

Here is a very authentic story. (Only personal names are substituted here!)

We were invited to a fairly traditional Sunday service. In a hall with benches for at least two hundred people, I estimated over a hundred people present. A pleasantly large and nicely maintained space, six musicians in the front, followed by a good biblical sermon and at the end – in addition to the usual announcements – three young people were sent off with prayers for a several-week mission abroad.

Pastor Petr and his wife treated us like guests after the service. As part of nice conversation over good lunch, they invited us to another meeting at their home. This is their „**second church**„! We know pastors who have two or more services per weekend, because the participants would not fit in the hall at once. But this was something completely different! On Thursday at 7:30 p.m., in addition to us, six local people arrived into the spacious living room. The flow of the meeting mirrored the three-thirds process that we routinely use in our mission teams, or in Discovery, and elsewhere:

- A Look Back: which has sections: Mutual Care, Return and Celebration of Jesus
- Looking up: that's the Vision and the Bible
- And Looking Ahead as usual contained: Action, Practice and Conversation with Jesus.

In the section called „Vision“, Petr grabbed a small whiteboard, drew a circle in the middle and wrote the name of their street in it. That's how they call this church at their home. He made **seven** more circles around it with some abbreviations. „These are house churches whose teams we have sent over the past three years!“ Petr explained to us as guests. „We would like to send David and Stephanie next week...“ he continued. And for us to explain, he added a short story how David and Stephanie contacted families in their neighborhood and at work, and started reading God's word with them as Discovery. A few people gradually believed, there are usually around ten of them, and the last time they were thirteen. „They understood that it's time for them to become a church,“ Petr smiled, as if David and Stephanie should have thought about it a long time ago.

Peter not only „does“ this own house church, including the Lord's Supper and occasionally including baptism, etc., but at the same time he supports multiplication of other house churches! At Sunday services, he openly encourages the congregation members to head with new people from outside to their own churches at home – or wherever.

I asked if people from those house churches go also to the Sunday meetings. „A minority,“ Petr thought for a second. „And aren't you worried that the house churches will vacuum the Sunday church?“ „It's not **my** church!“ the fifty-five-year-old experienced guy replied with a smile. „I'm not building my kingdom, nor the kingdom of our church! Together with the Holy Spirit, we build **God's** kingdom...“ And he went on to explain to me that their nicely reconstructed church building is also widely used as a training center for the leaders and founders of the small churches from their church and from many others in their region. I soon discovered that this involvement in **two churches at the same time** is quite common there even for believers who have ordinary jobs; not just for the pastor. These people have their house church during the week in addition to Sunday service. They meet at someone's home or somewhere in a cafe – of course with new people from „the world“ and naturally there are also unconverted individuals among them!

If you somehow cannot to get all this into your head, I understand. Please take a moment of silence and prayers now. Look at the biblical texts about the church that we read in previous lessons – and find others, maybe. And above all, **listen** to living Jesus and to His heart, to His wishes in them.

*Lord Jesus, please speak to our hearts and show us very specifically how to practically apply your Word in our time: today, this week, this month...*