

Oasis Core Value #5 – Simple

by [Derek R. Iannelli-Smith](#), August 2008

At our [website](#) under the “About Us” tab, I outline these core values. I list a brief outline of ‘simple’ as follows;

“...the daily Christian life is based upon faith in Christ, repentance unto Christ and new obedience in Christ and we tend to complicate it into rules and regulations, guilt and shame management based upon appeasement.”

What do I mean by “guilt and shame management based upon appeasement?”

Essentially, the institutional church has done a great job of loading things on parishioner’s heads. Between ‘hero worship’ (burning out the volunteer who cannot say ‘no – they are ‘hero’ because they are not really cared for, but fill needs the leadership requires to non-essential ministries), to filling their already busy weeks with useless classes, seminars, meeting, and other inward focused programs, that have nothing to do with reaching or ministering to the orphans, widows, or marginalized.

Because the priesthood is never shared (you must go to seminary, you need to be ordained, you are not qualified, only if you can recite this creed, etc) despite what the brochure in the foyer says about equipping believers, there is a cap on the amount of ministry that is delegated and shared. With the weight of all that, they become embittered and hardened toward the lost and marginalized and any evangelism accomplished, is creating even more embittered and hardened people like them. Further no matter what they do (more bible studies, come EVERY Sunday, attend more groups, do ministry the way the leaders want them to do ministry), they do not live the daily Christian life with joy, their lives are filled with non-victorious living, and in many cases, though they ‘fake smile’ on Sunday when they shake the pastor’s hand, they are dying inside, their marriage is on the rocks, their kids are out of control and if they hear one more sermon about ‘stewardship’ and ‘tithing’ they are going shoot someone.

So the question to be asked is... when did it get so complicated? When did ‘church’ and the Christian life become so much about performance less about faith, more about checking a box and less about repentance, more about busyness and less about being obedient? See Matthew 23:23-33; Mark 3:1-6 for some clarity.

In my years of counseling, I have noticed many of the counselees who came into my office, coffee shop, and home, were so burdened with their the performance, box-checking, and busyness, that they never addressed their heart in the matters they were coming to me about. It was on that observation and burden, that I started sharing an article by Dana Stoddard, titled; “*The Daily Christian Life*” and we spent the LAST session discussing it and walking through it as it related to their situation. This article and topic became part of every teaching situation (whether a marriage conference, or leadership coaching, etc.), and when shared with another friend of mine, even became a preaching series.

We really do tend to complicate the Christian life when it is really simple. Before my reformed brothers and sisters accuse me of being a heretic, here is a question you need to answer, how come the Christian life was so easy that unlearned, blue-collar, YOUNG, laborers (apostles) could figure it out and did not need years of seminary, memorization, and seminars/classes before they got in the game? So much of ‘church’ today has become about ‘doing’ rather than dying (to self) and the result has been that folks have lost their joy.

Before I define what a simple church is, or how this relates to a core value of Oasis, I would like to break it down through some simple axioms that I have found helpful¹ when it comes to understanding

¹ I highly recommend the reading of two foundational documents on this topic that helped it for me, 1) “One Churches Story” Journal of Biblical Counseling, Summer 2006 and 2) “The Daily Christian Life” Journal of Biblical Counseling, Fall 1999. If you would like copies of these foundational articles, please contact Oasis and we will get you a copy of these AWESOME articles. A side recommendation resource that also are great discipleship tools regarding this matter are “*The Blazing Center*” and “*When I Don’t Desire God*” by John Piper.

what the daily Christian life is and how it is based on repentance onto Christ, faith in Christ, and new obedience to Christ.

- 1) None of these things happen because we grit our teeth and try harder (repentance is a gift from God, faith is a gift from God, and Obedience as God requires comes through Him as well).
- 2) Having MORE head knowledge is NOT going to embed this in your heart. God is going to have to do that and only a regenerate believer can experience it.
- 3) The gospel is for everyone, all the time, in every situation, and relates to EVERYTHING and we must point each other back to this truth regardless of our opinions, how we feel, and what we think works. Jesus died, was buried and raised to give us new life, and what we have learned today through psycho-babble and feel-good seeker sensitive, watered down gospel is in actuality belittling the sacrifice God made thru His son. Someone died for it, and we forget it...regularly.
- 4) Too much 'repentance' leads to melancholic, introspective shame (man's guilt versus God's guilt) or being more focused on our sin than God's grace. Too little 'repentance' leads to Pharisaic self-righteousness and stoic hardness.
- 5) Too much 'faith' leads to mysticism or other worldliness (I have also seen dualism here as well, which is attributing our perceived blessings as coming from God and our perceived suffering as coming from the devil) and even subjectivism, which is the basing of our view of God on our changing feelings, and emotions. Too little 'faith' leads to dead orthodoxy, traditionalism, and self-trust (many times comments like, "Well I have tried.... And I have tried... and I have tried... reflect this type of deception).
- 6) Too much 'obedience' leads to legalism (basing our relationship with God on our own performance) and new rules. Too little 'obedience leads to self-indulgent hedonism and worldliness.

