

Some insights into the power of simplicity:

**Neil Cole, Director of Church Multiplication Associates-**

"Simplicity is the key to the fulfillment of 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 broader Christian population." Cultivating a Life for God, p. 35

**Roland Allen, Missionary Statesman-**

Thus, St. Paul seems to have left his newly-founded churches with a simple system of Gospel teaching, two sacraments, a tradition of the main facts of the death and resurrection, and the Old Testament. There was apparently no form of service, except of course the form of the sacraments, nor any form of prayer, unless indeed he taught the Lord's Prayer...This seems to us remarkably little. We can hardly believe that a church could be founded on so slight a basis. And yet it is possible that it was precisely the simplicity and brevity of the teaching which constituted its strength...By teaching the simplest elements in the simplest form to the many, and by giving them the means by which they could for themselves gain further knowledge, by leaving them to meditate upon these few fundamental truths, and to teach one another what they could discover, St. Paul ensured that his converts should really master the most important things. Missionary Methods: Paul's Or Ours?, p. 90

**Steve Steele, CEO of DAWN Ministries-**

"The continued growth of Christian churches in China - mostly underground house churches - has something to do with three convictions widespread among Chinese Christians. The Chinese love the progression "good, better, best" so the three mottoes are "It is good for a Christian to lead someone to Christ. It is better to plant a church. It is best to plant a church-planting movement. Indian Christians have three similar convictions. "Every Christian can plant a church; every house can become a church; every church can become a Bible school." "

This section is meant to be a simple primer concerning the thoughts of simple church. It is meant to assist people in catching the "heart" of the simple church concepts. It is not meant to be a dictionary replacement or a theological statement. It is written to assist in setting families free to be reflections of the Kingdom of God.

From time to time we will add a word or thought to this page that is used often but may have a variety of meanings. We want to work at being clear about what we mean when we use a word or phrase. Others may use the same word to mean something different. This is our attempt to bring clarity to our web page, not determine the rightness of a term or phrase as it is used by others.

**Simple Church** - The concept of simple church is rooted in Genesis 2&3. It is the belief that God intended Adam and Eve to be the first expression of the church. Two gathered with the Father is a great picture of the first gathering of the household of faith. So, for us, simple church is rooted in the family. Dad and Mom sharing with their children about the joy of a relationship with God. Every home IS the "church" in their community. Rather than viewing church as a meeting, it becomes a way of living life, a lifestyle. Every family becomes an entry point for people they know

to come into the Kingdom of God through Christ Jesus our Lord. With every family living out the love care and compassion of Christ daily, any number of structures can be used to support the work of the ministry.

**Family** - In the old days, family included several groups that we distinguish between in modern culture. First, family was mom and dad and the kids, but it also included the "extended family"; aunts and uncles, grandma and grandpa, also maidservants and menservants. Today we don't have servants but we do have a sphere of influence. This can be people we work with, fishing buddies or any number of people we are in regular contact with weekly or monthly. The question we might ask is, "What would our sphere of influence look like if everyone began living daily in their homes and in the marketplace for Christ"? Would there be an impact on our society if everyone who knows Christ begins to live Christ? This idea of family gives everyone a place of belonging. So many in today's society do not have a place to connect, to be loved and cared for. Our western way of thinking breeds independence rather than community. Most of the issues of personal growth in the Kingdom cannot be experienced apart from community relationships. Therefore, it is incumbent upon everyone to ask God who He would bring into their sphere of influence, their extended family, in order to develop relationships of trust and vulnerability where God can use others to bless affirm, exhort and gently correct us toward a healthy lifestyle with Christ and each other.

Healthy parents produce healthy children. When parents love God and commit to loving each other, their children grow up in a nourishing environment. When parents begin to pour their lives into their children, when they establish loving relationships in the home, their children are inclined to fall in love with the Lord. This can extend to their neighbors and friends, their sphere of influence.

A practical example can be found in the following story. Joe and Sam are friends and care for each other and their families. If Sam was out in the field working one day, and his cart fell on him and he died, his neighbor Joe would offer to take in Sam's wife Barbara and their two children. Because Sam and Joe lived in community together, their families would always care for one another.

One more note on family. In Christ, a family can be a group of singles, a group of people who are not necessarily connected by blood. When people chose to gather together, bless each other, care for each other and create a place where truth is spoken in love, God will bless them. They can become a family together and watch God replace their earlier losses with true love and affection for each other.

**Oikos** - A group of Greek words conveying a sense of community, from dwelling to dwellers, relatedness to responsibilities. The household of faith.

