

Home Group Mission in Sao Paulo, Brazil

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After completing a home group workshop

For many years before the home groups began, Mr. Francisco Luis Santos Sobrinho and Dr. Cláudio Antonio Vidotti had been investing their hearts into their missions, seeking victory, but they suffered because of difficulties they faced in breaking barriers to sharing their faith. Looking forward to victory as heavenly tribal messiahs, they were putting great effort into activities such as distributing pamphlets and inviting people to workshops. Mr. Santos Sobrinho even renovated rooms in his house to use it as a small training center, holding one-, three- or four-day workshops. Nevertheless, even though they did this, the barriers to effectively sharing their faith were hard to break; for years, they did not have any result.



The group poses after the workshop

The number of activities they'd conducted, their dedication, sacrifice and investments of love were not in question. Taking his guests to the workshop, Mr. Vidotti faced many difficulties to restore them, especially his relatives. The guests did not take the presentations seriously; until the end, they were thinking that ours is just another religion that did not have anything to do with their lives. Despite their great exertions, the missionaries felt that something wasn't right, something was missing, but they were unsure what it was.

Home group work in Itapecerica began in 2011. At first, home groups did not develop quickly. Because of a lack of understanding, only a few members accepted this method of outreach. However, through many workshops and listening to testimonies about how the home groups changed lives for the better, the members became receptive and began home group activities. For all the members in Itapecerica to involve themselves in home group activities took seven months. This may seem like a long time, but it was rather fast compared to the average speed of churches throughout Brazil. The missionaries took pains to deepen members' understanding of the home group providence. Members also enjoyed the DVDs provided by the headquarters with topics about home groups and gave them to other blessed couples in their mission area.

As a result of members participating in the home group providence, the church's environment changed completely through an influx of new people. In Itapecerica, we had only twenty-five members attending Sunday service when the home groups began. New members through home groups doubled that number.

Even in this small mission area, home groups flourished, completing the third stage of multiplication. From one cell that took six months to multiply, sixteen cells have resulted.

All the blessed members, including the missionaries, are leading their lives normally and have jobs. Yet, once a week, everyone attends their home group meeting with guests. They are gaining great success through one-on-one Divine Principle lectures, restoring people as spiritual children.

Through the home groups, a change occurred in our members' conceptual framework. Before home

groups, their daily lives were disconnected from church activities. Our members led their lives normally while trying to find time for outreach outside of their daily routines. Now that home groups have developed in a natural manner, members are connecting their daily lives to the witnessing activities.

Using the weekly goal, the members are constantly seeking individual perfection through eliminating characteristics of fallen nature, developing true love, having experiences with God and undergoing internal healing. They practice the precept, "When I change myself, my partner will also change," through which a couple's relationship improves.



A Home Group Assembly in Brazil at the South American regional headquarters

Thus, by loving each other day by day, not just in their home group meeting, they are sharing their faith with our other members (strengthening the heart-to-heart connection among them). Some people are even breaking barriers they had encountered in their tribal messiah work. They have begun making progress with relatives on whom for so long they had been unable to make an impression.

Another change experienced in the mission field was that members began coming to the church at other times than just for Sunday service. According to one missionary, one of the secrets behind the good development of home groups was his having visited each blessed family in his mission area, in order to love, serve and care for them; thus, they became closer in heart.

Today, members continually visit the church. They look to the missionary for advice about their lives and are more involved in church-related issues. This resulted from the missionary visiting families on a near daily basis when home groups began.



Members become close through one-on-one education in their home groups.

Those visits happened in the evening because the missionary works Monday to Friday from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Each Saturday and Sunday he strives to visit a home group leader and a blessed family in order to express love for and develop greater affection among the members.

Every fifteen days, the home group leaders hold a meeting to report and to learn from one another. At the meeting, they share experiences of success, resolve doubts, talk about their difficulties and listen to advice from the missionary or from other home group leaders.

