

The Purpose of a Home Group is the Success of Tribal Messiahs

Koichi Sasaki
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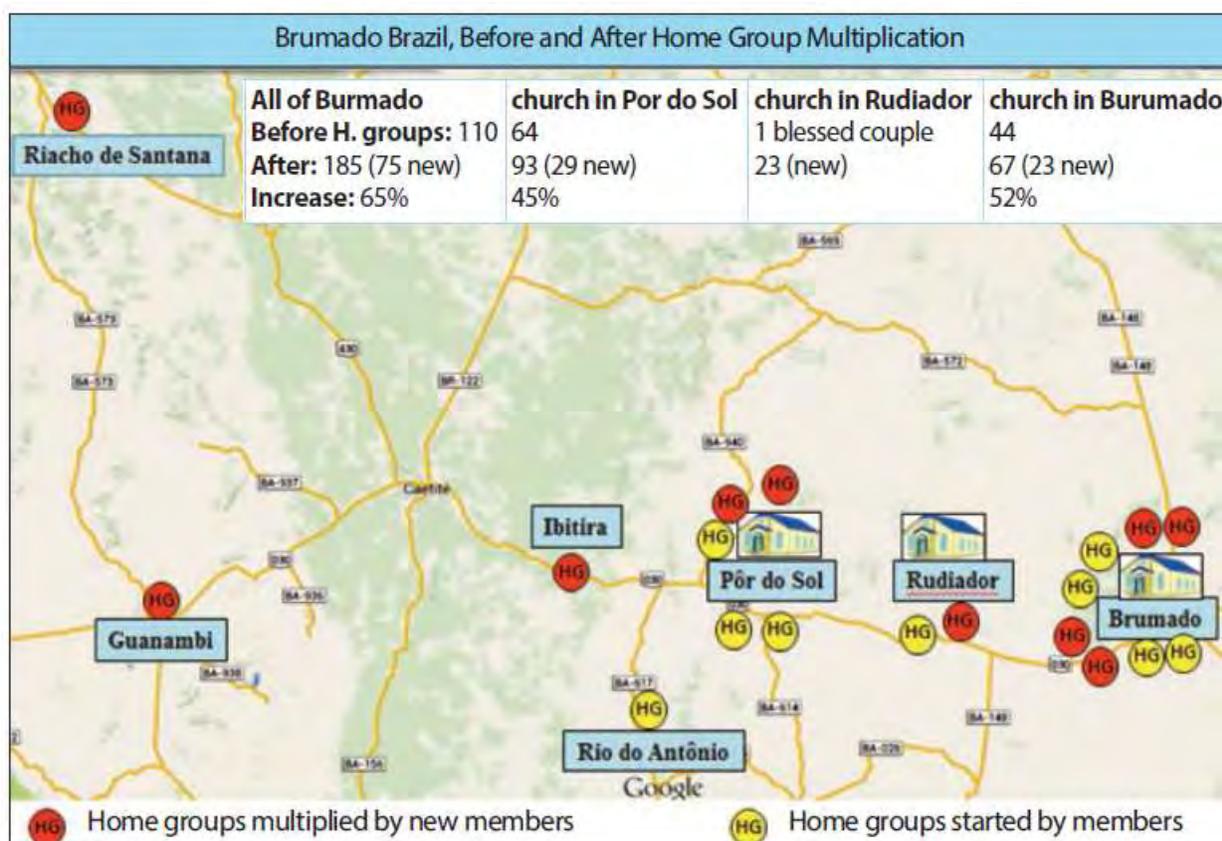
Rev. Odair and his wife

Rev. Almeida Oldair, leader of our church Brumado, Brazil, received an achievement award at the thousandth-day memorial of True Father’s ascension at the International Peace Education Center in Las Vegas. (I accepted it in his place.) This article will introduce the witnessing activities that are currently developing in Brazil and home group activities happening in Brumado under Rev. Almeida’s guidance.

In Brazil are 330 home family churches (home groups). All around Brazil, testimonies about success in reviving neglected local churches like the one in Brumado are arising. This is due to members in Brazil that have been working toward our goal to establish a witnessing culture through home groups. Through this, success as tribal messiahs, which was difficult before, has become possible and witnessing activities are energizing our churches.

Seeking a witnessing model

When we first started home group activities, many people did not have sufficient understanding of the correlation between home groups and the heavenly tribal messiah mission. However, through our Home Group Manual and other materials along with consistent education and practice, we naturally came to understand that the central purpose of home groups is success as heavenly tribal messiahs.



