

Book Map: Simple Church, Thom Rainer

CH1: The Simple Revolution Has Begun

This book helps you design a simple process of discipleship in the church.

Our world is not simple. The reason simplicity is a popular marketing technique right now is because people's lives are massively cluttered, overloaded with thousands of decisions, competing pursuits, and endless information, entertainment, and tasks.

Church should enable people to focus on what's important; we should not contribute to people's busy-ness, but rather give them a hand in ordering their worlds.

What we are not saying

- Not a change in doctrine or conviction.
- Do not become simple because it is in style, but rather because our world is not simple and need simplicity
- Not just for pragmatic reasons, but because God chooses to work through simple processes
- Simple church is not easy

Jesus the Simple Revolutionary

Came onto the scene and upended the complexity of religion of the time. Cleared the Law up into the two commands. Easy yoke, simple grace.

Simple church leaders are designers

Simple church leaders are designers. Programmers run ministry programs, designers create processes. Designers are not the producers of spiritual growth (God is); rather, they create opportunities for growth.

CH2: Simple Church In Action

Simplicity in Mission Statements

- Got to be simple, clear, teachable, easily communicated
- Must actually connect to every level of the church leadership

Simplicity in Programming

- Keep only the programs that directly serve the clear mission
- Map specific programs to specific steps in the process (one way of designing the process)
- The whole system of programs should be able to easily fit into a map which everyone can see and understand

Simplicity in Staff Meetings

- Spend time reviewing calendar, but not much; the calendar should be clear of events just to remove the clutter
- There should be no competition among events

Simplicity in Tracking

- Have a tracking system in place that reviews the health of the whole system
- Decide on metrics that represent your simple system, make sure they are measurable and actionable metrics

Simplicity in Implementing New Ideas

- Use existing programs to embody creative expressions, passionate ministry (if somebody is passionate about marriage seminars, implement them through existing programs rather than creating something new that crowds out other options)

Simplicity in Announcements

- Communicate the paths forward in your church in announcements
- Be absolutely clear what people need to do to be involved, who to contact and how
- Give them only a couple of options and simplify the decision making used to choose

Book Map: Simple Church, Thom Rainer

CH3: Simple Church: An Extreme Makeover

- Churches need a radical redesign in favor of designing for discipleship
- Church leaders are designers, crafting opportunities for people to get into the movement of what God is doing in their lives, the church, and their city.
- Useful images from 1 Cor 3: God's Children (who naturally grow up in a nurturing environment), God's field (in which God's fruits naturally grow with cultivation), and God's building (continually being built by God into something in which He dwells)

Defining a Simple Church

- **Definition:** *a congregation designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth.*
 - **Designed:** thought out.
 - **Around:** centered on something
 - **Straightforward:** not confusing, easy to grasp
 - **Strategic:** tied to the purpose or vision of the church; built for execution
 - **Moves people:** flows logically to an intentional end result
 - **Through the stages of spiritual growth:** changes lives are the bottom line; Christ formed in people is the goal

Clarity → Movement → Alignment → Focus

- **Clarity:** *the ability of the process to be communicated and understood by the people.*
 - Fix unclear, complicated, long, or confusing processes.
 - Understanding always precedes commitment.
 - Understand → Internalize → Embrace → Participate
 - Simple churches have a crystal clear process.
 - Simple church leaders know the process, articulate it, and own it.
- **Movement:** *the sequential steps in the process that cause people to move to greater areas of commitment.*
 - Most difficult step to understand.
 - Helpful image: handoff in relay race; movement is how someone is handed off from one level of commitment to a greater level of commitment.
 - Simple churches have a ministry process where programs are placed as tools along the process; all programs placed in sequential order along the process

- **Alignment:** *the arrangement of all ministries and staff around the same simple process*
 - If you lack alignment, there is competition for space, resources, volunteers, and calendar time
- **Focus:** *the commitment to abandon everything that falls outside of the simple ministry process*
 - Movement is the hardest to understand; focus the most difficult to implement
 - Focus is the energy and power for the other three elements
 - Makes church leaders very unpopular; people don't like focus, because the leaders say no a lot
- **Illustrations:** Hezekiah: broke the staff of Moses in order to re-focus people on God; Hans Hoffman says "the ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak."