So what is a 'simple church' and specifically, what does this look like as a core value?

The Simple Church Network defines 'simple church' as:

...without the necessity of church buildings, professional clergy, budgets, denominations or Sunday worship programs. The idea is that we can simply be the church when we gather as a community to nurture each other in God's truth and move out on the amazing journey of joining Him on His mission. It's really that simple.

Oasis as a simple church and expression through a core value submits to the following;

1. Relationships are a mess worth making. We do not pick and choose who deserves ministry or question motives of the recipients of ministry (it does not mean we are suckers, but it also means that we do not turn those in need away because of fear of man).
2. The 'church' does have distinctive marks – biblical preaching/teaching, church discipline/restoration, the sacraments and an opportunity for folks to use their (HIS) gifts the way God designed them.
3. There is a distinct DNA (Divine Truth, Nurturing Relationships, and Apostolic Mission) about who we are and what we are in our city.
4. Every member and attendee, understands we mean a way of being and doing church that is so simple that any believer would respond by saying, "I can do that!", which means everyone participates in ministry and being an observer or consumer is not optional.
5. There is no separation between "leadership and laity" or "sacred and secular" and there is no debate over "form" especially when it does not reflect "function" but a strong emphasis on the fact that all of life is worship.

These are a few the things that outline someone who understands what it means to be 'simple'² and the reason it is a core value. Is the hope we have in the gospel complicated or simple?

E-mail devotional:

Saints,

I just wanted to let you know that I am thankful and praying for you. Below you will find this week's Inspirational E-mail. I pray you will enjoy it and forward this thought on to your friends as well as offer them an invitation to a 'church' this weekend. Thank you for taking a moment to read our weekly newsletter.

This week we continue with our 5-part devotional outlining the core values of Oasis. These 'devotionals' accompany articles that I will be posting on my [personal blog](#) if you desire to go deeper on the topic. This week's topic is SIMPLE (click here for [OUTWARD](#), [AUTHENTIC](#), [SERVING](#), [INCARNATIONAL](#)).

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These are a few the things that outline someone who understands what it means to be 'simple' (A good place for more research on the 'Simple Church' can be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_church) and the reason it is a core value. Is the hope we have in the gospel complicated or simple?

Questions to ponder this week:

- a. How would you define SIMPLE as a core value?

² A good place for more research on the 'Simple Church' can be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_church

- b. Of the 5 submissions mentioned above, which one is active in your life? Which one needs more work? Would you invite someone to a church that has these 'submissions' as core value?
- c. Is the hope we have in the gospel complicated or simple? Explain.

1. Admin stuff:

- a. Summary of the vision of Oasis which we discussed last week can be found [on-line](#) (notes on the board) regarding Future Church, Missional Matrix, 3-types of Attenders, etc.
- b. Men's Tribe meets this week on Tuesday at 6:30pm at B&N, in N. Charleston. The tribe has decided this format for our time (it has been growing and changing each week... which is a good thing... 1) get something to drink 2) laugh, 3) opening prayer, 4) Whoever got asked a '[warm and fuzzy question](#)' last week, gets immunity this week, but is able to ask a W&FQ this week, but must... 5) pray for the brother who was asked the W&FQ specifically, 6) what is said in the group, stays in the group.
- c. We have a person who will watch the kids for [Fireproof!](#)
- d. [The Way of the Master One-Day Evangelism Crash Course](#) is cancelled as we have some community needs that take precedence over a class (hmmm, walking out "SIMPLE"... I think)
- e. We will be starting a new series this week: [You Can Double Your Class In Two Years or Less. by Josh Hunt](#)
- f. We have a [NEW brochure](#) that you can share with your friends, family, and neighbors for the Fall 2008 Semester.
- g. Donations can be made to Oasis on Facebook for those who might be interested.

2. Prayer Requests (PR) and Community Needs (CN): I wonder if God wants you to be incarnational regarding a prayer request or community need mentioned below.

- a. Updated prayer requests can be found at: <http://oasisgc.wordpress.com/prayer-board-facts/> I cannot stress enough that you check the prayer board... we get 1-5 of them a week. People believe that we are praying for them.
- b. CN: We will be moving David & Alenda on Saturday (waiting on details, time, etc).
- c. CN: A single father needs a car so that he can take care of his kids, and get a job.
- d. CN: Next weekend we will be moving the Richter's to their new home (details forthcoming)
- e. CN: Need a male volunteer to assist me to extend the Lord's Table to a shut-in.

stunned by the gospel,
Derek R. Iannelli-Smith

[Oasis Website](#) – [Oasis Facebook Group](#)

"Oasis...where relationships are a mess worth making..."