

# Simply Church

*Advancing His Kingdom*



**Equipping Simple/Organic  
Church Pioneers & Leaders**

**“To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus  
to all generations, forever and ever. Amen”**

(Ephesians 3:21)

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NKJV unless otherwise stated

# Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom

*Equipping Simple/Organic Church Leaders*

## Part A – Laying the Foundation

- |                |   |                 |
|----------------|---|-----------------|
| <b>Topic 1</b> | <b>Church: Then and Now</b><br><i>facing the truth about ourselves</i>    | <b>pp. 1-3</b>  |
| <b>Topic 2</b> | <b>The King and His Kingdom</b><br><i>putting first things first</i>      | <b>pp. 4-7</b>  |
| <b>Topic 3</b> | <b>The Hood of All Believers</b><br><i>unlocking the potential of God</i> | <b>pp. 8-11</b> |

**THIS MODULE**

## Part B – Growing a Family

- |                 |  |                   |
|-----------------|--|-------------------|
| <b>Topic 1</b>  | <b>The Holy Privilege</b><br><i>why am I doing this?</i>           | <b>p. 12</b>      |
| <b>Topic 2</b>  | <b>The Apostolic Connection</b><br><i>who am I aligned with?</i>   | <b>pp. 13, 14</b> |
| <b>Topic 3</b>  | <b>The Heart Condition</b><br><i>how is my soul?</i>               | <b>p. 15</b>      |
| <b>Topic 4</b>  | <b>The Personal Evaluation</b><br><i>where is my garden?</i>       | <b>p. 16</b>      |
| <b>Topic 5</b>  | <b>The Waiting Game</b><br><i>what am I waiting for?</i>           | <b>p. 17</b>      |
| <b>Topic 6</b>  | <b>The Missional Heart</b><br><i>how do we view our world?</i>     | <b>pp. 18, 19</b> |
| <b>Topic 7</b>  | <b>The Discipleship Issue</b><br><i>where do we start?</i>         | <b>pp. 20, 21</b> |
| <b>Topic 8</b>  | <b>The Apostolic Essentials</b><br><i>what are we building on?</i> | <b>pp. 22-24</b>  |
| <b>Topic 9</b>  | <b>The Apostolic Process</b><br><i>who are our sons?</i>           | <b>pp. 25, 26</b> |
| <b>Topic 10</b> | <b>The Relational Commitment</b><br><i>why do we bother?</i>       | <b>pp. 27, 28</b> |

## Part C – Preparing to Multiply

- |                |   |                  |
|----------------|---|------------------|
| <b>Topic 1</b> | <b>Kingdom Advance</b><br><i>confronting the difficult issues</i>               | <b>pp. 29-32</b> |
| <b>Topic 2</b> | <b>Apostolic Teams &amp; Strategies</b><br><i>harnessing a synergy of grace</i> | <b>pp. 33-36</b> |
| <b>Topic 3</b> | <b>Biblical Eldership</b><br><i>uncovering an ancient secret</i>                | <b>pp. 37-39</b> |

**CONCLUSION** **p. 40**

**PART A – LAYING THE FOUNDATION**

**Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom**

**Topic 1 Church – Then and Now**

**Session 1 Looking Backward**

**Why look back?**

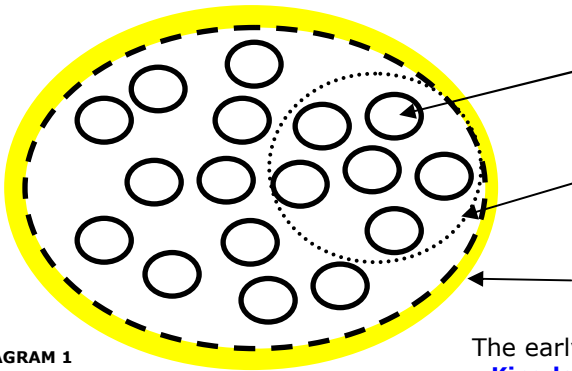
The early church enjoyed a profound sense of simplicity and power that the modern church seems to lack today. The simplicity of their communal and missional life resulted in remarkable fruitfulness. Today, church is far more complex, "sophisticated," ... yet far less fruitful. Our reliance on man-made systems has robbed us of the simplicity and power of the early church.

We need to rediscover the simplicity of the early church for two reasons:

- (1) If we want to enjoy the power that the early church had, then we must engage with what the early church was. To embrace our destiny we must honour our legacy.
- (2) Every revival in history, every society-impacting move of God through the centuries, was sparked into flame through rediscovering something of the power and simplicity of the early church. Every church historian knows this.

In a nutshell, the early church was **relational, organic** and **fluid** not hierarchical, institutional and rigid. In a locality, it comprised of these relational dynamics:

**"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ"**  
(2 Corinthians 11:2, 3)



Believers devoted to a **simple/organic church** family: a shared life together, facilitated by parent-leaders (1 Corinthians 16:19)

A fellowship of simple/organic churches aligned to **apostolic team and vision** (1 Corinthians 4:15)

Simple/organic churches advancing the Kingdom together as the **Body of Christ** (1 Corinthians 1:2)

DIAGRAM 1

The early church was the sum of a simple yet profound equation:

**Kingdom-advancing = simple/organic church + apostolic alignment + Body of Christ**

**So, what happened?**

How did the early church derail? The first factor was the loss of most of the church's key servant leaders to a martyr's death. All of the first apostles, and most of their spiritual sons, had paid the ultimate price resulting in a dearth of apostolic leadership.

Heresy was a disease the apostles had tenaciously kept in check. But in their passing, the disease mutated into forms and cultic expressions that threatened the apostolic faith. In reaction and fear, the church began to centralize and control what had been an organic, free-flowing community of life.

But worse was still to come ... The Roman Emperor Constantine claimed to be converted and made Christianity the state religion in his Edict of Milan (A.D. 312); this marrying of church and state was the final agent in confirming the church's doom from those awesome early days of power.

The result of this union was an **Empire-building** monster; compelling allegiance to the **institutional "Church"** enforced by **clerical control**, eventually spawning **denominational** sectarianism the world over.

Please, I'm not saying that every church and leader is wrong. Having been a senior pastor myself; my intention, like 99.9% of the pastors I know, was to sincerely do God's will. However, I became convinced that there were systemic inconsistencies in the construct of church as I knew it. The problem is not a "people-issue", it's a "systems-issue".

