

Some Distinguishing Characteristics and Values of “Conventional” Versus “Simple” Churches

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