

Rock International Tribe
Covenant Families (House Churches)
An Introduction and Overview

Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37; Rom. 16:5; Matt. 6:10, 33

"Evangelizing and discipling each person to become like Christ through a heart-to-heart, relationally committed, loving Covenant Family"

Mission of Rock International Tribe:

Our mission is to help initiate, coordinate, equip, and mobilize the Body of Christ to radically transform our communities by advancing Christ's kingdom and increasing God's manifest presence and glory through five essential strategies: 1) Father's House Of Prayer – night and day worship and intercession; 2) multiplying interconnected kingdom family platoons (micro-churches) that help each believer become like Christ; 3) Rock Training Center - equipping Father's sons and daughters to follow Christ and advance His kingdom in every area of life; 4) providing kingdom solutions to practical problems in the marketplace and community; and 5) training and mobilizing the people of God for world missions.

An invitation to become a radical kingdom people committed to God's glory:

God has always longed for a people whose heart motives, passions, and commitments accurately reflect and reveal His nature; a holy people devoted to expanding His glory in the nations. He wants a people who, like King David in the Old Testament, have *a heart after God*. This will occur when God's people have a profound revelation and experience of Father's intense mercy, love and grace, and are captured, not only by His will and ways, but by the depth and breadth of His fatherly emotions toward them as His children, even when they are immature and sinful. When the impact of God's love demonstrated in the cross and shed blood of Jesus touches us in the core of our being, and Father has convinced our minds, won our hearts, and healed our inner life, God's family will reciprocate that love and enjoy a pleasure in God that ultimately reforms and revives the church and transforms society.

There is immense pleasure in a self-denying, self-sacrificing love for God and others. Loosing our lives really does result in gaining our lives. Only a people who have died to themselves and live unto God can fully enjoy this reality. It will take a people who deny themselves, pick up their crosses and follow Jesus completely, who will be used of God as points of release for revival and transformation. Only those committed to a love which is self-sacrificing can understand what it means to fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. The kind of house churches we have been assigned to start and multiply will promote a high degree of Christ's life and love, so that they

positively impact the church and help to transform cities one person at a time. However, this is to be done without being religious, programmatic, or exclusive. On the other hand, because we have an assignment to be pioneers and agents of change, we must not compromise on our expectations. We will battle in prayer and personally encourage and disciple anyone who is willing to respond to Christ with their whole hearts, but we cannot enable lukewarm Christianity or allow ourselves to be mixed with the spirit of the world. We will have to humbly and wisely live with the tensions that come from wanting both quality and quantity.

Understanding the kingdom Of God:

The Kingdom of God is the realm or domain in which Christ is the King. It is where God's will and ways are perfectly obeyed through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is where Christ is the uncontested Lord, where He perfectly rules and reigns, and His government is fully manifested. It is Christ's desire for His kingdom to come to earth. We are called to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. (Matt. 6:33)

The necessity for a kingdom revival, revolution, and reformation:

Because the church in the Western Hemisphere is struggling in its mission to be salt and light in the world, and in some areas is even losing ground both in quantity and quality, we cannot afford slow incremental progress. The extreme suffering among youth, poor, and lost, and the acceleration of evil requires a rapid and radical invasion of God's glory. We must have a catalytic explosion, a massive outpouring of God's manifest presence, love, mercy, grace, wisdom, power, compassion and justice. This dynamic eternal life of God (the "wine" of the Holy Spirit) must be conducted through an equally dynamic Biblical conduit ("wineskin") in order to maximize and preserve the impact. God's divine order (His will and ways) must be the conduit of God's divine life (His Holy Spirit). God is a Father, Son, and Spirit, so the only wineskins capable of revealing who He is and what He is like are healthy natural and spiritual families. Apostolically and prophetically led international spiritual families (tribes) are the new, yet ancient, biblical human agency for expanding God's glory in the nations in a rapid and qualitative way. When an apostolic people comes into profound unity around Father's love and glory in the nations, the supremacy and centrality of Christ as Lord over all, the advancing of God's kingdom in every area of life, and will totally abandon themselves for these values and purposes, we will witness a staggering expansion of God's kingdom and glory resulting in the salvation of millions and the transformation of culture.

Our Kingdom Core Values:

Core Values are the fundamental ideals that determine our attitudes and actions. They are the basis of how we spend our time, energy, affections,

talents, and money. What we are willing to live and die for reveals our true core values.

Our top two values flow from the two great commandments given by Christ to summarize the ten commandments (Ex 20:1-17; Matt. 22:37-40). Our third top value comes from Christ's great commission (Matt. 9:35-38, Matt. 10:1-10, Matt. 28:18-20).

Value #1: We value a passionate, intimate love relationship with our heavenly Father through faith in Christ by the Holy Spirit which enables us to:

- have the motivation and capacity to expand God's glory and kingdom in the nations;
- be transformed into the likeness of Christ, having His heart, speaking His Words, doing His works;
- experience the manifest presence and supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

Supporting Values: knowing and obeying God's Word; hearing God's voice; passionate praise and worship; peace and joy; Spirit-led empowered living; loving intimacy with Father thru Christ; holiness

Value #2: We value exchanging the love, wisdom, and life of Christ through heart-to-heart covenant relationships within the context of natural and spiritual family. We want our love to be so authentic and attractive that unbelievers will be drawn into a relationship with their heavenly Father and become adopted into His family by placing their faith in Christ.

Supporting Values: unity, mercy, understanding, forgiveness, reconciliation, humility, communication, conflict resolution, honoring others, kindness, submission to Christ in one another, accountability, transparency, speaking the truth in love, acceptance, affection, fun

Value #3: We value advancing Christ's glory, lordship and kingdom in every area of life and among all people groups: personal, family, church, workplace, and the social and civil arenas.

Supporting Values: prayer and fasting, evangelism, discipleship, compassion, healing and deliverance, serving, spiritual gifts, the supernatural, extravagant giving, servant leadership, house church-planting, marketplace ministry, social transformation, missions.



