

"Simple Church"
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After hundreds of consultations with local churches and a significant research project, we have concluded that church leaders need to simplify (4) Are the people in your church being transformed? Is your church making real disciples, the kind of disciples Jesus made? Or is everyone just busy? (7) In the midst of complexity, people want to find simplicity (8) Focus on one thing and try to do it better than anyone else (11) We anticipated that there would be a relationship between a simple process and church vitality (13) Unfortunately, the over-programmed and busy church is the norm (14) Simple churches have designed a simple process to reach and mature people and structure their churches around that process (15,16)

Many of our churches have become cluttered; so cluttered that many people are busy *doing* church instead of *being* the church (19) We are not seeing spiritual transformation in the lives of our people. We have become content being busy (20) Most churches have no overarching discipleship process that pulls everything together. There is not a clear process in place that streamlines the ministry and keeps everyone on the same page (22)

Pastors committed to ministry to make disciples have become program managers instead (23) To have a simple church, leaders must ensure that everything their church does fits together to produce life change. A church must design a simple process that pulls everything together, a simple process that moves people toward spiritual maturity; skillfully design an environment where life change is likely to occur. Design a simple process that moves people through stages of spiritual growth (26) How do you structure your church to make disciples? How do you set up your ministry programs to move people toward spiritual transformation? (36) One simple church is all about "Loving God, loving people, and serving the world." Simple (37) The pastor believed God wanted disciples who would walk intimately with Christ, live in community with others, and serve both the church and the world (39) Programs can be ends in themselves. They are not used as tools to move people toward spiritual maturity (42)

New members are told at the new member's class that they should not join the church if they do not plan on serving. People who attend worship services are encouraged to move to a small group. People in small groups are challenged to serve on a team. It seems to be all they do. Three weekly programs. It is a simple design (44) Cross Church looks at the numbers of people at different stages in their ministry process. They evaluate how many people are at the *love God* stage (worship services), the *love others* stage (small groups), and the *serve the world* stage (ministry teams) The evaluation of an unhealthy church looks at the programs, not an overarching process (47)

We are talking about how a church is designed and structured so people can be transformed by God's grace (59) They design a simple process and abandon everything else. They rely on their simple process to create the environments conducive to spiritual growth. ***A simple church is a congregation designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth*** (60)

This process is tied to the purpose or vision of the church. The process is built for execution, to impact people. It is designed to be sequential so that people may move through the process (61) It appears that there is a relationship between being simple and being effective (63) There is a highly significant relationship between a simple church design and the growth and vitality of a local church. ***The leadership in the simple church is clear about the process (clarity) and is committed to executing it. The process flows logically (movement) and is implemented in each area of the church (alignment). The church abandons everything that is not in the process (focus).*** (67,68)

CLARITY

Clarity is the ability of the process to be communicated and understood by the people (70) Simple church leaders know their church's process and are able to articulate it to others (72) If you want your process to be clear, you must define it, illustrate it, discuss it, measure it and monitor the understanding of your people in regard to your process

1. Define it: "We have a clearly defined process for moving a person from salvation to spiritual maturity to significant ministry." Most churches are ambiguous about their ministry process, either because they do not have one, or because it is loosely defined (112,113) Defining the process is formulating a strategy. It is agreeing to a blueprint. And this blueprint describes not only the kind of disciple that will be built, but also *how*. (114) After you conclude what you desire people in your church or ministry to be, describe this in process terms. In other words, describe your purpose in sequential order (115) Your programs must be submissive to your ministry process (116)

2. Illustrate it: "We have a visual illustration of our process" (116) People will not live out something they can't remember (118) The illustration should be reflective of your process, show progression, help simplify (120)

3. Measure it: "We have a system to measure how people progress through the process." For people to take your ministry seriously, it has to be measured (121) If you do not measure the process, people will think it does not matter (122) Learn to view your numbers horizontally and not vertically. Not the numbers of people in a program but the numbers of people moving from one level of commitment to the next (123)

4. Discuss it: "We frequently discuss our process as a leadership team" (126) It must be discussed frequently. Clarity is not realized without consistency. The process must be discussed among the leaders consistently (125)

5. Understand it: **"Our church members have a clear understanding of our process"** Increasing understanding is hard work, and it must be continually monitored (129)

MOVEMENT

Movement is the sequential steps in the process that cause people to move to greater areas of commitment. Leaders have grasped the truth that assimilation effectiveness is more important than programmatic effectiveness (73)

Stagnant believers and congested churches go hand in hand (136) If the programs do not fit into your process, you need to eliminate them (141) Multiple programs for each phase of the process divide attention and energy (142) In many churches, people remain in the same place spiritually for years. And sometimes they remain in the same groups. They are kept in some type of "spiritual holding tank." They rarely move to greater levels of commitment (148) We need to capitalize on relationships. People move because someone else brings them through the process (151) Relationships, not information, bridge the process (152) Do not let the present program be the end. Seek to move people farther along (153) Many times, new believers are tossed aside. There is typically no follow-up.

