



HOUSEHOLD SERVANT'S MANUAL

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A. THE HOUSEHOLD

1. Definition

A household is a grouping of couples who meet regularly during the week for personal sharing and for mutual support and encouragement in the Christian life. As such, the household is the basic unit in the pastoral structure of Missionary Families of Christ (MFC).

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the household group is to build an environment for the support of the Christian life of couples, and to provide a means of encouraging and hastening growth in the Christian life. As such, the household group:

- a. Builds faith and provides for mutual encouragement through sharing of life experiences and God's practical wisdom.
- b. Provides friendship and brotherhood (sisterhood), without which our Christian life lacks joyful expression.
- c. Provides support for each other's needs.
- d. Helps people overcome obstacles to grow in the Christian life.

3. Composition

A household is composed of five to seven couples including the household servant and his wife. The household is constituted from couples who finished the Christian Life Seminar (CLS) and who have made their commitment to the covenant of the Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life. The household is set up immediately after the end of the CLS.

In succeeding years, there would be occasions when households would be reorganized, with the ensuing change in the membership in the different households.

4. Necessity of household membership

Every MFC couple is to belong to one household as a member of it.

MFC Servants (Household, Unit, Chapter Servants & their wives) are all to belong to households for their own personal support in their Christian life. Thus every MFC Servant participates in 2 households, one which he leads & the other where he in turn is led.



B. THE HOUSEHOLD SERVANT

1. Definition

- a. The household servant is a man appointed to take care of a household.
- b. The husband is the "household servant". The husband and wife are **NOT** the household servants. Together, the husband and wife are the "household servants".

2. The Role of the Household Servant

- a. He is the designated servant over a group of couples and is responsible for all the activities of the household and for the good order of the household meeting.
 - attendance
 - sharing/discussion
 - honor and respect
- b. He acts as an older brother to the group.
 - establishes strong personal relationships with each of his men.
 - gets help for them whenever it is available.
- c. He helps each member to be fully integrated into the household and in MFC.
- d. He has no authority over member's lives but exercises concern for their lives, especially in the areas of righteousness and good order.
- e. He supports the life in MFC and the decisions of its elders.
 - does not use the household meeting to ventilate his disagreements with MFC or its elders. In case of such disagreement, he takes this up with his Unit Servant.
 - supports fully any decision on movements of couples from one household to another, and helps such couples make such movements with ease and a minimum of difficulty.

3. The role of the Household Servant's Wife

- a. She is responsible for developing and enriching sisterly relationships among the wives.
- b. She fosters good order in the discussion and sharing of the wives during the household meeting.
- c. She sees to it that all the wives are fully integrated into the household and in MFC.
- d. She does not exercise headship over the wives, whose heads are their husbands.



4. Qualifications of a Household Servant

The household head is selected based on the following criteria:

- a. Availability
- b. Formation
 - growing spiritually
 - fairly good order in personal life (especially relationship with spouse)
 - a fairly good appreciation of the vision, mission and culture of MFC.
 - faithful to MFC commitments
- c. Personal characteristics
 - emotionally stable with good reputation
 - able to accept direction and correction
- d. Skills
 - ability to handle a group discussion
 - good listening and communication skills
 - ability to provide adequate directions to members regarding MFC commitments
- e. A member of MFC for at least one year.

5. Attitudes of a Household Servant

In order to properly function in a way that would truly be helpful to the members of the household, the household head needs to have some basic attitudes, to wit:

- a. He must have the mind and heart of a servant. Just like the Lord Jesus, he must come to serve rather than be served. His service should be an expression of his love for the Lord. He should be humble in his service and put the interest of his members first. He should be obedient to the Lord and to those whom the Lord has put in charge of his service.
- b. He must look upon the couples under him as being given by the Lord, to be cared for adequately. He has the responsibility to look after their spiritual welfare, a charge coming directly from the Lord.
- c. He must love them as brothers and sisters. They are not just good friends, but family.
- d. He must serve with gladness and joy. No matter what one's difficulties are, no matter how badly the day went, no matter how strained one's relationship with his wife is at the moment, the household servant needs to have the joy of the Lord, the joy of serving Him, the joy that transcends all earthly difficulties. And of course, how he conducts himself will provide a living example to those who have been put in his care.