In the past, a few model churches or individuals have brought great results in tribal messiah work or witnessing activities. Yet it was difficult for members as a whole to follow such examples, so no development occurred beyond that. The overall view was that “those people” could do it because they have special skills. I concluded that we would not be able to develop a model of witnessing upon which all members could succeed if we did not develop one that all members could put into practice.

Our previous witnessing system -- mainly comprising workshops, witnessing centers and events -- had brought results, but was not easy to practice because it often conflicted with work and other activities and required going to and from a witnessing center. Though the church had many people, most were not witnessing.

Moreover, a witnessing system implemented through programs in large churches such as conferences or workshops, only resulted in members becoming professionals at bringing guests. Most members did not gain experience in lecturing, caring for guests and other elements necessary to restore a person. Thus, when they returned to their hometowns and tried to do tribal messiah activities alone, contrary to their expectations, they were unable to bring witnessing results. A concept also arose that a building or location was necessary before they could even start.

However, home groups and one-on-one studying activities can take place anywhere. What is more, once a home group model exists, practicing it in the same way elsewhere is easy. Even if we developed thousands of models, economic and location problems would not be hurdles to implementing them. Consequently, the percentage of active witnessing members in congregations that have good home groups is higher. Attendance at some churches, such as the one in Brumado, can reach 100 percent for worship services.

We based our home group system on the concept that even without special skills anyone can succeed in witnessing if they follow the manual with a willingness to change themselves.

Though being able to pray powerfully and lecture skillfully is ideal, anyone that undergoes training through home groups can be proficient at witnessing in their day-to-day lives. Put concretely, through *oikos* witnessing, even members too busy to participate in church witnessing programs can train themselves to be people that move others by loving them, befriending them and gaining their trust.

We are doing home group work with this type of process, which can develop each individual's skills so that he or she can flourish as a heavenly tribal messiah. For all our members to be effective in heavenly tribal messiah work, as True Parents have shown us, they must establish a foundation of three disciples and then twelve disciples of their own and love each one of them.



A Home Group Conference

Tribal messiahs in Brumado

The city of Brumado, with a population of about seventy thousand, is in Brazil's Bahia State. Through *oikos* witnessing, home groups and one-on-one lectures, Almeida Oldair, the minister of our church in Brumado, is steadily developing the churches' foundation. His congregants now feel conviction and hope that they can also be successful in tribal messiah work.

Rev. Almeida explained that development occurred when he balanced oikos, home groups and one-on-one witnessing activities. With results from a balanced investment in home groups, which are small groups within his church itself, the congregation increased by 65 percent. Moreover, as Rev. Almeida explained, “We were able to create a natural church growth atmosphere after home groups became a basin of love. Members felt revived through home groups and the worship service atmosphere became filled with life. We expect that if we continue to develop this type of culture, anyone can be successful as a heavenly tribal messiah.”

According to Rev. Almeida, based on his ministering experience, they concentrated on a few key points to spur development. The most important is for the pastor to set the example by investing himself completely.

Another point is to encourage visitors to speak about their situations and to express their feelings. He added that for the pastor’s wife to accompany him on visits to home groups is important.

He and his wife visited home groups without rest. To some homes, they traveled more than a hundred kilometers, to guide the members in person. More than 70 percent of his home group investment has been in visiting, loving, caring, educating and reviving members one by one.

Field visits result from leadership being the most important factor in Brazil’s home group development. When you start home groups, members are not as motivated if the leader focuses on a system, as they are when he focuses on working hard and making personal contact. During his visits, members resolve questions, leading to rapid growth.

Even now, this pastor tries to improve his understanding by studying our official home group workshops, manuals, church service material related to home groups, videos, etc. Notably, he had all his members read the Home Group Manual. He emphasizes achieving external and internal goals, but in whatever activity they do, the internal objective, perfection of character, is more important than honing external witnessing skills.

Home group members set specific weekly goals to overcome bad habits or broaden their hearts. Changing themselves first is important. Once one succeeds and changes, hope and joy follow. Our goal is for our church in Brumado and all home group members to restore their tribes and to have explosive witnessing results based on continuously encountering joy.

Through weekly goals, people experience peace, and love of the original self grows greater thereby erasing resentment or scars of the past. Members meet the God that they met at the beginning of their faith. The initial goal of home groups is to witness to oneself and meet God again. Based on their internal success, members witness to others, who naturally connect to home groups.