CH4: Three Simple Stories

- Gates illustration: when Jesus is talking about the gates of Hades in Matthew 16:18, he means the church is on the offensive, attacking the strongholds of the enemy and taking his possessions. His possessions are the people who rightfully belong to God, and God wants them back.

Immanuel Church:

- **Process/language:** Connecting, Growing, Serving.
- Front door is worship service, then adult Bible fellowships (medium group gatherings), then small groups focused on serving and ministry
- Adult, teen, and children's ministry all follow the same pattern

Christ Fellowship

- **Process/language:** Connect to God, others, ministry, and the lost. Discipleship involves being intimate with God, living in community with other believers, serving the body of Christ, and sharing the gospel.
- Weekend worship service to small group, ministry teams; relational lifestyle of evangelism and inviting

Northpoint

- **Process/language:** Foyer, Living Room, Kitchen
- Worship service, GroupLink large events where people connect to each other, then small groups.

Book Map: Simple Church, Thom Rainer

CH5: Clarity: Starting with a Ministry Blueprint

- Church leaders are builders. Ministry “builds up” the body (Eph 4:11-12). We are built up in Jesus (Col 2:6-7). 1 Peter 2:5 and Eph 2:22 compare God’s kingdom to building. We must be careful how we build (1 Cor 3:14).
- Blueprints show what and how we build. More than a brochure, which merely shows the shiny end product.

DEFINE the process of discipleship

- What is the process for moving a person from salvation to spiritual maturity to significant ministry?
- Makes the *how* we make disciples tangible and clear; eliminates ambiguity
- Defining the how:
 - Determine what kind of disciple you wish to produce
 - Describe your purpose as a process; think sequentially as much as possible
 - Decide how each program and event is part of that process

ILLUSTRATE

- Need a simple, comprehensible illustration or metaphor that everyone can remember and repeat
- Follow up with tests; can they draw the process? Can they remember the metaphor?

MEASURE

- What gets evaluated, gets done.
- Clearly measure horizontal movement and value it as an organization; how many people are moving from one stage in the process to the next?

DISCUSS

- Initial rollout is not enough; needs to be part of the background of every leader’s conversation; how are we moving people through the process? How are we doing in each area and how is that area contributing to the overall movement?
- The discussion must be ongoing; just when you get tired of talking about it is when people are just starting to get it.

INCREASE UNDERSTANDING

- Leaders need to publicly talk about the process, share it privately 1:1 with people when they are together with them, and live it publicly for everyone else to see
- We are tour guides not travel agents—we are living this journey with people, walking alongside them like a good tour guide does

CH6: Movement: Removing Congestion

Biblical precedent and ground: 2 Cor 3:18, moving from one degree of glory to another; Jesus’ progression with his disciples in Luke: calling, then building/teaching, then sending. A clear sense of movement, growth, maturity.

Our part in the process

Like Moses, we discover where God is moving in His life and put ourselves there. Church leaders design processes that place people in the pathway of God’s transforming power.

Strategic programming

- Begin with the clearly defined process
- Design one program for each phase of your process
- Place the programs in sequential order

The sequence ought to follow a logical progression for the people you are reaching; what is the first level of commitment at your church? Start there, and move to increasing levels of commitment.

- Designate a clear entry point
- Constantly identify the next levels of programming

Intentional movement

- Create short term steps: ways for people to easily move to the next step without huge changes; 6 week small group gatherings, samples of experiencing service in short bursts
- Capitalize on relationships: help people understand they have a role to play in inviting people to the next step in the process; have key leaders cast vision for their part in the process and invite people to ask questions and check things out (rather than simply drawing a picture or preaching about the next step)

Clear next steps

- Especially for new believers, make the next step clear
- Provide a new believers class
- Connect them to a small group and normalize this step
- Provide mentors or discipleship leaders for new believers

New members class

- For everyone; new believers and established Christians joining the group; they need to be taught the simple process of your church, and then invited to commit to participating in that process

Book Map: Simple Church, Thom Rainer

CH7: Alignment: Maximizing the Energy of Everyone

- Unity requires being aligned on both the what (purpose) and the how (process).
 - Scriptures for unity: John 17, 13:35

Recruit on process

- Recruit people for leadership that are deeply committed to your process

Offer accountability

- Try managing by objective
- What other ways are there to keep your team accountable?