- e. He must serve in trust and confidence. He needs to realize that since the Lord has called him to do His work, then the Lord will equip him with the wisdom, guidance and gifts necessary to be an effective instrument of His will.

6. Some Areas of Challenge

The household servant is not expected to exercise pastoral headship over his group, but he would normally encounter certain pastoral challenges which he cannot avoid or should not avoid, but for which he should prudently seek help from the elders.

The household servant should refer all serious pastoral concerns to his Unit Servant, who is the pastor of the members of the unit, which includes the household. Of course, the Unit Servant can direct the household servant to handle the situation himself, with some input from him. But ultimately it is the responsibility and concern of the Unit Servant. Putting it within the context of a family (which a household is), the household servant is the big brother while the Unit Servant is the father.

Some examples of issues that need to be referred to the Unit Servant are:

- a. Serious relationship problems between husband and wife.
- b. Issues which pastorally affect the unit or across units, e.g., financial borrowing without proper consultation and clearance.
- c. Unfaithfulness of members to meetings, requiring a decision to retain or drop a couple from MFC.
- d. Slander or gossip which erodes relationships within the household/unit or across units.
- e. Serious wrongdoing.
- f. Moral and theological questions, such as taxes, bribery vs. extortion, penance, the sacraments, etc.
- g. Proselytizing and ecumenical relationships.

7. Practical Considerations

Some of the concrete things the household servant can and should do are:

- a. Handle the practical concerns for household meetings.
 - places of meetings
 - topics for discussion/sharing
 - drawing out a withdrawn member
 - regulating an over-sharing member
 - how to stop gossip in the meeting
 - bringing the discussion to the agenda and keeping it on course
- b. Know each member well.
 - keep notes on each one.



- c. Be prayerful.
 - Pray for each member regularly during his own personal prayer time.
 - Spend time praying before the household meeting and entrusting it to the Lord.
 - Pray over members when appropriate (birthdays, anniversaries, when sick, for inner healing, etc.)
- d. Be prepared and have an agenda. In other words, rely on the Lord, but also do your part.
- e. Focus on spiritual growth and God's power rather than on problems. However, be sensitive to personal problems.
- f. Get the group to make agreements and account to one another regarding:
 - time of meeting, punctuality
 - right way of speaking about others
 - negative humor
 - others
- g. Always work on the faithfulness of members. Attendance at the household meetings is part of a member's commitment and is a must.
- h. Refer all frequent absentees to your Unit Servant. Together you can discuss the particular situation and decide on a course of action. Remember: the strength of the body will depend on its members' faithfulness and commitment.
- i. Always be on the lookout for potential leaders (CLS discussion leaders, speakers, household heads) and inform your Unit/Chapter Head Servant about them. We want to identify them early, chart their development and at the opportune time let them serve. Remember that MFC can only grow in number to the extent that our leadership resources allow.
- j. Look upon our SG's books, as a pastoral tool. It can help members grow through teachings. It can help members experience unity in the body, especially in view of our growing numbers.
- k. Study and read, especially the books our SG's publish. Keep ahead of your members.
- l. Don't use the household meeting to ventilate your own personal problems, nor seek help for such problems from the household members under you. Rather, bring these to your Unit Head Servant and to the unit household of which you are a member.
- m. If for any reason you feel you cannot do the job as household head adequately, discuss this with your Unit Servant so that appropriate action can be taken. Don't just let it go, with the result that your household members suffer.