Introducing Covenant Families:

Starting and multiplying covenant families (house churches) must occur under the heart motives and core values (listed above) in order to receive the full enabling presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The supernatural life of Christ is needed to sustain Christ-centered relationships. A warning label should be attached to any document which tries to explain or instruct people about house churches. ***Warning: Do not attempt to start, grow, or multiply covenant families as another church program or evangelistic strategy. Covenant families (house churches) will only work to the degree that each individual, and the group as a whole, has died to themselves and is governed and empowered by the indwelling Lord, Jesus Christ, and his Word by the Holy Spirit.***

One more key point must be made regarding the reason for writing down the purposes, expectations, and commitments of house churches. All of the contents of this overview should be understood as instructions on **how to love God and people in a way that advances Christ's kingdom**. It should **not** be viewed as a rule book or religious document that has to be mechanically applied. **This overview is to help coach people in the art of loving relationships**. These requirements and recommendations present biblical wisdom, truth and reasoning, with the ultimate intention that the greatest amount of love is spread to the most people, in the highest quality way, in the least amount of time. Because people are suffering and dying, our mission is time-sensitive.

Truth exists for love. So many people come from dysfunctional families and/or unhealthy churches (or no church background at) that it takes clear teaching and constant coaching to help people walk in God's ways of combined truth and love. Most people have very little understanding of the etiquette of relationships and group life within the context and government of a healthy spiritual family. The spirit of this document is to promote the life and love of Christ within individuals and covenant families, and should in no way be used legalistically, so that people are judged or rejected. Covenant families should be the safest, most loving, life-giving settings on

earth. But true safety involves accountability and discipline along with unconditional affection and love, just like a healthy family. **Bottom line, Covenant Families should feel as much like heaven on earth as possible!**

The key to advancing the kingdom of God on earth is for lovers of Christ to exchange the life of Christ between each other in the context of covenantally connected Christ-centered relationships. Because the kingdom of God involves coming under the Lordship of Christ in every sphere of life, those in covenant families learn to submit to Christ in one another and assist each other to follow Christ completely.

1. **Definition:** A Covenant Family is made up of at least three people but no more than twenty, including a qualified leader and assistant. They connect as a lifestyle, around the lordship and person of Christ and His manifest presence and glory. They meet together at least weekly for the purpose of enabling one another to be radical disciples of Christ, reaching the lost, advancing the kingdom of God in all areas of life in their cities/communities, and multiplying more covenant families. ROCK stands for "Reclaiming Of Christ's Kingdom". The passions and missions of a Kingdom Family Platoon are Christ Himself, God's manifest presence and glory, spreading the love of the Father by the Holy Spirit, and the advancing of Christ's Kingdom.
 - A. Covenant Families are spiritual families. They are people connected covenantally heart-to-heart around Christ in order to advance His kingdom and help each person become like Christ. (I Cor. 4:15-17; Eph. 3:14)
 - B. Covenant Families are group of friends unified around Christ's love and mission. (Matt. 11:19; John 15:12-17)
 - C. Covenant Families are healing communities that pray for the sick, counsel the confused, carry out inner healing, set people free from curses and demonic bondage, and create such an atmosphere of acceptance and love that rejection and insecurities are displaced automatically over time. (James 5:16; Matt. 10:1,8)
 - D. Covenant Families are training and equipping centers; safe settings for people to practice leadership, management, preaching, teaching, creative ministry, spiritual gifts, and servanthood. (Matt. 28:18-20)

- E. Covenant Families are missionary teams and spiritual armies - flexible, spontaneous, organized platoons capable of reaching those who do not follow Christ and are not in spiritual families. They are dedicated to seeking and saving the lost, delivering people from demonic bondage, doing justice, and serving youth, poor, widow, orphan, and alien. (Luke 19:10; Eph. 6:10-18)
- F. Covenant Families represent a lifestyle of deep, intentional, meaningful relationships that connect any time and place with an ultimate goal to reach lost people, and transform communities through Christ and the kingdom of God. (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35).

2. **Perspective:** In order for Covenant Families to be experienced and viewed as the primary context for church life, there must be a significant paradigm shift in the hearts and minds of people. A true Book of Acts house church is a major shift of perspective, values and lifestyle. Usually this does not occur unless there is 1) a high degree of discontentment, dissatisfaction, and internal and external pain and pressure; 2) a high degree of promise and pleasure that come from both the manifest presence of Christ and authentic covenant love between the members; and 3) willingness to make the sacrifices necessary to reach the lost and transform communities.

God is transitioning the church in the Western Hemisphere. He is raising up forerunners or "early adopters" who will help to pioneer what C. Peter Wagner calls "the new apostolic paradigm". The word "apostle" means "sent one". It is a military term used in the Bible to describe certain individuals and those they lead. They have been mandated and empowered by the King to expand His kingdom through new pioneering efforts in families, church, business, civil government, and all of society. An apostolic people will know themselves as weak and dependent for they have been broken and humbled by God. This is the necessary backdrop for God to display his love, wisdom, power, and glory. He will share His glory with no other. (Eph. 4:7-13)

Apostolic kingdom people are merciful, having themselves been saved through the shed blood and sacrificial death of Christ. They place their faith in God's grace because it is His power, provision, and goodness alone that sustains all creation.

