

## The Simple Life

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(A Tribute to the Ministry of Dr. Wendell Heller)



“Singular in Focus and Simple in Faith”

This is one of Dr. Wendell Heller’s favorite sayings. He has been a good friend of mine throughout the passing years and is now with the Lord. His encouragement to possess a singular in focus in life and remain simple in faith has been the best advice anyone could give to a pastor. This study is dedicated to him and is done out of appreciation for his faithful ministry throughout his lifetime. The writer can only hope that the content in this study will in some measure reflect Dr. Heller’s thoughts on the simple way of life.

“The reason I am a minimalist today,” Troy began, “is because of the color of my house.” I’d never heard that one before, so I asked Troy to explain what he meant. Troy was a tall man of about forty with red hair and a red beard. The two of us were at a simple-living conference in Minneapolis when he shared his story. Troy explained that, a few years earlier, he had bought a house with the understanding that his friend would move in and help with the payments. But then, because of a change in life circumstances, the friend moved out.

Rather than try to find a new roommate, Troy opted to take a second job and increase his income to support the home all on his own. “Eventually,” he said, “the situation began to take a toll on me. I had more money but less time. And to make matters worse, I was not able to save any of the excess income. It was practically all going into the mortgage payment.” Troy entered a season of despair.

He began to buy and collect things to satisfy his craving for a sense of control. Garage sales and clearance displays at the end of aisles became his drugs of choice. Looking back, he says, “I was out of control, totally numb to what I was doing to myself and my living space. Until I noticed the paint on my window trim beginning to chip.” In preparation for the window repair, Troy opened his internet browser during a lunch break at work and searched for paint colors. The search returned so many color choices that at first, he felt paralyzed.

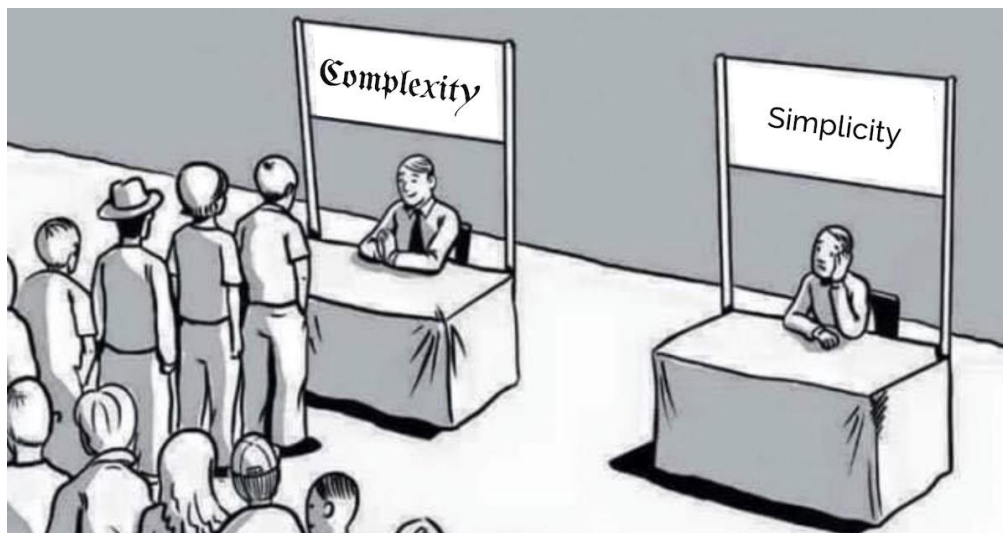
As he scrolled down, however, he happened to notice one image on the screen that did not look like the others. It showed the smallest house he had ever seen, just a few hundred square feet — a Tiny House on wheels, with chickens in the front yard. Troy was intrigued. With just a few clicks, he was immersed in a world of people purposely living in smaller homes with less stuff. It was the start of Troy’s journey to minimalism. His immediate goal was to make his existing home more livable.

Over the next month, Troy removed 1,389 things from his home. By the end of the summer, the number of items he had removed totaled more than 3,000 items. “It has not always been easy to let go of stuff,” Troy told me,

“but it is a process I want and I need.” He ended our conversation with tears in his eyes.

“I was really hurting for a long time, Joshua. I needed simplicity. I needed to get out of debt. I needed to get rid of the stuff cluttering up my life. But mostly I needed hope — hope that life could be different, better. This process of becoming minimalist and living with less has given it to me.”

Of course, living with less, especially if you are coveting things, is one way to refocus your spiritual life and simply. In this study of “The Simple Life” we want to concentrate on the need to simplify our lives and learn how to live simply from a spiritual perspective. We do this by remaining focused on the main thing of life which is our sincere devotion or commitment to Jesus Christ. If we remain devoted to Christ and His sufficiency, we will not be overcome with other things which get in the way of simplicity. In other words, we are to simplify our lives by keeping our devotion to Christ at the forefront and in everything we do. Putting Christ first in your life simplifies things. And yet, many Christians are not living a life of simplicity in Christ (our devotion and relationship with Him).



Paul said, “For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain” (Phil. 1:21). That is pretty simple! Paul’s entire life revolved around Christ. He fellowshipped with Christ, served Christ, and followed Christ’s will for his life. That is

making it simple. Everything else that Paul did was secondary and not the main reason for his existence. His life revolved around Christ – not money, a profession, job, stock market, climbing the corporate ladder, his dreams and wishes, or the personalities of other people.

I was watching some talk show on TV at lunch time and someone said, “We must just follow our dreams. Everyone should follow their dreams.” That was about the biggest bunch of fluff I’ve heard in a long time! We don’t follow our dreams – we follow God’s will for our life! We follow His purpose, desires, and what He likes. Here is the most obvious thing. You cannot get to simplicity if you get away from Christ! This is because if our main goal is to live for Christ we have downsized and made our life very simple in relation to spiritual living and fulfillment.

“Living for Jesus a life that is true,  
Striving to please Him in all that I do;  
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,  
This is the pathway of blessing for me.”

Maybe you need to downsize your life by turning everything over to Jesus Christ. It’s time to simplify!

I have a wooden sign on my desk which says, “Simplify.” Some things are so simple they are easy to miss! But if we just take some time and contemplate what the Scriptures teach, we can learn to live a much simpler way of life. As we will see in this study, we do need to narrow everything down and live the simple life of devotion and commitment to Christ. When we do this life will in some measure be simpler and easier as we make Christ first priority and importance in our daily living. If we revolve our life around Christ, instead of material things, hobbies, cars, sports, and other people, we will discover a simpler, less stressful, and less complicated way of living from a spiritual perspective.



Believe it or not, living the Christian life is not really that complicated. It really is a simple life! Of course, simplicity does not mean that the Christian life is not hard

and difficult, filled with trials and troubles, but that the day-to-day Christian life and spiritual living should be uncomplicated. It should consist of a devotion and commitment to Jesus Christ through walking with Him and living to honor and serve Him (Gal, 2:20). We should stay focused on Christ, “looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:2) for inspiration and strength and remain simply in our faith in God to meet all our needs and direct our lives as His children.

We should not try and complicate what it means to live the Christian life. Jesus said, “Follow me” (Luke 9:23), “love me” (John 14:15), and “sup with me” (Rev. 3:20). The concept of Christian living is not difficult to understand. It’s simple. But the Devil is trying to take us away from living the simple Christian life. He tries to complicate things and keep us from remaining singular in our focus and simple in our faith as Dr.



Heller used to say. If we are not careful, we can become sidetracked by Satan. We can lose the simplicity and singular focus of living a life that is pure, truthful, wholesome, and in right relationship with Christ. Fearing God and keeping His commandments (Ecc. 12:13), doing what we know is right based upon Scripture, and living by a simple faith brings a certain simplicity to life that we all need. God wants us to live the simple life which is to remain singular in focus and simple in faith.

God wants us to keep it simple in life and not complicate things.

This is revealed in two ways.

