

Leadership Breakfast

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RETURNING TO GOD'S PROCESS FOR MAKING DISCIPLES

SIMPLE CHURCH

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To know God to love and to serve

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1.0 The Simple Revolution Has Begun

This book will help churches design a simple process of discipleship.

There are four simple words that speak volumes on simplifying existing processes.

The words **Clarity, Movement, Alignment and Focus** will come to mean so much more after today.

A new revolution is sweeping our nation; simple is in.

- In a complicated world with complex and busy lives, people embrace simple and respond favorably.
- Many icons in the business world have taken note of the consumers need for simplicity.
- Apple, Google, Southwest Airlines and Papa Johns are a few trendsetters reaping success from this shift toward the simple.
- It is no longer business as usual for professionals such as market executives, graphic and interior designers.
- Simple is definitely in.
- As passionate leaders providing effective ministry, how does this simple revolution apply to the church and does it have any significance?
- The significance is that, in general simple churches are growing and vibrant.
- The authors are not suggesting that ministries change in doctrine or conviction.
- In the midst of all the noise, all the rush, all the *busyness*, along with the uncertainty, people long for simplicity.
- Because things are so hectic and out of control, people respond more to the simple.
- Shifting to a simple process is not easy to implement or maintain.
- Ministry design and mission can and should be simple.

- Jesus, as an example, did not offer a complicated, long set of rules or regulations.
- Jesus offered grace and a simple relationship with God.
- Jesus was not lowering the standard of the Law; nor was He abolishing it. Rather, captured its spirit and essence in one statement (mission).
- Many of our churches have become so cluttered that people experience difficulty encountering the simple and powerful message of Christ.
- So cluttered that many are busy *doing* church and not *being* the church.
- In the book of St. Matthew chapter 23, Jesus confronts spiritual leaders of hypocrisy and complexity.
- He told them they were like top-of-the-line coffins. The outside was shiny, but beneath the surface was death and emptiness.
- One complex church leader commented, "The project confirmed the reality that was slow to face: we are not seeing spiritual transformation in the lives of our people. We have become content with being busy."
- Churches are experiencing ministry schizophrenia, which occurs when churches and their leaders are not sure who they are.
- Being unsure of their fundamental identity, causing them to operate in a disjointed and frantic fashion.
- To have a simple church, leaders must ensure that everything their church does fits together to produce life change.
- Leaders must design a simple process that pulls everything together, a simple process that moves people toward spiritual maturity.
- Simple church leaders are *designers*, who design opportunities for spiritual growth.
- Complex church leaders are programmers, who run ministry programs.
- The process must be clear in its mission to move people toward maturity.
- It is hard to see the forest when leaders are constantly bumping into the trees.

2.0 The Simple (and Not-So-Simple) Church in Action

As a part of their research the authors and their staff visited several churches.

We will focus on the two churches referenced in this chapter.

1. The Simple
2. The Not-So-Simple

The team reviewed documents, conducted interviews and attended services at both a simple and not-so-simple church.

2.1 First Church...

...has been in existence for 40 years.
...has recognition throughout its denomination.
...is known for its great programs, which are often emulated.
...is known for its talented and popular staff.
...has been at a standstill for 5 years.
...has not grown and minimal souls have been saved.

- While things are not great at First Church, they are OK.
- First Church has not hit a point of crisis.
- And, without a crisis, it is oftentimes difficult to see the need for change.

2.2 Cross Church...

...has been in existence for just under 20 years.
...is not well known.
...has grown a lot over the last several years.
...has experienced strong retention in membership.
...has witnessed many come to know Christ.

2.3 First Church versus Cross Church

- First Church had several statements (mission purpose, vision and strategy).
- The confusion of these statements indicates that there may be multiple philosophies and approaches in the same place.

