

SOME DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS AND VALUES OF “CONVENTIONAL” VERSUS “SIMPLE” CHURCHES

You may find yourself objecting to some of the generalized descriptions and contrasts offered below. Obviously the distinguishing characteristics of these churches are not all uniform or stereotypical. This chart simply attempts to provide a clarifying overview of commonly-shared or favored distinctives.

	“Conventional” Churches	“Simple” Churches
“Church” Is...	A holy place: something we <i>go to</i>	A holy people: something we <i>are</i>
Location and Time	A centralized, specialized building; “God’s house” Usually Sunday (& maybe Wednesday) Usually meet for 1 - 1.5 hours	Ordinary homes, workplaces, parks, coffee shops, restaurants, etc. Whenever it’s convenient Typically meet for 1.5 – 3 hours
Goal	Fill the sanctuary; get big	Start new churches; stay small
Seating and Environment	Rows Can be impersonal, even anonymous	A circle Stresses being personal and open
Food	Snacks are nice	Shared meals are important
“Worship”	Carefully scripted and practiced The Holy Spirit can lead more in the planning stages A skillful few share their gifts Most people are passive spectators Focus: God	More open and spontaneous The Holy Spirit can lead more while the meeting is “live” Everyone can make a contribution Most people are active participants Focus: God and each other
Preaching / Teaching	Lecture; one-way People learn from a designated teacher Trains people to be quiet and listen	Interaction / Q&A There may be a primary teacher, but people also learn from each other Trains people to engage and participate
The Attraction	Sermons, music and/or programs	Loving relationships and involvement
Accountability	To the denomination	To each other
Ministers / Ministries	Pastoral staff; the ordained More program oriented	Everybody; the ordinary More personal need oriented
Primary Leadership	Senior pastor and/or governing board; hierarchical; a “Moses”/OT model Hired from outside Professional Clergy & laity are usually distinct Titles (like “Pastor”) are used	A team of co-equal elders; no “senior pastor” except Jesus; a NT model Raised-up and recognized from within Non-professional No clergy-laity distinction No titles are used
Leadership Qualifications, Expectations and Role	Formal education is primary Previous positions and successes Perform well Decide and do	Mature, godly character is primary Observed faithfulness Empower others Facilitate
Authority	Comes with position and office	Comes with maturity and recognition
Philosophy of Evangelism	Attraction / Invitation: they come to us Bring them here The mission field is mostly elsewhere	Pursuit / Fishing: we go to them Start something where they are The mission field is mostly here
Primary Use of \$	Mortgage / Overhead and salaries	Benevolence & ministries/missions
Costs	Very expensive	Very inexpensive
Replication	Complicated and difficult	Simple and easy