

CHAPTER 5

FIVE

Clarity: Starting with a Ministry Blueprint

If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward.

~ The Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 3:14

Clarity → Movement → Alignment → Focus

Congratulations, you are a builder.

Build lives. That is what ministry is all about. It is what you and your church are called to do. The apostle Paul gives specific instructions to church leaders:

And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ. (Eph. 4:11–12)

Ministry is done so that the body of Christ may be built up. The term Paul uses for "build up" is the Greek word *oikodome*. It is a construction term. It paints the picture of building a house. Constructing lives is the calling.

This imagery runs throughout the New Testament. Believers are challenged to continue growing in the faith:

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. (Col. 2:6–7)

Notice the language. The term for *built up* is a present-tense participle. This indicates continuous action. The house is always being tweaked. The application is simple—building lives is active and ongoing. It is a process.

There is more. First Peter 2:5 and Ephesians 2:22 compare the expanding of the kingdom of God to the building of a house. As people come to faith in Christ, the spiritual house is expanded. A new addition is constantly being added.

In both senses you are called to partner with God in a great building project. You are to build the spiritual house by bringing people into a relationship with God. And you are to build the lives of individuals by helping them progress in the faith.

You are a builder.

According to the apostle Paul, you must take this role seriously (1 Cor. 3:14). You must be careful *how* you build. The *how* is important. It is and it always has been.

As a builder, you need some clear blueprints.

Blueprints are not blue anymore, but they are still as vital as ever.

Blueprints are essential when designing or building. They show not only what will be built but also *how* it will be built. They show in great detail how everything fits together.

Building without blueprints would be ridiculous. It is inconceivable. You would never trust a physical house to a builder without blueprints. A good builder doesn't just wing it. He begins with a clear plan, a clear design.

A builder comes to the table with more than a brochure.

Brochures are different from blueprints. Brochures show the finished product. They show what the house will look like. However, you could not build a house with a brochure. It would be insufficient. The brochure is pretty, but it is not clear.

Blueprints contain more depth. You could follow the blueprint and build a house.

Why would we attempt to build spiritual lives without a clear ministry blueprint? To build the lives of people effectively, you need a clear ministry process. You need a blueprint that has clarity. According to our data, there is a highly significant relationship between church vitality and the clarity of the process. Clarity is *the ability of the process to be communicated and understood by the people*.

You are a builder, and it is time to design a ministry blueprint. It is time to be sure you have a clear ministry process. In this chapter you will be given five keys to clarity. All five are essential and have been validated by our research.

If you want your process to be clear, you must define it, illustrate it, discuss it, and measure it. You must also constantly monitor the understanding of your people in regard to your process.

1: Define

According to our research, defining your ministry process is extremely important.

We asked vibrant church leaders and comparison church leaders to evaluate how clearly defined their ministry process is. We asked them to state their level of agreement with the following statement: "We have a clearly defined process for moving a person from salvation to spiritual maturity to significant ministry."

Of the vibrant churches, 53 percent of the church leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they have a clearly defined process. Of the comparison churches, 25 percent of the leaders agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 1 illustrates this. Notice how the majority of the comparison churches are on the left side of the figure, while the majority of the vibrant churches are on the right. Vibrant churches are more than twice as likely than comparison churches to have a clearly defined process.

Figure 1. Respondents' level of agreement with having a clearly defined process.

Note: SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; MD = Moderately disagree; MA = Moderately agree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

So the beginning point is to define your process.

Without definition, people are uncertain about how the church is making disciples. Without definition, people are clueless about *how* the church is designed to bring people toward spiritual maturity. Without definition, there is room for ambiguity. Most churches are ambiguous about their ministry process, either because they do not have one or because it is loosely defined.

And where there is ambiguity, there is often confusion.

Several times in Miami, ambiguity has led to confusion for people who meet Eric's wife, who is especially tan from living in South Florida. She is often asked in Spanish, "Como té llama?" which means, "What is your name?"

Since she knows a little Spanish, she responds appropriately, "Kaye." Kaye is her name. But *Kaye* sounds like *que*. And *que* means "what?"

So the person will ask the question again in Spanish. This time, a little louder, "Como té llama?" And the person will get the same response. Usually after a few times of asking, the person gives up frustrated. For the Spanish-speaking person, the conversation feels like this:

"What is your name?"

"What."

"What is your name?"

"What."

You get the picture. The moment is filled with ambiguity. Multiple definitions for the same sounding word leads to confusion and frustration.