Apostolic kingdom people embrace a set of core values that act as the foundation for their life together and guide their mission. Some essential apostolic core values are:

- A. Apostolic kingdom people don't live for themselves but for the glory and pleasure of God. Integrity, humility, holiness and the fear of the Lord are the foundational attributes of their character. They live to see God's glory and presence manifested in the nations, so that He will be worshipped universally. (2 Cor. 5:9; Rev. 14:7; Psalm 96:3; 2 Cor. 5:14-15)
- B. Apostolic kingdom people are totally empowered by the life of Christ within them as opposed to their own strength. Abiding in Christ and His Word is a 24/7 lifestyle. Totally trusting and depending on Christ is evidenced by a life of prayer and fasting, placing a high value on faith and obedience to Christ. (John 15:1-17; Col. 1:27; Eph. 3:17; Luke 17:21)
- C. Apostolic kingdom people receive their identity, worth, and approval solely from their heavenly Father and not from people, success, or the world. (John 1:10-13; Eph. 1:3-14)
- D. Apostolic kingdom people are committed to bringing everything into divine order under the Lordship of Christ: their personal lives, marriages and families, churches, businesses, and civil governments. (Luke 6:46-49; Eph. 5:21-6:9)
- E. Apostolic kingdom people submit first to the objective truth of the Word and also to Christ living inside other believers, especially the leaders and members of their spiritual family. They understand that Christ mediates His grace through God-ordained and appointed human vessels like natural and spiritual parents/leaders. (Matt. 4:4; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-6)
- F. Apostolic kingdom people deeply value intentional committed relationships. They understand the power of being connected in heart and mind, and to "have all things in common" as in the early church. God's glory is poured out to create unity, so the world will be able to see and experience Father's love through His authentic family. Thus, they are active contributing members of a spiritual family. Church is a 24/7 family lifestyle carried out at work and in homes, as well as in church buildings

and programs. Starting, growing, and multiplying house churches is the agenda of apostolic people. That is the Biblical strategy capable of allowing relational intimacy, yet expandable enough to absorb a large surge of new believers. (Eph. 2:21, 4:3; John 17:20-26; 1 Jn. 4:7-21)

- G. Apostolic kingdom people are highly committed, sold out, and abandoned for the expansion of Christ's lordship, glory, and kingdom. This is evidenced in their use of time, energy, and money. Lifestyles are radically adjusted and simplified for the sake of the gospel. Tithing is an example of a beginning-level spiritual discipline. (Matt. 6:33, 10:32-39; Matt. 6:21; Mal. 3 :10)
- H. Apostolic kingdom people are aggressive spiritual warriors who work in harmony with other members of a spiritual army. They are committed to destroying the works of the evil one, to seeking and saving the lost, to being used as vessels for healing and deliverance, to making disciples of all nations, to planting and multiplying house churches, to starting kingdom businesses, to being godly citizens who insist on kingdom values, and to bringing all of society under Christ and His ways. Each one is a minister possessing spiritual gifts and a call from God. They fight for justice and demonstrate God's love and compassion to youth, poor, oppressed, and unreached people. They are ground-taking pioneers who constantly expand the boundary lines of heaven on earth. (Matt. 10:1-42; Eph. 6:10-20; I John 3:8)
- I. Apostolic kingdom people live in the reality of eternity, the judgment seat of Christ, eternal reward, the spiritual realm and the supernatural, and keep the heavenly realm as their point of reference and resource, God's throne of mercy and grace. They believe that all the spiritual gifts described in the Bible are for today, and they exercise these gifts to build up the body of Christ and to reach the lost. Signs, wonders, and miracles are expected and normative, though not necessarily predictable. (Eph. 1:3, 2:6, 3:23-25; Matt.5:3-12; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; Rom. 15:18-19; John 14:12-14; 2 Cor. 12:12)
- J. Apostolic kingdom people understand that love means self-sacrifice and inconveniencing themselves as servants

for the sake of others. Father may even ask them to a love so extreme as to risk their lives in order to bring others into the family of God. (Luke 14:25-35; Rev. 12:11-12; Phil. 1:20-21, 2:1-11)

3. **Accountability:** Each Covenant Family should be organically and meaningfully connected and in submission to either the local elders/pastors of a Christ-centered, Bible-believing congregation and/or the Rock leadership team. The local Rock is a part of and accountable to the leadership of Rock International. Rock International Tribe is led by the five-fold ministry team made up of apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors and general elders. The apostolic team which leads Rock International Tribe is submitted to and connected relationally with mature, gifted and proven leaders from the larger Body of Christ.

We believe a mighty outpouring of God's Spirit is coming to the Western Hemisphere, much like the Great Awakenings and revivals throughout church history. This next outpouring of the Holy Spirit will have the advantage of being sustained and preserved in the Biblical wineskin of trans-local spiritual families (i.e. "Apostolic Tribes") led by Apostolic Teams.

4. **Standards:** What are the requirements for being an "official" Covenant Family?
 - A. There is a trained, approved, qualified and commissioned Covenant Family leader who is in unity with and in submission to the values, vision, strategies, and leadership of the local ROCenter and the Rock International Tribe. A qualified assistant leader functions as a covenant partner and co-laborer with the house church leader. Besides evidencing the qualifications described in the New Testament for elders and deacons (I Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9), these leaders have demonstrated that they are life-giving people (John 7:38). They have consistently conducted the life of Christ in such a way that others have come into a relationship with Christ as Lord and are enthusiastic followers of Christ themselves. A person who conducts the Life of Christ consistently has a way of helping people experience the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22-23), the wisdom of the Spirit (Eph. 1:17-18), and the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8) and makes sure that God gets all the glory.

- B. The Covenant Family leader accepts responsibility (in part) for the spiritual well-being of its members, making sure that they are growing as disciples of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2).
- C. The Covenant Family leader encourages, trains, and facilitates outreach, evangelism, and ministry among its members.
- D. The Covenant Family leader and its members actively raise up new leaders who can plant, grow and multiply new house churches.
- E. There are at least two additional members (one of whom is the assistant leader) who are in unity with the Covenant Family leader around Christ and His kingdom, and the values, vision and leadership of the local ROCenter and the Rock International Tribe.
- F. The Covenant Family leaders and core members are relationally connected with the other Covenant Families, and participate in the city-wide celebrations and training.
- G. The Covenant Family leaders and members give tithes and offerings to Rock. If they are connected to another Christ-centered church, Covenant Families are encouraged to tithe to their local church but give offerings to the local Rock family.
- H. A local ROCenter is a part of the Rock International Tribe, which establishes kingdom resource centers devoted to city/regional-transformation, the planting of Covenant Families and missions in other cities, regions, and nations. Rock International Tribe also financially supports other church planting movements among unreached people groups, such as Iris Ministries led by Rolland and Heidi Baker.