### **I. The stated definition of the simple life.**

2 Corinthians 11:3

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

According to this verse, the understanding of living a simple life means to be sincerely devoted to Christ. The basic definition means to be sincerely devoted to Christ in our relationship and commitment to Him. The concept of the simple life is partly developed and defined from this text of Scripture. When we think of a simple life, we normally think of an easier way of life. In one sense, we know the Christian life can be very difficult with trials and when taking a stand for Christ.

Jesus said in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Peter reminds us of “the trial of your faith” (1 Pet. 1:7) and James also mentions “the trying of your faith” (James 1:3) which means there will be many hardships associated with the Christian life that we will need to pass through which will test our faith in God’s plan and provision for our lives.

So, on the one hand difficulties will arise, but on the other hand there is a certain simplicity to living the Christian life which makes life simpler and less complicated from a spiritual perspective.

The word “simplicity” does not necessarily mean to make life simpler. However, when we understand what this word means and practice what is being taught here (sincere devotion to Christ), we will live a simpler, less complicated, and a fulfilling life from a spiritual perspective by finding a right priority and purpose in life which simplifies our everyday living and goals. Simplicity or devotion to Christ makes life simpler from a spiritual standpoint and keeps us focused on what is most important in life. Although living and standing up for Christ may be difficult and cause hardships (John 16:33; 1 Pet. 4:12), from a spiritual perspective, living a devoted life to Christ is really a simple life. It simplifies how we live and conduct ourselves and what our main purpose is in life.

The word translated “simplicity” (haplotēs) is elsewhere translated as singleness of heart (Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22). Our “simplicity in Christ” speaks of being sincere and without hypocrisy, not self-seeking, but being unmixed in our devotion and desire to please Christ. It involves possessing a single purpose to honor Christ and be devoted to Him without any pretense. It

refers to an openness of heart and mind that is free from all hypocrisy and deceit. It connotes mental honesty without any hint of deceitfulness. In other words, we are to walk with Christ and live for Him with a sincere commitment and devotion to please Him with our life, possessing a heart that really loves God and is free from all sin and hypocrisy.

Most Western people are apt to think our great problems are external or environmental. Our real problem is that we are not skilled to live with “simplicity” in our inner life, where the real roots of our problem lie. Simplicity (devotion to Christ) begins from within and translates outward.

The simple life can only be discovered when we prepare our hearts (inner life) to seek the Lord and obediently follow His plan for our lives without pretense or hypocrisy. Ezra 7:10 says, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”

Wendell Heller once remarked:  
“We must do right because it is right!”

Ezra first prepared his heart to do what is right and then he was ready to follow the Lord’s plan for his life. A prepared heart is a pure heart. It’s a heart that serves God out of love and loyalty - not legalism and hypocrisy.

Like Ezra, we must prepare our hearts (inner life) to do what is right, so we sincerely devote ourselves to God’s will for our lives without hypocrisy and be completely loyal to God.

Romans 12:9 explains it like this: “let him do it with simplicity” (haplotēs - sincere devotion and commitment). This is what “simplicity” means in 2 Corinthians 11:3. We are to serve and live for the Lord with a sincere devotion and love that is free from sin and defilement. We can do what is right without possessing a right heart. Our motive may be wrong, and we are only passing through the motions.

Matthew 15:8

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.”

You will remember that King Amaziah “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart” (2 Chron. 25:2). God wants a sincere or genuine heart as well as an obedient life. In other words, we need to be genuine as we seek to obey God. A divided heart will not accomplish what God requires! In fact, James 1:8 says, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

A divided heart leads to a defiled life and eventually a destroyed relationship with the Lord. So, what is the solution? Do right! But at the same time be real! Be genuine!

One of my instructors at school used to say:  
“The main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things.”

Let us learn the secret of keeping our lives simple in relation to living the Christian life and doing what is right. In short, we must keep our lives simple by devoting ourselves to Christ with a sincere heart. We must learn to think and live on simple terms, possessing a sincere devotion to live for Christ and serve Him for only this will please God (John 8:29; 2 Tim. 2:4) and fulfill our own lives (John 10:10).

In 2 Corinthians 11:3 we discover that Devil wants to get us off the simple path of Christian living and devotion to Christ. He wants to steal away our loyalty to Jesus Christ. Satan wants to complicate things in our life by getting us to lose our spiritual perspective on what is most important in life. He wants to deter us from our personal commitment, loyalty, or devotion to Christ, which is called in this text the “simplicity that is in Christ” or “simplicity to Christ” since the Greek preposition (eis) can have the meaning of “to” or “toward” or “for” and in this text expresses the idea of direction and purpose in life. Once again, the imagery behind the word “simplicity” pictures unmixed devotion to Christ in all of our living and service.

Earlier Paul wrote “that in simplicity (haplotēs) and godly sincerity ... we had our conversation (manner of living) in the world” (2 Cor. 1:12). Paul possessed a testimony of possessing a single purpose to please Christ and



have a transparent genuineness that comes from God. The child of God must possess a sincere heart or an undivided and devoted heart toward God's purpose for his life. Colossians 3:22 states it this way: "not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness (haplotēs) of heart, fearing God." In short, God wants us to have an undivided purpose or aim in life, which involves being fully devoted to His cause, will, and holy purpose for our day-to-day lives. It is a devotion without hypocrisy. It's a devotion that stems from a heart that is deeply in love with Christ and which does not want to live a double-standard type of life.

Undivided affection and devotion to Christ should be the natural response of a bride to her spouse. The allusion to the marriage relationship is maintained in this section of Scripture to demonstrate how the believer should be loyal and devoted to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2 – "for I have espoused you to one husband"). Until the marriage is consummated at Christ's coming, exclusive devotion to Christ should prevail (Eph. 5:25-27). Paul had compared the Corinthians to a virgin promised to one husband (Christ), and he feared (2 Cor. 11:3) lest their affections might be seduced from Christ and transferred to another (Satan). The church must give the same kind of undivided affection and devotion to Christ which is expected from a bride to her spouse. So the point is vividly illustrated that a Christian needs to possess an unmixed devotion to Christ and obey Him out of a loving and loyal heart. This is what "simplicity" means.

Here is the main thrust of our study. From the word "simplicity" we develop the concept of living the simple Christian life which is essentially a sincere devotion or commitment to Christ – Himself, His way, and His Word. Loving devotion to Christ is the simple way of life. Be devoted or loyal to Christ because you love Him.

"I will serve Thee because I love Thee  
You have given life to me.  
I was nothing before You found me,  
You have given life to me."

This is the simple life! We are to be devoted to Christ possessing a single purpose and sincere desire to please Him.

Living the simple Christian life refers to a believer having a mind and heart that is singular in focus, as Dr. Heller says, possessing a wholesome desire to love God and live close to God and for God in a pure and undefiled way. Don't complicate things. Keep it simple. Love God and serve Him and make this the highest priority of your life.

We are to be living for Christ and serving Him simply because we are in love with Him. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love him, because he first loved us." This is as simple as it gets! We are to be in love with the Lover of our souls and realize that Christianity is the expression of one lover to another for we are "married to another" which is Christ (Rom. 7:4). This is why we are to be devoted to Jesus Christ. We are married to Him and are in love with the Lord.

Wendell Heller once said:

"If our value system is right everything will fall into place."

In other words, if we truly love the Lord and want to glorify Him, we will seek to devote ourselves to Him wholeheartedly without any reservations and thoughts of sinning against Him and not being loyal to His cause.

In summary, the phrase "simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3) can be understood as wholehearted and sincere devotion or commitment to Jesus Christ. It's possessing a genuine desire to live for Christ, be devoted and commitment to only Him, without being self-seeking. This is what Jesus taught during His earthly ministry when He said to take up a cross and follow Him (Luke 9:23). Yes, from a spiritual perspective, living the Christian life is not really complicated. Living the Christian life is simple in the sense that we are to love and obey Christ out of a sincere and genuine heart. Simplicity (being devoted to Christ) applies to the areas of our faith, obedience, love, fellowship, commitment, and service to Christ. And this sincere devotion to Christ will in one sense make life simpler for us. We will stay focused on the main thing which is to love, obey, and please Christ.