Members in the mission field realize that three points are essential to home group success: Union of heart between the home group leaders and the local central figure; heart-to-heart connection between the home group leader and the vice-leader, and success in reaching a weekly goal in some area that causes real

change in people's lives. Those in the Itapecerica mission field have consistently made effort to attend all meetings, reunions, events and workshops about home groups, seeking to deepen their relationship with the national leader and thus attract heavenly fortune to their activities.

Some members have overcome great family difficulties they had had with their spouse or children through their home group weekly goal. Feeling gratitude for that, they devoted themselves to becoming successful in home group outreach. They are breaking through in many areas now. For example, someone that has been a member for about a year and a half brought in a spiritual son through a home group and through one-on-one lecturing.

This spiritual child has already received the blessing and is becoming the leader of his own home group.

An example of a home group meeting in the Itapecerica mission area:

They hold the meeting at some time other than when Sunday service takes place because members must attend the service.

- 1) Prayer and holy songs (Sometimes, to help open guests' hearts they sing Christian songs.)
- 2) An ice-breaker to relax and soften the hearts of the participants. (During the week, one of the participants prepares some simple, brief game and introduces it at the meeting.)
- 3) A short reading from True Parents' teachings, lasting no more than five minutes (The reading has to be easily understandable for the guests.)
- 4) A conversation about the topic of the reading and an exchange of experiences. (At this point everyone should speak with love and without showing fallen nature, controlling themselves. Everyone else should listen with the utmost attention and interest as an expression of love toward the speaker.)
- 5) They talk about the weekly goal, explaining how they battled to win a victory, if they did win. If not, they admit what difficulty prevented them from winning and express how determined they are to succeed in reaching the next weekly goal. Listening to the members testify about their victories in their weekly goals piques the guests' interest. They want to learn more, to establish their own weekly goal and to experience real change in their lives.
- 6) Socialize over food (Sometimes, this includes a game. This, like the ice-breaker, is a means to approach a person's heart and help the person go home happier. During the week the guests are likely to look forward to continuing this type of interaction and members likewise will look forward to seeing the guests again.)
- 7) The concluding prayer (It may include requests; for example, prayer for an ailing relative.)
- 8) Emphasize the next meeting, to be held in the house of another member or guest.



Members of the Itapecerica home group

Members widely report that through home groups, their hope to get spiritual children and fulfill their missions as heavenly tribal messiahs is increasing. They are growing individually through the weekly goal, improving their interfamily relationships and relationships among the brothers and sisters in our church.

After achieving home group success through harmony and unity, members share their faith with guests naturally and experience joy through having spiritual children. The oldest members say that the environment and heart-to-heart connection causes a warm feeling inside of them that reminds them of the early days in the church.



Rev. Sasaki Koichi giving a lecture to members

Testimonies: The Effectiveness of Setting Weekly Goals

Elisângela Martins:

I am the leader of the home group Luz Celestial (Heavenly Light), from the city of Riacho de Santana. After I began using the weekly goal in our home group I felt that now, certainly, the possibility exists for us to reach perfection!

I know that we often think that perhaps no way to reach perfection in our lifetimes exists. Yet, today we have True Parents, who perfected themselves and left us their legacy and their teachings so that we can also reach the long awaited perfection. One of their teachings is the weekly goal, which we have initiated in our home group.

That is why today I am here to share with you what the home group and the weekly goal have changed in my life.

I have always had the habit of rating my husband's behavior, and I easily got irritated for any small reason, always analyzing whether he had acted correctly. So I decided to make my the weekly goal, "not to get irritated because of his behavior, try not to check if he was right or wrong, fight against my thoughts." It worked very well!

I realized that he was not the problem but it was my own fallen nature (anger). I made effort not to feel anger anymore, nor indignation nor contempt. I was already tired of these feelings. With the victory in the weekly goal, today I feel lighter.

By nature, my husband speaks in a loud voice. But when he spoke to me like that, I always closed myself up, feeling my pride was hurt. I would not talk to him for three days or more. I made my weekly goal -- instead of getting irritated -- not to take it so seriously, even to joke about it. That was the hardest goal for me to achieve. I had to repeat it a few times, but in the end I managed to do it.