**Can you see the foundational differences between Diagram 1 and 3?**

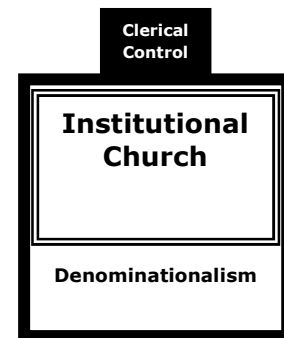
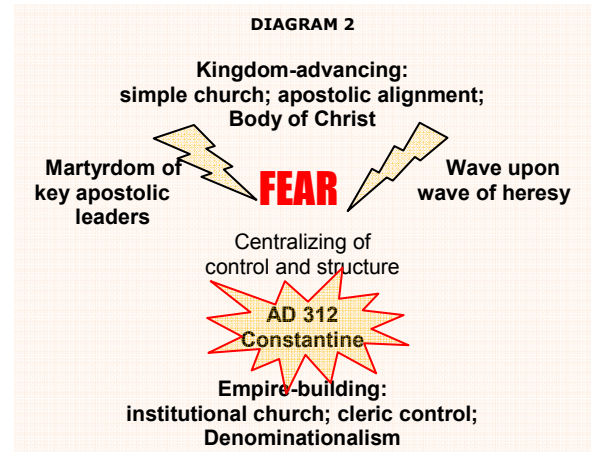
**INDEX**

**Topic 1 has three sessions ...**

**Session 1 Looking Backward** p. 1

Session 2 Looking Inward p. 2

Session 3 Looking Forward p. 3



EMPIRE-BUILDING DIAGRAM 3

**Next > Topic 1, Session 2: Looking Inward**

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What's wrong with institutional church? <Honey, I blew up the church>  
How did your story begin? <The story of us>

# PART A – LAYING THE FOUNDATION

## Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom

### Topic 1 Church – Then and Now Session 2 *Looking Inward*

#### INDEX

Topic 1 has three sessions ...

Session 1 Looking Backward p. 1

**Session 2 Looking Inward** p. 2

Session 3 Looking Forward p. 3

### Is there hope?

Can we recapture something of the dynamic of the early church? Oh, yes ... we are part of a five hundred year come back plan! Peter prophesied concerning the **"times of restoration of all things"** (Acts 3:21). God promised to restore His church to her former glory and more before Jesus' coming.

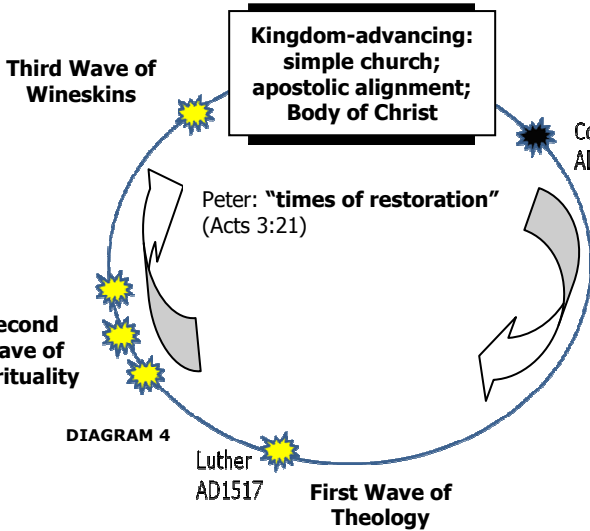
**"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the Presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ ... whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things"**  
(Acts 3:19-21)

In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther opposed the Roman Catholic Church and the principle truth of "justification by faith" was restored. This was the first wave of restoration – one of theology. **God gave His Word back to His people.**

Following this, the second wave of restoration – one of spirituality – swept the earth through the Wesley brothers, the Moravians, the Pentecostal revival, the Charismatic renewal and many others. **God gave His Spirit back to His people.**

Many are sensing a third wave of restoration – one of wineskins – to build on the first two waves and restore His "glorious church"! **God is giving His church back to His people.**

Clearly, we are heading back towards Biblical, apostolic simplicity and power.



### Restoration or cosmetic face-lift?

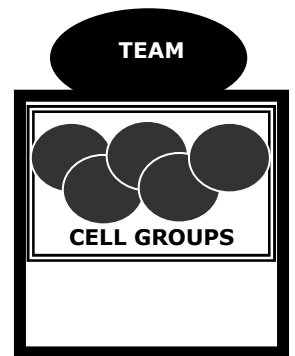
There have been innovative attempts to try to improve church such as "team ministry" – trying to do away with the error of "one-man ministry" – and an attempt to recover "community" through, for example, "cell groups".

These amendments are noble but clearly **we remain frozen within a wrong construct!** We may have the doctrine and Spirit of the early church, but we still do not have their liberty.

In order to recapture the New Testament simplicity and power, **a revolutionary shift in thinking is required.** We are not just talking about *innovation*; we need nothing less than *restoration*.

While structure, in itself, cannot create spiritual life – only the Father can do so – wrong structure does restrict spiritual life. **Biblical structure facilitates the life that the Father creates!** Jesus made this very clear: "new wine" needs "new wineskins" (Luke 5:37, 38).

DIAGRAM 5



### What then is the answer?

**First and foremost we need a fresh encounter with God in which we receive a renewed revelation of His Lordship and glory.** Yes, we need a fresh download of the Holy Spirit! Essentially we need to rediscover our identity as sons before Father God, re-establishing our utter devotion and complete dependence on the Lord Jesus as "Head of the body ... that in all things He may have the pre-eminence" (Colossians 1:18).

In this quest, however, **our dependence on an institutional construct of "church" hinders the flow of God's Spirit and our ability to respond to Him fully.** As we repent of our false dependencies and misplaced loyalties, we can trust for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

#### Some "dependencies" to consider...

- Our denominational loyalties?
- The pastoral structure?
- Our "anointed" style of worship?
- The "senior pastor"?
- Sunday morning services?
- Program-driven ministry?
- Teaching?

Some of these things, like teaching, are not 'bad' in themselves. If, however, we're reliant on them; we're putting our trust in them rather than God Himself.

### What are the idols in our heart that rob us of a foundational reliance on the Lord Himself?

Next > Topic 1, Session 3: *Looking Forward*

**PART A – LAYING THE FOUNDATION**

**Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom**

**INDEX**

**Topic 1 has three sessions ...**

Session 1 Looking Backward p. 1

Session 2 Looking Inward p. 2

**Session 3 Looking Forward** p. 3

**Topic 1** Church – Then and Now

**Session 3** *Looking Forward*

**Where are we headed?**

In a nutshell, we’re contending for a **Kingdom-shaped church** where we view church as essentially **relational, organic** and **fluid** rather than hierarchical, institutional and rigid; a **Kingdom family** rather than a business enterprise or religious establishment.