Someone once said:

"The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing."

And what is the main thing? Live for Jesus Christ and serve Him because you genuinely love Him and want to please Him. Our sincere devotion to Christ will make things less complicated in relation to our Christian living and commitments in life. This devotion we have to Christ will keep us from going down rabbit trails and sidestepping God's will for our lives and keep us out of a heap of trouble. Living simply or with "simplicity" ultimately means to be devoted to Christ's sufficiency, His person, power, provision, His personal fellowship, and living in obedience to His holy purpose for our life. Again, Satan wants to take us away from this simple devotion to Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:10 also speaks of this sincere devotion to Christ:

"That ye may approve things that are excellent (*different or superior in nature*); that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

When I am washing the windshield on my SUV, I always like to have the sunlight shining on it. Why? It's because the sun reveals the dirt marks and smudges much better than any other light. There is nothing like sunlight to reveal or show all the defects in something. The sun gives us a closer and unbiased view of everything.

The word "sincere" (eilikrinēs) means to be judged by the sunlight and connotes that our hearts and lives are pure, unmixed, and honest in our desire to remain clean and committed to Jesus Christ. It connotes the idea of possessing a genuine love and commitment to God's ways and purity. When we possess this kind of heart attitude and devotion toward Christ, we will remain focused, and our life will be much simpler and easier from a spiritual perspective.

When we live this life of "simplicity" (a sincere devotion to Christ) we can remain singular in focus and keep things in proper perspective, possess meaning for our everyday existence, and keep our lives from becoming barren and unfruitful (2 Pet. 1:8). If we are not careful, we can lose our simplicity and sense of spiritual balance. We can lose our spiritual equilibrium when we lose sight of what is most important or what really matters in life. This occurs when we take our eyes off living a sincere and devoted life to Christ. The result is we lose the simple way of living!

Staying simple and focused on your devotion to Christ is very important. During a retreat in France, a young American shared a remarkable discovery. He said: “Back home, surrounded by all my possessions, I often feel uncertain about many things. Here, with only a backpack, in the company of people who want to be together in the presence of God, I feel rich in every way. With the prayers, the songs, the silence, and the honest conversations about faith and life, I have everything I need.”

Someone said:

“Clarity and simplicity are the antidotes to complexity and uncertainty.”

Keep it simple! There is no replacement for sincere devotion to Christ. Out of a loving response to His grace, serve Christ out of a sincere heart. It does not get any simpler than this! O to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be!



I looked up the definition of “brain fog.” This is the definition that was given. “Brain fog is characterized by confusion, forgetfulness, and a lack of focus and mental clarity. This can be caused by overworking, lack of sleep, stress, and spending too much time on the computer.”

What are the main symptoms of brain fog?

- ✓ poor concentration.
- ✓ feeling confused.
- ✓ thinking more slowly than usual.
- ✓ fuzzy thoughts.
- ✓ forgetfulness.
- ✓ lost words.
- ✓ mental fatigue.

Well, I think all of us at times experience a certain amount of brain fog to one degree or another. As we are reminded of our study on the simple life, we might conclude that our simplicity or sincere devotion to Christ will in a very real sense allow us to get rid of our spiritual brain fog that has been

slowing us down and bring us back to the simple way of life that God intended us to live. We need to return to this kind of living, an uncomplicated and simple way of living in relation to our Christian life, living only in a loving devotion to our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## **II. The specific application of the simple life.**

There are various applications of how we can live a simple life of devotion to Jesus Christ.

There are ten areas of devotion to Christ (simplicity) which will distress and un-complicate your life.

### **1. The simplicity or devotion to the doctrine of Christ.**

We must keep things very simple in relation to the doctrine of Jesus Christ by staying devoted to His person and work (Christology). Do not complicate the doctrine of Christ with big fancy words and mushy talk. Jesus is God, He died on the cross, and bodily (literally) rose again the third day.

The immediate context of this simplicity (sincere devotion to Christ) certainly implies that we must keep the doctrine of Christ pure and free from error. We must remain simple (loyal and devoted) to the doctrine of Christ. This is what the context is referring to in Second Corinthians chapter eleven. If we are going to stay devoted to Christ, we must be committed to Him doctrinally. In fact, we must keep the Gospel simple and not complicate its message.

Paul speaks of our reason for simplicity or devotion to Christ in 2 Corinthians 11:4: “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus (*an imposter Jesus that is not found in the Bible*), whom we have not preached, or *if ye receive another spirit, (a demonic spirit)* which ye have not received, or another gospel (*false gospel*), which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.”

Many people will tell you, “I believe in Jesus.” I normally ask them, “What Jesus?” If it’s the Jesus of Mormonism, the Jehovah Witnesses, the Jesus of

the Baha Religion and so many other religions, then it is not the Jesus of the Bible. Paul is urgently pleading that we maintain our loyalty and devotion to the doctrine of Christ (Christology) which means we are going to remain pure and unmixed from errant theologies, ideologies, and philosophies which degrades and destroys the true message of Christ's person and work. We had better stand up today and be counted!

“When you count the ones who love the Lord,  
Count me, count me;  
When you count up those who trust His Word,  
Count me, count me.

When you count up those who do the right,  
Count me, count me;  
Who are walking in the Gospel light,  
Count me, count me.

Count me with the children of the heav'nly King;  
Count me with the servants who would service bring;  
Count me with the ransomed who His praises sing;  
Count me, count me.”

Later in the same chapter Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15:

“For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel (*messenger*) of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers (*the cults, liberals, neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth, the social gospel, and other ideologies being promoted today*) also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (*their sinful and theologically debunked works - 2 Cor. 11:13-15*).

Keep the doctrine of Christ simple! Don't veer one inch from it. The Lord Jesus Christ is God, He died on the cross, rose again, and today is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Men, have you ever cut a board and discovered that you cut it one inch short! Yes, we probably have all done this without thinking. This is why the old carpenter saying is rue: “Measure twice, cut once!” As a Christian we

must never move away from the doctrine of Christ (not even one inch) for the sake of some kind of fake ecumenical unity.

There are many in the world today who do not properly represent Jesus Christ and His claims. False doctrine concerning Christ's person (deity) and work (substitutionary death) in the Gospel message (salvation by grace through His death, burial, and resurrection) is being widely propagated today through the cults and the many other isms and philosophical movements in our world (Buddhism, Mormonism, Liberalism, rationalism, Leftism, Progressivism, etc.). No wonder Paul said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

Satan gets people to *doubt* and *deny* Christ's person and work and then brings them under *delusion* (Gen. 3:1-6). This is the way Satan worked with Eve in the garden and why Paul feared concerning the Evil One's present work in Corinth (2 Cor. 11:3). Satan is a master deceiver, and he is always seeking to get people away from the doctrine of Christ. Paul was concerned that Satan had "corrupted" (spoil, ruin, bring to moral ruin through seduction) the minds of people concerning the person and saving work of Jesus Christ. The imagery of corruption with the bride analogy in 2 Corinthians 11:3 would mean that the church could lose her virgin purity through other seducers.

We can be sure that Satan is a great deceiver in relation to the lives of those who are lost or unsaved (2 Cor. 4:4). But if he can succeed at getting God's own people to become clouded and confused in their perception and understanding of Christ then he has won a great victory. New converts can fall prey to the cults. Paul had a "fear" (2 Cor. 11: 3) that the Corinthians would not be discerning and become at least permissible of "false apostles" (2 Cor. 11:13) who would undermine the person and work of Jesus Christ and confuse the new converts.

We need to remember something. Not every person who gives us literature or knocks at our door represents the true Christ. Beware! 2 John 1:10-11 declares: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive

him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker (sharer) of his evil deeds.”