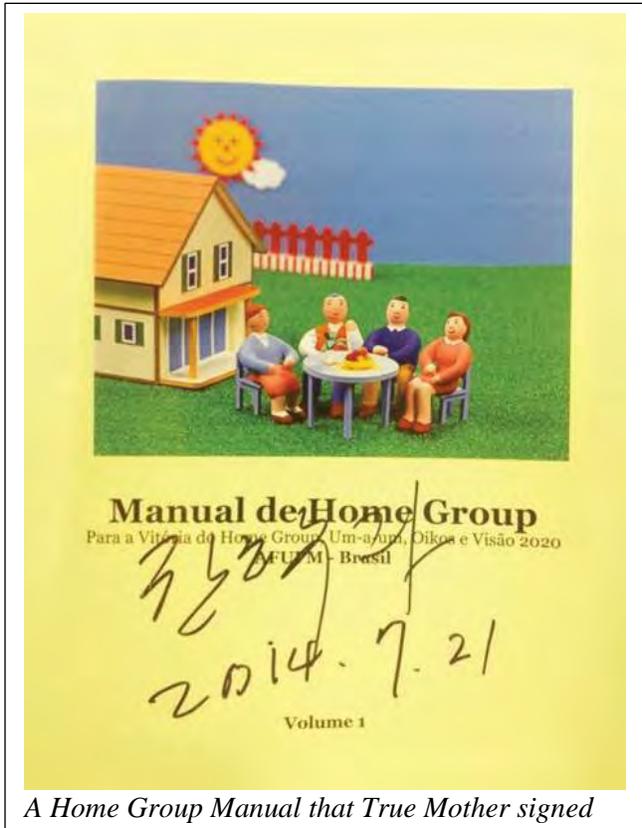
I had the habit of asking help from many people, especially my husband. I put as one weekly goal that I would serve more instead of asking favors from people and in that I also succeeded. To fight against that habit was very difficult, but my husband helped me a lot. With my son, things changed too. Because of work, I am out of the house most of the day. He ends up being left alone without my attention. Because of a goal I made, today I give him more attention, phoning him when I am out and asking him how his day at school was, about homework, etc.

After all, we have to eliminate many fallen natures so we have many weekly goals to work on. I know I have defects that cause other people problems, but through the weekly goal I feel that I can increasingly do better, because when I stop feeling anger, indignation and disappointment I liberate my heart to love. I feel conviction that I will be a better wife, mother, friend, home group leader and a better daughter to

bring joy to God and True Parents.

Mrs. Célia Lelis:

I started participating in the home group, Peace of Life, about a year and a half ago. The Peace of Life leader, Mr. Amarildo, always strongly emphasized the importance of the weekly goal. Slowly, I started to feel an internal change, and today my life is completely different. I made a weekly goal to overcome difficulties with my husband and with the people around me. I went to sleep and woke up thinking about my goal. As I got up, I was already thinking about how I could meet that weekly goal today.



A Home Group Manual that True Mother signed

Reading Mrs. Onnan's testimony in the Home Group Manual, I sometimes became emotional. I cried because I found answers to my difficulties. Sometimes I laughed, because the difficulties that she struggled with were exactly the same as mine. After striving with my weekly goal, I reached the conclusion that I don't want to allow small things to disturb my happiness anymore. When my husband would do small things... For example, his leaving orange peels in the sink or bread crumbs on the table was already enough to irritate me and I couldn't love him.

When I made a goal to overcome these things, achieving it was not easy.

I fought strongly with myself, I didn't fight with other people, nor with my husband, but with myself. I realized that the problem was in me. I was seeing my problems in others and getting angry with them for that reason. After I overcame my problems, I could see that they were all good people, and I did not see my problems in them anymore.

Today I feel completely different, and my husband is finishing one-on-one Divine Principle study. When I started achieving my weekly goals, eliminating those behaviors that irritated me, my husband changed very much; today we live in harmony. I feel that I lost time in my life, because the things to overcome were small things that had been disturbing me for a long time. Now, when my husband does just a small thing for me, I already feel joy. The weekly goal in my home group wrought real change in our lives and in our relationship as a couple.