



Greater Sydney Conference

Essential Church

Essential Church – Reclaiming a generation of dropouts

Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer

B&H Publishing Group, Nashville TN, 2008.

Ten most common reasons why 18-22 year olds leave the church.

1. Simply wanted a break from church.
2. Church members seemed judgemental or hypocritical.
3. Moved to a college and stopped attending church.
4. Work responsibilities prevented me from attending.
5. Moved too far away from the church to continue attending.
6. Became too busy though still wanted to attend.
7. Didn't feel connected to the people in my church.
8. Disagreed with the church's stance on political or social issues.
9. Chose to spend more time with friends outside the church.
10. Was only going to church to please others.

Churchgoing students drop out of the church because it is not essential to their lives.

Young adults are likely to stay in the church if they see church as essential to their lives.

The Four Major Components of Essential Church

1 - Simplify - Get the structure right

Too many churches are filled with activities that have little coherent purpose. They have no clear process or structure for making disciples.

2- Deepen – Get the content right

The church moves its members to deepen their knowledge of God's Word and His truths.

3 - High Expectations – Get the attitude right

The church has high expectations of its members. Most sports teams and civic organizations expect more of their members than churches do. When expectations are low, commitment is low. The high-expectation church expects much and, thus, receive much from its members. As a result, the church exodus is minimized.

4- Multiply – Get the action right

An essential church is committed to helping its members multiply spiritually. Evangelism is part of the heartbeat of the church. Missions and ministry are common in the lives of the members, and many of these essential churches seek to plant other churches. The most outwardly focused churches are many times the healthiest on the inside.

Seven Sins of Dying Churches

1 - Doctrine Dilution

Diluting the truth to cater to eighteen-to twenty-two-year olds may work for a time, but low-dose Christianity stings the church much worse in the long run.

2 - Loss of Evangelistic Passion

“In many thriving churches the driving force behind obedience to the Great Commission is the passion that the senior pastor maintains for the lost. This passion will flow from the top down. As the congregation sees his/her zeal, they catch the same fire.”

3 - Failure to Be Relevant

The church must find ways to relay the gospel message to the culture around them. “How can we best relate the unchanging gospel to the shifting culture around us?” Depth and relevance are not mutually exclusive.

4 - Few Outwardly Focused Ministries

“It’s all about me!” is the anthem chant of the dying church. As crucial as Bible Studies and fellowship are, dying churches gorge themselves on closed study groups and church-wide fellowship events while neglecting outreach in the community.

5 - Conflict over Personal Preferences

Internal conflicts over ‘insignificant’ things smother a church and smother a church.

6 - The Priority of Comfort

Dying churches are comfortable with their ministries and refuse to stretch beyond their limited zones of comfort.

7 - Biblical Illiteracy

One of the major sins of a dying church is the neglect of theological training. Since the people of the church do not understand the foundation of their faith, they stand on shaky ground and falter during the first time of trouble.

Only 10 percent of dropouts mentioned one of the reasons for their departing from church was because the worship style was unappealing to them.

Almost every dropout leaves the church because of a life change.

Teens are best assimilated into the church through service.

The perception of hypocrisy starts in the home, not in the church.

The older a person gets, the less receptive he or she is to returning to church.

Essential churches strive to connect newer members with others in the church. Nonessential churches assume 'it will just happen.'

The Simple Steps of the Simple Church

Step 1 – Clarity

The church needs to be clear about its purpose. What is the purpose of the church? How will that purpose be accomplished?

Step 2 – Movement

The simple churches are intentional about helping members move toward greater maturity. Like other churches, simple churches have programs, but unlike many other churches their programs are strategic around the purposes and process.

Step 3 – Alignment

Simple church arranges the ministries, programs and staff around the simple process.

Step 4 - Focus

Focus is difficult because most church leaders do not want to be the guy who says no. It is the most difficult aspect of simplifying because it deals with sacred cows. The purpose of focus in the simple church is to say yes to those areas that fall within the simple church process.

Be careful before adding something new to the list of activities of the church. Saying no is easier than eliminating.

Young people are looking for churches where they can make a difference. They are looking for churches that are making a difference. They are looking for essential churches
May God make it so in your church.