I don't promote the religious systems that reject the doctrine of Christ. I want nothing to do with them. I'll witness to their followers, but I won't support them in any way, shape, or form. I will separate from them and their false doctrines. That is what the Bible informs me to do! Some of these milk toast, unlearned, and generic Christians will tell you today, “It's unloving to separate from others. We must be inclusive.” Of course, it's not unloving – it's biblical to separate from apostasy in all its forms.

So, Paul concludes that we need to practice “simplicity” (devotion to Christ and freedom from all hypocrisy) and this certainly relates to the doctrine of Christ. In these last days of doctrinal corruption and compromise, it becomes hypocritical to say we are committed to Christ doctrinally when we religiously fellowship and dialogue with the enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18). Doctrinal simplicity (devotion) demands separation from the enemy (“Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” - 2 Cor. 6:14-17).

Wendell Heller was right when he said:  
“We are so open our brains are falling out.”

We need to stop being tolerant and open to the inclusivism and ecumenicalism of the last days which is running ramped in our churches. During the last days of “seducing spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1) God's people must remain committed or devoted to the doctrine of Jesus Christ and the Gospel of God's grace. There is no room for New Evangelical dialogue or compromise! Many churches put up with those things they should put out of their local assemblies!

Jude 1:3 commands us “earnestly contend for the faith (*the body of doctrinally revealed truth*) which was once delivered unto the saints.”

The faith was entrusted to us via the Bible, the written Word of God. We must not compromise the truth that God has spoken inerrantly, fully, and finally in His Word.



We must not be sidetracked but remain constant and committed to Christ's person and saving work. Revelation 3:11 says, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." When we hold to the doctrine of Christ, we will maintain moral and doctrinal integrity and remain simple or devoted to Christ in relationship to His person and work. Keep it simple. Hold fast to the basic tenants of Christ's person (who He was) and work (what He did for us).

Richard Baxter once said:

"We need to keep close to the ancient simplicity of the original Christian faith, and build our foundation on its original unity."

Of course, this concept of being simple or sincerely devoted and committed to Christ has many more applications. Our single-minded devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:3) should translate into overall devotion and commitment to Jesus Christ. Doctrine and duty go hand in hand. When we are committed to Christ doctrinally, we should also be committed to Him devotionally. In other words, we should faithfully serve the Lord and commit ourselves to His cause and work. So, the life of simplicity, a sincere devotion or commitment to Christ applies to many other areas than just the doctrine of Christ. There are many areas in life that call for our commitment to the Lord.

But one thing is certain, the life of "simplicity" (a sincere devotion to Christ) involves living an uncomplicated and simple way of life which can only be experienced when we follow God's clear plan for our lives and do it out of a right heart that is free from all hypocrisy. Paul wanted the saints to be devoted to the Lord Jesus alone, and not to allow their heart's affections to be drawn away by anyone or anything else. Being devoted to Christ alone in our heart and life is the simple way of life. It's a life that is uncomplicated from a spiritual perspective. It's a life that is restful, steady, consistent, and simplified.

The rest of the points under this main heading will continue to bring out this simple way of life of being sincerely devoted and loyal to Jesus Christ alone.

## 2. The simplicity or devotion of loving Christ.

There is a simplicity in loving Jesus Christ. In other words, if we lose this focus, we lose the most important thing in life and will drown our lives in other things. Instead of finding the simplicity in loving Christ, we can short-circuit our lives and miss the meaningful relationship we can have with God.

Jesus taught in John 14:15

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

This is very simplistic. You cannot miss how simple it is. If you love Jesus Christ and want to be truly devoted to Him, then you will keep His commandments and live a consecrated and dedicated life. Loving Jesus Christ involved obedience. It’s not a “pie in the sky” love but a real loving commitment to the claims and commands of Jesus Christ. What He says in His Word we must do to prove the depth and greatness of our love for Him.

Revelation 2:4 gives us this reminder:

“Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

Perhaps this is where you are at in your life. Maybe this is why you have lost your way and the wonder of it all. You have lost your first love (honeymoon love) for the Lord. The good news is that you can get back to God’s purpose for your life when you start loving Him again. If you want to live a devoted, loyal, and simple life that is uncomplicated and unchanging then look no further than your love for Christ. Loving Christ should be the longing of our Christian experience. Being devoted to Christ means to maintain our love for Christ which results in living a very simple life that is without complication and complexity. Just love Jesus Christ and obey Him.

Jesus also taught this simplistic principle for living in Mark 12:30:

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart (*affectionately or what we desire – what we long for inwardly through our human will, intellect, and emotions*), and with all thy soul (*outwardly or how we live – through our personal human life as a living and physical being – Gen. 2:7;*

*Mark 3:4; 10:45), and with all thy mind (intellectually or what we think about), and with all thy strength (physically or how we serve the Lord – through giving of our strength, power, and time): this is the first commandment.”*

The commandment is to love God with one’s whole, undivided being. To “love” God in the Biblical sense is to choose deliberately to make Him the supreme object of one’s devotion: one’s adoration, worship, service, and obedience. The four-fold distribution Jesus gives does not mean that humans are four-part beings. Each indicates an important aspect of being human. The “heart” represents the core of one’s inner being. The “soul” or self represents the personal life of the follower of Christ in relation to outward stimuli. The “mind” represents the capacity for perception and thinking. The “strength” represents one’s energy and power. Together, they mean one’s whole being.

“Give of your best to the Master;  
Give of the strength of your youth;  
Throw your soul’s fresh, glowing ardor  
Into the battle for truth.  
Jesus has set the example,  
Dauntless was He, young and brave;  
Give Him your loyal devotion;  
Give Him the best that you have.”

This is the stripped down and simple version of life. It’s the life of loving devotion to Jesus Christ. There is a sense of simplicity regarding our Christian life. Just love Jesus!

“I love You, Lord, And I lift my voice  
To worship You, Oh, my soul, rejoice  
Take joy, my King, In what You hear  
May it be a sweet, sweet sound, In Your ear.”

I was walking through Walmart one day and a younger lady came up to me and asked, “Do you love Jesus?” I told her that I do and that He was my

Savior. You see, if we want to live simply then we need to possess an undying devoted love for Jesus Christ. Loving Christ makes everything else fall into place. Keep it simple!

This is devotion, pure and simple. 2 Corinthians 11:3 reminds us that we should be wholeheartedly devoted to God. Once again, the word “simplicity” means our loyal devotion to Christ. We should have a similar love and devotion that a dog has for its master.

I was walking at the track the other day and a man had his dog following him. At one point the dog saw me and started toward me but the master called the dog’s name, and he turned around and went back to his master. Like this dog, there should be no one else who steals our attention and devotion from Jesus Christ. We should want to be devoted to Christ when Satan tries to get our attention and lead us astray. We should not stop to consider the possibility of betraying Jesus Christ.

Out of simplicity (devotion to Christ) flows a simple way of living. If we want to experience the simple Christian life, then we should practice a sincere commitment and devotion to God. In doing so, we will simplify our lives and take a lot of stress out of them as we enjoy our relationship with Christ.

Keep it simple – love God!

### **3. The simplicity or devotion of fellowshiping with Christ.**

There is a simplicity in fellowshiping with God. Another example of living a life of sincere commitment or devotion (simplicity) to Jesus Christ would involve staying in close fellowship with the Lord. If we are going to stay devoted to Christ, we must be committed to Him relationally. Paul’s whole aim in life was to know Christ relationally. Philippians 3:10, “That I may know him (*relationally*), and the power of his resurrection (*dynamically*), and the fellowship of his sufferings (*sacrificially*), being made conformable unto his death.”

Paul knew that he was called to a new relationship with a person – Jesus Christ. His whole life revolved around a personal walk and intimate

fellowship with Jesus Christ. Today the pressures of the world and the “cares of this world” (Matt. 4:19) can very easily keep us from enjoying a personal walk and relationship with Jesus Christ that is sincere and untainted by worldly loyalties. Satan wants to distract us and keep us from walking in close communion and fellowship with the Lord. He wants to steal away our love, loyalty, and living fellowship with Jesus Christ. Dear Christian friend, have you wandered from the Lord? Are you walking close to Him these days? That I may know Him! An old man of God who knew what he was talking about wrote this out and gave it to me on a piece of paper. I’ve never forgotten it.