When we first began this journey, well over a decade now, we were inspired with the Biblical phrase: **“church in the house”** (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15 and Philemon 1:2). However, we realised the limitations of this clumsy phrase and now use the following words to refer to the same thing: simple church, organic church, missional church, home church, house church, relational church, redeemed community, Kingdom family, etc. etc. While each phrase is incomplete in itself, each does capture a little of what we’re pressing out for. In these notes, we’ll use the phrase “simple/organic church”.

**“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... You shall love your neighbour as yourself”**  
(Matthew 22:37-39)

**“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations”**  
(Matthew 28:18-20)

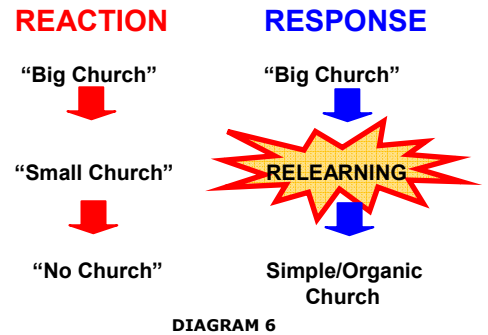
So what are we about then? We’re about the simplicity and profundity of the **Great Commandments** (Matthew 22:37-39) and the **Great Commission** (Matthew 28:18-20). First, we’re communities learning what it means to love God with all our beings – **alive in the Spirit** – and to love each other as we love ourselves – **in love with one another**. We’re resolved to unpack these two juggernaut truths in word and deed not just in theory and sentiment. Second, we’re determined to engage with the mission of Christ; cooperating with His activity in our world, ensuring that we do not hoard this life for ourselves – **on mission together**.

**Alive, in love and on mission!** It’s as simple and profound as this!

**React or respond?**

Realising the inadequacies of an institutional construct of church, we’re faced with a decision. On the one hand, we can **react against our past**. However, reacting in hurt or disappointment is never the answer to a bright future. Many leaving “big church” bring their hurt into “small church” and after further disappointment end up in “no church”. And this is simply not God’s best.

On the other hand, we can **respond to our future**. Responding to the promptings of the Spirit, willing to relearn all we know, we cooperate with the Shepherd of our souls who leads us beside still waters and into green pastures (Psalm 23:1, 2). The truth be told, when I began this journey over a decade ago, I realised that I had a lot of **unlearning** to do. A humble attitude of teachability is without question the most important factor in going forward.



**What now?**

First, ensure you’re responding to your future rather than reacting to the past. As we press out for the “new”, we must still honour that which we may consider as “old”. This is a Kingdom skill: **“Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a house-holder who brings out of his treasure things new and old”** (Matthew 13:52).

In my opinion, those who have been involved in hierarchical church structures for years may benefit from a sabbatical or “detox” period of around six months as part of this relearning process. If you feel you could benefit from some suggestions on this sabbatical experience or if you’re still struggling to work through your past, please request the article called, *“Help! The church is killing me!”* from [craig@crosswaveglobal.com](mailto:craig@crosswaveglobal.com).

Second, ask God to knit your heart into a community who are either enjoying simple/organic church or seeking to explore simple church. Defining your primary relationships and together, asking Father God to shape you into a life-giving community is a wonderful journey to embark on.

Third, use these notes if you find them helpful. The aim of this material is to assist in the “relearning” process. If you are beginning this journey with a group of people, these notes can facilitate discussion around core topics necessary for starting or strengthening a healthy simple church.

Please feel free to also make use of our blog-articles written for simple churches which you can access at [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com).

**Are you willing to let go of the past and to fling yourself, intentionally and proactively, into a new experience of Kingdom community?**

**Next > Topic 2, The King & His Kingdom**

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What is simple church? <Honey, I shrunk the church>

What does *ekklesia* mean? <Lost in translation>

What’s wrong with institutional church? <Honey, I blew up the church>

**PART A – LAYING THE FOUNDATION**

**Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom**

**Topic 2** The King & His Kingdom

**Session 1** *The Gospel of the Kingdom, Part 1*

**Mega-Shift 1**

**From the gospel of the church to the Gospel of the Kingdom**

**INDEX**

**Topic 2 has three sessions ...**

**Session 1** *The Gospel of the Kingdom* pp. 4, 5

Session 2 *The Hebrew Mindset* p. 6

Session 3 *An Apostolic Wineskin* p. 7

**“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’”**  
(Mark 1:14, 15)

The first mega-shift is to embrace the **Gospel of the Kingdom** from the gospel of salvation or the gospel of the church.

What is the “Gospel”? Many answer this question with something like: “Jesus died for us” or “We can have a relationship with God” or even “We can now go to heaven”. However, Jesus defined the **“Gospel”** as the **“Kingdom of God”** – His most used phrase (over 100 times); He never referred to the gospel of salvation or the gospel of the church.

**Door or Way?**

**The Gospel is the Kingdom of God.** The Good News is that the King has come to rule and reign. The Gospel is that the King has come to establish His Kingdom on earth! This certainly includes salvation but salvation is the starting point not the end goal. Jesus revealed that He is both the **“Door”** (John 10:7) and the **“Way”** (John 14:6). We must grasp both realities. We cannot know forgiveness without finding saving grace in Jesus the Door but we cannot understand our dominion destiny without following Jesus the Way. The early church were called **“the Way”** (Acts 9:2) because they had found a revolutionary new way to live.

Too many believers make their bed at the Door waiting for heaven when the point is to follow the Way of the King! Now, here ... on this earth! I remember the day it dawned on me that while I wore, in a sense, the **“helmet of salvation”** I had little clue what the **“whole armour of God”** was (Ephesians 6:11, 17). Like a spiritual stalker, I was doing more harm than good! The Good News is that the King has come to rule and reign on earth and through us, His Kingdom-*ekklesia*, to establish His Kingdom in every arena of society. **The Gospel is that, in Him, we are restored to our God-given destiny as custodians of this earth.** God’s original plan is still His eternal plan and is now His fully restored plan (Genesis 1:26-28; Ephesians 3:9-11; Revelation 5:8-10). And this is great news!

Jesus calls us to **“repent”** – to defect from the systems of this world (worldly and religious), to completely overhaul our previous thinking – so that we can redefine our lives under His loving Lordship. Thus, we’re to turn away from every **system**, not just every **sin**, which robs our affection from and allegiance to God.