C. THE HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

1. Attitudes of Household Members

In order to reap the full benefits to be offered by participation in a household group, its members have to foster some basic attitudes, such as:

- a. Openness: One has to be open to what the Lord wants to give through the household group. One should realize that this is part of God's work and in conformity with His plan for each person, and should therefore be expectant and desirous of what is in store for him/her. Concretely, one should share about his/her personal life and relationship with the Lord in a spirit of openness.
- b. Confidentiality: Household members are encouraged to share their personal lives, including their concerns and difficulties, in the meetings. And this can be done only in an atmosphere of confidentiality. Whatever is shared in the meetings should not be shared outside with anyone else.
***Note:** The household servants may share concerns with their service servant/Unit servant, who are extensions of their service and care for household members. This is not a breach of confidentiality.
***The prohibition on sharing with outsiders excludes the positive factors in one's life. These in effect can be shared by the members outside the household meeting whenever there is an appropriate opportunity so that others can also be built up and encouraged.**
- c. Faithfulness: One has to make the weekly household meeting a priority in his/her life, and be regular in attendance. Only with continuity and one's personal commitment can the purpose of household groups be achieved.
- d. Participation: Each member has to come to the meetings prepared both spiritually and practically, and have the attitude of wanting to make a contribution to the life of the meeting. Think not only of what you can get out of the meeting, but of what you can impart to the brothers and sisters. This is done by active participation in worship, in sharing and discussion, and in fellowship. It is important that each member supports the good order of the weekly meeting and relates to everyone in the group with honor and respect, especially to the household head.
- e. Love: The idea, after all, is to foster active concern and commitment to one another. One has to look at the other members of the group as not just so many new friends, but as brothers and sisters in the Lord, among whom mutual love is the common denominator.



2. Attendance

- a. Each member is expected to attend the weekly meetings faithfully, and indeed this is part of one's commitment to the covenant of MFC. Of course, certain obstacles will come up, such as sickness. What is important is that one should accord top priority to these meetings and really desire not to be absent from them.
- b. If either spouse is unable to attend a meeting, the other should still attend. They don't have to come as a couple if one cannot come for a valid reason.
- c. Since attendance is part of one's commitment and since the very purpose of household groups would be defeated by frequent absences (indicating a lack of interest), such absences form sufficient ground for one's separation from MFC. Household heads should follow up on absent members and try to renew their interest and commitment. If unsuccessful, the matter should be referred to the Unit Head for appropriate action.
- d. The household head has no authority to grant leaves of absence to his household members. Any such requests should be referred to the Unit Head.

D. THE HOUSEHOLD MEETINGS

1. Frequency

- a. Households meet once a week, on the same day of the week as mutually agreed on by the members. Less than once a week would not provide enough contact to have adequate support and encouragement in the Christian life. More than once a week may take time that is more properly allocated to work, family, personal needs or Christian service.
- b. The household servant cannot skip or cancel any meeting, except as provided for below, or as approved by the Unit Servant due to a serious reason.
- c. If the household servant cannot be present at a scheduled household meeting (of course for a valid reason), he should not cancel the meeting. Rather, he must refer the matter to the Unit Servant. Together, they will agree on a replacement, either one of the men from the household or another brother from the unit.
- d. Exceptions to the weekly household meetings are the following:
 - During the week when the monthly prayer meeting is held.
 - When a household serves in a CLS. In this case, the household will need to meet only two weeks out of four in a month, in addition to its weekly service in the CLS. If the CLS is on the same day as the monthly prayer meeting, the household meets twice in a regular household meeting. If the CLS is not on the same day as the monthly prayer meeting, the household meets once in a regular household meeting and attends the prayer meeting.



Continuing to meet is essential so that the members continue receiving personal life support, and not just meet for service, which is the CLS.

- During special times such as Holy Week and Christmas break.

2. Venue

The household meeting is to be held in the home of one of the members of the group.

The meeting place is rotated among the homes of each member couple.