The person is unsure what to do next **"After someone becomes a believer, the next step for them in the spiritual transformation process is clear."**(155) New Christians who immediately become active in a small group are five times more likely to remain in the church five years later than those who were active in worship services alone. Discipleship of new believers does not just happen. It must be intentional. There must be a heartbeat and a plan to make it happen (157) **"We have a class or group to move new people into the life of the church."** Churches that require potential members to attend a new members class have a much higher retention rate than those who don't (158)

ALIGNMENT

Alignment is the arrangement of all ministries and staff around the same simple process. They insist that each staff member and each ministry embrace and execute their simple ministry process (74)

We recruit and hire leaders who are committed to our process (170) While theological alignment is critical, so is philosophical alignment. Key leaders must be aligned to the same philosophy of ministry (174) Leaders should outline the simple process, but then allow ministry leaders to implement with freedom and creativity **"Our staff/leaders are held accountable for how the church process is implemented in their respective areas."** Each person's goals are tied to the simple ministry process (177) The church that is committed to alignment implements the same process everywhere. The simple ministry process guides each ministry department in the church (179) While the styles and methods vary in different ministry departments (such as children and youth), the process is the same (180) **"Our process is the unifying factor that keeps all our leaders focused"** (184) People will often agree theologically but disagree about ministry philosophy (185) If potential staff do not fit the ministry process and philosophy, you simply do not allow them to begin. Make sure that new ministries fit into the simple process. **"Before we begin a new ministry, we ensure that it fits within our process"** (188)

FOCUS

Focus is the commitment to abandon everything that falls outside of the simple ministry process. Focus is the element that gives power and energy to clarity, movement, and alignment. Leaders seek to funnel new ideas into their ministry process instead of beginning new paradigms (77)

We need to be careful that the tool for to accomplish something doesn't become the object of what we are trying to achieve (79) If you want the necessary to stand out, you have to get rid of the unnecessary. The unnecessary divides attention, resources, and time. The unnecessary can hide the necessary (80)

An example of a three fold process could be *Connecting, Growing and Serving*. Each having a program to support it (88) The process and the programs have to be friends. They must complement each other (94)

Another example would be: *Connect to God, Connect to Others, Connect to ministry, Connect to the lost* (94, 95) People only have so much available time, and the leaders must decide to free up slots for people to be able to connect to the essential programs in the process. We need to be careful to not add "Extra programs" which business consultants refer to as non-value-adding work. (97) Every program must facilitate movement (102) Staying focused is essential to being simple, and a church cannot stay focused without saying no (200) Focus is the commitment to abandon everything that falls outside of the simple ministry process (203) You must **eliminate** nonessential programs, **limit adding** more programs, **reduce special events**, and ensure the process is **easy to communicate** and **simple to understand** (204)

ELIMINATE

"We seek to eliminate programs that do not fit in our process even if they are good" (205) People spend hours of time attending programs that are nonessential to your church's ministry process (208)

LIMIT ADDING

"We use our existing weekly programs for special emphases/initiatives instead of adding new programs" (211) Simple churches are process-centered and others are programmed-centered (212) Less programs mean more focus on the programs offered. Less programs means more excellence. Less programs mean more energy for each program. Less programs mean more money allocated to each program. Less programs mean more people coming to the ones that are offered. Less programs mean more attention from the people in your church. There is a key distinction between a new program and a new option (214)

REDUCE SPECIAL EVENTS

"We limit the number of conferences and special events that we do as a church (216)

Funnel the event into an existing program (218) Combine the event with an existing program (219) Use the special event strategically (220)

It is vital that your process be easy to communicate and make the process simple for people to understand (223) The pain of change is greater than the pain of ineffectiveness (229) Complexity is often synonymous with mediocrity (232)

STEPS TO TAKE

1. Design a simple process (clarity)
2. Place your key programs along the process (movement)
3. Unite all ministry around the process (alignment)
4. Begin to eliminate things outside the process (focus)