try to budget for it. We don't have much money because we're mostly Uni students, but it's important to get to know people, even if it costs something. It's really encouraging for them and it's really encouraging for us."



guidance and the voice of God
How do I know what God wants me to do? How can I make decisions that are in line with God's will? If God still speaks will I recognise his voice? These are important questions and many Christians grapple with them. "Guidance and the voice of God" charts a way through these often confusing issues, and shows how for those who have ears to hear, God is still working through his Son.



prayer

"they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" **Acts 2:42**

"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should" **Ephesians 6:17-20**

it got weird...

Praying together is a very emotional thing. It's deep and personal because it should be the truth spoken to God. You could even say that praying together is a beautiful and intimate thing. That's why it's so important to do it together as a household if you want to grow into the community that we read about in Acts chapter 2.

But here's a tip for the punters; because it's such an intimate thing we need to be wise who we do it with. When I first became a Christian I enjoyed reading the Bible and praying with whoever I could, male or female. I found myself praying with other women alone quite often and to tell the truth it got weird. Prayer is a very intimate thing and I found myself in intimate situations with more than one woman more than once. It got weird. One sort of intimacy can get confused with another. This is the sort of thing that I wanted to reserve for my wife.

Thankfully one of the guys I lived with spoke to me about it and all of a sudden it became clear how intimate prayer was, especially between guys and girls. I'm not saying that I now prohibit any such thing in any case, but I do think it's important to be wise with something as personal and powerful as prayer. If you're really keen to pray with others why not make the most of your housemates time and pray together with them!



1. What is the sword of the Spirit?

2. What might it mean then, to 'pray in the Spirit'? When should we pray this way?

3. What are we to 'keep on praying' for?

4. What does Paul ask the Ephesians to pray for him?



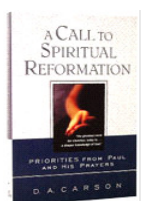
5. What does it mean for your house to 'pray in the Spirit'?

6. How do your priorities in prayer compare to Paul's?

praying together...

Not everybody feels comfortable praying together or praying aloud. It's important to deal with this together as a household and encourage one another to pray about all kinds of things on all occasions. Maybe starting off praying one on one, or writing your prayers out will help. With prayer, we're all still learning. Here are a few suggestions to help with house prayer life:

- pray before you read the Bible together, asking God to help you understand his word
- pray after you read the Bible together, about the things you have talked about
- if anything arises, big or small, good or bad, that somehow affects any member of the household, be bold enough to sit down with each other and pray about it.
- share the opportunity of saying 'grace' around and try and make it Christ focused
- keep a prayer list on the fridge, and keep it current
- be sensitive to others when you're praying. Sometimes try 'one sentence' prayers.



prayer 'A Call to Spiritual Reformation' is a great book by Don Carson that teaches us to find strength and direction in the prayers of Paul. It spells out the lessons of Paul's "school of prayer" in expository studies for individuals and groups. It will challenge you to think about what your priorities in prayer are and should be.



pray about things arising from the study:

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those being saved

"...And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." **Acts 2:47**

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." **1 Corinthians 10:31—11:1**



1. What should we do for the glory of God?

2. What does it mean to cause people to stumble?

3. Why is Paul trying to please everybody in every way?

4. Whose example is Paul following?



5. *How have the studies you've looked at so far helped your house to do 'all for the glory of God'?*

6. *What are some things about your house that may be causing others to stumble? How can this be changed?*

7. *How can the salvation of others be at the heart of your household?*

live it!

A major part of becoming a Christian for me was experiencing the true love and community of Christian people like Pete & Suzie. Even though my life was riddled with sin, these people, like the God they follow, were ready to accept me. It was an incredibly warm and welcoming thing.

Suddenly the contrast between the life I had known and the life my Christian friends were living was absolutely amazing. The way they were truly hospitable and the way they truly shared their lives for the sake of my salvation was a great model of people following the example of Christ.

It wasn't just the way they shared their lives with others that presented me with a Godly witness. It was the way they shared their lives with each other. They really seemed to give themselves up for each other in a way I hadn't experienced before. Somehow I knew that their salvation was at the heart of the way they were living, and for that I'm truly thankful.

Why not think of a couple of your own friends to witness to as a house and pray about it together?

those being saved...

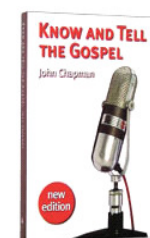
Above all things it's important to recognise that living with other Christians presents a great opportunity to minister to the unsaved. By loving one another and living lives to the praise of God we can be effective witnesses. It is important to recognise this and be intentional with the things that we do:

- be motivated in all that you do by the idea that your life could point people to the cross of Christ and bring glory to God.
- talk to each other about your evangelism 'contacts' and pray about it together. Use all the resources God has given you in your household to make Christ known.
- follow each other up about how you're going with your non-Christian friends.



pray about things arising from the study:

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evangelism To be effective in sharing the gospel you need a good grip on it yourself. Apart from being an easy read, John Chapman's 'Know and Tell the Gospel' is a great book to read through as a household to help you all to be sharpened in the area of evangelism. It's one thing to pray about people that you want to be saved. It's another to try and equip yourselves with the skills to do it. This is a great book for doing exactly that.



putting it **all** together

"They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Everyday they continued to meet together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." **Acts 2:42-47**

Hopefully doing these studies together has prompted plenty of ideas about the shape of your life together as a household. Having done the hard work, it's probably worth looking back through the studies and putting together the various ideas and plans that you've been challenged about. Think of this page as a worksheet... moving from studies to a living plan for your household...



word



fellowship



breaking bread



prayer



evangelism

other ideas...



"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Everyday they continued to meet together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." **Acts 2:42-47**