

## Simplicity Is the Key

Have you ever purchased a “some assembly required” item and then tried to put it together at home? When you open the box or boxes you discover a multitude of parts and bags of hardware. You open the instructions and the first sentence, in bold print, is “Follow the directions carefully as it is possible to misassemble this item.” When you study the instructions, you feel like you need a degree in civil engineering and knowledge of at least three languages. We have all been there. It is downright frustrating, isn’t it?

I believe our churches today have some of the same frustrations. What used to be pretty simple now is complex and complicated. We have been bombarded by multiple church models and programs that have, in my mind, complicated the simple. Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger have co-authored a book titled *Simple Church: Returning To God’s Process For Making Disciples* (Broadman & Holman, 2006). They tell us that a revolution is underway to move toward the simple. They state that simple is in and complexity is out of style. They cite the computer world as one of the pioneers of simple. Consider the “plug and play” phenomenon that came on the scene several years ago where you just plug your printer, keyboard, etc. into the USB port on your computer and you are ready to go. The iPod is another example of simple. Just touch one button to accomplish all you need to do. My digital camera has a docking stand where I just push one button and all of my pictures automatically download into my computer. Look around and you will see “simple” everywhere.

The church is called to make disciples. This is our main mission. Unfortunately, church life has become so complicated, complex, and just plain busy that we have been distracted from the main thing. The church is working hard, is very busy, and is going in many different directions. Because of this fragmented structure, the church has lost its focus. Many churches have multiple ongoing ministries and few of them are connected to the primary mandate or purpose God calls us to as a body of believers.

So, the question is “How can we lead our church to move from the complex and complicated to the simple”? As you start on this journey toward the simple, pray, pray, pray! Pray for God’s wisdom and insight as you study how you do church. An important first step will be to define the process your church has for making mature, fully functioning disciples. How does your church move people from the pre-Christian

expressing interest in Jesus Christ to the mature disciple that is fully engaged in using his or her spiritual gifts and passions to disciple others? You may just need a tweaking of your established process or you may need to go back to square one and conduct a total makeover. *Simple Church* will lead you in this journey and will provide ideas and suggestions along the way.

In *Simple Church* the authors identify Cross Church as a simple church. They have one statement that drives the church; “Love God, love others, and serve the world”. Pretty simple, isn’t it? It is easy to remember and does not take a complex organization to implement. Love God happens in the worship service. Love others happens in the church’s small group ministry (remember, Sunday School is our main small group!). Serve others happens through ministry teams. One option for you to consider is the *Five Star Church Strategy*. In this strategy, your “Love God” phase could happen in the “Be-Know” Triangle through the worship service. The “Love Others” could happen in the “Be-Know” Triangle in both Sunday School and discipleship small groups. The “Serve the World” phase could happen in the “Do Diamond” where ministry and missions occurs.

I believe this is a journey every church ought to explore. If you are already a simple church, tweak what you have and continue to move forward. If, on the other hand, you find that complexity is distracting your church from the mission of making disciples, please begin to pray about what God would have you do to move toward becoming “simple”. My encouragement to you is to read *Simple Church* and then ask God how your church can adopt the principles outlined so you can move from the complex and complicated to becoming simple but effective in fulfilling The Great Commission.

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