

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 A specialized building; “God’s house” Usually Sunday (and maybe Wednesday) Usually meet for 1 - 1.5 hours	Dispersed throughout the community Ordinary homes, workplaces, coffee shops, restaurants, parks, 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	Usually in rows Can be impersonal, even anonymous	Usually in 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 learn from each other also 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 oriented to programs	Everybody; the ordinary More oriented to personal needs
Primary Leadership	Senior pastor and/or governing board; hierarchy a “Moses” / OT model Hired from outside Professional Clergy and laity are usually distinct Titles (like “Pastor”) are used	A team of co-equal elders; there is 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 <i>elsewhere</i>	Pursuit / Fishing: we go to them Start something where they are The mission field is mostly <i>here</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