The same is true with defining a process for church ministry. If the process is not clearly defined so that everyone is speaking the same language, there is confusion and frustration. If there is not one clearly defined *how*, people construct multiple interpretations on the direction of the church.

How's Your *How*?

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*.

Church leaders must define more than the purpose (*the what*); they must also define the process (*the how*). Thom previously discovered in his research on evangelistically effective churches that effective churches have leaders who are clear about the purpose of the church.¹ This new research affirms that finding and also reveals that it is important to be clear about the ministry process.

Michael Hammer is a business consultant who meets with organizations about their processes. The cost to attend one of his two-day conferences is more than two thousand bucks a person (ouch). He believes that the process is more important than the purpose of a company because it is the process that makes everything work. It is the *how*. He points out that the people within any organization must know the process because they are integral to fulfilling it.²

The same is true for a church. People within a church must know the process because they are integral to fulfilling it.

Actually, the process is for them. It is designed for them, for everyone. The end result is their lives transformed. People are more likely to progress through the process if they know it. A clearly defined process encourages people to progress through it because they know the expectation. People cannot embrace the ambiguous.

How is your *how*? Do you have a process that is clearly defined? Following are three concepts to wrestle with as you begin to define a ministry process:

Determine what kind of disciple you wish to produce in your church. What do you want the people to be? Narrow this list down as much as possible. For example, Cross Church (chapter 2) decided that disciples at their church would be passionate lovers of God, servants in the kingdom of God, and connected in vibrant relationships to people.

Describe your purpose as a process. 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. Process definition is much easier for church leaders if they describe their church purpose statement as a process.

Cross Church took their desires for disciples and placed them in sequential order: "Love God, love others, serve the world." Someone first commits to love God. The person then gets connected in vibrant relationships with others and finally expresses love for God and others by serving the world.

The leaders at Cross Church believe that spiritual growth is a process, and they describe the focus of their church in such terms. The order is important. It provides a clear blueprint for the leaders at Cross Church.

Decide how each weekly program is part of the process. Let's be honest; the programs and ministries are what people see. People forget the statements on the wall, but they know what programs you offer. Your programs say what is important to you; therefore, you must define how each program is used to produce the kinds of disciples God has called you to make.

The programs must specifically be defined how they will be used to move people through the process of spiritual transformation. Cross Church focuses their worship services on helping people love God. They use small groups to help people love others, and they challenge people to be on a ministry team so they can serve the world.

Your programs must be submissive to your ministry process. They are tools to facilitate the process of spiritual growth. Programs must work for your process, not the other way around.

Define your process, and then illustrate it.

2: Illustrate

According to our research, illustrating your process is vital. If you want your church members to see your simple process clearly, you must illustrate it.

Blueprints are visual. Can you imagine building a house without having the drawing to look at? Can you imagine constructing a building without having the blueprints on the table as discussions emerge?

We asked vibrant church leaders and comparison church leaders if they use an illustration or metaphor to help bring clarity to their process. We asked them to state their level of agreement with the following statement: "We have a visual illustration of our process."

Of the vibrant churches, 35 percent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement compared to 16 percent of the comparison churches. The percentage of vibrant church leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that their church has a visual illustration of their process was more than twice that of the comparison church leaders (Figure 2).

The majority of comparison churches admit that they do not illustrate their process. Over 70 percent of the comparison church leaders disagreed at some level that their church illustrates their process visually.

The data urges church leaders to choose a visual illustration to represent their simple process. Why does it matter so much? What is the big deal with a baseball diamond, a triangle, a home metaphor, or some other illustration?

Get Visual

The simple process is more likely to resonate with each person if it is visual. People are more likely to remember it. Consequently, people are more likely to experience the reality of the process if they can recall it.

Figure 2. Respondents' level of agreement with having a visual illustration

Note: SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; MD = Moderately disagree; MA = Moderately agree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

Recollection increases movement. It increases the likelihood that people will progress through the stages of commitment. People will not live out something they cannot remember.

The process must be the vision for discipleship in a local church. The process says, in essence, "This is the kind of people we believe God is calling us to be, and here is *how* He is going to transform us into that type of person." It is personal. It is something each person can internalize and own. The process can become the personal vision for each person in the church.

And vision is always visual.

People are able to live out the vision if they can see it. If there is a visual illustration for the process, people know where they are in the process and where they have yet to go. If they can attach the process to something that is etched in their minds, they are more likely to embrace it.