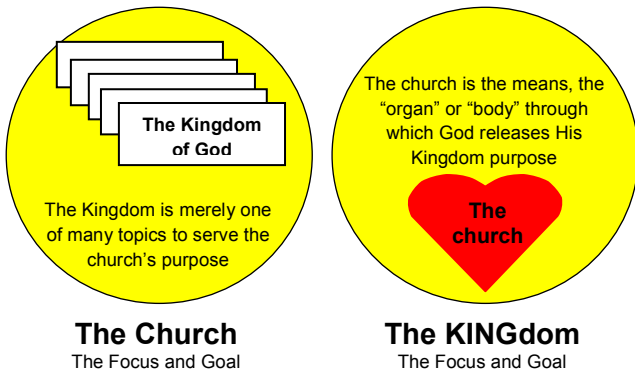


DIAGRAM 7

**Goal or means?**

As a senior pastor, over a decade ago, the whole ball game became “The gospel of the church”. I certainly considered myself sincere but, looking back, it sadly became all about getting “bums in the seats and bucks in the basket”.

In “church world” (left side of Diagram 7); the Kingdom of God is simply one of many topics that serve the church’s purpose.

When the King, and His Kingdom, is correctly the focus and the goal (right side of Diagram 7); the “church” is the organ or means through which God releases His Kingdom purposes. We’re dreaming of a Kingdom-shaped church not a church-shrunk kingdom.

Jesus taught us to pray His **“Kingdom come”** (Matthew 6:10), not ‘pray for His church to escape’; to **“seek first”** His Kingdom (Matthew 6:33), not to ‘champion our church vision’; to **“preach the gospel of the Kingdom”** (Matthew 24:14), not to ‘promote our church’s events and programs’.

Think about the implications of the Biblical metaphors of **“church”**. A family, a body, a building, an army, a bride ... are not ends in themselves; they all exist for a purpose above and beyond themselves. The church is clearly the means or organ to usher in the Kingdom; the King and His Kingdom ought to be our consuming focus and unwavering goal.

However, this is not to be dismissive of the church. There are a growing number of people who, burnt by their experience of church, say things like: “I have a heart for the Kingdom but I can’t stand church. It’s all about the Kingdom; I don’t need the church”. But that is like saying, “Life is all about breathing, we don’t need lungs. Lungs complicate things. Lungs can pack up; they get old and restrictive, life is all about breathing!” Just like you cannot breathe without lungs; you cannot grasp the Kingdom without embracing the church. **The church is to the Kingdom what lungs are to breathing.** Yes, it is all about the Kingdom but the church is God’s chosen “organ” to establish His Kingdom.

**Think about the comparison between a “Kingdom-shaped church” versus a “church-shrunk kingdom”. What does this mean for you?**

**Next > Topic 2, Session 1 Continued**

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The King & His Kingdom

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What does *ekklesia* mean? <Lost in translation>

## Topic 2 The King &amp; His Kingdom

Session 1 *The Gospel of the Kingdom, Part 2*

## INDEX

Topic 2 has three sessions ...

*Session 1 The Gospel of the Kingdom* pp. 4, 5

Session 2 The Hebrew Mindset p. 6

Session 3 An Apostolic Wineskin p. 7

**Mega-Shift 1 Continued****From the gospel of the church to the Gospel of the Kingdom**

Consider these ten comparisons below...

DIAGRAM 8

	<u>Gospel of the Church</u>	<u>Gospel of the Kingdom</u>
<b>Language:</b>	We go to church	<b><i>We are the church</i></b>
	Rather than defining ourselves by a 'holy' meeting or a 'holy' building we attend on a 'holy' day; as a community, we understand that we are <b>“a royal priesthood, a holy nation”</b> (1 Peter 2:9) – as God's people, we the church, ought to manifest His Kingdom Presence wherever we go.	
<b>Prayer:</b>	“Bless what we are doing?”	<b><i>“Father, what are You blessing?”</i></b>
	Rather than asking God to bless the clever plans we have spent hours concocting; as a community, we look to discern what the Father is doing and cooperate with His revealed will. Jesus explained that He only did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19, 30).	
<b>Impact:</b>	“How do we get people to come to us?”	<b><i>“How do we go to serve people?”</i></b>
	Rather than defining our impact by how we get people to leave their comfort zone to come to 'our world'; as a community, we resolve to leave our comfort zone to serve people in 'their world'; where they are at. Jesus said: <b>“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you”</b> (John 20:21).	
<b>Focus:</b>	Individual Need	<b><i>Corporate Destiny</i></b>
	Rather than focusing on our personal needs with a 'me-centred gospel'; as a community, we focus on maturing as a Christ-filled family, confident that as we <b>“seek first His kingdom”</b> Father God is faithful to look after our needs (Matthew 6:33).	
<b>Priority:</b>	Meetings	<b><i>Relationships</i></b>
	Rather than embarking on a religious 'schedule of meetings'; as a community, we engage in a communal lifestyle, prizing our relationships – meeting in ways that strengthen these relationships. Jesus came to give <b>“life abundantly”</b> (John 10:10) not meetings redundantly.	
<b>Commitment:</b>	Performance & Results	<b><i>Process &amp; Journey</i></b>
	Rather than measuring our effectiveness by our perceived 'performance' and canned 'results'; as a community, we value the process we're on and the people we're becoming as we journey together – knowing that as we sow and water, it is God who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).	
<b>Mindedness:</b>	Earthly, Short-ranged	<b><i>Eternity, Long-ranged</i></b>
	Rather than earthly and short-ranged decision-making; as a community, we live with an eternal, long-ranged perspective, knowing that we are 'training for reigning' in <b>“the life that now is and of that which is to come”</b> (1 Timothy 4:8 c. 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3).	
<b>Leadership:</b>	Tight-fisted & Controlling	<b><i>Open-handed &amp; Equipping</i></b>
	Rather than holding things tightly and micro-managing the church as if we own it; as leaders in a community, we hold things lightly – not loosely – that is, as responsible stewards we selflessly serve and release others knowing the <b>“government rests upon His shoulder”</b> not ours (Isaiah 9:6).	
<b>Structure:</b>	To Contain & Maintain	<b><i>To Release &amp; Send</i></b>
	Rather than prioritising structure over relationships that restricts and limits people; as a community, we build from relationship to structure instead so that we serve and release one another into our God-given ministry and destiny: <b>“in honour giving preference to one another”</b> (Romans 12:10).	
<b>Effectiveness:</b>	Appearances - ABC's	<b><i>Wisdom: Faith, Hope &amp; Love</i></b>
	Rather than gauging our effectiveness on skin-deep appearances such as “Attendance, Buildings and Cash Flow”; as a community, we seek <b>“the wisdom from above”</b> (James 3:17) to excel in our <b>“work of faith”, “labour of love”</b> and <b>“patience of hope”</b> (1 Thessalonians 1:2-8).	

