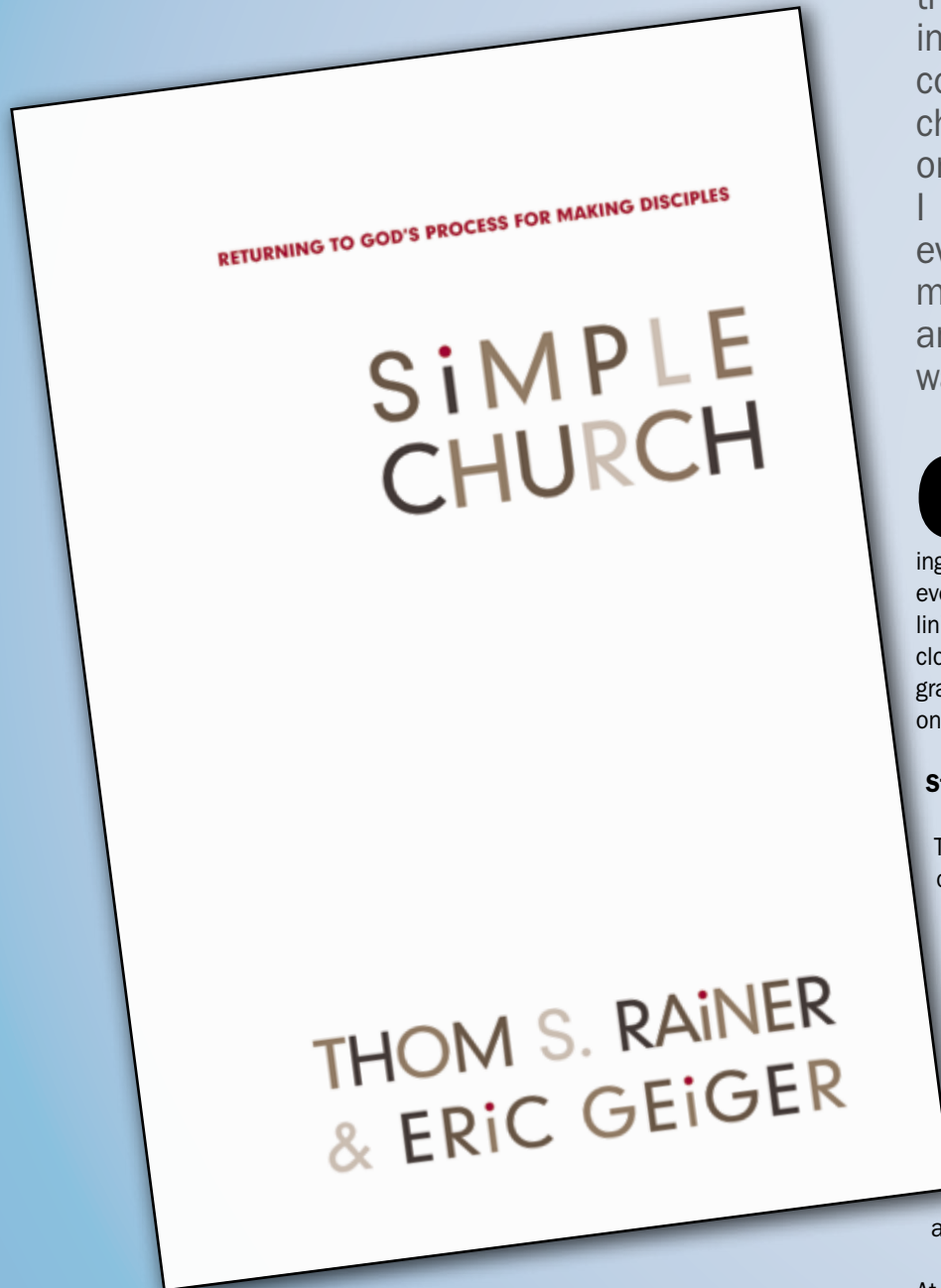


Simple Church

Streamline your church and refocus on ministry

By Topper Reid



Almost 10 years ago or so, there was a buzzword making its way through church conference circles and into church leadership. The term or word was “streamline.” I am not sure who said it or even where I heard it, but it made an impression on me and our staff at the church I was serving.

Churches had become too busy, filling their calendars with numerous quality events. The average church was wearing out its congregation from attending all the events and programs on the calendar. Streamlining meant that churches needed to take a close look at their processes and try to deprogram their calendars. They were to focus more on keeping “the main thing the main thing.”

Streamlined and Back

This new concept had an impact on our church staff team to the point that we were successful in weeding out some dates on our calendar, slowing down some, and refocusing on our priorities. It helped us to look at our process and evaluate how effective we were in our ministry. We made some strides and streamlined our calendar, only to see the calendar slowly fill up again over a period of time. Eventually, we were back where we started, and the word streamline was no longer a part of our vocabulary.

At that time, and for a brief period, the word streamline was the future. It gave churches hope in simplifying what they were doing and realigning their sights to refocus on the main

thing. In their newest book, *Simple Church*, Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger take us back to the future as they encourage us to evaluate our process, eliminate some things, and streamline our churches. As Albert Einstein

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once said, “Out of complexity, we must find simplicity.” (See page 3 in *Simple Church*.)

Simple Church is based on a study of more than 400 growing and nongrowing evangelical churches. Church leaders from both groups participated in the study, which was designed to measure the simplicity of their church discipleship processes. The results of this study revealed “that growing churches are more simple than the comparison churches, and conversely, complex churches are struggling and anemic...Churches without a process or with a complicated process for making disciples are floundering.” (See page 14.)

A Four-Part Process

Going beyond the suggestion of streamlining, *Simple Church* gives readers an outline to help bring this strategy into focus. It is one thing to suggest we streamline, and it is a different challenge entirely to actually do it. There are four key concepts churches must embrace in order to begin the process of moving from complexity to simplicity, “Four simple words... clarity, movement, alignment, and focus.” (See page 3.)

As we think about these four words, keep in mind that our goal is to move our people

along a continuum of spiritual transformation, leading them to develop into spiritually mature Christians.

The first step in the process is clarity. “**Clarity** is the ability of the process to be communicated and understood by the people....If you want your process to be clear, you must define it, illustrate it, discuss it, and measure it.” (See page 111.) As church leaders, we are encouraged to become tour guides to guide our people on a journey of spiritual transformation.

Movement is the next step in the process. “**Movement** is the sequential steps in the process that cause people to move to greater areas of commitment.” (See page 139.) The question for my church is: Do we have a simple process that is strategic and sequential that moves people step by step in a continued pattern of spiritual growth?

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Alignment is the third step in the process. “**Alignment** is the arrangement of all ministries and staff around the same simple process.” (See page 168.) Alignment leads to becoming simple, and it allows the church to become unified around the same approach to ministry.

Finally, we come to focus. “**Focus** is the commitment to abandon everything that falls outside of the simple ministry process.” (See page 203.) Churches are encouraged to

eliminate all the nonessential programs, calendar dates, and emphases that keep them from accomplishing their simple process.

Simply stated, *Simple Church* is a must read. I believe this book will be an invaluable asset to churches as they seek to focus and become the vibrant church God has called them to be. ♦

About the Authors



Thom S. Rainer, Ph.D., is the president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, one of the largest Christian resource companies in the world. He has consulted with more than five hundred churches, served as pastor in four churches and interim pastor in seven churches, and spoken in hundreds of venues. His publications include 16 books and hundreds of articles. He and his wife, Nellie Jo, live in Nashville. They have three grown sons: Sam, Art, and Jess.



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