Having the household meeting in the homes of the household members have the following values:

- a. Worshiping the Lord in our homes makes the truth that the home is a small church a concrete reality. And God's blessings will surely descend upon the home where God's people can be found, worshipping Him together and growing in their faith together.
- b. The people in our home: our children, maybe our parents, our household help, the people who are closest to us and whom we love - will be aware of what we are involved in and what we do every week. To them we will become people who are living their Christian faith openly and powerfully.
- c. What we do in our homes can be an effective tool for evangelism, especially to our residential household, to our neighbors and to other relatives and friends.

3. Ingredients of a Household Meeting

A typical household meeting would involve three indispensable ingredients and all three are very important and none should be skipped or simply glossed over.

- a. Worship.
 - The worship portion should include all the necessary ingredients: singing, praising, thanksgiving, prayers of petition and intercession. Every member should become familiar and comfortable with our way of worship and praise, and the household servant shows the way.
 - A typical format for the time of worship could be as follows:
 - ★ *come before the Lord (short period of silence or exhortation from leader)*
 - ★ *sing a lively song of praise and simultaneous vocal praising*
 - ★ *sing another song, then more praising*
 - ★ *sing a worship song*
 - ★ *singing in tongues, followed by a short period of silence*
 - ★ *bring forward words from the Lord (prophecy, inspired Scripture verses, exhortations) □ individual prayers of thanksgiving*
 - ★ *individual prayers of petition and intercession*
 - ★ *closing prayer by the leader*



- Members should be exhorted by the head to participate actively in the singing, praising and prayers of thanksgiving and petition. They should also be encouraged to exercise the spiritual gifts of prophecy, inspired Scripture reading and exhortation.
 - The household servant leads in the worship. As a general rule, he should not delegate his responsibility to the other men. However, every once in a while (not too often), he may ask another brother to lead, for the purpose of training. But most if not all the time, he leads.
 - Ideally, someone in the group should play the guitar. A piano or other musical instrument would be alternatives, if available and practicable. If no one can play, then it would be advisable to make use of our song tapes, where songs have been arranged in groups of three precisely for use in household worship.
 - The worship is done standing up for the whole duration. Exceptions would be pregnant women and sick or weak members.
- b. For the time of sharing, teaching or discussion, both men and women may meet together, or the men can meet separately (at a different part of the home) from the women, depending on what is to be taken up, at the discretion of the household head.
- However, most of the time, it should be a separate meeting. Some advantages of this are as follows:
- Members are more free to share, especially of their difficulties, when their spouses are not around.
 - Practically speaking, there would not be enough time (at least quality time) for everyone to share in a joint meeting.
 - It's an opportunity for the husbands to be supported by the brothers as men, and the wives by the sisters as women.
 - The household can tackle two different topics in one meeting, addressing itself to the different needs of the men and the women in the group.
- c. The last part, fellowship, is the time for socializing.
- A very simple snack is usually prepared by the host couple. Here it must be kept in mind that the food is incidental to the fellowship, rather than the fellowship being centered on the food. Furthermore, no member should be burdened by the snack's cost or needed time for preparation, nor should any host ever be pressured in "keeping up" with a fellow member's extravagance.
 - Grace before the meal is said by the host.
- d. The evening ends with a short closing prayer by the head.



4. Duration

- a. Ordinarily, the household meeting is held after dinner on a weekday. However, other mutually acceptable times are possible. The whole meeting would typically run for about 2 1/2 hours, as follows:
 - a. *Worship - 30 minutes*
 - b. *Sharing/teaching/discussion- 60-90 mins.*
 - c. *Fellowship 30-60 mins.*
 - d. Of course, there is some flexibility and there could be variations on the above time frames.
- b. As much as possible, household meetings should start at the agreed time, even if not everyone has arrived. The household servant should not wait for everyone. He should not make the meeting and everyone else a captive of someone else's lack of commitment to punctuality. Besides, this may be the only way to get chronic latecomers to mend their ways. So if necessary, the household servant should start the worship even if only he, his wife and the host couple are around.
- c. The meeting should not end too late, say, not later than 11 p.m. If the meeting can start earlier, so much the better. If the meeting goes beyond 11 p.m., this should be the exception rather than the rule.

