

A Simple Plan

Simple isn't necessarily easy

Practical steps in the development of Foursquare Simple Churches

While the goal is to advance the gospel by planting more churches as faithfully and as quickly as possible, the journey to planting a Simple Church isn't necessarily easy. The path isn't without its obstacles and it will require new things of you, your family, and those around you. Though you will be challenged in the season ahead, pushed to ask hard questions of God and others, we believe you will also be enriched and equipped, ready for this good work.

The following are some essential preparations for pursuing God's call to extend His Kingdom in the planting of a Simple Church. Please understand that this is by no means an exhaustive list, but is intended to stimulate much prayer and thought along your journey. If you are to do this faithfully, it will require being realistic, faith-full and upright before God and man, so let's get started!

The First Steps

Because the Simple Church adventure is about inviting people into your life to a much greater degree than church as we often know it, it is essential for you to be healthy in your relationship with God and your family! Genuine, growing intimacy with God (hearing God, obeying Him wholeheartedly, etc.) is the foundation from which everything else flows. The core expression of the church in your life is your own family. Since you will be inviting people into your life, your family must be a healthy reflection of the church. You need to be able to say to people, "Live your life the way I live mine; relate to God the way I relate; treat your spouse the way I treat mine." To do the work of an evangelist, to make disciples, you must be a disciple of Christ.

Personal Preparations

There's a difference between a call and a chasm. A call brings people together in agreement while a chasm tends to separate. There is a call to ministry that is personal and unique for those who are called for God's purposes. People with different skills, different approaches to ministry and different past experiences work together so that the good news is preached and the whole church is built. Too often, there is also a chasm that would seem to force this kind of environment. While a call will continue to sustain you over the long term, a chasm merely gets deeper. Lead from a call, not from a chasm. If your differences with others have become the primary reason that you're on this journey, please consider the following list of reasons to wait.



Reasons to wait

- You don't qualify for the position of Elder/Overseer as laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- You long for community, but are uncomfortable in your local church.
- You're unwilling to listen to or submit to anyone else.
- You prefer this model of church over the model you're currently exposed to.
- You can't remember the last time you personally shared the Gospel with anyone.
- You're from a ministry family, so you might as well be in ministry too.
- Your father was or was not a pastor and you're fulfilling an expectation by doing this.
- You love the idea of having a following, or doing things your way, but you're not entirely sobered by this responsibility.
- You want to see church get back to how it was when you were a kid, regardless of whether or not that was right or biblical.
- You don't want to give, baptize a certain way, or be willing to admit if you're wrong on any particular point of doctrine.
- You want to use a Simple Church as a stepping stone to get somewhere else.
- You have a lot of neat thoughts and a lot to say and people need to hear it.
- You have almost no friends who aren't just like you.

If these are a persistent, even driving issue with you, please investigate your call to ministry, your calling and election as a Christian, and your desire to plant a church, any kind of church.

Repent, resolve any issues you may have with the appropriate people involved and take time to truly inspect your call to ministry. The church has often multiplied and grown as a result of an initial difference in opinion or approach (Paul and Barnabas separate, etc.) but it has lost blood over strife and division. If your intention is to take people away from your current church, or to build a following of your own, instead of a following of Jesus Christ, for the building up of His church... you are not ready.

STOP HERE

Keep in mind that planting a Simple Church, regardless of how you do it, will require a shift in perspective. Your priority must go from obtaining a building and establishing processes to making friends, and making friends disciples of Jesus Christ. Finding a building and making disciples may sound like essentially parts of the same thing, but they are not the same. One does not necessarily equal or lead to the other.



Moving the focus from obtaining a building and making a great organization to opening your home, making friends and making friends disciples takes hard work! The following are essential preparations for pursuing God's call to extend His Kingdom. If you do not have these things...

Please get healthy

The Simple Church Adventure is about inviting people into your life rather than doing meetings or programs, it is essential for you to be healthy in your relationship with God and your family! Genuine and growing intimacy with and obedience to God is the foundation from which everything else flows. The first expression of the church is your own family. And since you will be inviting people into your life, your family must be healthy in that it is growing in forgiveness, obedience and health. You need to be able to say to people, "If you live your life the way I live mine; relate to God the way I relate to Him; treat your spouse the way I treat mine... then you are living as a disciple of Christ." To make disciples, you yourself must be a deeply committed disciple of Jesus Christ.

If you should come to realize that you aren't healthy in any of these areas, please seek relationship with someone who is and be disciplined until you are ready to proceed.

However, If you do desire to plant and believe that by the testimony of your family and the testimony of other Christians and leaders that you're ready, then consider the following.

