

CHAPTER 4

FOUR

Three Simple Stories

Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

~ Jesus, Matthew 16:18 NASB

Clarity → Movement → Alignment → Focus

There is an interesting conversation in Matthew 16. If you jump into the conversation, you will find Jesus asking His disciples who people say that He is. It is a simple question. It is not complicated. It is straight and to the point.

And it is a question that is not asked frequently. He does not ask what people are saying about Him. He does not ask if people are saying He is a nice guy or a great speaker. His question is different. He asks, "*Who* do people say that the Son of Man is?" (v. 13). The disciples tell Him that some people are saying He is John the Baptist. Others are saying He is Elijah.

Jesus then asks the disciples the same question. He wants to know what they think. "Who do you say that I am?" (v. 15). Peter, of course, speaks for the entire group. He replies, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (v. 16).

Jesus loves his response. He calls Peter blessed. The words Peter spoke came not from man but from God. Jesus then says, "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matt. 16:18 NASB).

The gates of hades will not overcome it. Hell will not be able to hold back the church. Jesus says he is going to unleash a movement that will be so powerful and intense that it will be unstoppable. This movement is the church. It is not an institution, a building, a program, a creed, or a doctrinal statement. This movement is alive and growing. This movement is people. Jesus started the church, and the gates of hell will not be able to contain it.

The Theology of Gates

So that his in-laws would be somewhat comfortable with their daughter living in Miami, Eric bought a house in a gated community. After all, Miami is not known as the safest place to live. *Miami Vice* and now *CSI Miami* do not help the perception. So Eric was excited to tell his in-laws that he was doing all that he could to protect their daughter. He lives in a gated community south of Miami.

At least that is what the brochure said when he bought the house.

It turns out the gate is just a piece of PVC pipe attached to a mechanical device. That's it. In the two and a half years Eric has lived in the house, the gate has been up approximately forty-one hours.

The demise of the gate is pretty simple. People who did not receive the clicker in the mail decided to run through the gate. The painted piece of PVC pipe was no match for the cars. The gate cracked off. For a few weeks the homeowners association paid a company to fix the gate. Then someone else would run through the gate. Eventually the homeowners association decided to stop paying.

So now the gate/PVC pipe lies on the ground. It is just beneath the sign that points people to the gated community. The gate could not stop the traffic. It could not overcome the power of cars. It was pathetic in comparison.

The gates of hell are the same way. They are powerless to contain the movement of the gospel. Jesus started the movement, and hell cannot contain it.

There is another thing about gates. They are always defensive. They protect. They guard. But they never attack. The gate lying next to the sign in Eric's neighborhood has never attacked Eric despite all that he has said about it. The gate is inept.

Gates are never on offense. Only defense. Hell is always on defense. However, the movement of the church is never on defense. Only offense. The church always has the ball. There are no defenders on the squad.

This is good news. Victory is guaranteed.

The question is not whether we are going to win or not. Our victory celebration has already been determined. Christ has promised it. We win in the end. In fact, the enemy never gets the ball. The kingdom of darkness is stuck on defense. And we are on perpetual offense.

Even the more inept team could win if the other team never played offense. It may take some time, but they would win. Eventually.

The question is, how much will we win by? How big of a dent in the gates of hell will we make? Will we run up the score? Will we push the movement of the gospel forcefully through the gates of hell?

In this chapter you will encounter three simple stories. These are stories of simple churches that are running up the score. These churches are making a big dent in the kingdom of darkness. God is using these churches to push back the enemy.

While the research project focused on hundreds of churches, we wanted to give you the story of several simple churches. Churches of varying size and setting have been selected. First, you will hear the story of a rural church of three hundred people. Next you will hear the story of a church in one of the most unchurched American cities. Finally, you will encounter one of the fastest-growing churches in American history.

May the gates of hell lie damaged on the ground. Right next to that PVC pipe.

Story 1: Immanuel

There are a lot of Immanuel churches. There is probably one in your community. Some spell it with an *E* and some spell it with an *I*. And some people are really proud of how they spell it.

This story is about Immanuel Baptist Church in Glasgow, Kentucky. Glasgow is a city of sixteen thousand people located in Barren County. Barren County has forty thousand residents. Glasgow is the buckle of the Bible Belt. The town is dry. There are more than one hundred churches listed on the city Web site.