5. Social night

- a. The household may decide to have a social night on occasion. A social night is a time devoted to fellowship, with no formal worship, discussion or sharing.
- b. It is recommended that a social night be held once a quarter, on the month where there is a 5th week. If the members want to have a social night more often, then it should be done outside the time allocated for regular household meetings. Some possibilities: meet during the prayer meeting week; or have a Lord's Day celebration together.
- c. Various activities are possible. Members may have dinner together, at a home or outside, or go out somewhere together (at a party, go bowling, etc.), or even decide to have a whole-day outing. This could be a time when their children would be brought along, so that they might get to know everyone else's children. There is a lot of flexibility, and the idea is just to enjoy each other's company socially and become intimate friends as well as brothers and sisters in the Lord.



E. TOPICS FOR MEETINGS

1. For the first year (for new members right after the CLS), the household meetings are used to follow up on the topics in the teaching program. Thus the first year would look like this:
 - *3 months*□□- *CLS*
 - *3 months*□□-*Follow up*
 - *1 day* □□-*Covenant Orientation*
 - *3 months* □□-*Follow up*
 - *1 weekend*□-□*MER*
 - *3 months*□□-*Follow up*
 - Manuals are provided for each of the three "Follow up" phases

2. In the second year and beyond, the topics for the household meetings would normally follow the following cycle:
 - *1st week*□□-*General prayer meeting*
 - *2nd week*□□-*Personal sharing*
 - *3rd week*□□-*Bible sharing*
 - *4th week*□□-*Christian topic*

The above cycle provides enough variety so as to make household meetings always interesting and life-giving. This cycle could go on and on, year in and year out. Of course, the household head is free to deviate from this cycle as he sees fit.

3. Personal sharing

Personal sharing is telling our brothers and sisters about what has been happening in our lives for the past month, with a particular focus on what the Lord has been doing in our lives. Personal sharing is an essential element in building up our relationship with our brothers and sisters, as more and more we open up our lives to them and they become an intimate part of our lives.

- a. If the household head opts for personal sharing, it can either be done by just encouraging the members to share as they are led, or by using a set of questions which can guide the members in their sharing. As a framework to provide shape and direction, questions can be an effective means to lively personal interaction. One can develop and use one's own questions, just so long as they suit the needs of the members and can effectively draw out people.



b. Sample questions are as follows:

- *How have you grown in your relationship with the Lord? Have you come before the Lord faithfully in personal prayer?*
- *In what ways were you aware of the Lord's presence or action in your life during the past week/month?*
- *What has the Lord been teaching you in your prayer time or Scripture study this week/month? How have you responded?*
- *Have you conducted yourself righteously in thought, word or action?*
- *In what ways has the Lord used you to serve others this past week/month?*
- *What change has the Lord been asking you in order that you might grow in loving your brothers and sisters?*

4. Bible sharing

Bible sharing is a way for us to be more familiar with the Word of God, as we share about it every month. Bible sharing is not Bible study as such, but a way of drawing insights from the Bible and allowing God to speak to us personally through His written Word. Various methods of Bible sharing could be utilized. We however recommend the "7 step" method of Bible sharing.

5. Topical discussion

This is a time for formal discussion of a Christian topic. These topics could be anything that has to do with the Christian life. Especially recommended are those topics which have to do with the life, mission, covenant and culture of MFC.

a. For example, such topics are:

- *personal daily prayer time*
- *daily reading of the Bible*
- *living fully the Christian life*
 - avoidance of wrongdoing
 - good order in private life
 - participation in Church life
- *regular weekly dialogue with spouse*
- *living as a good Christian parent*
- *headship and submission in the family*
- *disciplining and raising children*
- *Christian service & fellowship*
- *priority setting/weekly schedule*
- *TV and media*
- *spiritual gifts*