The process must become etched in the minds of your people.

God is the ultimate etcher. Long before researchers discovered that people remember more when visual stimulation accompanies hearing, God was teaching people visually. He created and crafted people, and He knows what makes them tick. He knows what urges a response in people. The Bible is filled with prophets and teachers who used visual illustrations to stir the hearts of people.

Hosea's life was a poignant visual message for the people. God instructed Hosea to marry an adulteress woman named Gomer (Hosea 1:2). It was probably awkward taking her home to meet his family.

Yet God was making a point.

Gomer was the representation of spiritual adultery committed by God's people. They had forgotten their first love. Each time people looked at the shame of Hosea, they saw a picture of their own relationship with God. When Hosea bought her back, he visually illustrated God's grace in a powerful way.

Jeremiah looked a bit odd stumbling around with an ox yoke on his neck (Jer. 27:2–3). Ox yoke medallions have never been in style and for good reason. However, the image was clear. God was going to discipline His people with a yoke around their necks.

The Passover drama was both bloody and visual. It foreshadowed the sacrifice of the Lamb of God on the cross. God's implicit instructions on the design of the tabernacle depicted a visual picture of the worship of heaven.

Then there is Jesus. Jesus pointed to fields and birds. He picked up a child and used a fig tree to make a point. He was a visual teacher.

After claiming to be the bread of life, Jesus fed bread to five thousand men (John 6). After calling Himself the light of the world, Jesus put light in a blind man's eyes (John 8–9). After claiming to be the resurrection and the Life, Jesus called Lazarus to come out of the grave (John 11).

The vine and the branches discourse (John 15) most likely involved real vines and branches. The water conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well definitely involved real water (John 4).

If your church is "not into the visual thing," then we assume you do not practice the Lord's Supper (Communion) or baptism. Both of these ordinances, given by Christ to the church are visual pictures of a theological reality.

A visual illustration increases clarity; therefore, church leaders should use one. The visual illustration may be a diagram, or it may be a metaphor that gives people a mental picture.

Choose a visual illustration for your process. Get some wise and creative people around a table and come up with one. Or borrow (steal) one from another church. However you do it, just be sure your visual illustration has the following components:

The illustration should be reflective of your process. The illustration must fit. If your process has three steps, then your illustration should reflect that. If your process has four steps, your illustration should reflect that. Ensure that the illustration is an expression of the reality of your process.

The illustration should show progression. Remember the simple process is about moving people toward greater commitment. The genius in the baseball diamond illustration started by Rick Warren is that the diamond shows movement from base to base.

The illustration should help simplify. Don't choose an illustration that makes your process seem complicated. Here is the rule: If you have to explain a lot of symbols and hidden meanings in your illustration, it is too complicated. The point of your visual illustration is to help people grasp the reality.

Define. Illustrate. Measure.

3: Measure

Our research also reveals that measuring your process is critical. Measuring helps bring clarity.

Preseason games are boring to watch, even for serious fans. If you're skimming this chapter while watching a preseason game, it is time to evaluate your life. Perhaps you should get out more. Go ahead, put down the book, and leave the cave.

Seriously, *Sportscenter* on ESPN barely mentions preseason games. The anchors even poke fun at how little the games matter. The best players are not in the game at critical times. It is basically a practice with real referees. It just seems that no one really cares who wins or loses.

No one cares because the games are not measured.

They do not count. And because the games are not counted in the season's overall record, the games are not taken seriously.

You get the point. For people to take your ministry process seriously, it has to be measured. For people to internalize the simple *how* in your church, you have to evaluate it. The cliché is true: what gets evaluated, gets done.

We asked church leaders if they have a system in place to evaluate if people are progressing through their process. Church leaders stated their level of agreement with the statement: "We have a system to measure how people progress through the process."

Figure 3. Respondents' level of agreement with measuring the process

Note: SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; MD = Moderately disagree; MA = Moderately agree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

Of the vibrant churches 27 percent strongly agreed or agreed with this compared to 9 percent of the comparison churches. Vibrant church leaders agreed or strongly agreed three times that of the comparison church leaders that they measure the effectiveness of their process. The vast majority of the comparison churches have no system in place to measure people moving through the process (Figure 3).

Michael Hammer, the process expert, indicates that a process must be measured. If there is no measurement, the people within the organization will not internalize the severity and urgency of it.³ In other words, if you do not measure the process, people will think it does not matter. It will be just another statement on the wall or in the bulletin.