People in Glasgow enjoy the pace of life and the Southern hospitality. There is virtually no crime, and the schools are well respected. Traffic is minimal unless you get stuck behind an old pickup truck going thirty-five miles an hour. The land is beautiful and plentiful. People trust their neighbors. Life is good.

In most rural Bible-belt towns, there are churches on every corner. Nearly everyone can claim membership in some church, even if they have not been in years. Many of the churches are struggling. Rarely are new people brought to Christ. Every few years one church has some problems, and another church three blocks over gets some new members.

The Bible-belt culture is the same in Glasgow. Yet Immanuel is different. God is using Immanuel to push back the gates of hell.

Immanuel Baptist Church is vibrant. Alive. And growing. In the last two years the church has doubled in attendance from 150 to more than three hundred. Guests are coming regularly. Many people have been converted to the faith. The church baptizes people regularly. People are growing and serving.

Immanuel is also different because Immanuel is simple. The complexity that plagues many rural churches does not exist. Instead Immanuel has a simple process that guides their ministry.

Clarity at Immanuel

Tony Cecil is the pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church. He is thirty-three years old, and Immanuel is his first church to serve as senior pastor. When Tony arrived in Glasgow, he knew the church needed a simple process for discipleship. He commented,

As a twenty-nine-year old, first-time senior pastor, I struggled with the dysfunction and chaos that characterized the churches I had encountered. By the grace of God, through personal study and conversations with friends, I began to see the importance of embracing and implementing a strategic process for making disciples.

Tony gathered a group of godly leaders in his church. They sought to define what kind of disciple they would seek to make at Immanuel. They concluded that fully committed believers would be intimate with God and other Christians, people who grow in their faith, and are servants in the kingdom of God.

Tony and the group chose to describe their discipleship focus as a process. They call it *Connecting, Growing, Serving*. First, Immanuel seeks to connect people to God and others. They desire to see people become "connecting believers." Next they challenge "connecting believers" to become "growing believers" by engaging in opportunities for deeper spiritual growth. Finally, the process ends with "growing believers" committing to become "serving believers."

Movement at Immanuel

To promote movement through the process, Immanuel has placed their weekly programs at key points along their process. They use their Sunday morning worship services to make "connecting believers." The worship service is designed to bring people into a relationship with God and other Christians.

After someone comes to the worship service, the person is encouraged to plug into an adult Bible fellowship. Immanuel offers adult Bible fellowships on Sunday mornings to make "growing believers."

The process does not end there. Once an adult attends an adult Bible fellowship, the person is challenged to join a smaller group. These smaller groups are designed to help people become "serving believers." Each adult Bible fellowship is made up of several smaller groups. These groups are serving teams, and they do ministry together either in the community or in the church.

Immanuel strategically moves adults from worship services to Bible fellowships to small groups. By moving people from program to program, people naturally progress through the simple process.

Movement is intentional at Immanuel. For example, the content of the adult Bible fellowships coincides with the message in the worship service. Tony writes what he calls "coordinates" each

week that supplement his message. The Bible fellowship leaders use these coordinates as curriculum. Tony is able to invite the people at the worship service to attend a Bible fellowship "to get more information and go deeper."

People are intentionally moved from the "connecting believer" level to the "growing believer" level. There is a clear overlap between the worship service and the next step. The overlap promotes movement. Without an overlap, people fall through the cracks.

To move people from Adult Bible Fellowships (ABF) to serving groups, Tony and the ABF leaders decided to link the small serving groups to the ABFs. When someone goes to an ABF, they are immediately given the opportunity to plug into a small serving group. There is no space between the programs. Movement occurs easily.

Alignment at Immanuel

Since Immanuel is not a large church, there is not a myriad of ministries to align. The primary ministries at Immanuel are the age-specific ministries to children and teenagers. Both the children's and the youth ministry use the same simple process: *connect, grow, serve*.

The students have a weekly *connect* program designed to bring teenagers into a relationship with Christ. They use small groups to grow teenagers deeper, and they have ministry groups to engage students in service. The children have a weekly connect program and another weekly *grow* program.

Everyone uses the same terminology. Connect. Grow. Serve. Simple. It is woven into every part of the church. The people in the congregation hear it all the time.

Focus at Immanuel

Immanuel Baptist Church has a simple process that is clearly defined, moves people, and is implemented throughout the church. They have chosen to focus all of their energy and resources on this simple process. Because of their focus, they have been able to place all of their financial resources on the programs within the ministry process.