- The “what” of First Church was unclear, preventing the “how to be on the radar. Cross Church had one statement which is evident in all of their communication pieces.
- It was clear that Cross Church is all about “loving God loving people and serving the world.”
- Their focus is to lead people to love God, love others and serve the world.
- The purpose and the process at Cross Church are one in the same.
- “The back door of the church was as big as the front door.”
- To eliminate confusion, they decided there would be one rally cry that would feature the discipleship process.
- Cross Church’s pastor realized what was missing was a simple process that moved people toward spiritual maturity.
- Attention is divided as it relates to the programming at First Church.
- There were so many activities and events on the calendar causing competition among leaders.
- “Programs were made for man not man for programs.”
- The goal should always be about the people and use programs only as tools to build the people.
- Programming at Cross Church is used as a tool to move people through the process.
- The first step in the process is to love God, and the weekend worship services are used to help people do so.
- The second step in the process is to love others, so programming is in place to support this effort of connecting people relationally.
- The third step is to serve the world, and ministry teams engage people.
- Both churches held weekly staff meetings on Tuesday.
- Both meetings were similar from afar but different up close.

- The amount of time spent on the calendar at First Church was drastically different than the time spent at Cross Church.
- The way both churches look at numbers in terms of participation was also very different.
- First Church looks at the number of people involved in each program, which is viewed separately from the whole.
- Cross Church looks at the number of people at different stages in their ministry process.
- Another comparison is the method used to hire new staff members.
- First Church, when seeking staff members, looks for the best staff possible.
- At First Church, staff members come with experience, passion and aggression for his/her department or ministry without commitment to the whole.
- Cross Church's approach is somewhat different.
- Although, they desire competent staff members, they seek people who are committed to the mission of the ministry.
- Cross Church is interested in having a unified staff as opposed to an all-star staff.
- Their staff is diverse and its members are not carbon copies of each other. They are all uniquely different people who are on the same page about ministry at Cross Church.
- Announcements at First Church were numerous.
- Cross Church's announcements were focused with clarity.
- Two churches...one that is simple and the other not-so-simple.
- We must then ask ourselves, is our church more like First Church or Cross Church?

3.0 Simple Church: An Extreme Makeover

What is a Simple Church?

A simple church is a congregation designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth.

- The church is designed and not carelessly put together. Programs and ministries revolve around something.
- The process is straightforward and not confusing. It is easy to understand. Leaders and the congregation alike know it and understand it.
- The process moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. A simple church understands that people are at different places in their spiritual journey and that growth is a process.
- The research is convincing; it appeared that there was relationship between being simple and being effective.
- After identifying several vibrant churches that had a simple process, the research team concluded that these churches had four elements in common: **clarity, movement, alignment** and **focus**.

A simple church is designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. The leadership and the church are clear about the process (clarity) and are 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).

4.0 Clarity: Starting with a Ministry Blueprint

Ephesians 4:11-12 (NKJV)

¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Leaders need clear blueprints

- Blueprints emphasize the vision by showing how everything comes together.

Leaders need more than brochures

- Brochures only show the finished products
- Brochures are pretty, but not comprehensive and clear

4.1 Identifying the Four Keys to Clarity

Clarity is our ability to communicate the process and be understood.

- Define it
- Illustrate it
- Discuss it
- Measure it

A clearly defined process moves a person from knowing God, to loving and serving others.

1. Define the **what** (purpose)
2. Define the **how**

A clearly defined process moves a person from knowing God, to loving and serving others.

3. Determine what kind of disciple you wish to produce
4. Describe your purpose as a process in sequential order
5. Decide how each weekly program is part of the process

Blueprints are visual and visuals drive the vision.

- Provide a visual illustration of the process
- People are more likely to remember
- The process becomes the personal vision of each person

Leverage a system that measures how people progress through the process.

- View your numbers horizontally
- Measure attendance at every level/stage in your process.

Clarity is not realized without consistency.

- Frequent collaboration is a must.
- Collaboration must begin with the leadership of the church.
- Ownership begins with leaders.

5.0 Movement: Removing Congestion

What is Movement?