5. Expectations and qualifications of Covenant Family leaders.

- A. They are born again Christians, baptized in the Holy Spirit, radical followers of Christ, with consistent evidence of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in attitude, actions, and impact in other people's lives. They actively and consistently conduct the Life of Christ (fruit, wisdom, and power of Holy Spirit) into other people to such a degree

that there is obvious impact. They are life-giving, loving, serving, positive, faith-filled people.

- B. They meet the biblical qualifications for elders in regards to character, personal life, marriage, and family management, with proven integrity and fruitfulness in their families, church, neighborhoods, workplace, and communities. (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim.3:1-13) They evidence godly character such as truthfulness, honesty, integrity, obedient to corporate and civil laws. They properly steward their body in the following ways: sexual purity, no illegal drug usage, does not use alcohol as means of escape (such as relaxant) to get high or intoxicated, not gluttonous, etc. Read Larry Kreider's book, "The Biblical Role of Elders for Today's Church" for a more comprehensive teaching on this subject.
- C. Relationships with parents, children, spouse, employers, and civil authorities are healthy and in divine order.
- D. They evidence good stewardship in the areas of money (including tithing), time, and talents.
- E. They demonstrate order and management in the care and maintenance of living space, automobiles, etc.
- F. They have appropriate relational and people skills, such as communication (listening and talking), conflict resolution, gentleness, kindness, patience, tactfulness, ability to correct, confront, and rebuke in a way that is respectful, gentle and restorative.
- G. They have been able to consistently apply and incorporate spiritual disciplines into their life (1 Tim. 4:7): Spiritual disciplines include prayer, worship, evangelism, serving, fasting, silence and solitude, learning the Bible with application/obedience, frugality, confidentiality, secret acts of service, confession, and submission.
- H. They have the ability to interpret, understand, apply, and teach the Word of God as given to us in the Bible.

- I. They have the ability to provide the beginning levels of pastoral care to members of the house church: prayer, listening, inner healing, deliverance, godly counsel, encouragement, comfort, and exhortation.
- J. They have the basic leadership and management skills necessary to rally people, keep unity, resolve conflict, equip others for ministry and leadership, facilitate house church gatherings, and reach mutual ministry and mission goals together. They have the capacity to initiate love, relationships, ministry, and outreach.
- K. They have the understanding and ability to make good decisions based first upon: objective truth from the Word of God, godly counsel from mature believers, utilizing wisdom, research, and common sense, and taking into consideration circumstances, resources, limitations and opportunities, pros and cons, risks versus rewards. They also utilize the subjective imputes of the Holy Spirit: the inner intuitive small voice of the Lord, and prophetic indicators and revelations such as dreams, visions, etc.
- L. They are willing and able to facilitate discipleship, evangelism, kingdom-advancing ministry, & house church multiplication with the members of their house church.
- M. They accept responsibility (in partnership with the local elders) for the spiritual well-being of the members of the house church, keeping watch over them, knowing that they will give an account before God. (Hebrews 13:17)
- N. They pray for and connect with their members regularly throughout the week.
- O. They are constant learners who participate in the regular training and support which comes from the other house church leaders, local elders, and apostolic team.
- P. They are in unity with and in submission to the agreed upon values, vision, strategies, and leadership of the Rock International Tribe.
- Q. They adhere to the commitments and expectations for the members (see below). They participate in the

expansion of the kingdom by giving tithes and offerings through Rock International.

6. **Commitments and expectations of Covenant Family members:**

These commitments and expectations should be presented in writing and discussed with each person at the beginning of his/her involvement in the house church. They should also be reviewed regularly with all the members.) One becomes a member of the local Rock family and Rock International Tribe by becoming son or daughter of Father through Christ by the Holy Spirit and an active member of a Covenant Family. **Remember: These commitments and expectations are not rules and regulations. They are to be used as helpful guidelines and principles which enable us to love Christ, one another and unbelievers more effectively.**

- A. We sincerely seek to know God through Christ and become Spirit-filled, radical disciples of Christ. By joining the Covenant Family, we invite the leaders and other members to help us follow Christ and grow into Christ's likeness.
- B. We are in unity with and submission to the values, vision, strategies, and expectations of the leaders of the Covenant Family, the local elders, and the Rock leadership team.
- C. We attend and participate weekly in the life and activities of the Covenant Families, and regularly attend city-wide celebrations and training. We honor and worship God and help advance His kingdom by giving tithes and offerings through Rock.
- D. We contribute to the discipleship of the other members in the Covenant Family, engage in evangelistic outreach, and help to advance the kingdom of God in the settings and with the people God has placed us. We enthusiastically embrace the multiplication of the Covenant Family.
- E. We are **committed to grace affirmation:** unconditional love, agape love (Colossians 3:5-14) *"I will choose to love you, up build you, and accept you, my brothers and sisters, no matter what you say or do. I will choose to love you in whatever form you come. There is nothing you have done or will do that will make*

me stop loving you. I may not agree with your actions, but I will love you as a person and do all I can to hold you up in God's affirming love."