Some would think this focus would hamper the vitality of the church. In rural Bible-belt towns, churches are often known for the amount of special events they do. Immanuel goes against the culture. They are a part of the simple revolution. Tony remarked:

The irony is that we have actually grown numerically and spiritually by doing fewer programs and special events, choosing instead to focus our attention on moving people with various levels of commitment to deeper levels of commitment.

Fringe Benefits at Immanuel

We encountered this great church in the research phase of the project. Few churches experience the growth that Immanuel has seen. It has been explosive, not incremental. This church breaks all the rules. They are growing by reaching new people in a city that is not experiencing a population increase and is full of other churches. It is truly a God thing.

Designing a simple process for church ministry has made a major difference at Immanuel Baptist Church. We asked Tony to list some of the benefits to being a simple church. Following is what he shared:

- **Increased Morale.** Morale has improved by actually defining the Great Commission in the form of a simple disciple-making process. This reality seems to stem from people understanding how we propose to make disciples, rather than just being told that we need to make disciples.
- **Urgency.** There is an ever-increasing sense of urgency in moving people into spiritual maturity and ministry, rather than just seeing them converted.
- **Spiritual Growth.** Though hard to measure, we have seen believers grow and mature before our eyes. The process not only shows people where they are but also where they need to go next. As a result, people have become proactive in their own spiritual development. Personal commitments to Bible study and small group involvement have increased steadily. More individuals are sharing their faith; more people are inviting their friends to worship and small groups.
- **Conversions.** We've seen a significant increase in adult conversions and baptisms. Our ministry process has resulted in adults being more proactive in inviting their friends to the appropriate venues that are geared toward connecting people to Jesus Christ and other Christians. This process has also resulted in adults sensing a need to make a greater commitment to Christ by learning how to share their faith with their friends and family members. Before developing our process, our church had baptized two adults in the first eighteen months of my ministry. Since we have developed our process, we are on target to baptize forty people each year. This number still falls short of what we desire in terms of evangelism, but for us it's big-time improvement.
- **Stewardship.** Our financial situation has improved drastically by eliminating programs and ministries that do not contribute to our overall process. I've also seen that it's easier to eliminate programs after people have committed themselves to the congregational process.
- **Unity.** As we've experienced some short-term successes, our overall unity has been strengthened. We're becoming a closer family by agreeing on the process and consolidating our efforts around fulfilling it.

Story 2: Christ Fellowship

Until one year ago Christ Fellowship in Miami was First Baptist Church of Perrine. The community name changed to Palmetto Bay, and God led the church to a new name. Christ Fellowship is a multicultural church consisting of more than seventy nationalities. Rick Blackwood is the senior pastor, and Eric serves as his executive pastor. Before coming to LifeWay Thom consulted with the church. He believes Rick is one of the most humble large church pastors he has ever interacted with.

Miami may be in the South, but it is definitely not the Bible Belt. It is a city filled with people from all over the world in desperate need of the grace of God. Many churches struggle in Miami. Many pastors struggle in Miami. It is not an easy place to do ministry. Church and God are, at best, afterthoughts to the majority of people.

Christ Fellowship is eighty-nine years old. It is a church with a great history and tradition. In the last forty-five years, only two senior pastors have led the church. Often in churches with rich history, change is the most difficult. People see no reason to change. Things are fine as they are. There are a lot of programs and events, and most people are happy. The status quo is comfortable.

However, at Christ Fellowship, God assembled a team of pastors and leaders who were not satisfied. They believed God wanted to do more. They were convinced the gates of hell needed to be run through.

Several years ago the pastors at Christ Fellowship began evaluating the ministry. They sought to define the kind of disciple their church was seeking to make. God impressed on their hearts to focus people on four things: an intimate relationship with God, community with others, serving, and influencing nonbelievers. The vision for this kind of disciple gripped the staff.

They committed to these four aspects of discipleship. They committed to streamline, to become simple. Their commitment has been rewarding. The church is continually growing and seeing people, specifically adults, come to know Christ. People are growing in their faith and plugging into service opportunities.

Clarity at Christ Fellowship

While those four aspects of discipleship captivated the staff, they also knew discipleship was a process. They worked hard to craft a statement that would encompass both the process nature of discipleship and those four aspects. Like many churches they had vision, purpose, strategy, and mission statements. It was too much, too confusing.

They committed to one statement that would feature their simple process: Connect to God, others, ministry, and the lost. Discipleship includes being intimate with God (connect to God), living in community with other believers (connect to others), serving the body of Christ (connect to ministry), and sharing the gospel (connect to the lost).

