

# Simple Church Models - BELLS

## Every family a church

*"Simplicity is the key to fulfilling the Great Commission in this generation. If the process is complex it will break down early in the transference to the next generation of disciples. The more complex the process the greater the giftedness needed to keep it going. The simpler the process the more available it is to the Christian population."*

~ Neil Cole

For years, the Body of Christ in Western Culture has assumed that Church is a major event requiring great expertise to lead. We have missed the essential truth that God fully intended Adam and Eve to be the foundational model for the Church. Church was meant to begin, and to be lived out, in the family. The simplest expression of Church is the family. The essential building blocks for the Body of Christ are healthy spiritual families giving birth to healthy sons and daughters who give birth to healthy spiritual families. Healthy families reproduce and multiply.

### Definitions from Webster's Dictionary

- Simplicity - That which is simple.
- Simple - consisting of few parts, without any or much ornamentation, sophistication or complexity.
- Essential - Necessary, something that one cannot do without it. Of the utmost importance. Relating to or arising from the real nature of a thing or person. Containing all that is best or most important in a thing. As perfect as the mind can conceive. The basic or fundamental part of a thing.

What we are speaking of today is this idea of simple church, church in its most natural and simplest state of being.

Bindu Choudrie says, "If you believe in and love Jesus and can read, you can lead a house (simple) church." We should view the progression as follows: Every believer a church planter, every house (family) a church, every church building a training center. It's a paradigm shift. It's a whole new way of thinking about what church is, and who we are, and what God's purposes are for us.

We have to understand what is essential for church so that every one of us can do it and be successful at it. Simple church, that's what's on God's heart. God wanted every one of His people, I believe, to be vehicles, channels of His blessing.

The key concept is really not a matter of planting a church in your home, rather it is realizing that your family already is a church, and then begin to function accordingly. Jesus said where two or three are gathered in My name there I am in the midst. This includes everyone in His family, (Redeemed by His blood). It does not exclude anyone, (Singles, fatherless, etc.).

The issue is realizing that your family already is the church, that your home or your apartment or wherever you live is where the gathering of the believers meets. Simple church is infinitely flexible. You can do it any place, any time, any where with anybody. All you need is two people and Jesus. You don't necessarily need a "church" building. In England they meet in pubs. In Africa, under the trees.

Each family or grouping, whatever those groupings look like, would specifically meet together and have a meal with Jesus, have dinner with Jesus at least once a week and do four things. This model is built on the essentials of blessing, eating, listening, learning, and signs and wonders - **BELLS**.

### **B is for Blessing!**

God's desire, His heart, is to bless His people. Through the blessing, identity and destiny are imparted to the one being blessed.

God speaks of His covenant to bless His people starting with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, 15:18, 16:10, 17:2 ,22:17. (Also see Hebrews 6:14, Deut 8, Deut. 30.) God introduces the way He's going to bless Abraham. (Definition of what it means to bless someone - to empower to prosper.) We're not just talking financially here; we're talking about comprehensive blessing, spiritually, relationally and emotionally.

The God of the universe, Yahweh, is coming to Abram. He's saying, "Abram I'm going to enter into an agreement with you, a covenant with you, and I, God, am going to empower you to prosper."

In the book by Rolf Garborg, *The Family Blessing*, Rolf points out that there are four aspects to blessing.

A blessing spoken by God to people - God blesses us!

A blessing spoken by people to God - We bless God

A blessing spoken by one person to another - We bless each other

A blessing by God or people over things - Blessing land, provision, gatherings, etc.

God blesses us, we bless God, and then we bless each other, and that's the essential message of simple church. God invites us to share in this powerful activity by becoming a channel of blessing. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you, and the first place to do this is with your own family. We can't really bless people out there until we learn how to bless each other in our own families.

God's word spoken to Abraham was, "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." If we keep that concept in our heart, things remain simple. God made it simple so we could understand His blessing.

What would this look like? During your meal together, talk about God and encourage one another in this way. After the meal the husband/father leads out. The first thing that he does is to bless his wife. KISS - Keep it simple sweetie! I want to suggest that you use

Proverbs 31, verses 10-31, 21 verses. You can read all of it, you can read part of it, you can read one verse, but read it to your wife, speak it to your wife and wherever you can, make it personal. This is what most Jewish husbands do every week, they bless their wives.

Knowing he will be imparting a blessing to his wife and family every Friday will probably change the thought life of a husband/father during the week! He will be seeking God to understand how to empower his wife to prosper.

Here are five elements to the blessing.

A meaningful touch

A spoken message

Attaching high value to one being blessed; "What do I see of Jesus in you?" "What's God doing in you?"

Picturing a special future; "You know I really see you becoming this or doing this."

An active commitment to fulfill the blessing

Now it is the wife's turn to bless her husband. She can use Psalm 1, and as she reads she personalizes it.

Go ahead and improvise. Don't let it become legalistic. *You* find ways to make it exciting, and personal and alive. Ask God to help you do this.