“Jesus Christ is a Person and we must come to Him  
As we would come to a person.  
Every day of our lives we must live with Him  
And walk with Him as we do with a person.  
Every day of our lives we have fellowship and communication  
With Him available as we do with a person.  
Every day of our lives we are responsible  
And accountable to this Person.  
Every day of our lives we must re-affirm and readjust  
Our relationship to this Person.”

Being devoted to Christ in a devotional way (fellowshipping with Him on a daily basis) is simplicity and makes your life worth living! But the Devil wants to keep us from experiencing daily companionship with the Lord. He wants to keep us from this simple way of living in close communion with the Lord. When we lose our sense of God’s presence and fellowship in life, Satan keeps us from simplicity or a sincere devotion to Christ. Dear friend, let us remember that Christianity is not a creed, it is a relationship, it is living with a Person.

The danger we face in life is that we become involved with secular activity and even religious activity and lose sight of our fellowship and personal walk with the Lord. We can become involved in things *about* Christ and fail to live in a relationship *with* Christ. When this happens, we lose simplicity or devotion to Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:9 says, “God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Jesus

Christ is not just for Sunday's but for all the moments of life "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

We need to have a simple walk and fellowship with the presence of the living Lord. It is easy to lose this simplicity or simple devotion to Christ. It can be lost in the midst of good Christian activity. It can be lost in Bible study and the many fascinating aspects of Scripture. It can be lost in the midst of the pressures of life. We can become so busy, worried, and anxious about ourselves and the things that are happening in our lives that we lose the sense of Christ's presence and His adequacy. In the midst of the rapid pace of living we can lose sight of sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Luke 10:39 records these memorable words:

"And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word."

Now this is simplicity. It's simple, pure, and unadulterated devotion to Christ that is important in life! It's remaining singular in focus – not forgetting what is most important in life. When our spiritual lives begin to suffer we can be sure that we have lost sight of our personal devotion and walk with the Lord. Beware of drifting from simplicity!

Again, the word "simplicity" connotes a genuine love for Jesus Christ, an unmixed loyalty to Him alone. When it comes to possessing a proper relationship with the Lord, we must be free from hypocrisy. The religious leaders in Israel were said to have an outward show of religiosity but no inward fellowship and communion with the Lord. Jesus said in Matthew 15:8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me." Later our Lord said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matt. 23:27).

A life of true fellowship and genuine communion with the Lord will be free from sin and hypocritical actions. God is calling His children to a life of genuineness and possesses a dynamic living relationship with Him (John 15:4). There is much showtime Christianity today but what we need is a

simple, personal walk with the Lord. There is simplicity that is related to practicing the presence of God! This simple and uncomplicated way of living can only occur when we take devotional time with the Lord and maintain personal contact with Him.

James 4:8 says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." God's children should strive to live near or close to God and fellowships with Him. It becomes hypocritical to say that we love God when we don't really want to spend time with Him in prayer and devotions. How can we love somebody that we don't give our time and devotion? Do you long for the simple life of just walking with God? Psalm 42:1 says, "As the hart (deer)



panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." When we walk close to the Lord in the light of His Word, we will live on simple terms and not complicate things in our Christian living.

"If our love were but more simple,  
We should take Him at His word;  
And our lives would be all sunshine  
In the sweetness of our Lord."

Our relational love and fellowship with the Lord can become replaced by the sinful and secular things that Satan brings to our attention and which overtake our lives (1 John 2:15-17).

The commentator Fausset said this:

"Where Eve first gave way, was in mentally harboring for a moment the possibility insinuated by the serpent, of God not having her truest interests at heart, and of this other professing friend being more concerned for her than God."

How true this is! When we begin to focus on Satan's lies and the world system, we will lose our spiritual focus and simple love and communion with the Lord.

Charles Spurgeon once said:

“O foolish wisdom, which widens the distance between me and my heavenly Father! O sweet simplicity of love, which sees the God of love in every place, at every hour! I need no telescope to see my God with; behold, O sons of men, he is here; and my heart joyfully perceives him.”

God’s people should remain committed to communing with God. Our worship, walk, and love are all bound together in fellowshiping with God. It’s amazing how much easier the wheels of mortal life turn when we take time to worship and fellowship with God! Loving worship and fellowship with God keeps life simple!

Elizabeth Barrett Browning caught the concept of simplicity when she wrote:

“The little cares that fretted me,  
I lost them yesterday  
Among the fields above the sea,  
Among the winds that play,  
Among the lowing of the herd,  
The rustling of the trees,  
Among the singing of the birds,  
The humming of the bees.  
The foolish fears of what might pass  
I cast them all away  
Among the clover-scented grass,  
Among the new-mown hay,  
Among the hushing of the corn,  
Where drowsy poppies nod,  
Where ill thoughts die and good are born —  
Out in the fields with God.”

Oh, the simplicity of just walking close to God, keeping in tune with the Lord, speaking to Him and letting Him communicate to our hearts. Being devoted to Christ in a devotional way (fellowshipping with Him on a daily basis) is simplicity and makes your life worth living!



Jesus spoke of His desire to fellowship with His people when speaking to the church of Laodicea.

Revelation 3:20

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Although this verse is sometime used as an evangelistic verse it really is a verse dealing with Christ’s fellowship with His own people or children whom He loves, chastens, and wants to repent of their sinful departures from Him and His ways.



Revelation 3:19

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

The Laodiceans were worldly and carnal Christians who basically lived for themselves instead of Christ. Today we would say they wanted the American dream and did not dedicate themselves to following Christ. They were part of the consumer Christianity that we see today and did not walk close to the Lord. They were so invested in material things that they forgot the most important thing in life – simple fellowship with the Lord. The material should never replace the spiritual part of our life which involved fellowship with God in the inner man. So, Jesus is saying that He loves them as His children, and this is the reason He is giving them rebuke and the command to repent of their consumerism, lack of dedication, and broken fellowship with God.

When Jesus says, “I will come in to him” (Rev. 3:20) He is not talking about entering a person’s heart for salvation but is using a simple analogy or picture of wanting to enter into fellowship with His children again as they give Him the affection and loyalty of their hearts. They must open their hearts to Him afresh and anew and allow Him to enter into commune with them once again.

He desires their repentance and restored fellowship with Himself and places this request in the familiar imagery of being invited into a home to enjoy an evening meal together. The concept of “sup with him, and he with me” speaks of the intimacy that Christ and His child can share together as they are connected in communion, enjoying one another’s presence.

Of course, Christ is knocking wanting to regain fellowship with His people, but the Christian must be willing to open the door since the latch is on the inside. This means that we must take the initiative to get right with the Lord and reignite a loving fellowship with Him.

Psalms 37:4 also speaks of this simple walk and fellowship with God: “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

The concept of delighting ourselves in the Lord means to enjoy His presence. The word means to “take make merry over” or to “enjoy” and “refresh oneself” in the LORD. This verse reminds us of the simple life of fellowshiping with God and the enjoyment and satisfaction is brings into our life.

“When we walk with the Lord  
In the light of his word,  
What a glory he sheds on our way!  
While we do his good will,  
He abides with us still,  
And with all who will trust and obey.  
Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”

Hebrews 10:22 also speaks of the simplicity of drawing close to God and experiencing His presence in our lives: “Let us draw near (*near to God in fellowship and communion*) with a true (*sincere*) heart in full assurance of faith (*that God always loves and accepts us*), having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (*the symbolic language of cleansing through Christ’s sacrifice*).