**Do you feel you have a good grasp of this mega-shift, from a one-dimensional “church world” viewpoint to an all-encompassing, multi-dimensional Kingdom of God perspective?**

**Next > Topic 2, Session 2: *The Hebrew Mindset***

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What is a Kingdom-shaped church? <The King's speech>

**PART A – LAYING THE FOUNDATION**

**Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom**

**INDEX**

**Topic 2 has three sessions ...**

Session 1 The Gospel of the Kingdom pp. 4, 5

**Session 2 The Hebrew Mindset** p. 6

Session 3 An Apostolic Wineskin p. 7

**Topic 2 The King & His Kingdom**

**Session 2 The Hebrew Mindset**

**Mega-Shift 2**

**From a Greek mentality to a Hebrew mindset**

**“For My thoughts are not Your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways’ says the Lord”**  
(Isaiah 55:8)

The second mega-shift is to embrace a **Hebrew mindset** from a Greek mentality.

We often forget that even though the New Testament was written in Greek language, it was written from a Hebrew mindset. **Hebrew thinking is, in essence, the way God thinks.**

God chose a pagan named Abram, calling him out of his heathen way of life, and made covenant with this man; downloading His heart into him, birthing the Hebrew people. This is an important thought.

God did not just randomly choose a group of people somewhere on the Sinai Peninsula and attempt to indoctrinate them with His Law. Rather He birthed the Hebrew people in His ways through His covenant with Abram. And while not everything Hebraic is “of God” – like all cultures, the Hebrew culture has devolved of course – the essence of what God birthed into the Hebrew people reflects the way He feels, the way He thinks, the way He views and perceives things ... what the Old Testament called the **“ways of God”**.

The way we view our world affects how we think, feel and act in our world. In fact, our worldview determines how we live. The reality is, our modern age is affected more by a Greek mentality than a Hebrew worldview. While it is mind-boggling to consider the extent to which Greek philosophy has shaped our modern world, it is not difficult to understand why.

By the time the Gospel breached the gap between the Jewish and Gentile world, Greek centres of learning – established by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle – were well established and a Greek worldview was deeply entrenched in the known world. And because Greek was the predominant language of the age, it was a powerful medium to impart this philosophical ideology to the world.

The Hebrew-values that had given the Gospel context began to slowly erode in the face of the seemingly “smarter” Greek philosophy of the day. Even a godly church father like Augustine was a disciple of Plato before he was a follower of Christ and by his own admission attempted to reconcile the Gospel with his own ingrained Greek philosophy.

Add to this the prevailing anti-Semitism that has sadly plagued the church through the centuries; the Gospel’s relationship to Hebrew values has been further estranged. For these reasons – and I’m sure there are many others – our modern world is entrenched in a Big Fat Greek Mentality. I am fully persuaded that as long as we wear Greek-shaped glasses, we will give birth to that which is of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle ... that which is birthed “of man”. Only by fully engaging with a Hebrew mindset, will we birth that which is “of God”. We certainly see things not as they are, but as we are. **“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he”** (Proverbs 23:7).

**What are the crux issues then?**

While space prevents us from looking at the many distinctions between Greek and Hebrew thinking in these notes, let’s compare the different way each worldview perceives “community” and “leadership”. This distinction is critical to our discussion here.

To a Greek worldview, community is first and foremost viewed as a legal body: an **institution**. Hence, leadership consists of those who constitute the law-makers and law-keepers of such a legal body: the **directors** and managers of the organisation.

	<u>Greek</u>	<u>Hebrew</u>
<b>Worldview:</b>	Dualistic	<b>Holistic</b>
<b>Emphasis:</b>	Nouns	<b>Verbs</b>
<b>Community:</b>	Institution	<b>Family</b>
<b>Leadership:</b>	Directorship	<b>Parenthood</b>

**DIAGRAM 9**

In stark contrast, **the Hebrew worldview understands community as essentially family and leadership as parenthood**. Think about this for a moment – consider just how radically different this simple but revolutionary change in worldview ought to shape our experience of church. Consider this implication, for example:

In Greek thinking, structures (and their related systems) are the primary element to make the institution or business function; relationships are at best secondary, at worst, completely subservient to the enterprise. The result? People are secondary to productivity and are often mere collateral damage if they do not fit in to suit the institution’s aims or the business’ objectives.

In Hebrew thinking, relationships are primary; structures are secondary – and only valid to the degree that they serve our relationships. Our structures ought to be **descriptive** of our relational life rather than **prescriptive** of it. Relationships are primary and, as a communal people, we develop fluid, skeletal structures that serve our growing community.

**How does a Hebrew perspective of community and leadership change the way you think about church?**

**Next > Topic 2, Session 3: The Apostolic Wineskin**

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How big does a spiritual family get before it loses all sense of being a family? There are no canned numerical formulae here – for us we’ve seen groups anywhere between 3-30 enjoy meaningful family life. However, a group that is starting to lose a sense of family due to its growing size ought to consider itself pregnant and trust to reproduce by planting a daughter group. More on this later.

**Other resources on [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com)**  
What are Hebrew values? <My big fat Greek mentality>

**PART A – LAYING THE FOUNDATION**

**Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom**

**Topic 2** The King & His Kingdom  
**Session 3** *An Apostolic Wineskin*

**INDEX**

**Topic 2 has three sessions ...**

Session 1 The Gospel of the Kingdom pp. 4, 5

Session 2 The Hebrew Mindset p. 6

**Session 3 An Apostolic Wineskin** p. 7

**Mega-Shift 3**

**From a pastoral paradigm to an apostolic wineskin**

The third mega-shift is to embrace an *apostolic wineskin* from a pastoral paradigm.

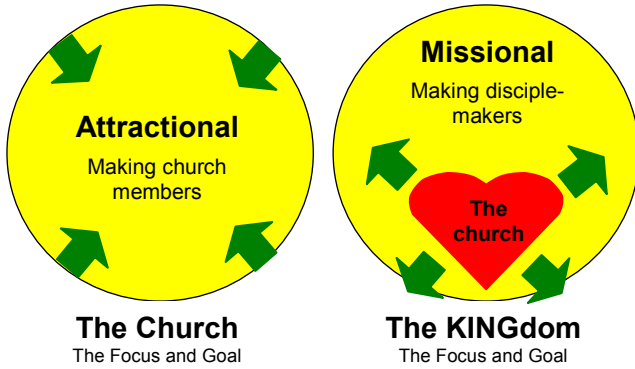


DIAGRAM 10

In the pastoral paradigm, the aim is “attractional”; that is, to get people to the “church” and to make more church members of “our” organisation. An implication is this: “other churches” are our primary competition.

In an apostolic wineskin, our aim is “missional”; that is, to serve people in need and to engage with prophetic causes. Our aim is to make disciple-makers who make disciple-makers who make ...

This means that we partner with other Kingdom communities towards this end.