Do you have children? Bless them next!

Do you have others who join you in the gathering of the believers? Neighbors, friends, extended family? Bless them also. The countenance of the people will shine brightly!

When husbands bless the wives, wives bless their husbands and parents bless their children, we will see how we are to bless other individuals in our gatherings.

"Lord, show us how to bless people in our whole neighborhood, the people at work, the people at school, all those within our sphere of influence."

What's going to affect your children more - being to soccer practice on time or doing ballet lessons or seeing Mom and Dad bless each other and then receiving a blessing from them also?

"The primary unit through which God has committed Himself to work is the family. God is a family man. God is the blesser. Through Jesus Christ, God is intent on blessing all the families of the earth." Blessing is God's primary mechanism of imparting His message of identity and destiny into your life. Isn't that what we need? God's sense of who I am and destiny of what He wants me to be about? This is the way it comes.

God's heart desire is to bless families!

Through a family, identity and destiny are imparted. Children find out "who they are" and "what they were created to do". Identity and destiny are found through the blessing of the father.

## **E is for eating!**

We're speaking of sharing a meal together, the Lord's Supper.

In Exodus 24, God invited the elders of Israel to the top of the mountain where He prepared a meal for them. Jesus invited Himself to eat with several folks including Zacchaeus. In the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ we see all of God's family gathered together at the wedding supper of the Lamb! There is an intimacy and closeness that happens when we eat together.

When we meet, when we have dinner with Jesus, take some bread (pancakes, etc.) and say the words, "This is Christ's body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." Everybody eats some bread, we start the meal with that. Next take the cup and remind everyone of Christ's blood spilled for you. Maybe you end the meal with the cup. It could be grape juice, it could be wine, or it could be something else.

1 Cor. 11:1,23-34 says to celebrate the Lord's Supper when you gather.

And you should follow my example, just as I follow Christ's.

[23] For this is what the Lord himself said, and I pass it on to you just as I received it. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and you, sealed by the shedding of my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." [26] For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

[27] So if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, that person is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. [28] That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. [29] For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. [30] That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.

[31] But if we examine ourselves, we will not be examined by God and judged in this way. [32] But when we are judged and disciplined by the Lord, we will not be condemned with the world. [33] So, dear brothers and sisters, when you gather for the Lord's Supper, wait for each other. [34] If you are really hungry, eat at home so you won't bring judgment upon yourselves when you meet together.

## **L is for listening!**

Listening is simply saying, "And Lord, what else do You want to do this day/night while we have simple church as your family in our home? Is there anything else You want to bring? Any spiritual gifts? People You want us to pray for?" Listening is the third element of simple church.

1 Cor. 14:26 NLT

*Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize what I am saying. When you meet, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in an unknown language, while another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must be useful to all and build them up in the Lord.*

Everyone should be able to engage and participate in the gathering. The fullness of the heart of God and Body life is revealed as each one shares what God is putting on their heart to share.

John 14:26 NLT

*But when the Father sends the Counselor as my representative - and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit - he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I myself have told you.*

1 Cor. 14:1, 3, 20-26,36-40 NLT

*Let love be your highest goal, but also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives, especially the gift of prophecy. [3] But one who prophesies is helping others grow in the Lord, encouraging and comforting them.*

*[20] Dear brothers and sisters, don't be childish in your understanding of these things. Be innocent as babies when it comes to evil, but be mature and wise in understanding matters of this kind. [21] It is written in the Scriptures,*

*"I will speak to my own people through unknown languages and through the lips of foreigners.*

*But even then, they will not listen to me," says the Lord.*

*[22] So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for the benefit of believers, not unbelievers. [23] Even so, if unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting and hear everyone talking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy. [24] But if all of you are prophesying, and unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting, they will be convicted of sin, and they will be condemned by what you say. [25] As they listen, their secret thoughts will be laid bare, and they will fall down on their knees and worship God, declaring, "God is really here among you."*

*[26] Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize what I am saying. When you meet, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in an unknown language, while another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must be useful to all and build them up in the Lord. [36] Do you think that the knowledge of God's word begins and ends with you Corinthians? Well, you are mistaken! [37] If you claim to be a prophet or think you are very spiritual, you should recognize that what I am saying is a command from the Lord himself. [38] But if you do not recognize this, you will not be recognized.*

*[39] So, dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues. [40] But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.*

If we ask the Lord what He would have us do, He will lead us in our gatherings. He will also prompt us to go and introduce people to Him and gather them together for Him to speak through us. Remember, we are church, we don't do church. You're not running this thing, Jesus is!

### **Notes On The Simple Church Meeting:**

A comment on children. While there are no set rules on children participating in the gathering, I am constantly reminded that anyone who receives the gift of salvation in Christ Jesus receives His gift of the Holy Spirit indwelling them. The Holy Spirit is not immature in a child. Pay attention, He may just speak through a child. Children or unbelievers who have not received the Holy Spirit may still be drawn to Christ while being in your midst.