The purpose at Christ Fellowship is a process. First, someone gets connected to God. That is the most basic and essential aspect of discipleship, but it does not end there. Next, the person gets

connected to others. After loving God and others, the natural result is to minister to people. Finally, the person is living a life fully surrendered to God where evangelism is the overflow of this dynamic relationship.

The process has taken center stage in staff meetings and volunteer leadership meetings. It is preached with clarity and conviction from the pulpit. The worship folder and other key communication pieces explain it. The staff discusses the process and measures how people are progressing through it. All staff members, including administrative assistants, are expected to be able to communicate the process to others.

Movement at Christ Fellowship

The leaders at Christ Fellowship knew the process would be just another statement unless it was reflected in their weekly programming. The process would be just words if the programs did not become tools to move people through the process. The process and the programs have to be friends. They must complement each other.

So the staff discussed what the best programs were for each level of the process, and they committed to placing those programs in sequential order along the process. In other words, they decided to set up the weekly programs so people could easily move through the process simply by moving from one program to the next.

The first step in the process is to *connect to God*. During the weekend worship services people are able to begin or deepen their relationship with Christ. Through engaging worship and a biblical message, people are thrust into an environment where a growing and intimate relationship with God is the primary concern. Many guests also attend the worship services each week, so it makes sense that this would be the first program in the process.

The second step in the process is to *connect to others*, and the staff concluded that small groups best accomplish relational connection and interdependence. People may go to a weekend service faithfully, but if they never connect to a small group, their spiritual growth stagnates. And they are not really known. Small groups are offered on Sunday morning, Wednesday nights, and in homes during the week.

The third step in the process is to *connect to ministry*, and Christ Fellowship utilizes ministry teams to provide service opportunities for people. People experience God working through them as they minister to others in tangible ways. People are challenged to join a team that is engaged in ministry they are passionate about.

The final step in the process is to *connect to the lost*. At Christ Fellowship, this step is not a program but a relational lifestyle. People are challenged to invite friends and families to church. The church family is challenged not only to go through the process themselves but also to bring others through it. When someone is first brought to a weekend service, the process for that person begins.

Since the last step in the process is not a program, people are challenged to do three things a week at Christ Fellowship. Come to a worship service, be in a small group, and serve in a ministry. Simple. These expectations are stated clearly to people in the church. At the new member's class, people are told they should not join if they are not planning to move through the process.

To facilitate movement to small groups, small groups are promoted in the worship services. The church also frequently offers six-week small group series based on the worship service series. People are encouraged to join or start a group for the duration of the short-term series. This process has moved hundreds of people to small groups.

To facilitate movement to ministry, people are challenged to test-drive a ministry. A test-drive is an opportunity to serve with a ministry team for one serving session. They can experiment without any pressure to join the team. After the test-drive they debrief with the leader of the ministry and are given an opportunity to continue serving or to try another ministry team.

Alignment at Christ Fellowship

Alignment is evident at Christ Fellowship. The children's, middle school, high school, and young adult departments have the same process. You guessed it: *Connect to God*, others, ministry, and the lost. The staff is on the same page and moving in the same direction. The entire church is aligned around the same focus.

Children, middle school, and high school ministries provide their own Connect to God worship experience. They are offered every time an adult worship service occurs. Each age-specific department also offers small groups on Wednesday nights to connect their group to others. Each department also provides ministry opportunities for their specific age groups.

Focus at Christ Fellowship

Once the staff committed wholeheartedly to the process of connecting people to God, others, ministry, and the lost, difficult decisions had to be made. Eliminating programs that did not fit became necessary to maximize the impact of the process.

Over a two-year period, the churchwide Sunday night worship service was eliminated. And home groups, Sunday school classes, and Wednesday night discipleship groups were combined into one small-group strategy. All groups were placed under the same leadership and philosophy. These two changes made it easier for people to move through the process. People are now challenged to come to one service and one small group a week.

The extra programs are what business consultants refer to as nonvalue-adding work. They did not add value to the process. The extra programs actually competed with the process because people were less likely to plug into a small group and a ministry. People only have so much

available time, and the leaders decided to free up time slots for people to be able to connect to the essential programs in the process.

In order to bring greater focus, even popular programs were altered or eliminated at Christ Fellowship.