Implement the same process everywhere

- Think like GAP: even with radically different constituents, every GAP store offers the same overall experience and framework, and everything within their company aligns with this purpose

Unite around the process

- Constantly communicate and lead such that leadership is deeply united around the process
- Tell people what part they are playing in the overall movement of the body
- Make decisions (and help others make decisions) according to the movement of the body, with the purpose and direction in mind

Ensure new ministries fit

- Don't start something that doesn't fit into the process
- Ministry expansions: expanding to meet new age groups or life stages
- Ministry additions: adding functions that move people through the process of transformation

Biblical illustration: Israel moving into Canaan; lots of grumbling, agreed on the purpose but not the how, didn't like the specifics

A lot is at stake with unity and alignment: people's eternal destiny, life transformation, participation in God's cosmic story.

CH8: Focus: Saying no to almost everything

- Super-Size Me illustration: people love spiritual fast food; lots of menu items, they choose which one looks most appealing at the moment of ordering to meet their immediate desire
- Biblical illustration for focus: Psalm 27:4 (David asking for only one thing); Phil 3:13-14 (Paul's one thing: pursue the prize)

Eliminate nonessentials

- Elimination is a matter of stewardship (Eph 5:15-16, make the most of your time)
- Be a wise steward of both time and money

Limit new programs

- Do not add new programs outside the process
- Make the process as short as possible in order to accomplish the ministry purpose
- Utilize existing processes to handle new incoming needs
- Provide options, not programs: new options are expansions of existing programs (new worship services, new small group opportunities). The question to ask is, would people be tempted to come to this who are already part of something else? If yes, you are adding a program, if no (as in, it will attract and make room for new people), then you are expanding a program and providing a new option.

Reduce special events

- Special events (conferences, seminars, etc.) take energy away from the basic movement of your church
- If special events are publicized, then the essential programs that move people through the process are under-emphasized
- Events are more glamorous and provide a way for leaders to address a need with low commitment. They offer a one-off rather than walking with people through a situation
- Three ways to reduce: funnel events into programs, piggyback them (offer the event right before an installment of the program starts), or connect them so that there is a sign-up for a specific program at the conclusion of the event

Ensure process is easy to communicate

Ensure process is simple to understand

Book Map: Simple Church, Thom Rainer

CH9: Becoming Simple

Step 1: Design a simple process (clarity)

- Process has to live in your head and heart first
- Talk to people about how disciples are not currently being made intentionally
- Start with a blank piece of paper
- Invest a significant amount of time in the Scriptures and in prayer; read about discipleship; allow God to breathe into you what a disciple at your church should look like. This is the *what* we are trying to make.
- Meet with people and ask them what kind of disciples we should be making
- Fill in this statement: disciples at our church are: _____, _____, _____, and _____.
- Figure out *how* it happens.
- Place them in sequential order.
- Discuss with others how spiritual transformation takes place; where has it happened in my life, in others?
- Place aspects of discipleship in order based on differing levels of commitment; must be a starting point and a next step. The first step in the process should be the first level of commitment.
- Discuss and preach the process

Step 2: Place your key programs along the process (movement)

- Choose one churchwide program for each phase of your simple process
- Tune and re-tune each program so that it most effectively accomplishes that aspect of discipleship and that level of commitment, aiming at the handoff for the next step

Step 3: Unite all ministries around the process (alignment)

- Each ministry should be using the same terms in their micro-worlds to promote clarity
- Recruit leaders according to their ability to understand, support, and implement the process
- Evaluate new ministries according to the process

Step 4: Begin to eliminate things outside the process (focus)

- Go slowly to make sure that everyone can make the move
- Eliminate carefully and with grace