**“According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation ... For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”**  
(1 Corinthians 3:10, 11)

**“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord”**  
(Ephesians 2:20, 21)

**What’s the foundation?**

The pastoral paradigm is built on the ministries of the pastor, evangelist and teacher. However, the New Testament teaches that the gifts of apostle and prophet are required to lay a biblical foundation (Ephesians 2:20). This leads to two very different “buildings”.

A pastoral paradigm tends to result in the building of a **hierarchical, centralised organisation** that depends on a **positional or official “pastor”** to lead it. An apostolic wineskin results in the birthing of a **non-hierarchical, decentralised family** that multiplies itself regularly through **spiritual parenthood**.

	<u>Pastoral Paradigm</u>	<u>Apostolic Wineskin</u>
<b>Foundation:</b>	Pastor, evangelist and teacher	Apostle and prophet (pastor, evangelist and teacher)
<b>Structure:</b>	To contain and maintain	To release and multiply
<b>Call:</b>	“Come to us”	“Send us”
<b>Focus:</b>	Meeting-mode	Missional-life
<b>Result:</b>	Accommodating and maintaining	Pioneering and sending

DIAGRAM 11

This certainly does not mean that the apostle and prophet are any more important than any other God-given gift or ministry. However, if you’re going to build a house, who do you call on first? An architect, of course. This doesn’t mean the architect is more important than the builder, plumber, plasterer or painter. Simply, we need to put first things first and build the foundation as God intended.

True apostles are “architects” – the Greek word (*architekton*) Paul used to describe his **function** as an apostle in the phrase **“master builder”** (1 Corinthians 3:10) – who help to birth a simple church seeking to make themselves redundant; that is, they purpose to build a self-governing community and help release parent-leaders to facilitate the new work. (This apostolic goal will be covered later in the notes).

**What’s the core issue?**

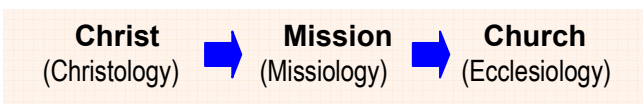


DIAGRAM 12

The core shift here is from an attractional, meeting-model to a **missional way of communal life**. Our revelation of Jesus (our Christology) ought to determine our grasp of mission (our missiology) which only then should inform our understanding of “church” (our ecclesiology).

If we fail to engage with Christ and His mission in a foundational way, we end up drowning in the secondary issues of how we meet, when we meet, what we do when we meet ... yawn!

Actually, we’re not primarily looking to start a *meeting* in the home; we’re looking to be a family ‘team’ that flings ourselves into the *mission* of Christ. Connected to Jesus, engaged with His mission, a family will meet as an overflow of living missional community together. And only then will we avoid the trap of finding our identity in our meetings, our ecclesiology.

**Is your present experience of Christ’s mission primary or secondary? Is it individual or communal?**

**Next > Topic 3, The Hood of All Believers**

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**Other resources on [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com)**

What does it mean to be missional? <Failure to launch>

### Topic 3 The Hood of All Believers

#### Session 1 *The Priesthood of All Believers, Part 1*

#### What is the priesthood?

After the ten plague blitz of Egypt, God expressed His longing for His people: **“you shall be a special treasure to Me ... you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”** (Exodus 19:5, 6) and then in another display of glory and power God revealed Himself on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:18). Yes, God desired a whole nation of priests: **“a kingdom of priests”!** This was God’s open-hearted invitation to *all* to embrace an essential, first-hand relationship with Him. But how did the people respond?

**“And when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, ‘You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die’”** (Exodus 20:18, 19). They misunderstood God and rejected His invitation; in so doing, they made the fatal mistake of every religion since: **“you speak with us, and we will hear”**. They settled for a *mediated*, second-hand relationship with God. Although Moses pleaded with them (Exodus 20:20), his appeal fell on deaf ears: **“the people stood afar off, [only] Moses drew near ... where God was”** (Exodus 20:21).

Do you see the tragedy of this moment? God delivered His people to bring them all – **every single one of them** – into a first-hand love-relationship with Himself, to make them a **“kingdom of priests”**. Instead they chose religion; they settled for a mediator between themselves and God, in essence: “Moses ... you get it from God and we will get it from you”. It is my opinion that this sad attitude prevails within the modern church more than we care to admit: “Pastor ... you get it from God and I’ll get it from you”.

The great news is that God has His desire fulfilled ... in you and me! Not at Mount Sinai but at the cross. In John’s Revelation, we read this triumphant declaration of Jesus: **“You are worthy ... For you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God...”** (Revelation 5:8-10). This phrase, **“kings and priests”** could be translated a **“kingdom of priests”** and is a reference to God’s expressed desire back in Exodus 19!

Peter captured this theme so well too; explaining that we **“as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”** (1 Peter 2:5). He then marvellously declared: **“you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light”** (v. 9).

#### What is the purpose of a priest?

Many people incorrectly assume that the purpose of a priest is to minister *to people*. However, when God set up the priesthood, He made it clear: **“Now take Aaron ... that he may minister to Me as priest”** (Exodus 28:1). The purpose of a priest is to minister to God first and foremost!

While true ministry to God will overflow in ministry *to* others, being a New Testament priest does *not* include serving as mediator *between* God and others. While God tolerated this second-hand, mediated relationship in the Old Covenant; He does not in the New Covenant, a covenant sealed by the blood of His Son: **“there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus”** (1 Timothy 2:5).

The New Testament priesthood certainly did not wear dog-collars, depressing black garb and gloomy faces. Rather they ministered to God with great freedom and joy; knowing that, on the one hand, **their consecrated lifestyles were a continual sacrifice bringing pleasure to God’s heart** (Romans 12:1; Philippians 3:3). On the other hand, they knew that their **thanksgiving, praise, prayer, fasting and celebratory worship** was their New Testament **“spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”** (1 Peter 2:5 c. Ephesians 5:18-21; Colossians 3:16, 17; Hebrews 13:15). It was during one such time, as the church **“ministered to the Lord”**, that the planet’s course was forever changed: **“the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’”** (Acts 13:1, 2). Powerful things happen when we, as priests, minister to Him.

#### What are the core issues then?

Firstly, there is no “special” priesthood or clergy in the New Testament; thus, there are no second-class believers in Christ. While we are all at different stages of maturity and while we all have different God-given gifts, **every believer is a priest or minister to God**. This means we are all invited to enjoy a first-hand relationship with God; we need no earthly mediator.

Secondly, from this essential relationship with Him, **we are all called and gifted to minister to others**: **“as each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”** (1 Peter 4:10). Without the contribution of all we are notably weaker.

#### What does the concept of being a priest mean to you?

Next > Topic 3, Session 1 Continued

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#### INDEX

Topic 3 has two sessions ...

