Clarity

Can our people say how Pathway helps a person grow?

> *"Clarity is the ability of the process to be communicated and understood by the people."*
>
> Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church*

What Rainer and Geiger mean

The authors aren't talking about a slogan. They mean a **process**: the route a church expects a person to travel, from a first Sunday toward maturity in Christ. Clarity means the people in the chairs can describe that route, and not only the pastor and the board. In their study of about 400 churches, the healthy, growing ones had a process ordinary members could explain. Many of the others had one too, but it lived in a binder or in the pastor's head.

Clarity comes first because the other three depend on it. People can't take a next step they can't see, and leaders can't line up ministries or let programs go against a path nobody can name.

Where Pathway stands

We already have four words that were written as a path: Learn, Love, Live and Lead the Way of Jesus. The website explains each one, and the Love paragraph says learning "is only the first step." So the bones are there. But most of us say the words in a different order (LIVE, LEARN, LOVE, LEAD), few people could tell you which ministry belongs to which word, and the words rarely come up on a Sunday morning. By the book's measure, we have a process on paper that hasn't yet become clear to the people.

Here's a fair test. If someone stopped you in the parking lot and asked, "How does Pathway help a person grow?", what would you say? If ten of us would give ten different answers, we have work to do.

What clarity could look like here

1. **Settle the words, then keep them still.** Session 3 and the town halls will decide whether we keep, reshape or retire the four words. Whatever we land on, pick one order and never vary it. If the words describe a path, the order is part of what they mean.
2. **Draw it once and use the same picture everywhere.** A church called Pathway has an obvious image: a trail with a marker for each step. Use it on the website, the bulletin, the slides, the new members class and a wall in the Ebenezer Center.
3. **Put it in one sentence a fourth grader can repeat.** If Hikers can say it, adults will remember it. Test drafts on a few kids before we adopt them.

4. **Teach it to leaders before we teach it to the church.** Every LBA member and ministry leader should be able to explain the path, and say where their ministry fits, before Vision Sunday.
5. **Say it on ordinary Sundays.** Name the step when we announce something ("Band of Brothers is a great next step if you're ready to Love"), close sermons with a next step tied to the path, and give the bulletin and the newsletter a regular "your next step" line.
6. **Check whether it's sticking.** Clarity is measured in people, not in printed pieces. Each quarter, a few LBA members ask five people at random to name the path, and we add the question to the surveys we retake in spring 2028.

A POSSIBLE TIMELINE

Feb 7–20, 2027	Session 3: the Vision Team works on mission and our path.
Mar–Apr 2027	Town halls and Life Groups weigh in on the four words.
May 2027	Draft wording goes to the church for comment; the LBA decides.
June 20, 2027	The "our path" sermon in the June series.
Summer 2027	The picture and sentence go on the website, bulletin, slides and walls.
Sept, Dec, Mar	The LBA's quarterly check: can people name the path?
Spring 2028	Survey retake includes the clarity question.

WATCH FOR

- **Clarity drifting into marketing.** A good graphic doesn't make disciples. If the words describe something we don't actually do, people learn to tune them out, and that's worse than having no words.
- **A process mistaken for sanctification.** *Simple Church* is a book about structure. Growth in holiness is the Spirit's work, and He works through the means of grace: Scripture, prayer, the Lord's Supper, worship and Christian fellowship. A clear process gives those means a clear place in our week. It can't do the Spirit's work for Him.
- **Changing the words too often.** Every new version resets what people remember. Once we adopt the words, plan on keeping them for years.

TALK IT THROUGH

1. Without looking, write Pathway's four words in order. Compare with the person next to you. Did you match?
2. Which ministry do you think belongs with each word? Where did you hesitate?
3. What would a guest need to hear in their first three Sundays to understand how Pathway helps people grow?

Source: Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: B&H, 2006).