The word “true” also speaks of sincerity. It is the opposite to what is fictitious, counterfeit, imaginary, simulated or pretended. The Bible is

teaching here that we can draw near to God, entering His presence through prayer and experiencing His fellowship with the complete confidence that we are accepted in His presence, cleansed and forgiven of our sins. In other words, we can have the total confidence and firm conviction (“the full assurance of faith”) that we will always have a gracious reception in God’s presence through Christ whereby we can fellowship with God on a daily basis. Of course, this can only occur because we have been, forgiven through Christ’s shed blood and sacrificial death upon the cross which clears our conscience from sin and gives us the assurance of acceptance in God’s heavenly throne room.

“Conscience now no more condemns us,  
For His own most precious blood  
Once for all has washed and cleansed us,  
Cleansed us in the eyes of God.”

Satan wants us to move away from our devotional love, fellowship, and worship with the Lord. James says that we must “resist the devil” so that he will flee from us (James 4:7). When we let down our guard, it’s then that Satan tries to make a move.

Someone has said:

“Satan rocks the cradle when we sleep at our devotions.”

Dear friend, remember that we don't need more of ourselves; we need more of God! And this experiential love and nearness to God can only take place as we commune with Him (1 John 1:7). Knowing and fellowshiping with God keeps life simple! It also brings joy, peace, and contentment into our heart which in return simplifies life and makes life worth living.

Here is a short letter from the devil:

“When you're faced with a busy day, save precious time by skipping your devotions.”

Signed, Satan

Here is the point. Drawing near to God in fellowship with a “true heart” is the simple way of life. We are once again called upon to keep it simple. Just stay close to God and enjoy His presence.

Richard Foster shares 10 principles that can help you cultivate an attitude of simplicity over consumerism.

- ✓ Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status.
- ✓ Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you.
- ✓ Develop a habit of giving things away. De-accumulate.
- ✓ Refuse to be propagandized by the custodians of modern gadgetry.
- ✓ Learn to enjoy things without owning them. Enjoy public parks and libraries.
- ✓ Develop a deeper appreciation for creation.
- ✓ Look with a healthy skepticism at all “buy now, pay later” schemes.
- ✓ Obey Jesus’ instructions about plain, honest speech.
- ✓ Reject anything that breeds the oppression of others.
- ✓ Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the kingdom of God.

Our study on “The Simple Life” is just that – learning to live the Christian life on a simple plain – learning to live a less-complicated way of life primarily in relation to your spiritual living. A simple faith, a simple dedication to the Lord, a simple walk with God – these are the things that make our Christian life simpler and less chaotic.

Our key verse is 2 Corinthians 11:3 which we have already studied. “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” Once again, the word “simplicity” does not necessarily mean to make life simpler. However, when we understand what this word means and practice what is being taught here (sincere devotion to Christ), we will live a simpler, less complicated, and a fulfilling life from a spiritual perspective by finding a right priority and purpose in life which simplifies our everyday living and goals.

Simplicity or devotion to Christ makes life simpler from a spiritual standpoint and keeps us focused on what is most important in life. Although living and standing up for Christ may be difficult and cause hardships (John 16:33; 1 Pet. 4:12), from a spiritual perspective, living a devoted life to Christ is really a simple life. It simplifies how we live and conduct ourselves and what our main purpose is in life.

Most Western people are apt to think our great problems are external or environmental. Our real problem is that we are not skilled to live with “simplicity” in our inner life, where the real roots of our problem lie. Simplicity (devotion to Christ) begins from within and translates outward.

So when we understand what this word means and practice what is being taught here (sincere devotion to Christ), we will essentially live a simpler, less complicated, and a fulfilling life from a spiritual perspective by finding a right priority and purpose in life which simplifies our everyday living and goals. Therefore, living a devoted life to Christ is a simple life. It simplifies how we live and conduct ourselves and what our main purpose is in life.

Some things are so simple they are easy to miss! We now come to another application of how we can live a simple life of devotion to Jesus Christ.

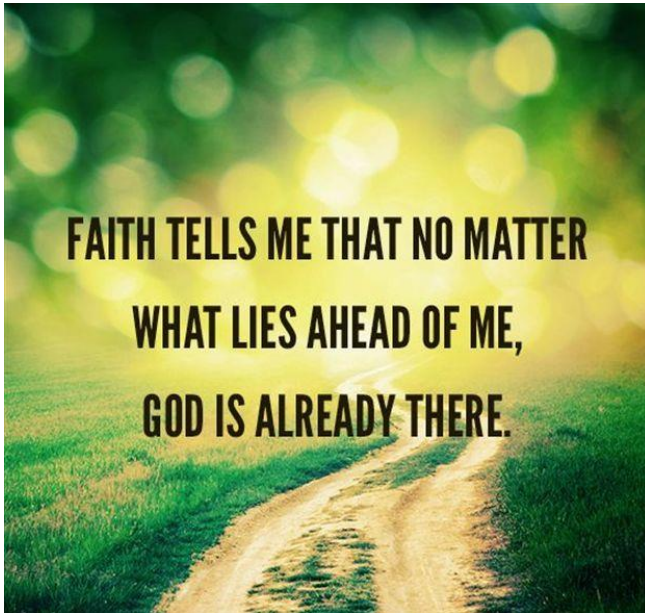
#### **4. The simplicity or devotion of possessing faith in Christ’s sufficiency and providence.**

Once again, Dr. Heller’s most famous saying was to remain “singular in focus and simple in faith.” There is a simplicity in childlike faith in God. God wants us to remain simple in faith, trusting in His provision, power, and promises to get us through life.

“Oh, how sweet the glorious message simple faith may claim:  
Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same;  
Still He loves to save the sinful, heal the sick and lame,  
Cheer the mourner, still the tempest glory to His name!”

Mark 11:22

“And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.”



Another key area of commitment to Jesus involves living by a simple faith in God and His promises. It becomes hypocritical when we say that we possess faith in God while at the same time we doubt His provision and sufficiency. Self-sufficiency robs our life of simplicity in God's provision. 2 Corinthians 3:5 states that "Our sufficiency is of God." Satan has always tried to get Christians away from the

simplicity of an all-sufficient Christ. Psychology and psychotherapy techniques promise to help man but provide no spiritual answers on how to live and cope with problems, nor do these manmade techniques provide the supernatural power to deal with life's perplexities and difficulties.

God promises that His people have everything they need to live victorious, godly, and experience contentment, peace, and fulfillment in this present life. We simply need to express faith in an all-sufficient God – His power and provision for our lives.

2 Peter 1:3-4 speaks of Christ's sufficiency:

"According as his divine (Godlike) power (FAITH IN GOD'S POWER) hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness (*all that is related to or necessary for our Christian life*), through the knowledge of him (*an intimate awareness of Christ's presence in our life*): that hath called us to glory and virtue (*a new way of life of honor and moral excellence*). Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises (FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES): that by these ye might be partakers (*sharers in an experiential way in our everyday living*) of the divine nature (FAITH IN GOD'S NATURE – a *Godlike nature – the new nature*), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (*possessing a positional victory over the moral rot and decay of the world system that is against God*).

When we possess faith in God's power, promises, and that we are a partaker of the divine nature we can live simply by trusting in God's provisions to get us through life.

Today many are saying within the Christian community that this is too simplistic, and we need therapists and professional people to help deliver us. I have been told that I don't understand the deep-seated problems that some people are wrestling with. So, when I say that Christ's Godlike power is sufficient to transform people, I am giving simplistic advice to very complicated problems which cannot be resolved through God's power and promises found in His Word.

One author stated it like this:

"Christian psychologists have become the new champions of church counseling. They are now heralded as the true healers of the human heart. Pastors and lay people are made to feel ill-equipped to counsel unless they have formal training in psychological techniques."

Whatever happened to faith in God's sufficiency and provision for our daily lives? If it was good enough for the early church, it should be good enough for us today. Yes, God wants us to remain singular in focus and simple in faith as we trust in His daily provision for our lives.

Jesus promises an abundant life to His followers. John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly." Jesus is still the answer! Satan wants to keep us from the simple life of faith where we trust in the Lord to meet all of our needs (Phil. 4:19) and abundantly fulfill our lives with His presence and power (Eph. 1:19). Living the Christian life boils down to living by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20; Heb. 11:6).

