

Open cell: what, why, how?

Martin Ruddick is an evangelist based with Tees Valley Community Church, Teesside. Over the last few years he has been developing 'open cells' – encouraging people to open their homes and lives to reach out to friends and neighbours. Martin explains...



"Gaius is letting me and the whole Church here use his home." Romans 16:23, NCV

Good old Gaius! No wonder the Church in Rome was doing so well. From Acts 2 onwards, and even in the days of Jesus' ministry 'opening' your home for the Lord has been a key to family blessing, church growth and evangelism.

Opening a cell to gather and win people for Christ

starts with this: a willingness to open your home and heart to the Lord for his purposes. An 'open' cell could be formed around any number of activities, such as games evenings, testimony nights, Alpha courses, 'Journeys' courses, coffee and cake – whatever works for you. The important thing is to build around **YOU**, i.e your strengths and interests and the

things you have faith for.

In other words, you need to hear the Lord! Then pray; get a couple of friends to help; pray; make a few phone calls; pray; pick a night (fortnightly is less of a commitment for unbelievers); and then GO! See what the Lord does and don't be afraid of failure. Even if it starts on a purely relational basis, God will see to it that lives change and more spiritually-based cells could emerge.

Does it work?

Some of the ladies in our church began a fortnightly games night and invited some friends. That was 18 months ago, and it's still going strong, but from that group some of the ladies have done Alpha and some are starting to meet weekly in a cell for Bible study.

Another lady brought her boss to a guest service, and she made a commitment to Christ. They then started to meet weekly at her home and four other work colleagues are joining them.

After running an Alpha course in my own home, I've seen two 18 year old lads make a commitment to Christ. I asked a guy in the church to meet with them for an hour each week to encourage them, and one of the lads offered his home as a meeting place. When our guy turned up the lads had brought six friends to the group! That cell is now meeting weekly as a Bible study group.

It is amazing what God will do if we:

*Open our heart and pray.
Open our home and pray.
Take some risks and pray.
Follow his lead and keep praying!*

Its as simple as that! Go open a cell!

Regular, intentional and spiritual

An open cell should be

- **regular**
- **intentional**, i.e. *your intention* is that this bunch of people will become a cell.
- **spiritual** – you are pastoring people, even if they don't know it!

Support your open cell leaders and give them lots of backing!

Don't drive people, but...

- Envision them
- Play to their strengths
- Play in a team
- *Be relational* – grow relational evangelism, rather than driving functional evangelism
- Catch the wind of the Spirit

Big and small need to work together, i.e. keep working on your big Sunday gatherings too! We need the best preachers, teachers, worship leaders and ministry.

And remember: "If we always do what we've always done we'll always get what we've always got"