- F. We are **committed to honesty**: (Ephesians 4:25-32) *"Good or bad, I will not hide from you what I see in you or coming from you. In the timing of the Spirit, I will deal openly and directly with you in a loving and forgiving way so that you are affirmed when in need, and so that our frustration with each other does not lead to bitterness. I will try to mirror back to you what I am hearing you say and feel. If this means risking pain, realizing it is in 'speaking the truth in love that we grow up in every way into Christ who is the head' (Ephesians 4:15), then I will take the risk. I will try to express this honesty in a sensitive and controlled manner and to meter it, according to what I perceive the circumstances to be."*

- G. We are **committed to openness**: (Romans 7:15-25) *"I will try to strive to become a more open person, disclosing my feelings, my struggles, my joys and my hurts to you as well as I am able. The degree to which I do so implies that I cannot make it without you. This is to affirm your worth to me as a person. In other words, I need you!"*

- H. We are **committed to prayer**: (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12) *"I commit to pray for you regularly, believing that our caring Father wishes His children to pray for one another and ask Him for the blessings we all need. I will not be merely a passive listener. Rather, I choose to be a spiritual participant, willing to enter into your situation and prayerfully helping to shoulder your burden."*

- I. We are **committed to sensitivity**: (John 4:1-29) *"Even as I desire to be known and understood by you, I commit to be sensitive to you and your needs to the best of my ability. I will try to hear you, see you, and feel where you are and to draw you out of the pit of discouragement or withdrawal. I will earnestly avoid giving simplistic answers to the difficult situations you may find yourself in".*

- J. We are **committed to availability**: (Acts 2:43-47) *"Here I am if you need me. Anything I have--time, energy, insight, possessions--is at your disposal, if you need it, to the limit of my resources."*
- K. We are **committed to confidentiality**: (Proverbs 10:19; 11:9,13; 12:23; 13:3; 15:4; 18:6-8) *"I will keep whatever is shared within the confines of the house church in order to provide the atmosphere of trust necessary for openness. I understand, however, that this confidentiality does not prohibit my house church leader from sharing either verbally or in written form any pertinent information with the congregational elders. I understand that house church leaders function under pastoral/elder oversight, having delegated authority as an extension of the pastoral care ministry of this congregation. As a result, they are accountable to the elder(s) of this church, who are themselves accountable to others in ministry and the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, my Lord."* (Hebrews 13:17).
- L. We are **committed to accountability and confession of sin**: (Ezekiel 3:16-21; Matthew 18:12-30; James 5:16) *"I commit to growth, maturity and discipleship, using the Bible and other equipping materials that each of the house churches in our spiritual family are progressing through as part of their equipping times. In doing so will make myself accountable weekly to my accountability partner in the covenant family. I give you the right to question, confront, and challenge me in love when I seem to be falling in any aspect of my life under God--family, devotions, general spiritual growth, etc. I trust you to be in the Spirit and led of Him when you do so. I need your correction and reproof so that I may ever better fulfill God-given ministry among you. I will try not to be defensive."* (Prov. 12:1,15; 13:10,18).
- M. We are **committed to following the biblical process of conflict resolution**. (Matt. 18, Gal. 6:1-5) *"We will not triangulate, gossip, or slander our brothers or sisters in Christ. We will deal with offenses with truth and love. Disagreements or conflicts should not divide our hearts or justify a breach in relationship or closing."*

- N. We are **committed to time regularity:** (Luke 9:57-62) "I will regard the regular time which my house church spends together weekly as time under the disciplining hand of Jesus in our midst. I will not grieve the Spirit or hinder His work in the lives of my brothers and sisters by my absence, except in an emergency. By His permission, and through prayer alone, will I consider being absent. If I am unable to attend for any reason, out of consideration I will call my house church leader in order that the house church members may know why I am absent, will be able to pray for me, and will not worry about me."

- O. We are **committed to outreach:** (Matthew 25:31-46) I will find ways to sacrifice myself for those outside our house church and congregation in the same way that I have committed to sacrifice myself for you, my brothers and sisters. I will network in prayer and relationships with my fellow house church members, to bring two or more unbelievers or unchurched friends to my house church. I will do it in Jesus' Name so that others are added to the Kingdom of God.

7. **Discipleship track** for each Covenant Family member (the 7 C's):

- A. **Christ:** Helping each member know, love and experience Father through Christ. To know and experience the joyful reality of being a child of God. To help each member become a lover and follower of Christ who advances His kingdom in every area of life. This involves helping each member know and experience Christ through His written Word, and to enjoy praise, prayer and worship as a life style. It includes teaching people to be prophetic, knowing how to hear and obey God's objective and subjective voice. It means being a priestly people who minister to the Lord and intercede for others. And it involves being a kingly or apostolic people who proactively advances Christ's kingdom and facilitates divine order (God's will and ways) in all of life.

- B. **Community:** Helping each member connect organically and covenantally (head-to-head, heart-to-heart, hand-to-hand, house-to-house) with the family of God. This involves learning the ways of forgiveness, mercy, and biblical conflict resolution. It involves the proper use of

the tongue for blessing, affirming, and prayer. It is exchanging the life and love of Christ organically 24/7.

- C. **Character:** Helping each member to become like Christ in their heart motives, attitudes, personal integrity, and actions.
- D. **Call:** Helping each member discover their callings from God, their spiritual gifts and talents, their destinies, ministries and purpose in life.
- E. **Competence:** Helping each member gain the skills, abilities, and resources they need to carry out their life purpose and mission.
- F. **Contact:** Helping each member make meaningful connections with the lost and those they serve for the purpose of evangelism, discipleship, and advancing the kingdom.
- G. **Cycle:** Helping each member reproduce in others what the Spirit of God has done in them, so they in turn can reproduce it in a third generation.

8. The **essential activities** of a Covenant Family gathering:

- A. Welcome: Food, Fun, Fellowship, Communion, Check-in.
- B. Worship: Commune with Jesus in praise and worship, collect offering.
- C. Word: Hear from Jesus through the written Word. Also release teaching and prophetic ministry to one another.
- D. Discipleship, prayer, encouragement, and support throughout the week.
- E. Works:
 - 1. Minister to one another through prayer, healing, inner healing, deliverance, personal discipleship, etc
 - 2. Baptisms
 - 3. Confess sin, release forgiveness, hold each other accountable.

4. Strategically plan evangelism or kingdom-advancing ministry with a person, neighborhood, or city.
5. Pray for the lost, acts of service or outreach.