One of the most popular programs in the church was known as the "Friday Night Open Rec" for students. It was free burgers, games, and basketball. Every Friday night it drew three hundred to four hundred students. While it was successful, it was unclear how it fit in the process.

The gospel was not shared at this event, and it was not the entry point into the student ministry, so it could not be classified as a "Connect to God" program. The student pastors could not manage this weekly event and then provide another exciting "Connect to God" program during the weekend services. Their attention would be divided. Also, the students would be inviting friends to a program that was not in the process instead of bringing them to one that is.

Friday Nights were cancelled. The program was reestablished after the Saturday night service as a way to engage more kids in the student "Connect to God" program. By placing the food and games on top of the Saturday night service, more kids are now in a student worship service.

Another popular program that was altered was the special Christmas Eve services. Like many churches Christ Fellowship offered specific Christmas Eve services each year. Many people who rarely come to church attended the Christmas Eve services, but the services were completely different from the weekend services. People never got a taste of what takes place at the regular weekend services. The Christmas Eve services failed to engage people in the simple process.

Active church members attended both the Christmas Eve services and the regular weekend services. The worship staff had to prepare two different types of services during the same week, which lowered the level of excellence at both. This was also poor stewardship of space because the same people were coming multiple times instead of freeing up places for new people.

Also, instead of inviting people to the weekend services, church members were inviting friends and family to the Christmas Eve services. These guests were never exposed to a typical weekend service and were less likely to return.

To simplify things and expose as many people as possible to a typical weekend service (the Connect to God program), the staff decided to combine the Christmas Eve services with the weekend services. Christ Fellowship now offers several identical weekend Christmas services. The elimination of the special program paid off immediately as the number of people who were exposed to a weekend service skyrocketed.

Story 3: Northpoint

While Immanuel Baptist Church and Christ Fellowship have transitioned to a simple church design, Northpoint Community church began that way.

Northpoint is the epitome of simple. They are pioneers.

Northpoint Community Church is located in Alpharetta, Georgia, just north of Atlanta. Andy Stanley is the founding and the senior pastor. While Andy grew up being exposed to complex churches, he chose to begin Northpoint with a commitment to simplicity. He believes that ministry naturally drifts toward complexity, that complexity just happens. Unfortunately, according to Stanley, "Complexity dilutes your potential for impact."¹

To counteract complexity, the church has remained committed to their simple process. That commitment has pushed the gates of hell back. The church has grown from a handful of people to more than sixteen thousand in ten years. God has used the church to bring many people to faith and spiritual maturity. God is also using the church to challenge and encourage church leaders from all over the world.

Clarity at Northpoint

Northpoint Community Church has a clear process that is constantly referenced in the life of their church. They call it the "Foyer to the Kitchen." They seek to move people to *the kitchen* where people will be in community groups with others. They do so because they are convinced that life change best happens in that environment. So everything they do is designed to move people to the kitchen.

The metaphor comes from a time when Andy Stanley and his wife visited a church on a Sunday morning. As they were leaving, his wife commented that the church felt like being invited into someone's home and then ignored the rest of the time. Stanley became convinced that the church must be designed never to leave people alone. People must be moved to something.²

The church is designed to move people to greater levels of commitment and relationships. Their process begins with the *foyer*. Just as the foyer is used in someone's home to welcome guests, Northpoint refers to the first step in the process as their *foyer*.

The imagery of a home and the family continues throughout the process. The next step is the *living room*. After guests are made to feel welcome in the foyer, they are moved to the living room where relationships are built. Without the living room, people would remain in the foyer. There would be no place to go. Without the *living room* environment at Northpoint, people would not progress to the final step.

The final step in the process is the *kitchen*. In most homes the kitchen is where the most intimate conversations occur. It is where life happens together and where family discussions take place. At Northpoint the *kitchen* is the deepest level of commitment. It is where people are transformed in community with others. People are held accountable and spur one another on toward spiritual maturity.

Movement at Northpoint

The entire "Foyer to Kitchen" process at Northpoint Community Church is about movement. They resist the word *program* and use the words *steps* or *environments* instead. Steps are about movement. They are seeking to move people to the *kitchen* because they are convinced life change happens there. They only use steps that get people there.³

Northpoint has placed their environments/steps sequentially along this process to facilitate movement. Their foyer environment is their worship service, and it is the clear entry-point for the church. People are encouraged to invest in the lives of nonbelievers and invite them to church; therefore, their weekend worship service is the program where guests are expected to be.⁴

Their living room environment is what they refer to as GroupLink. It is where people connect to one another relationally. GroupLink does not meet every week. It is offered at strategic times throughout the year. The focus is to get people to know one another. The intention is to use the GroupLink to move people to the kitchen/small groups.