Churches that measure their process prove its value. Measurement proves the process is more than a new fad or down-loadable strategy. Staff, volunteers, and members see the importance.

Measurement also helps leaders know if people are progressing through the process. For example, Cross Church continually evaluates the numbers of people who are moving through their process. Their measurement tool looks like this:

	Love God (worship service)	Love Others (small groups)	Serve World (ministry teams)
Children	120	80	40
Students	140	75	65
Adults	650	400	300
Total	910	555	405

A measurement tool like that at Cross Church focuses on moving people from one level of commitment to another. Holes are easily identified and remedied. If the church increases in attendance at their "love God" level, they expect to increase proportionally at their "love others" and "serve the world" levels.

Are you ready to measure? To measure your process effectively, you must think differently in two critical ways:

Learn to view your numbers horizontally and not vertically. Measuring your process requires you to view your attendance differently from most churches. Take Cross Church's measurement

tool, for example. Most church leaders would look at the total number of people in a particular program, such as the total number of adults in small groups. That is looking vertically. It is looking at programs to see if they are successful.

Viewing your numbers horizontally is different. Someone who views numbers horizontally would look at Cross Church and see that a certain percentage of adults moved from a worship service to small groups and then to ministry teams. The horizontal viewer would think of ways to move more people across the chart. Sideways. Horizontally. Got it?

Measure attendance at each level/stage in your process. To evaluate your entire process, you must know how many people are plugged in at each level. Most churches tend to measure only worship attendance and small-group attendance. That makes sense if those are the only two programs in the process. However, it does not make sense if there are additional programs.

For example, Cross Church wants to move people from worship service to small groups to ministry teams. For them to measure effectively, they have to know how many people are in ministry teams. If they did not know that, it would be impossible to see a clear picture of reality.

To get an accurate picture, you must measure attendance at each level. It gives you key knowledge for planning and praying. Without this knowledge, you are bound to make decisions based on incomplete information.

Define it. Illustrate it. Measure it. Discuss it.

4: Discuss

Imagine this scenario. A pastor and team of leaders invest months in crafting a vision or purpose statement. They have late-night meetings with pizza and M&Ms. They debate the wording. They choose key Scriptures to emphasize the direction of the church. They are filled with excitement, and they come up with a plan to share everything with the people.

They share the vision with the key leaders in the church. Then they mail out letters to everyone. They get a banner. They get new letterhead with the statement just under the church name. They even change the names of their budget categories. They put the vision in the bulletin. And the pastor preaches on it for three weeks.

Then everyone breathes a sigh of relief. The intensity dies down. That's it.

"Nice series, Pastor. I enjoyed it."

Everything goes back to normal.

The statement remains, but nothing really changes. It might as well be in a drawer. It is just some nebulous verbiage. No one really pays attention to it. No one really gets it.

This scenario is typical.

If the church is going to be simple, these events cannot happen. The process must not be just another statement on a wall or in a drawer. If the church is going to be simple, the process must be clear.

If the process is going to be clear to the people, then it must get into the very fabric of the church. It must become part of the character of the church. It must be foundational to the church culture. It must be in the DNA of the church's identity.

For the simple process to become woven into the identity of the church, it must be discussed frequently. Not just during the launch. Clarity is not realized without consistency.

It is not enough to unveil a vision for the *how* and then bury it among other things. It is insufficient to preach a series on the discipleship process and then file the messages. Consistent discussion is a must.

The Role of Leadership

For the simple process to become a part of the culture of the church, it first must be woven into the leadership culture. The discussion must begin with the leadership of the church. The simple process must become part of their vocabulary. It must roll off their tongues with ease. It must make its way into the hallway discussions, lunches with key leaders, and the meetings.

The process must be discussed among the leaders consistently. If the hearts of the leaders do not beat passionately for it, the people will miss it. If the ministry blueprint is fuzzy to the leaders, it is not even thought about by the people in the church.

Michael Hammer advocates that the leaders of an organization be the pioneers and the overseers of an organization's process. He believes that the leaders of an organization have the breadth of perspective and the authority needed to oversee the entire process and solve problems along the way.⁴ He believes that ownership begins with the leaders.

We agree.

Discussion among the leaders leads to understanding and ownership. When the church leadership team discusses the process, the team is able to accept ownership and accountability. They are also able to address problems in the process that hinder the spiritual maturation of the people in the church.