The idea of Oikos is a gathering of multiple families. In the early days, several families would share a common area for eating and washing and other daily tasks. Many hands would reduce the workload and anyone lacking would be able to receive from the larger group. While each of the families typically had their own place to sleep and keep personal items, eating, fellowship, and many other things were done in a common area.

Healthy Oikos is found in Acts 2:42-47, Acts 13:1-3 among others.

A word study on Oikos is located in the resources section.

**Both/And** - God always sees the whole picture and sometimes we just see through our individual lens. While we believe simple church (healthy extended families) is foundational to house church, traditional church, mega church and congregational church gatherings, we know many who

choose one to the exclusion of another. Structure is a secondary issue that should be maximized at every opportunity to extend the Kingdom of God. We would suggest that healthy families will bring life to multiple expressions of the Body of Christ. Still, apart from families becoming the church in their home and sphere of influence, it will be difficult to impact at other levels.

The idea is that you live simple church daily in the home. Just like eating, we need daily life with God and each other to be whole. Jesus said, Love my Dad and love each other. This IS life and real food. The gathering of the Body on a regional level is like desert. It doesn't replace the daily life with God and each other but adds a great opportunity for corporate worship and teaching, prophecy and corporate prayer.

The idea of community is the idea of a big extended family. Instead of the independent lifestyle many Americans accept as the norm, the picture is one of multiple nuclear families and singles of all sorts connected together caring for each other. Since it is difficult for any person to have many intimate relationships, Oikos usually finds its optimum expression in connecting with 15 people or less.

Israelites gathered 7 times a year for a week each time to celebrate the work of YHWH in their lives. With the notable exception of Yom Kippur, the day of atonement, most of the other time was given to corporate celebration.

So Both/And. Daily in the home and several times a year in the corporate gathering. In recent years we have tended to focus on the corporate gathering to the exclusion of families being the Church in their sphere of influence.

**Fatherhood and Motherhood** - While realizing this will not be politically correct, I want to affirm that in the beginning, God created Adam and Eve. A man and a woman. Together they were created in God's image. Each with a distinct role and character. And God said that it was good! In fact, I believe it is safe to say that this is the model that God intended to permeate His creation. He gave no other options! Dads have a role and moms have a role in the raising of children. God knew that a child would need the love, affection and input of both the parents to grow up with a healthy understanding of life and of God. Together, the parents would reflect the fullness of the creator and pour into their children.

**Fatherhood** - a weeping father crying out for his sons to overtake him

**Motherhood** - a weeping mom crying out for her daughters to overtake her.

Today, many are growing up without this kind of model. Their hearts are broken. Should the "church" catch a picture of the Kingdom, they would see their role in mentoring and raising up children who have been robbed of their birthright. It would be normal for families to provide a place of health and safety for children mistreated by a cruel and selfish world.

## **Ekklesia**

Robert Fitts writes:

The original word in Greek, ekklesia, is composed of two words: ek, meaning, "out of" and kalleo, meaning, "I call." The meaning of church according to the original word is, "I call out from." When Jesus said, "I will build my church." He was saying "I will call my people out of the world and they will assemble in my name, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against them." This implies that his called out people will rally as an army to take the world for him and the enemy will not be able to stop the advance. This invincible army will be motivated by the love of God within their hearts

and a

message of love and forgiveness on their lips. Actually ekklesia has two meanings: that of being called out and that of being assembled together. We cannot experience church until we come together. My wife and I are one even when we are separated from each other by many miles. But we do not experience the full benefits and blessings of our marriage union until we are together. Even so, you and every other believer in your city constitute the church in that city, even when you are not assembled. But we cannot receive the benefits and blessings of church until we assemble together. This, of course, does not mean that we all have to be in the same place at the same time. That will probably never happen in any city. I was amazed and delighted recently to discover that the word "ekklesia" in the New Testament was not a religious word at all. I was reading through the nineteenth chapter of Acts where the apostle, Paul, was threatened by an angry mob who wanted to kill him. The writer uses several different words to describe this mob: "the whole city", "the people", "the crowd", and three times he uses the word, "assembly", "The assembly was in confusion; Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there . . . The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: 'Men of Ephesus . . . if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls . . . If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly . . . After he said this he dismissed the assembly. (see Acts 19:28-41) The remarkable thing about the above passage is that the word assembly in the original language is ekklesia, which is the word we always translate, "church." So Jesus used a common word when he said, "I will build my church." It was not a religious word. It simply meant a called out group, or crowd, or fellowship, or assembly. So we can use the word church when it communicates what we are saying, but we can also use the word fellowship, or gathering, or brethren, or saints, or disciples. It simply means a group of people.