Jesus reprimanded the disciples for lacking faith. Our Lord said in Luke 12:28, "If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Jesus wants us to mature and develop in the area of faith by simply trusting in His power and provision to meet all of our needs in life. This is why He instructed us to "Consider the lilies" (Luke 12:27). Like the

flowers of the field, we are to depend upon the Lord for His provision. Of course, a growing faith also requires that we accept testing and the tough times of life as part of God's sovereign will for our lives. This is called "the trial of our faith" (1 Pet. 1:6-7). Faith is a simple thing. We depend totally upon God's help and sufficiency.

Another area of simple faith and trust relates to the working of God's providence over our lives or what He allows to come into our lives in accordance with His own purpose.

It takes a simple faith to accept the events that occur in our lives as coming from the hand of a loving God who on some grand scale orchestrates all the happenings or events of our lives.

Psalm 115:3

"But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

Psalm 135:6

"Whatsoever the LORD pleased, [that] did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."

Of course, this is true regarding our own lives as well. Whatever pleases Him is what He allows to come to pass in our lives. God has ordained our path and allows trials, the twists and turns in life, and the good and difficult times to be part of His all-encompassing plan. We must possess a simple faith in God and His plans and ways He has purposed for our lives. Our health, wealth, trials, temptations, position in life, work, calling, and everything dealing with our lives is somehow orchestrated by God. If I don't believe this, I will become perplexed, distraught, filled with anxiety, overcome with life in general, and find no rest for my soul.

Simple faith says: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Faith will allow us to relax in God's sovereign plan for our life. It will help us to maintain a spiritual outlook on life when we know God has known and ordained the path that I have taken.



Job 23:10

“But he knoweth the way that I take: [when] he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

Tony Evans once said:

“Everything in the universe is either caused by God or allowed by God, and there is no third category.”

This is true. God is in charge of the events of our lives, either directly or indirectly. It is our part to simply trust or possess simple faith in God’s providential plan for our lives.

“Simply trusting ev’ry day,  
Trusting thro’ a stormy way;  
Even when my faith is small,  
Trusting Jesus, that is all.  
Trusting as the moments fly,  
Trusting as the days go by;  
Trusting Him whate’er befall,  
Trusting Jesus, that is all.”

Jesus used the illustration of children to bring His disciples and you me back to the simple life. Children possess a simple faith in their parents for direction and provision. The same should be true regarding our faith in God. We should have a child-like faith when trusting the Lord for guidance and His daily provision for our lives.

Matthew 18:1-4

“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted (*turn from your worldly and selfish ambitions or personal greatness*), and become as little children (*and take the lowly or humble position of a little child*), ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (*a reminder to His disciples that transformed living is not the way but the proof of one’s salvation*). Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child (*in simple, child-like faith, dependence, and obedience*), the same

is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (*great in recognition, honor, and reward*).

Jesus brings out the character traits of children as being humble and fully dependent on the parents. He stresses that humility will result in great recognition and reward in the earthly kingdom. Being simple, humble, dependent, and obedient, wanting to please the Lord are the qualities that will result in future greatness and honor.

Jesus stresses the humility of a child. A humble child trusts in his parents for their complete care and provision. There are no real worries connected to a child’s life. Daddy and mommy are always there for the child to meet his or her needs.

Little children are humble, tender, and trustful. I remember when my children used to eat ice cream cones. We would have them in the height chair and they would sit there with chocolate ice cream smeared all over their faces. They were smiling and loving every minute of it. They did not have a care or worry in the world. They knew mom and dad would clean them up and that everything would be alright. When they would fall and skin their knees they would come running to mom and dad knowing that we would help them and take the hurt away.

Here is the point. Humility (childlike humility) in our Christian life of discipleship is most important. Only when we are humble can God use us for His glory and reward us someday for our humble living and service to God and others. So Jesus paradoxically taught that in order to grow up we must go back and become a child again!

One daddy said this: “Last night my little boy confessed to me some childish wrong. And kneeling at my knee, he prayed with tears: “Dear God, make me a man, like Daddy, wise and strong. I know you can.” Then while the child slept, I knelt beside his bed, confessed my sins, and prayed with low bowed head. “Oh God, make me a child again. Make me like my child here, who sleeps in purity, guileless, trusting Thee with faith sincere.”

Make me a child again! Let us be pure, sincere, and free from hypocrisy and possess a single aim or purpose to do what is right. The Christian life is

simple! Just do what God wants you to do. Claim His promises and be sincerely devoted to God's truth, as found in His Word. Keep the main thing the main thing! Don't complicate things. Stay simple!

God wants us to live the Christian life with childlike humility. In a very real sense, we must become like humble children again – simple, dependent, trusting in the Lord's care and provision over our lives and wanting only to please Him. Oh, how simple life can be when we walk by a simple faith in God's provision instead of doubting God and turning to other secular philosophies for answers. God wants us to remain humble which means to remain singular in focus and simple in faith.

Keep it simple! Live by humility and faith in God's promises and provisions for your life. It will make your life much easier and you will find true satisfaction and fulfillment. Become as a child again! Just trust! Trust God who is there to meet all of your needs in life. Trust Him in the morning, trust him in the noontime, trust Him the evening, trust Him all day long.

An old Dutch poem goes like this:

“Make me, O Lord, a child again,  
So tender, frail, and small,  
In self possessing nothing, and  
In thee possessing all.

O Savior, make me small once more,  
That downward I may grow,  
And in this heart of mine restore  
The faith of long ago.

With thee may I be crucified—  
No longer I that lives—  
O Savior, crush my sinful pride  
By grace which pardon gives.

Make me, O Lord, a child again,  
Obedient to thy call,  
In self possessing nothing, and  
In thee possessing all.”

An artist once painted a picture during the nineteenth century that seemed to capture the hearts of many people. It is the simplicity of truth presented in the picture that has captured the attention of many who have observed the painting throughout the years.



Although this is not the painting it does give us a visual of the importance of trusting God together in our marriage relationships. In the painting, the evening bell rings, and a man and woman, *as they hear it, cease work, and together bend their heads in prayer.* That is all, but the whole picture breathes with an atmosphere so rare.

These two humble folks pray with a simple, confiding faith. They pray as children. They drop their work and turn to God with a perfect ease and naturalness, without the slightest irreverence. Things hidden to the wise and prudent are revealed to their childlike minds. God is near. God is their Helper.

There is nothing in their work which makes them ashamed to pray; there is nothing in their prayers which makes them ashamed to work. They pray to God in simple faith and live an uncomplicated life filled with tender and truthful trust in God. Let us learn the secret of living, thinking, and even praying on simple terms. Let us become as a humble child again with simple trust in God's help and provision and with a heart to please only God. This is what Jesus taught.

Keep it simple – live humbly and be childlike in faith.

##### **5. The simplicity or devotion of surrender and obedience to Christ.**

There is a simplicity in just surrendering to God and obeying Him. It keeps life simply from a spiritual perspective. Obey God. There is a very simple way to live the Christian life. Just surrender your life to God and let Him have His way with you!

“Would you have Him make you free, and follow at His call?  
Would you know the peace that comes by giving all?  
Would you have Him save you, so that you need never fall?  
Let Him have His way with thee.

His pow’r can make you what you ought to be;  
His blood can cleanse your heart and make you free;  
His love can fill your soul, and you will see  
’Twas best for Him to have His way with thee.”

Romans 12:1 speaks of our surrender to God:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God (*sympathy*), that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice (*surrender*), holy, acceptable unto God (*sanctification*), *which is your reasonable service*” (sensible).

Without surrender and obedience, you cannot live the simple life. You are setting yourself up for a lot of heartache and will create many unnecessary difficulties in your life when you do not surrender to God’s will and purpose for your life.

Wendell Heller once remarked:

“What I believe is not as important as what God believes.”

This is very true. What God believes and says is that we should surrender our lives to Him and obey Him. There is no replacement in the Christian life for surrender and obedience.