Session 1 *The Priesthood of All Believers* p. 8, 9

Session 2 *The Brotherhood of All Believers* p. 10, 11

**“You are worthy ... For you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God...”**  
(Revelation 5:8-10)

**Topic 3** The Hood of All Believers

**Session 1** *The Priesthood of All Believers, Part 2*

**Wild-fire!**

As persecution lashed into the early church (Acts 8:1), it served to jumpstart the apostolic heart of God’s people. Jesus had promised: **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”** (Acts 1:8). When persecution temporarily spoilt the early-day fulfilment of this promise, crashing their party, God’s purpose was launched: **“those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word”** (Acts 8:4).

**“you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people”**  
(1 Peter 2:9)

But an often overlooked incident needs to be spotlighted. Luke tells us that all these early believers left Jerusalem to carry the fire to the world, **“except the apostles”** (Acts 8:1). Except the apostles? Huh? Luke does not explain why they remained, only that they did. And this choice proved to be ingenious.

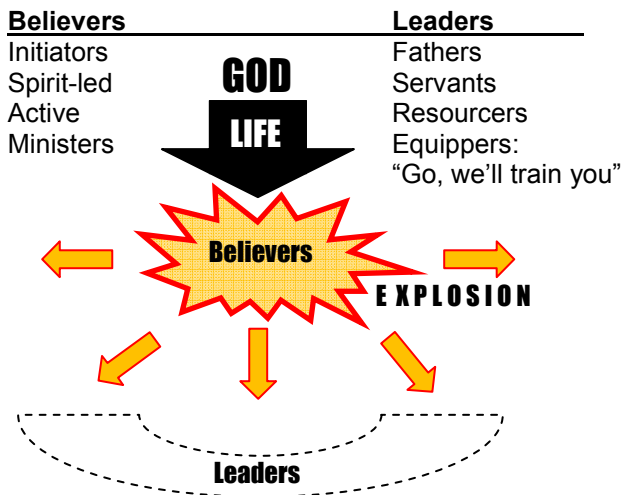
The early church exploded **off the back of every believer carrying the fire wherever they went**. Wild-fire! This was not a leadership directive. Philip did not receive papal permission to evangelize Samaria; he was led by the Lord. The early church was birthed on the shoulders of the priesthood of all believers, not on the back of some clever leadership initiative. **The Great Commission had given them permission to go and had invited them to a life of adventure**. The Head of the Church poured His life out through His body to reveal His glory to a destitute, thirsty world.

Once the fire of God had swept through the known world, the apostles – discovering their role – began to add the components necessary to facilitate the life that was **already** flowing. Only once the river was in full flow did they pick up their apostolic role to build the banks of spiritual leadership to channel this healing river to the nations (Ezekiel 47:1-12).

The two key components that enabled the early church to be so fruitful were God’s **power** (Acts 1:8) and God’s **priesthood** (Acts 8:1, 4). Compare this assessment of the early church and today’s modern church below, noting the comparison between the way believers and leaders are perceived.

DIAGRAM 13

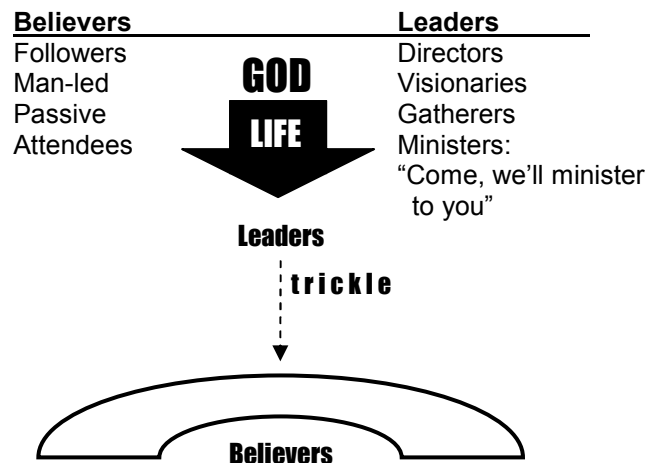
**The Early Church:**



God created life through **believer-ministers; servant-leaders** supported and channelled this Spirit-led initiative (see Acts 8:5ff and Acts 11:19ff).

The result? A spontaneous, organic and often explosive flow of God’s life.

**The Modern Church:**



Leadership today, acting as **minister-leaders**, too often reinforces the idea of the clergy-laity divide by playing mediator, trying to create life and then attempting to envision **believer-audiences** to do what they initiate. The result? An unconscious, unintended lid is often placed on the people of God.

**What is the bottom-line?**

Too much of the modern church is overly dependent on hierarchical leadership. The expectation many have of the “pastor” – that he be a man of prayer; that he know God’s Word; that he have a sure sense of his calling; that he be a man of integrity; that he be led by the Spirit; blah, blah, blah – **God desires of each one of us!**

**Are you leadership-dependent? As a leader, do you feel others overly rely on you? Why do you think this is so?**

**Next > Topic 3, Session 2: The Brotherhood of All Believers**

**Other resources on [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com)**  
What is the priesthood of all believers? <Shall we all dance?>

**Topic 3** The Hood of All Believers

**Session 2** *The Brotherhood of All Believers, Part 1*

**What is the brotherhood?**

We, as God's people, are first and foremost a community of equals. Yes, we all have different gifts. Yes, we are all at different stages of maturity. And yes, we all have different roles and responsibilities in the Kingdom based on our God-given measure of grace (Romans 12:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6). If I was exactly like you, one of us would be irrelevant! Yet before God we are of equal worth and value; we are all sons and daughters of the Father. And we aren't conforming down to some colourless, uniform, lowest common denominator either; no, we're **conforming up to the multifaceted beauty of the image of Jesus**, who is **"the firstborn among many brethren"** (Romans 8:29). Take note of this word **"brethren"**.

**"Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another"**  
(Romans 15:14)

When Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of His day, He confronted their tendency to consign people to different levels in a hierarchy of pride and prejudice. Listen to His words: **"do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren"** (Matthew 23:8). He rebuked their use of titles, exhorting them: **"you are all brethren"**.

The phrase **"brethren"** is used extensively in the epistles to address a **self-governing community** of God's people; it was not just a term of greeting, in no way similar to contemporary means of addressing a group of people such as the word "folks". Rather it referred to the community's identity in Christ and had vital implications; it is the word Paul used most frequently – by a country mile – in his communication with the churches of the first century.