9. **Covenant Family as a family and army lifestyle.** Here is some of what will happen.

- A. Food, fun, and fellowship.
- B. Connect with one another - keeping our ongoing internal and external "story" current.
- C. Praise and worship: Connect with Father through Christ by the Holy Spirit.
- D. Hear from Father/Christ through His Word (Bible).
- E. Share victories and struggles-transparent communication for the sake of support, training, and accountability.
- F. Minister to one another utilizing spiritual gifts: prophetic communication (words of encouragement, comfort, and exhortation from Holy Spirit,), words of knowledge (supernatural insight), healing, miracles, tongues and interpretation of tongues, helps, intercession, etc. You might also meet each other's needs in practical ways.
- G. Special training so that we can more effectively advance Christ's kingdom in our families, at work, and in our communities.
- H. The sacraments: Lord's supper and water baptism.
- I. Informally hang out.
- J. Special gatherings: retreats, adventures, picnics, game nights, outreaches, mission trips.
- K. Strategically plan outreach to the lost and missions in the community.
- L. Corporate evangelism. Love expressed through spiritual family touches the longing of every human heart.

10. **Why start, grow, and multiply Covenant Families?**
- A. Both Moses in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament chose the small group model and format (twelve disciples) as their method of making disciples, caring for people, and spreading and reproducing the Life and ways of God.
 - B. They are the most effective form of evangelism. An authentic loving community is the most convincing argument for the reality of God and reveals the basic meaning of life. John 17:20-23
 - C. Multiplying covenant families is an effective structure to facilitate both the quality and quantity of connected caring relationships. The purpose of life is love. House churches create the very best organic setting for the highest quality of love, in the most efficient way, with the greatest number of people.
 - D. They create the best setting for mentoring and training people at the heart and life level. The life of Christ is more "caught" than taught. Consistent, loving, transparent relationships allow hidden weaknesses and sins to come into the light, so they can be eliminated and replaced with the attributes of Christ.
 - E. They are the best way to develop leaders because everyone is expected to contribute what Christ has given to them and to experiment with their gifts and callings.
 - F. They are the most effective way to enable the participation and ministry of every member.
 - G. They have the most flexibility and quickest response time to provide pastoral & practical care among the members.
 - H. They can easily infiltrate every human situation & setting.
 - I. They allow "church" to take place all the time, everywhere, and through everyone.
 - J. They are the only structure that can absorb a massive influx of people in a short amount of time when genuine revival occurs.

- K. They allow the church to grow even during persecution.
- L. No building costs.

11. What is a recommended use of time, and ministry flow, in a covenant family gathering? **No two covenant family gatherings will ever be alike because they should all be led by the Holy Spirit.** Jesus is creative and fun. Everyone should try to discern His presence and leadership throughout the gathering. There will be some consistent elements week in and week out that point to a pattern. Here is one of hundreds of formats the Holy Spirit might direct:

- A. 6:00 P.M. – The meal and hang out time. Consider including the Lord’s Supper during the meal.
- B. 7:00 P.M. – Praise and Worship. Guitars, key boards, small drums are great to assist the singing. Praise tapes or CD’s work as well. Take some time to wait on the Lord and be silent. Always invite the Holy Spirit to manifest His presence and lead the time together. Include reading scripture passages that praise the Lord. Allow people to offer prayers of thanksgiving and praise as well.
- C. 7:30 P.M. – Time in the Word. Start with reading a chapter of the Bible aloud. Designate (usually at least a week in advance) someone to give an expository teaching of the passage for about 10 minutes. Follow up the teaching with “flow” questions (a question that cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no” and presses people to understand and apply the passage). The Serendipity Bible has flow questions included in the margins beside the Bible verse. Encourage the members to systematic Bible reading through the same book of the Bible, and have them study the same passages on their own so they will have familiarity with the scripture.
- D. 8:00 P.M. – Take time to have people share their hearts, life situations, give testimonies, and ask for prayer requests. If the house church is too large to allow everyone to share, it can be divided into groups of 3 to 4 people for this time of personal ministry. Have personal ministry with one another.
- E. 8:30 P.M. – Planning and prayer for the people the group is trying to lead to Christ.
- F. 8:45 PM – End with a short time of prayer.
- G. 8:50 PM – Some may hang around and visit longer, but release those who need to go. Some folks start work early the next morning, so be sensitive. Also be sensitive

to those hosting the house church gathering. If people linger late into the evening, this could create emotional and physical weariness and lead to burnout over time.

- H. 9:15 PM – Process and evaluate that night’s meeting with those you are developing as leaders. Ask questions such as, “How was Christ and His presence evident in our gathering?” “In what ways did our house church members connect with and minister to each other?” “How could we improve our ministry to each other?” “How did our time in Scripture go?” “How is our discipleship doing?” “In what ways are we being effective in reaching the lost and how can we improve on evangelism?” “How can we facilitate relationally connecting with our house church family throughout the week?” “How are we doing with children?” “What was the level of participation from each person?”

- 12. **Stages in the life of a Covenant Family:** We can easily observe developmental stages in individuals or even marriages. Knowing these general stages helps us to understand and prepare for the positive and negative aspects of each period of the group’s life.

- A. The initial birth or planting stage.
- B. The honeymoon period.
- C. The conflict stage.
- D. The true community phase.
- E. The reproductive stage.
- F. The multiplication stage.

- 13. **What about children in Covenant Families?**

- A. In a fragmented and mobile culture, children need the benefit of spiritual fathers and mothers, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, etc. When they connect relationally at the heart, their deepest needs of affection, belonging, identity, and affirmation are met. Children love house churches as long as they aren’t a strict religious program.
- B. Children can and/or should be included in nearly every aspect of the house church gathering. The meals, times of praise, checking in, sharing, personal ministry, Bible study, outreaches are all opportunities for children to experience church life. In fact, they add a great deal of fun, love, entertainment, and excitement. Children keep things real. Besides all this, children are much more capable of ministry than we imagine. They can pray for

the sick, contribute during sharing times, and express compassion for those who are struggling.