- Movement is the sequential (in order) steps in the process that cause people to move to greater areas of commitment.
- Movement is the most difficult simple church element to understand.

“Where there is movement, there is improvement.”

- After you have designed a process (clarity), it’s time to implement it.
- It’s good to have the process written down (ministry blueprint).
- It’s more difficult to move the process and change it.

People are stuck in the same place spiritually.

- People are stuck when there is not an intentional process to move them.
- There is no progression or movement.

How do we change this?

1. Have a plan.
 2. Have a measureable goal.
 3. Have a method for the plan and goal.
- The authors say that simple church leaders should be strategic with their programming.
 - Simple churches detest (*despise*) the concept of doing programs because of **tradition** or because they need to have something on the calendar.

We have to identify steps to align the simple process to move people from one point to another (from the foyer to the kitchen).

How do we do this?

We begin with a clearly defined process not the program

- Some churches always begin with the program rather than the process.
- The authors wrote that if programs do not fit in with the process, eliminate them.

Choose one program for each phase of your process.

- Again, the authors wrote, “for each department in your church, there should be at least one program for each phase of that process”.
- They also wrote that multiple programs for each phase of the process divide attention and energy.
- You may have some programs that do not fit into your process.
- Don’t feel like you have to eliminate the programs right away.
- Take your time and move through the transition as God leads you.
- Eliminate some things (This is part of the last step.).

5.1 Intentional Movement

- Simple churches resist congestion
- They intentionally move people from program to program through their ministry process
- The authors wrote that according to their research, intentionally moving people through the ministry process is vital
- This does not necessary mean that they have to move from a new member one day, to a pastor the next week.

- Simple church leaders are designers. They design opportunities for people to be transformed.
- Complex church leaders are programmers.
- Programmers focus on one program at a time.
- Designers focus on the movement between the programs.
- Without movement we are just running ministry programs.

5.2 Connect People to Groups

- There are a variety of different groups
 - Christian Education/PDI
 - Ministries
 - Care Groups
 - Support Groups
- The style and purpose of each group may vary; however, they all should connect people relationally.
- People stick to church when they get involved in a small group.
- If people only come to service, they can drop out without anyone knowing.
- When they move to a group they are known, they have a support network, and a community.

Remember that people really do appreciate simplicity.

6.0 Alignment: Maximizing the Energy of Everyone

- Alignment is the arrangement of all ministries and staff around the same simple process.
- Maximizing the energy of everyone is ministry involvement.
- Without alignment, complexity is assured.
- Without alignment, you will not be simple.
- The church must align around the simple ministry process.

6.1 Recruit on the Process: The Right Players Doing the Right Job

- The church must align around the simple ministry process.
- The challenging aspect of alignment is pulling existing ministries and existing staff in the same direction, especially if they have been moving in opposite directions.
- New ministries must fit. If they do not fit, they simply are not allowed to begin.
- Church leaders must check the ministry fit.
- Before a new ministry is launched, church leaders must clarify specifically how the new ministry will move people through the process.
- Church leaders must ensure that leaders of the new ministry understand how the ministry is a part of the big picture.

6.2 Offer Accountability

- Ask leaders how comfortable they are with accountability.
- Leaders outline the simple process but allow ministry leaders to implement with freedom and creativity.
- Church leaders are held accountable for how the church process is implemented in their respective areas.
- Leaders of ministries must be set up to help move people through the process of transformation.

- For example, the Baptism Ministry team makes it easy for people to move through the baptism process; the Hospitality Ministry helps move guests into the life of the church.
- If it is unclear how the addition of a ministry will move people through the simple process, do not launch it.

6.3 Implement the Same Process Everywhere

- A church that is committed to alignment implements the same process everywhere.
- UNITE people around the same process!
- Ministry must appeal to different groups at various stages of life using the same process.
- Implementing the same process everywhere has at least three benefits:
 1. Understanding is increased
 2. Unity is promoted
 3. Families experience the same process

6.4 Unite Around the Process

- The differences that lead to division are in realm of ministry approach and philosophy.
- Leaders must agree on how ministry is done.
- Help people be of the same mind in regards to ministry approach.
- Leaders must agree on “HOW” ministry is done at the church.