Consider that when Paul had to address the many disturbing problems in the church at Corinth, he repeatedly appealed to the **"brethren"** (1 Corinthians 1:10,11,26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 6:5,8; 7:24, 29; 8:12; 9:5; 10:1; 11:2,33; 12:1; 14:6,20,26,39; 15:1,6,50,58; 16:11,12,15,20). It is amazing that he did not address the leadership and hold them solely responsible for the mess they were in. No doubt the parent-leaders were responsible to facilitate their repentance and re-alignment with the apostolic correction Paul delivered. But he addressed the whole community – the **"brethren"** – **expecting them all to take ownership and responsibility for their progress (in their case, lack thereof) as a community in Christ**. There is no hierarchy in God's community; there are no second class citizens and there are no passengers. We are all brothers and sisters. Jesus said: **"you are all brethren"**.

It is worth stating upfront that this is a gender-neutral word as is the phrase **"sons"** of God and **"bride"** of Christ. In other words, the phrase **"brethren"** refers to **both men and women** (see for example, Galatians 3:15-29; Philippians 4:1-8). Thus, the **"brethren"** certainly also includes the "sisteren".

**What do you mean by "self-governing"?**

Let me clarify what a self-governing community is. First, the prefix "self-". In the same way that a believer exercises **"self-control"** as a fruit of the Spirit's work in his life (Galatians 5:22, 23); that is, he submits himself to the leading of the Spirit, by "self-governing" we mean a spiritual family ought to submit themselves to the Presidency of the Spirit in their collective midst.

Second, the word "governing". As the *ekklesia*, the cabinet or governing counsel of the King, we are called to govern over the issues of this life, knowing this is our training for reigning in both this age and the one that is to come; starting, of course, with our own lives (Proverbs 16:32; 25:28) and then together as a mature spiritual family (1 Corinthians 6:1-5).

Thus, a self-governing community – the **"brethren"** – is a simple/organic church family that can stand on its own not dependent on outside props or artificial support systems. Being mutually aligned with an apostolic team means that a self-governing simple/organic church can "stand on its own" *but is not alone*. (The topic of apostolic alignment is a subject we cover later in the notes).

When Paul and his apostolic team initiated a new work, his first goal was *not* to immediately appoint a leader. His aim was to lay the foundation of Christ by bringing the new fledgling community into an understanding of the priesthood and brotherhood of all believers. As they worked these two values out through their shared life and participatory meetings together, spiritual leadership emerged in the context of a self-governing community.

**While many have at least thought of the priesthood of all believers, most have never considered the implications of the brotherhood of all believers. How about you?**

**Next > Topic 3, Session 2 Continued**

**Other resources on [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com)**

What is a self-governing community? <A lot like love>

What does *ekklesia* mean? <Lost in translation>

**Other resources on [www.soulrecharge.wordpress.com](http://www.soulrecharge.wordpress.com)**

What is it that God wants?

**Topic 3** The Hood of All Believers

**Session 2** *The Brotherhood of All Believers, Part 2*

**Do we all vote?**

Too often we relegate to the realm of leadership decisions what ought to involve the attention and concern of the whole church family and thus miss the joy of testifying as a community, one in heart and mind: **“it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”** (Acts 15:28).

This of course does *not* mean we should vote on issues; nor does it mean we must seek 100% consensus on the issue concerned. The community of God is *not* a democratic society. The centre and constitution of our redeemed society is not the rights of man; the centre of our society is Christ and our constitution is rooted in the Truth He reveals.

**“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ”**  
(Galatians 6:1, 2)

The brotherhood of all believers means that while every voice will be heard we are seeking nothing less than the Mind of Christ in our community. True parent-leaders help to facilitate the community in discovering God’s will and, in faith, obey what He is revealing; even when the way forward – as often happens – cuts against our childish notions and faithless opinions. And it is in this process of discerning the Mind of God together – patiently and intentionally – that all mature in the ways of God.

I am convinced that the spiritual family is *the* God-appointed training ground for growing into maturity and our mandate to rule and reign. Parent-leaders, who patiently listen and gently yet firmly assist their communities to process decisions that affect them, will grow believers that are strong and robust in their faith.

**So what of leaders?**

Leadership, as pointed out already, is certainly not a dirty word. When we grasp a Hebrew mindset, we realise that spiritual parents are vital to a healthy faith-family. Of course, the nature of their leadership – as spiritual parents – is the issue. Biblically, the final piece of a self-governing community is when the spiritual parents of the family are affirmed by the serving apostolic team (Acts 14:21-23); this provides a healthy check-and-balance to the equation, preventing self-seeking and self-promotion. And, while it is a topic we explore later, it is worth clarifying that the apostolic team merely affirms the spiritual parents who they discern have emerged in a group, *confirming the witness of the community*.

Consider then how different the **“brethren”** dwell together as compared with the “clergy-laity” scenario.

**The Early Church:**

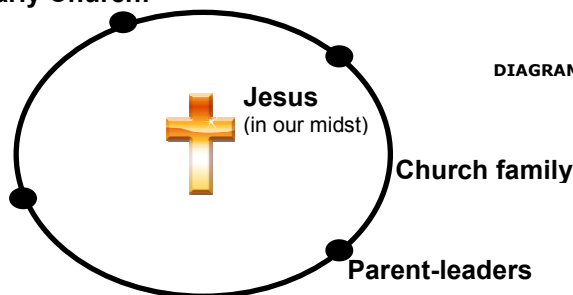
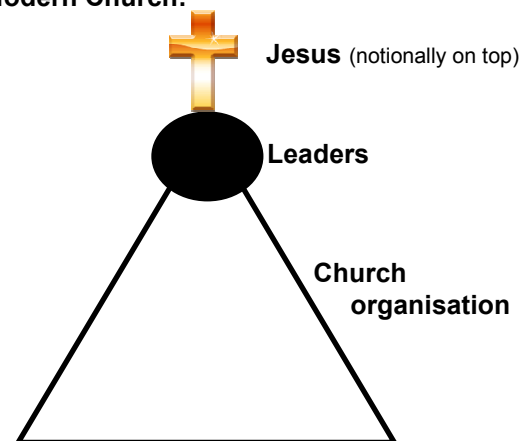


DIAGRAM 14

**The Modern Church:**



Leaders serve **“among”** the people as spiritual parents facilitating a communal life centred on Christ in their collective midst (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 18:20).

The result?

Together as a self-governing community they discern the Mind and Heart of God: **“it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”** (Acts 15:28). In this way, we all mature and learn to govern.

Leaders ‘lord’ it over the people they lead as ‘mediators’ between God and others. While many churches would deny this in terms of soteriology (salvation), too often it is their practice of ecclesiology (church practice).

The result?

Today, leadership is a “decision-making group” whose energies are often spent trying to secure buy-in from the “laity”. Thus, many are patronised, forced to either become rebels or robots.

**Are you enjoying the pleasure and challenge of journeying with a brother/sisterhood of believers?**

**Next > Part B, Growing a Family**