Their kitchen environment is where people meet together in small groups for deep fellowship and Bible study. Andy claims their process is extremely simple because it seeks to move their people through these three environments. People are then challenged to bring others through the same process.

Movement is the trump card at Northpoint.

There are no environments at Northpoint where people stay forever. This is in stark contrast to churches where people sit in the same groups for decades. At Northpoint, people are continually moved to another step. Even when someone reaches the kitchen, movement is not complete. Small groups must start new small groups.

At Northpoint, all steps must take people somewhere. They must not be ends in themselves. They must move people toward the kitchen environment. If not, they harm the process. Andy commented, "Every program must facilitate movement through the simple process. Anything that facilitates movement is a 'yes.' Anything that does not is a 'no.'"⁵

Alignment at Northpoint

Because the "Foyer to Kitchen" process is implemented at every level of the church, Northpoint enjoys the power of team alignment. Every ministry is on the same page and uses the same verbiage. And this alignment fosters unity. People are not fighting over the same space, resources, and leaders. Each ministry complements the others.

The goal of each department is to move people to the kitchen. According to family pastor Reggie Joiner, this process is so simple that it can be explained in a few minutes on a napkin. Each department understands the process and is committed to it. The process is the same for each area.

Their process could be drawn with three circles. The first circle is the largest. It is the foyer environment for each ministry. Every age-specific ministry at Northpoint has a foyer. The

second circle is smaller. This circle represents the living room for each ministry. Each ministry department in the church also has a third circle, the smallest. This circle represents the kitchen. At every level of the church, ministry departments are seeking to move people from circle to circle through the process.⁶

Focus at Northpoint

If you go to Northpoint, you will be struck by how ministry is executed with excellence. Things are just done right. The culture of excellence permeates the entire church from the campus grounds to the greeters to children's and youth ministries. The worship services are inspiring and engaging.

The reason Northpoint is able to do things so well is because they have chosen to only do a few things.

The church has rejected the menu philosophy of ministry that encourages church leaders to offer huge menus of programs. It is no wonder ministry is done poorly in most churches. It is impossible to do things with excellence when energy and attention are divided. Reggie Joiner refers to these churches as ADD churches. They have an inability to focus.

At Northpoint, less really is more. They have done much less than most churches but have been able to accomplish much more.

Simplicity is not just lip service at Northpoint. They refuse to add programs or events that will distract people from the simple process that God has given them. Again, they began simple, so people are often shocked to learn what programs are not offered at Northpoint. Reggie Joiner writes:

Many of our staff had previously been involved with churches that were program-heavy, and we know how quickly things could grow out of control. So we became tenacious about staying simple. In fact, you might be surprised at some of the things we do not do. For example, we don't have a Christian school, midweek services, men and women's ministries, a children's choir, adult Sunday school, Easter or Christmas Pageants, or a recreation ministry.⁷

Immanuel. Christ Fellowship. Northpoint—three different churches in different communities. Their worship styles are different. The makeup of their congregations is different. Their church government is different.

Yet each church is simple. Each church is vibrant. Each has a simple process that guides its ministry. And each church is pushing back the gates of hell.

How do the gates look in your community? We mean spiritually.

Is your church pushing the movement of the gospel forward? Are you putting dents in the kingdom of darkness? Are you running up the score?

Now What

You have been introduced to the simple revolution.

You have learned how people are responding to simple because life is so complex. You have gone on a consulting trip and seen a simple church and a complex church. You have learned the four major elements of the simple church through an overview of the research findings and an encounter with three simple churches.

Now it is time to get specific and practical.

In part 2, you will be guided through the four elements of a simple church. You will wrestle with and understand clarity, movement, alignment, and focus. You will see the significant research findings that cannot be ignored. And you will be given practical insight on how to implement all four of these critical elements.

You have been introduced to the simple revolution.

It is now time to become a simple church.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it much easier to begin as a simple church than it is to become one?
2. What is the relationship between focus and excellence in ministry?
3. What common factors exist in these three churches?
4. What differences emerge?
5. Of the four simple church elements—clarity, movement, alignment, and focus—which will be the most difficult to implement in our church? Why?
6. What does the movement of the gospel look like in our community?¹

¹ Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville: B&H, 2011).