Reasons to plant

- You have repented of your sin and believed in Jesus Christ, have seen much evidence of a new nature in Him and are in no uncertain terms a disciple yourself.
- You have been filled with the Spirit.
- You have been called by God to do this.
- You aspire to and qualify for the position of Elder/Overseer laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- You love sharing the Good News with lost people, and are capable of making disciples of Christ.
- You pray more than you theorize. You think more than you speak. You may swing passionately, but are quick to correct yourself.
- You're open about your own sin, and not in a generalizing, diminishing way, but in a way that helps people see and understand their own sin and get free from it.
- You hold strong opinions, but you're open to change and quick to repent when you're wrong.
- In obedience to the Great Commission, and out of a love for the Great Commissioner, your desire is to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them to obey all that He has commanded.
- You hold a Biblical theology, a solid understanding of the Gospel, and a gentle and open posture toward unbelievers.
- Your boast is in knowing God, and not in a method of ministry or in the concept of community.



- In keeping with the Apostolic gifting, you make the Gospel of first importance. 1 Corinthians 15
- You weep for those who are perishing without knowing God and are not removed from them. You live life alongside them.
- You're far less impressed with you than those around you, and far more likely to share why than you are to hide those reasons.
- You recognize that oversight in a Simple Church carries less administrative duty than a typical pastoral role, but carries no less a degree of influence and relational impact in people's lives.
- You are not only willing, but ready to urge those in your care to live lives worthy of the Gospel in the face of sin and opposition. Phil 1:27

If this is a more accurate description of your state of mind and heart, then by all means...

GO!

Get equipped - with the supernatural power of God. "The Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power!" (1 Corinthians 4:20). When Jesus sent His disciples out to announce that the Kingdom of God, they were sent with power (Acts 1:7, 8). Healing the sick and casting out demons (see Matt 10: 1-8), the power released was the indicator that God's Kingdom had truly come near (see Luke 9:1-6 and 10:8-9). When Philip went down to Samaria he healed the sick and cast out demons as he announced the Good News (Acts 8:4-8), and Paul describes his ministry in terms of power, telling the Thessalonians, "we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction..." (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5a). In 1 Corinthians Paul says, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power." (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). Be ready to lay hands on the sick or to cast out demons- the power of God is available, and we are here to help and pray for you.

Get connected - with simple communities of faith living a simple life in Christ. Since this is about inviting people into life with Jesus, you can start by catching the pulse of your community. Walk through it and pray, build relationships by listening to the people to whom God has called you, and be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as you catch the Father's heart for them. Make disciples of those who are not yet Christians. Have an informal gathering at your home, meet up at a restaurant, or be open for your weekend plans to change when others want to join in! Connect with others who hear God's call to participate in the extension of the Kingdom of God.

Get informed - with recommended reading and researching resources. While it's common to run out to study various methods and models, we'd actually encourage a careful (and regular) reading of the book of Acts on your journey. Books can be helpful to show us what people are doing, but let's remember that the most direct path will be to discern what God is doing in our situation.



Organizational Preparations

Communicate - If you are being sponsored by a Foursquare church, be sure that communication is flowing between you and its leadership and that everyone understands basic Simple Church values and approaches. Be sure that you are in communication with your District Supervisor and his/her Church Multiplication representative. They will need to sign off on any funding proposals. If they turn out to be unfamiliar with simple/house church model and Foursquare's commitment to it, feel free to have them contact the national Church Multiplication personnel for help. Your district representative will have you fill out an application for church planting.

Confirm Support - After you have the support of your district leadership, you will submit a simple church network planting proposal to them.

Draft a Proposal

For your development and our consideration please:

Write Out Your Story - as a synopsis of God's call to begin this adventure and give evidence of your familiarity with simple church principles and values. This will include, but not be limited to, books you've read, websites you've researched, and practical experience that you have obtained. We are also looking for evidence that you hear God and live intimately with Him leading to healthy relationships that begins with the family.

Develop Core concepts - This need not be as detailed as a typical Church Plant proposal because Simple Church by its definition is... well, simpler! But even simple church leaders have core values, a vision of what God has called them to and a sense of mission. This may seem played out organizationally speaking, but at it's base, we're asking you to articulate what you feel God desires from you and the community you'll lead. In this section we will be looking for evidence of commitment to the releasing, empowering leadership style that is essential to simple, organic church life and rapid multiplication.

Have A Plan For Funding - If you are requesting funding. (unusual for simple churches because of the typical lack of traditional expenses connected to buildings and salaries) Your proposal should also include a proposed budget. You can submit this to your district supervisor and his/her church planting point person. The budget will be evaluated for evidence of clear understanding of organic/simple church values as well. A separate handout describes our current guidelines regarding funding.

Do A Community Study - related to the people you feel called to impact. A brief picture of how your community will be impacted by what God will do via this endeavor. A snapshot of how your community will be transformed five years in the future would be great!

Have A Plan For Discipleship - A description, as you see it happening, displaying degrees of training and/or licensing that will be offered to the leaders of simple churches in your network. Anything else you wish to communicate with us—perhaps things related to the uniqueness of your call, your vision, or anything you feel is vitally important to your part in the Kingdom.

Connections

Once you have submitted the proposal to the district (if not sooner), we will begin to link you with others. The district leaders will be in contact with you about coaching, as well as completing all necessary forms.

