

(Following is Chapter 3 of the book **“The Simple/House Church Revolution”** by Roger Thoman. The entire book is available as a free download here: <http://www.simplechurchrevolution.com/>)

CHAPTER THREE

UNLEASHING THE “GOING” CHURCH

The church is meant to be the expression of Christ’s life and power on earth. This can only take place as:

- We move out of “comfy Christianity” into the daring adventure of following Jesus.
- We replace our “come-structures” with “go-structures”
- We recapture the “going” lifestyle

Comfy Christianity

Shane Claiborne writes: “Being a Christian is about choosing Jesus and deciding to do something incredibly daring with your life.”¹

In my former life as a pastor, I was a dispenser of comfortable Christianity. I took on the job of creating a “conducive environment” for worship. What this really meant was making a worship event cushy enough that people would want to come and then come back: comfortable seats, coffee, pleasing worship music, and a sermon that holds attention. Unfortunately, regularly attending a comfortable worship event has become the primary marker of what it means to be a Christian today.

In fact, we often replace the miraculous adventure of following Jesus with religious activity. Did I go to church this week? Check it off the list. Did I read my Bible? Check it. Did I pray? Check it. Done! I have completed my Christian activities and am, therefore,

a “good Christian.” Religion itself becomes an easy replacement for a daring life lived in partnership with Jesus.

Ironically, Jesus drew a startling line in the sand in response to someone who wanted to follow him: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head (Matthew 18:20).” Jesus was not a dispenser of comfortable Christianity. Quite the opposite. He taught that followers would live a lifestyle of stepping outside of comfort zones in order to join him in the adventure of extending the life of the kingdom.

Replacing “Come-Structures” with “Go-Structures”

Part of our comfy Christianity has been to focus most of our Christian activities within the four-walls where our friends and other Christians hang out. The result is that we reach out to others by inviting them to come join us where we are.

My fellow-blogger, Hamo, comments on this:

If Jesus were alive today and his mission was still to seek out and save the lost what might he do?

Would he hire a building, set up a sound system, develop a music team, drama team, and then do local letterbox drops advising people that they could come and be part of his church on Sunday?

Was it ever Jesus’ intention that non-Christians should seek us and desire to attend our worship events? Or didn’t he say quite clearly that it was his calling, and now ours to seek out and save the lost; to go to their world and enculturate the gospel there. Little Bo Peep evangelism (leave ‘em alone and they’ll come home) is fast running out of steam...²

Recapturing the “Going” Church

The church’s true nature is best seen by the life that Jesus modeled: he took the life of the kingdom everywhere that he went—out into the world that he was ministering to. In the process of going, he healed, loved, delivered, and shared good news.

God’s heart is missional at the core as he seeks to recover his children who are lost to him. Jesus came to “seek and to save the lost.” This is not a sidebar. God, because of his love, is a caring, reaching God.

The church is becoming unleashed as Christians are re-discovering the daring adventure of “going” and taking the presence (love, life, and power) of God everywhere that they are going. Jesus called us to a lifestyle that would take us out of our comfort zone and into the adventure of miraculous living as we extend ourselves to extend his kingdom.

As Jim Rutz wrote, “The bleachers are beginning to empty as 707 million action-oriented Christians start to pour out onto the playing field and discover the joy and challenge of every-member ministry.”³

But What About the Gathering?

In conferences and conversations all over the world about simple/house church, it seems that people usually want to learn *first* about “how to gather.” This is natural since we have thought about “church” as being mostly about events and gatherings. The problem is that though we can replace larger events and gatherings with smaller ones, our motivation may still be to hang out with our Christian friends and, again, seek to reach others by inviting them to join us.

By focusing first on the gathering, we miss the point that Jesus’ focus was first on the *going* way of life. If gatherings develop that support a dynamic, outward, supernatural lifestyle, then the gatherings will be powerful and relevant. However, if gatherings become a *replacement* for the true adventure of Jesus-following (which can easily happen), then we will again regress into a comfortable Christianity with little life in it.

Stepping Out Makes Life Worth Living

Most of the truly defining moments of our lives take place because we are willing to step out and trust that God has more for us. Rarely do we find new life by holding back or retreating into our familiar, comfort zones. If this entire book accomplishes nothing else, I hope it will inspire someone to listen and follow a very adventurous God into some new horizons.

Pete Greig wrote:

Christ is not a passive Savior sitting in some cosmic comfy chair. Our God is dynamic; He is a creative force, the ultimate visionary, always on the move, and if we want to know Him and be with Him, we will have to follow Him wherever he is going next.⁴

Let's look at some principles that can guide us forward.

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¹ Claiborne, Shane, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*, Zondervan, 2006

² Hamo, backyardmissionary.com, *Incarnational v Attractional Evangelism*

³ Rutz, James, *Megashift*, Empowerment Press, 2005, p. 65

⁴ Greig, Pete, *The Vision and the Vow*, Relevant Books, 2004, p. 29