The culture of the church follows the culture of the leadership. The leaders' understanding and ownership overflow to everyone.

According to our research, consistently discussing your ministry process makes a big difference. Simple churches tend to do so while complex churches ignore this principle.

We asked vibrant church leaders and comparison church leaders to evaluate their commitment to discussing the process as a leadership team. We asked both groups of leaders to state their level

of agreement with the following statement: "We frequently discuss our process as a leadership team."

Of the vibrant churches, over half of them strongly agreed or agreed with this statement compared to a fourth of the comparison churches. The percentage of vibrant church leaders who agreed or strongly agreed that their church leadership team frequently discusses their process was more than twice that of the comparison church leaders (Figure 4).

The Ongoing Conversation

Our research indicates that you should frequently discuss your simple process. Discussion will lead to understanding and ownership with the leaders. Consequently, the process will be planted deep into the culture of the church.

Perhaps it is time for you to begin the ongoing conversation . . . to get things started.

Figure 4. Respondents' level of agreement with discussing the process.

Note: SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; MD = Moderately disagree; MA = Moderately agree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

Pace yourself. This process will take some time. Don't make the mistake of trying to make up for lost time in a few weeks. The discussion must be ongoing. It takes time for understanding and ownership to develop.

Following are four ways to surface and resurface the simple process in discussions among the leadership:

View everything through the lens of your simple process. When you evaluate, evaluate through the lens of your ministry process. When decisions are made, refer to the process. When programs are analyzed, view them through the lens of your ministry process. Bring conversations back to the ministry blueprint.

Surface the process in meetings. The simple process must be discussed in meetings. Sometimes it needs to be an item on the agenda. Other times it just needs to be interwoven into discussions. By using your ministry process language frequently, you will establish a new vocabulary at your church.

Test the leaders on it. No one likes tests, but we took them for years because they provide objective measurement. They actually work. As much as people abhor tests, they hate not passing them even more. It's a bit embarrassing.

Hand out a figure of the visual illustration with fill-in-the-blanks, and have the leaders fill in the answers. Then walk through the visual illustration with the entire group. Don't call people to the front to write in the answers. It is not an algebra class. Simply discuss each part of the process as a group. Let it sink in.

Once a test is given to adults, they will do their best to be prepared for the next one. Make this fun, not serious. Regardless, people will get the point.

Several weeks later, do it again.

Several months later, do it again.

Brainstorm new ways to communicate it. Here is an early warning. Your process will get old. It will lose its freshness. You will one day be tired of the verbiage you chose. At some point the leaders will be sick of talking about it. If you are a type A personality who thrives on change, you may even want to start over.

Ironically, it is just at this point that people in the church are starting to get it.

When the process starts to feel old, brainstorm fresh ways to communicate it. Brainstorm new ways to present your process, and involve other leaders in this. New ideas will keep things fresh and will help you focus on the execution of the process.

Define. Illustrate. Measure. Discuss. All these factors lead to understanding.

5: Increase Understanding

Vibrant churches are confident that people understand their simple ministry process. They have this confidence because they have invested the time in defining, illustrating, measuring, and discussing it.

The comparison churches lack this confidence. They inwardly know that their people do not really understand the ministry blueprint. Often it is because there is no ministry blueprint. Other times, communication has been poor.

We asked the vibrant church leaders and the comparison church leaders to state their level of agreement with the following statement: "Our church members have a clear understanding of our process." Of the vibrant churches, 60 percent agreed at some level with this statement compared to 32 percent of the comparison churches. Moreover, vibrant church leaders agreed or strongly agreed four times that of the comparison church leaders that their church members have a clear understanding of their process (Figure 5).

Understanding does not come easily. It does not occur with a one-time magical act of communication. Increasing understanding is hard work, and it must be continually monitored.

Vibrant church leaders embrace this challenge. They continually and intentionally confirm that their church members have a clear understanding of their process.

And this understanding bears fruit.

When people understand the process, they are able to embrace it personally. They progress through the process toward spiritual transformation. They partner with the church and God as their spiritual lives are constructed.

Figure 5. Respondents' level of agreement with members understanding

Note: SD = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; MD = Moderately disagree; MA = Moderately agree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly agree

When people understand the process, they are also able to bring others through it. People are always the church's greatest resource. And when someone really gets it, the person becomes a missionary and an advocate. The person becomes a walking sermon illustration, a moving and talking billboard for the grace of God. The impact is then exponential.