- C. There are segments of time in a covenant family gathering when it may be best for some adult members to take the children to another part of the house and especially focus on them, so that the other adults can share deep struggles and confess sin. During this time, you can use age-sensitive Bible study and, allow kids to minister to and pray for each other, or to enjoy recreation, games, crafts, etc.
- D. Since being in a covenant family is a 24/7 lifestyle, members should include the children in their lives outside the gatherings. Mentoring and relationship opportunities can be woven into everyday life.

14. What about intergenerational covenant families?

A. There is a notion that youth prefer being in groups with just youth, or that singles prefer only being with singles. This is often not the case. There is a rich exchange of life that occurs when people from different generations come together in a meaningful way.

B. The keys to making intergenerational covenant families work are the same for more homogenous groups – humility, transparency, and the exchange of affection. When people are valued, received, and desired, and humbly and openly give and receive life, great personal advances are made in people’s lives.

C. Oddly enough, it is those who are older who usually need to be pursued and invited. Those from the “Senior” generation (born in 1926 and earlier) and the “Builder” generation (born between 1927 to 1945) are not as accustomed to smaller settings where people share personal information. With enthusiastic encouragement, coaching, and positive affirmation, they can become stable pillars in a spiritual family. The “Boomer” generation (born between 1946 to 1964) needs to be encouraged to make relationships and spiritual family a priority in addition to their inclination towards success in reaching their goals and financial independence. If their idealism and can-do approach to life are utilized, powerful victories for the kingdom of God can be won. They must be encouraged to

keep it real and avoid condescending attitudes and superficial advice giving. They will also need to let go of control and positions of power in order to be approachable to the younger generations. The "Busters or Gen-Xer's" (born 1965 to 1983) are more skeptical (often cynical) of pat answers and cultural norms, and don't usually have much respect for institutions (especially the traditional church) or authoritative positions. They are won over by love, relationships, tangible care giving, fun, and quality time, not logical arguments or structured programming. "Millenials" or "Mosaics" (born 1984 to present) are a very eclectic and creative group. They will pull all kinds of information and experiences together in what feels like a random way, but is exciting and meaningful to them. They borrow from all areas of life to piece together meaning and experiences that are important to them. Relaxed but meaningful relationships, especially friendships, are very important to Millenials. And by all means, don't forget to have fun with them.

D. Fun, in-depth relationships/friendships, exciting adventures, and experiential learning are of utmost importance to "GenXer's" and "Millenials". For the generations to connect, the older (and often more powerful due to their positions, education and finances) must regularly defer to the younger. The covenant family experience must include lots of hanging-out time, goofing off, laughing, and experiences and activities that older people may consider to be unproductive, silly, and even meaningless. Nothing could be further from the truth. These generations must find each other if the fullness of God's purposes are to be realized.

E. Each generation accents a kingdom value. Often these values seem paradoxical and mutually exclusive. However, they are all complimentary if we will look more deeply into what each generation values. Those born after 1965 tend to lean toward relational intimacy, toward "being" more than "doing". Is that not a kingdom value? Those born before 1965 have a tendency to lean toward "doing" and desire to make impact. They want to build something that lasts, and produce something of worth. Leadership, management, and discipline are highly valued because they enable the successful achievement of important goals. Is that not also a kingdom value? If we take a fresh look at the situation,

we will realize that we all need each other. Mutual humility and respect are essential for actualizing the fullness of Christ. Let us submit to Christ in one another.

15. **Watch out for distractions.**

- A. Many people have never been in a covenant family setting where people are vulnerable and share life and death issues. Because of this, they may not be sensitive to the damaging effects of distractions. A cell phone ringing and being answered during gut level sharing could damage the heart of the one sharing and discourage them from opening up again.
- B. Lots of spiritual warfare will occur before, during, and after a house church gathering. Leaders and members should be on the alert for demonic distractions.
- C. Practical advice:
 - 1. Turn off all cell phones and pagers. Keep one phone line open for emergencies and designate a person to answer the phone.
 - 2. Keep pets locked up and out of the way.
 - 3. Help people to be aware of their own distracting habits, so that they can correct them. These habits include rapping fingers on tables, and clicking ballpoint pens in and out. Little things like this can produce distracting annoyances that the enemy uses to reduce the impact of the time together.

16. **Teaching visitors and members basic Covenant Family manners:**

The etiquette of conduct in a spiritual family gathering.

- A. Without being too rigid or programmatic, leaders should help visitors and members understand that there are ground rules that are important to keep so that everyone can have a meaningful experience.
- B. Some examples:
 - 1. When someone is talking, do not interrupt, or judge them with your words or body language. Don't talk to someone else while another is talking. Make eye contact with the person sharing, and be an active listener.

2. When someone is finished sharing, don't jump in and offer advice. Respond with acceptance, affirmation, and affection.
3. Don't make speeches or sermons. Share personally from the heart, and do it in short segments of time. Don't dominate the discussion.
4. Correcting and/or redirecting the house church is the responsibility of the leader and, therefore, if someone has input at this level it should first be brought to the leader in private.
5. Avoid debates and arguments. They can result in threatening the sense of acceptance and safety in the group. This is a place for heart connecting, and dialogue.

17. How big should a Covenant Family get and why?

A. Minimum number: three people.

B. Maximum number: Preferably twelve, but no more than twenty. Too many people, begins to compromise the ability to connect meaningfully from the heart. Bigger groups mean less intimacy. Shy and reserved people tend to slip into the background of large groups. Always encourage, plan for, and celebrate covenant family multiplication.