- b. Furthermore, certain publications, sharing or teachings may provide the impetus for a household meeting topic, to wit:
 - Teachings from SG.
 - Topics contained in the various books that we publish.
 - Articles of interest in "God's Word Today" or other similar prayer or Scripture guides.
 - Teachings or exhortations given at the monthly prayer meeting.
 - Taped talks or teachings by renowned personages.
6. It should be noticed that this cycle of topics for the second year and beyond is such that there is no burden on the household servant to be always thinking of what to take up during the household meetings.
- a. For personal sharing, the household servant (and his wife for the sisters) would simply moderate the sharing and keep the interaction active and life-giving.
 - b. For the Bible sharing, the household servant merely chooses the particular verses to be taken up.
 - c. For the topical discussion, the household servant chooses the topic, taking from the vast array of materials available to him. Thus he simply moderates the discussion.
- Thus the household servants are not burdened by "technical" preparation for the meetings, but can focus more on "spiritual" preparation.
7. This cycle is something the household servant is free to follow or not. The household servant has a good amount of flexibility as to how to handle the household meeting and what to take up. The important thing is that the conduct of the meeting contributes to the achievement of the stated purpose of our having households, and that is to build an environment of support for the Christian life of our members.

F. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNIT SERVANT

1. The Unit Servant is the pastor of the unit to which households belong. As such, he has overall responsibility for the service of household servants in his unit.
2. The Unit Servant has the authority coming from the MFC Council to back him up. As such, the household servant needs to look to him with respect and in obedience with regard to his service.



3. The household servant needs to look upon his Unit Servant as someone there for him, to help him perform his duties more effectively. The household servant should not look upon his household as his own turf which is not to be invaded by his Unit Servant. The household servant is to be fully open to his Unit Servant and be eager to have his input on any matter involving his service.
4. The household servant focuses on facilitating discussion and developing brotherhood and sisterhood in the household group. He is not expected to exercise pastoral leadership over the group, but he would normally encounter certain pastoral challenges which he should refer to his Unit Servant.
5. The household servant, either singly or together with another household servant of the unit, meets with the Unit Servant once a month for a service meeting. The meeting shall dwell on any or all of the following:
 - a. Reporting on how the members are doing.
 - b. Receiving pastoral guidance and direction in handling of couples.
 - c. Discussion/resolution of problems or issues.
 - d. Report on faithfulness in attendance (at household & prayer meetings and other activities) and in financial giving.
 - e. Identification/training of potential leaders.
 - f. Administrative matters.
6. The household servant needs to keep the Unit Servant informed and updated regarding his members, since the Unit Servant does not have regular direct contact with them but is, as pastor, still responsible for everyone. Thus occasional feedback and the regular monthly service meeting are essential.

Following are some areas of pastoral concern for the Unit Servant:

- a. Household.
 - *Are the men relating to one another well? The women?*
 - *Are they free to share with one another?*
 - *Do they worship freely together?*
 - *Do they ever do anything together outside of the household meeting?*
 - *How is their general attitude towards MFC?*



- b. Individual members.
 - *How are they growing in Christ?*
 - *Daily prayer?*
 - *Relationship with spouse? With children?*
 - *Relationship with authority? To the household head, to the Unit Servant, overall to MFC?*
 - *Problems if any.*

- c. Time and service.
 - *Do they have enough time for themselves, family, job and service?*
 - *How are they experiencing their service?*
 - *Are they growing in confidence? Do they need more help?*

G.GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Aside from what has been taken up as proper to the activities of a household group, there are many other things that can be done as well. It is up to the household servant to discern the needs of his members individually and as a group, and to act accordingly. These other activities may be in lieu of the normal household activity (with approval of the Unit Servant) or in addition to it. Some such activities are:
 - a. Healing sessions/praying over
 - b. Intercessory prayers
 - c. One on one
 - d. Video sessions
 - e. Socials (sports, outings, picnics, etc.)
 - f. Lord's Day celebration

2. Other activities are welcome so long as they make a positive contribution to the support and strengthening of the Christian life of couples, within the context of MFC.