So, as a leader, you must increase the level of process understanding in your church. To do so, you must do three things. While all three are critical, they are in reverse order of importance:

Articulate the process corporately. Leaders, you must speak about the process to the church as a whole. When you are tired of talking about it, people will just be in the first stages of understanding. That is just the way it works. You are just one voice in their lives.

Max Depree wisely stated, "Leadership is like third grade: it means repeating the significant things."⁵ The simple process is significant, and it is worth repeating again and again.

It does not mean you need constantly to devote messages or special days to declaring your ministry process in its entirety. In fact, weaving it into regular messages and communications is more effective because it is consistent.

When you communicate the process, share stories of how it is working. Share stories about how God is moving in the lives of people. Talk about the couple that moved from just coming to church to being the church, to serving others. Talk about the guy who finally tried a small group and is now leading one. Share real stories of real people with real names. It resonates with people, and it leads to understanding.

Share the process interpersonally. More importantly, you must also discuss the process interpersonally with other people. The process must not only be heard through monologue. Dialogue gives people a chance to interact. And this dialogue has a tendency to spread.

Preachers, read this next sentence: It is not enough only to talk about the vision or ministry process from the pulpit. The simple process must be shared at dinner tables and meetings. When people see that it is not just a "sermon thing," it means more. People pay greater attention when they can see your heart off the stage.

Live the process personally. This issue is paramount, the absolutely most important thing you can do to increase understanding. The most important way you help people understand the defined ministry process is through your personal behavior—living and doing what you are asking people to live and do.

If you are asking people to move from a worship service to a small group, you must be in a small group. If you are asking people to progress to a place of service, you must serve in a tangible way . . . off the stage. If you are asking people to connect to people relationally who do not know God, you must meet your neighbors and the person who cuts your hair.

There is another word for it—integrity.

Don't be a spiritual travel agent.

Please, No More Travel Agents

There is a major difference between a travel agent and a tour guide. This difference is seen best in white-water rafting. There are plenty of rafting outfitters from which to choose along a white-water river trail. A travel agent will mail you brochures. A travel agent will suggest a few rafting outfitters and a river to enjoy.

But a travel agent's role ends there.

A travel agent spouts out intellectual information, hands you some brochures, and smiles. A travel agent tells you to enjoy the journey.

"Nice to meet you. Enjoy the trip."

A tour guide is different.

Along the Ocoee, in the Smoky Mountains, there is a great tour guide named Tripp. The name fits. He literally is a trip. Unlike the travel agent who hands you a brochure, he goes with you on the journey.

"Nice to meet you. Get in. Let's go."

Tripp knows the Ocoee. He knows each rapid intimately and talks about them with great energy. Double Suck. Moonshot. Flipper. Tripp enjoys each stage in the journey. It is fun to hear him share stories about the different parts of the river. You fall more in love with the river and the scenery because of him. You are inspired by his passion.

What makes Tripp a great tour guide is not his information. Even some of the local travel agents have the information. Tripp is great because of his love for the journey and because he takes you with him.

He takes you along the journey he has traveled. He does not instruct from a distance. He is with you. He is on the bus with you from the outfitter to the river. He is in the raft with you. And, if things do not go as planned, he is in the river with you.

Tripp has been where he is taking you. He is able to instruct because he is familiar with the journey. He speaks from a place of personal authority, and you listen. He is not perfect. His boat may tip over with you in it. But he is credible.

People need spiritual tour guides. They have had plenty of spiritual travel agents. Be a tour guide through the process of spiritual transformation in your church. Take people on a journey with you.

If you get in the boat, the ministry process will come alive. The ministry blueprint will make sense then. It will be clear.

Clarity is a huge first step, but it is only the beginning. You must now proceed to movement, the removal of congestion in your church.

We think you will have fun in the next stage, but be careful. You may start messing with sacred cows. Please seek God's wisdom for the right pace of change.

Let's see how you do in the chapter.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to our weekly programs, what kind of disciples are we trying to make?
2. Is there a defined process at our church? If so, what is it? How is each of our weekly programs used?
3. What is the illustration or metaphor we most often use to describe spiritual growth?
4. How do we measure success at our church? What are we looking for?
5. On a scale of one to ten (with ten being the highest), what is the level of process understanding in our church?

6. What should we do in response to the things learned in this chapter?

7. Are we tour guides or travel agents?¹

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