6.5 New Ministry Alignment

- Redefine what is needed and only allow new ministries that “fit” to be established.
- Arrange ministries and staff around the same simple process.

- Maximize the energy of everyone.

***“He makes the whole body fit together perfectly.
As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the
whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”***

Ephesians 4:16 (NLT)

7.0 Saying No to Almost Everything

- This factor is the most difficult simple church element to implement and practice.
- It means saying no a lot.
- Saying no is difficult because it tends to bother the person who hears it. While it may be difficult...it is necessary.
- A church cannot stay focused without saying no. While it is not easy, the health of the church is at stake.
- Saying no must be done with God's wisdom and timing.
- ***Focus is the commitment to abandon everything that falls outside of the simple ministry process.***

7.1 Essential Elements of Focus

- Eliminate non-essential programs
- Resist adding new programs
- Reduce special events
- Ministry process must be easily communicated

7.1.1. Eliminate Non-Essential Programs

- Seek to eliminate programs that do not fit the process...even if they are good programs.
- Elimination is necessary and it's also difficult.
- Elimination is a matter of stewardship...choosing to be wise with the time and resources (money) God has given us.

Time

- Ephesians 5:15-16 - Kairos - predetermined, specific amount of time, measured, allocated, and fixed. *So don't just spend it, invest it.*

- *People in our church have only a certain amount of discretionary time and they cannot afford to attend an abundance of weekly programs.*
- Refusing to eliminate is also bad stewardship of leaders' time. Instead of being able to focus on doing a few things with excellence, they lead a lot of programs with mediocrity.

Money

- Keeping programs that are not within the process is also bad stewardship of resources (money).
- Running programs out of alignment come with lots of hidden costs that people never see...printing, utilities, staffing, etc. Instead of spending it on programs outside the process, invest it on programs within the process. As programs are eliminated so are line items in the budget and this elimination means more resources for essential programs.

Example: Mothers Morning Out – pg. 209

Business Examples of Elimination

- Proctor & Gamble reduced number of products by 20% in late 90's. Sold some product lines and eliminated others.
- Steve Jobs of Apple says he is as proud of what they have **not** done as he is of the things they **have** done. Saying no has reaped great benefits.

7.1.2. Limit Adding New Programs

- In order to be focused, you must be careful not to add programs to the ministry process.
- Use existing weekly programs for special emphases/initiatives instead of adding new programs (**avoid duplicating**). Funnel needs and emphases through existing programs.
- Example: Stewardship classes through small group structures – pg. 212

Potential Internal Examples: Would PDI work via Sunday School?

- Do we need multiple mentoring and homework assistance programs?

- Could major all health initiatives be implemented via the health services ministry and MCHC?

7.1.3. Innovation Through Options

- Still get at NEW by offering OPTIONS
- Differentiation:
 - ***New programs require additional administration and resources***
 - ***New options use existing administration and resources to engage people who are not involved.***
- All of this assumes that you have the right people in the right jobs!

7.1.4. Reduce Special Events

- We should be so focused on ministry process that there is little time for special events.
- Emphasizing events distracts from essential programs that move people through the process AND *events compete with the essential programs for time of the people and resources.*

7.1.5. The Ministry Process Must Be Easily Communicated

- If the ministry process is not easy to communicate, it will not be understood.
- People are incapable of focusing on something they do not understand. Understanding leads to focus and commitment.
- If key leaders do not grasp the process in the midst of change, division is certain.
- Leaders must be comfortable in articulating the process.
- No is easier to accept when the reasoning is clear.

8.0 New Mission Statement



To know God to love and to serve

The Simplicity of Our Mission

To know God...

- Spiritually
- Personally
- Collectively

To love...

- God
- Others
- Ourselves

To serve...

- God
- Humanity
- Community