18. The relationship of Covenant Families to the local ROCenter:

Every living thing must be connected to and a part of something greater than itself. Each person needs to be organically and covenantally connected to a spiritual family which gathers as a Covenant Family. Each Covenant Family needs to be connected to their extended family - other house churches in their city or region - so they can strategically advance the kingdom of God in that geographic area. Each group of Covenant Families should be connected to an even larger spiritual family - a city-church - that is coordinating city-wide ministries, outreaches, and celebrations. Each city-church needs to be connected to and in partnership with a trans-local apostolic tribe that is strategically reaching other cities, regions, and nations. Each apostolic/prophetic tribe should be in relationship with and submission to the leadership of other apostolic tribes. Unifying resources, influence, gifts, and strategies among the whole Body of Christ will result in the transformation of cities. Apostolic/prophetic leaders are called to help connect the hearts and minds of believers around Jesus in such a quality way that there is a seamless flow of His life and love out to the poorest and

most unreached in the nations. This allows each member of their "tribe" the eternal rewards of contributing to those Christ mentions in Matt. 25:31-46.

19. How individuals become members: We understand and believe that whenever anyone becomes a child of God through Christ, they automatically become members of the universal family of God. We also believe that identifying with and becoming members of a specific group of believers (local church) is God's ordained strategy for helping His children become mature disciples of Christ. Every specific spiritual family (local church) should have a clear understanding and set of expectations for membership. This enables the highest quality of pastoral care, training, and mobilization.

Step 1: The person repents from trying to save his/her self. He places their faith in Christ and in His blood and sacrificial death, asking Him to come and live in his heart and baptize him with the Holy Spirit. In other words, he becomes a born-again Spirit-filled member of God's family and a follower of Jesus Christ. He experientially receives the Spirit of adoption. The outward sacrament of this inward reality is water baptism.

Step 2: He becomes an active member of a Covenant Family.

Step 3: He goes through Rock Tribe orientation and training. This helps each person know how to come into unity with our values, vision, strategy and leadership.

Step 4: He meets with Rock leaders to discuss and confirm becoming a member of the Rock Family. Both parties agree that this is God's will.

Step 5: He enjoys being received into the Rock family publicly at a city-wide celebration and training.

20. Rock International Tribe's commitment to reaching cities, regions and nations. Most cities and regions have identifiable and definable geographic or incorporated boundaries within a larger metropolitan area. These districts usually have their own local, county, state, and even national civil leaders. Within these districts are neighborhoods, neighborhood and community churches, shopping areas, schools, businesses, social services, entertainment and the arts, a police force, and much more. An apostolic/prophetic group of believers will organize themselves so that they can strategically advance the kingdom of God within those geographic districts. They are going to coordinate intercession, multiply house churches, carry out relevant and effect forms of ministry and outreach, and more.

A. Rock International Tribe wants to help establish or support city-wide kingdom advancing ministries: Some ministries and outreaches require the support and participation of the entire church in the city.

B. Urban development and practical training. Rock International Tribe has helped to establish Rock Solid Urban Impact, a not-for-profit 501-C-3 Corporation dedicated to helping urban youth learn the ways of the kingdom of God and practical life skills through mentoring relationships with loving Christian adults. Rock Solid Urban Impact owns a training center composed of a gymnasium, cafeteria, classrooms, and offices. This facility is a part of the Rock Tribe Mission Base located in the inner city of Kansas City, MO.

C. City-wide training and celebration: Rock International currently holds a city-wide celebration every Saturday night at our Mission Base in the inner-city of Kansas City, MO.

D. Father's House of Prayer: Rock International has established a base for prayer and fasting which will eventually be 24/7.

E. Rock International Training Center: The Rock Tribe has a vision to train and equip leaders to plant covenant families, and advance the kingdom of God in marriage, families, market place, and civil government. This training center is being reorganized and redeveloped, so that it can more effectively raise up kingdom leadership which impacts cities and nations.

F. Rock Tribe Missions Strategy: Rock International Tribe is committed to establishing both a missions training strategy and sending agency for those who are called to cross-cultural missions and for nationals who need more equipping and support for church planting in their own nations.

Contact Information:

Rock International Tribe www.rocktribe.org
Rock Solid Urban Development www.rsui.org
Email: info@rocktribe.org

816-241-ROCK 934 Norton, Kansas City, MO 64127

Contributions: Make checks payable to: **Rock International**
Send To: PO Box 270266 , Kansas City, MO 64127

Micro-Church (House Church) Resources:

Banks, Robert & Julia, *The Church Comes Home*, Hendrickson Publishers.
Barna, George, *Revolution*, Tyndale House Publishers.
Birkey, Del, *The House Church*, Herald Press
Dale, Tony & Felicity, *Simply Church*, **Karis Publishing**.
Dale, Felicity, *An Army of Ordinary People*, Karis Publishing
Edwards, Gene, *How To Meet In Homes*, SeedSowers Publishing.
Edwards, Gene, *An Open Letter To House Church Leaders*, SeedSowers Publishing.
Fitts, Robert, *The Church In The House*, Preparing The Way Publishers.
Garrison, David, *Church Planting Movements*, **WIGTake Resources**.
Kreider, Larry, *House Church Networks*, House To House Publications.
Simpson, Wolfgang, *Houses That Change The World*, OM Publishing.
Zdero, Rad, *The Global House Church Movement*, William Carey Library.

Apostolic Teams & Church Government:

Alley, John Kingsley, *The Apostolic Revelation*, Peace Publishing.
Eberle, Harold, *The Complete Wineskin*, Winepress Publishing.
Eckhardt, John, *Moving In The Apostolic*, Renew Books.
Cannistraci, David, *The Gift of Apostle*, Regal Books.
Hamon, Bill, *Apostles Prophets and the Coming Moves of God*, Destiny Image Publishers.
Johns, Timothy, *Restoring The Spiritual Family As The Emerging Apostolic Paradigm*, Doctoral Dissertation available through Rock Tribe Book Store.
Katz, Arthur, *Apostolic Foundations*, Burning Bush Press.
Kreider, Larry, *The Biblical Role of Elders for Today's Church*, House To House Publications.
Wagner, C. Peter, *Churchquake*, Regal Books.