The size of your gathering will have a direct impact on these issues also. Around 15 to 20 people will make intimacy and the ability to share easier than a gathering over 20. If it starts feeling like a duty, if it starts feeling like law, if it starts feeling heavy - you just need to know that you're doing something wrong. That's not how God wants you to be church. Go back to the beginning, listen to Him and find out what's gone awry. Ask him where you got off base.

The essentials of Simple Church affect real life! It's going to be a source of life for you, for your family, for your neighbors and for your whole neighborhood! Church happens 24/7, all week long!

You and your wife and your children are a church. That is the first expression of community. Everything else that you do, inviting other people to join you, occasionally, all the time, whatever, that's up to Jesus because He's the head of your church.

Blessing is so neat because God has said, "You start with your family. Don't worry about starting a church, just bless your family." He called us to make disciples, and through that a gathering will happen. Jesus said, I will build my Church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it! That's great news, just don't forget your role in prayer and warfare. You will need to take steps to stand on behalf of your family gathering and recognize the desire of the enemy to destroy the work of the Kingdom of God.

If you set out to start a church, you tend to put the church in front of family. But, if you start out to be God's people as a family, and bless each other, (and you can do that), then other people will just naturally be drawn in, and it won't take a toll on your family.

### **L is for Learning!**

"What have we learned this day? What has God said?"

A summary at the close of the gathering will reinforce that which God has revealed to everyone.

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls.

A. Jesus taught His disciples the Word of God.

B. Jesus taught His disciples to pray.

C. Jesus was constantly revealing the heart of the Father to His disciples.

D. Jesus modeled life and ministry for His disciples. Jesus taught them how to do this so His message would go to the people.

Matthew 9:35-36 says:

*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. [36] When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Jesus taught, Jesus preached, and Jesus healed. He revealed the good news of the Kingdom and the love of the Father. Revelation is at the heart of teaching, to reveal what the Father has for us.

Jesus asked His disciples many questions to drive home the concepts He was teaching them. He wanted to make sure they understood what He was teaching them.

Matthew 16:15, Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

Peter responded and Jesus blessed him! Lesson imparted, internalized and learned.

The idea is to ask the group what God has revealed to them today and let it sink deep into their hearts and minds. Then they determine how it might apply in their lives and in the lives of those God would send them to.

## **S is Signs and Wonders!**

Like many in the church today, I was raised with the idea that the miraculous works of Christ ended in the first century. Having traveled around the world and witnessed healings first hand, it is great joy to report that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever! In our time of gathering together, we minister regularly to the hurts and needs of the people who are present. We have an anticipation that God will "intrude" on us in His power and might and meet the needs of the family gathered together. We regularly intercede for healing from physical, emotional, spiritual, and material needs. We constantly ask God for the fullness of His Kingdom to be exhibited in our midst. Seeing with the eyes of the heart (spiritual eyes) and hearing God's leading (spiritual ears) are necessary to participate with God in His work in His Kingdom.

## **BELLS**

Blessing speaks of the reason we gather (growing out of Gen. 12:1-3). God blesses his people and they bless each other and then the world around them. Blessing (barak in

Hebrew) means "to empower to prosper". Often blessing means speaking into a person's life concerning their identity (who they are - "you are Peter/Rock) and destiny (why they are here - "on this rock I will build My church"). Everything that happens when we meet should empower the church and its members to prosper and be strong (1 Cor. 14:26). (This is modeled on "the blessing" that is at the heart of the Sabbath Meal in every Jewish home each week.)

Eating speaks of location or environment or context. We meet around the table with each other and with Jesus. Family like relationships develop. We share our lives as we eat together. This is where the Lord's Supper took place in the early church. (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor. 11:33).

Listening speak of direction or agenda. Jesus is not the Honored Guest but the Master of Ceremonies. He brings the agenda. Our job is to listen to Him. "What does He want me to contribute this week? A word of instruction? A song? A prophetic message? When do I make my contribution? How does He want me to strengthen (bless) His church this week?" Jesus, who did nothing on His own initiative but only did what His Father was doing (Jn. 5:19), is our model for doing church.

Learning speaks of paying attention to what the Lord is teaching both the individuals and the community. "What did the Lord say to us today and what are we to do about it?" Obedience oriented education. (John 14:21)

Simple Church can be facilitated by anyone who loves Jesus and wants to bless others as they journey together, being conformed to His image and rescuing others from a life of hopelessness and releasing them into the Kingdom of God.

2 Tim. 2:2

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men (and women), who will be able to teach others also.

We want to pour our lives into those who are faithful, available and teachable (FAT) in order to see the Kingdom advance and fill the earth with the glory of the Lord!

Source: From Articles From The Simple Church Web Sight:

**[www.dawnministries.org/regions/nam/simplechurch/index.html](http://www.dawnministries.org/regions/nam/simplechurch/index.html)**