“I thank you, Lord,  
For the victory that growing brings.  
In surrender of everything  
Life is so worth while.”

It is true that life is worthwhile and worth the living when we surrender everything to God. We must put our life under God’s authority and simplify our everyday living in surrender and obedience to God. Although the way may be difficult with twists and turns the simplicity of surrender to God should not be hard and difficult.

I remember Dr. Heller telling the story of his call to become a pastor and minister of the Gospel. He avoided it as long as he could but through God's chastening hand and conviction, he one day cried out, "God, it's all over. I surrender to you. I am completely Yours." This is the way it must be in Christian life.

Surrender and walking in obedience are the way we receive God's rich blessing upon our lives. This truth has never changed.

Psalm 84:11 declares:

*"For the LORD God is a sun (providing illumination and guidance as well as comfort) and shield (providing spiritual protection): the LORD will give grace (the expression of God's favor and kindness toward us in strengthening, loving, and caring for His children) and glory (the expression of God's personal splendor, greatness, and honor is conveyed to our hearts – "My glory" - Ps. 3:3): no good thing (spiritual blessing) will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (soundly and with integrity).*

The promise is that when we walk uprightly in obedience to God's way and purpose for our lives, it's then we receive good or great blessings from the hand of our giving and loving God. God promises that He will bring many spiritual blessings into our lives when we obey His Word and will. Of course, God does not give us everything we want, but He bestows upon us all that is good for us, all that we need (Phil. 4:19).

Remember this: If It's good for us He will not withhold, but if He withhold it from us, it's not good for us,

A young boy went to the local store with his mother. The shop owner, who was very kind and giving, passed him a large jar of lollipops and invited him to help himself to a handful. Uncharacteristically, the boy held back. So, the shop owner pulled out a handful for him. When outside, the boy's mother asked why he had suddenly been so shy and wouldn't take a handful of lollipops when offered. The boy replied, "Because his hand is much bigger than mine!"

Folks, God has a big hand and heart, and He knows how to supply His children with the spiritual blessings we need to live effective, fulfilling, and satisfying Christian lives.

1 Samuel 15:22 -23 gives us this enduring reminder:

“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams (*religious routine*). For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry (*rebellion in living*). Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being king*” (*rejecting God’s Word*).

In other words, it’s far better to obey God with a genuine heart that wants to honor and please Him then to legalistically sacrifice yourself to God without any true love and desire to honor the Lord with your life.

Ron Hamilton wrote these lovely words:

“From the very start, have purpose in your heart  
To do what’s right and never ques-tion why.  
Never count the cost, though every-thing seems lost;  
The price for doing right is some-times high.

Do right till the stars fall, do right till the last call  
Do right when there’s no one else to stand by you!  
Do right when you’re all alone, do right though it’s never known.  
Do right since you love the Lord — do right, do right!

Right is always right, and wrong is always wrong,  
And we must learn to sep-a-rate the two!  
If you love the right, the Lord will give you light;  
So seek the right in every-thing you do!

Do right till the stars fall, do right till the last call  
Do right when there’s no one else to stand by you!  
Do right when you’re all alone, do right though it’s never known.  
Do right since you love the Lord — do right, do right!”

I was walking at the track the other day and a man had his dog following him. At one point the dog saw me and started toward me, but the master called the dog's name, and he turned around and went back to his owner. I was thinking how this applies to our Christian life. Like this dog, there should be no one else who steals our attention and devotion from Jesus Christ. Satan tries to get our attention and lead us astray. But we should not stop and even consider the possibility of betraying Jesus Christ "who loved us and gave Himself for us" (Gal. 2:20).

Surrender and obedience to God out of a heart that is filled with love and gratitude for what He has done for us and continues to do for us on a daily basis is what makes our life much simpler and more focused. Obeying and loving God are always placed together.

Deuteronomy 11:1

"Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway."

Deuteronomy 11:22

"For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him."

Jesus said in John 14:15:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

1 John 5:2-3

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments (*we love other Christians in obedience to God's commands and because we love Him*). For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (*they are not a burden because they are the things born again people love to do*).

Our love for God is expressed in willing obedience to His commands. John's point is clear: the believer's love for God demands a commitment to live according to the instructions that He has given.



It has been said:

“Love which does not include obedience is not worthy of the name.”

Here is another dog story that someone shared. They wrote: “If you've ever been to Camp Fairhaven, you've probably met Dunkin. Dunkin is not a person, he's a dog. He belongs to Dave, who is currently one of the directors at the camp.

“I've never seen a dog quite like Dunkin. I've never seen a dog so devoted to his master. If Dave is in the camp office, Dunkin will stand just outside the office door and stare at him. Doesn't matter if Dave is in there for three hours; Dunkin is content to stare for three hours.

“Dunkin follows Dave everywhere. Once, when Dave ended up on the opposite side of the lake from Dunkin, Dunkin didn't wait for Dave to come get him -- he swam all the way across the lake to get back to Dave.

“If I opened the door of my car and Dave opened the door of his truck, I have no doubt which vehicle Dunkin would get in. If I stood there and called him by name, I still have no doubt which vehicle he would get in. And, if I stood there and called him by name while holding a doggie treat for him, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that he would still get in Dave's truck instead of my car.”

Like the dog Dunkin, we are to be obedient to our Master and Lord. So here is the point. Surrender your life to God and obey Him. This will keep your life simple! You won't become bogged down in your own rebellious ways, making your life more difficult because of your disobedience to God. Sometimes we dig our own grave and then jump into it. Why? It's because we are not really surrendered to the Lord and willing to obey Him.

Isaiah 1:19

“If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.”

Simple obedience brings God's blessing into our life. Are we willing to surrender our life to God afresh and anew and be obedient to Him in all areas of our lives? If we are holding back in some specific area that we

should surrender to God, then we are missing out on God's true blessing and the simple way to live the Christian life. To live simply and not complicate things in our spiritual life, we must learn the secret of surrender and obedience.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 sums it up in these few words,  
"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God (reverentially), and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

Now this is simple! You can't simplify life any more than this. What the church needs today is obedient "doers of the word" (James 1:22) and genuine or "sincere" (Phil. 1:10) Christians who are walking close to God as Enoch or Noah did while living in their own evil generation (Gen. 5:22; 6:9).

We discover from Scripture that the simple life of obedience is the happy side of life. Proverbs 29:18 says, "he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

"When we walk with the Lord  
In the light of his Word,  
What a glory he sheds on our way!  
While we do his good will,  
He abides with us still,  
And with all who will trust and obey.  
Trust and obey,  
For there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus  
But to trust and obey."

Beloved, we must once again learn the secret of living the life of simplicity (sincere and personal devotion) to Christ. Life is short. Keep it simple! Live simply!

## **6. The simplicity or devotion of serving Christ.**

There is a simplicity in serving God. Let's not try and complicate what God wants us to do or how He wants us to live. Keep it simple. Just love and

serve the Lord while you live out your days on earth. Remember that you only have one life so make it count!

Romans 12:11 speaks of the simplicity of serving God:

“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.”

“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.”

Romans 12:11



Another example of living a life of sincere devotion (simplicity) to Jesus Christ would involve a genuine commitment to Christian service rendered unto the Lord. If we are going to stay devoted to Christ, we must certainly remain committed to Him in the area of Christian service. “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (2 Cor. 4:2). Being

devoted to Christ in our everyday Christian living and service is vitally important if we are going to keep our lives simple from a spiritual perspective in life. We are in the Lord’s army (2 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, we need to remain consecrated or dedicated to Christ’s cause and work.

The message of Romans 12:11 is threefold: Don’t become lazy (“not slothful in business”), maintain your zeal (“fervent in spirit”), and keep serving Jesus (“serving the Lord). Now what is a sloth? A sloth is a slow-moving tropical American mammal that hangs upside down from the branches of trees using its long limbs and hooked claws. Sometimes we can turn into a Christian sloth when we become lazy and lethargic in our service for the Lord. God does not want us to slothful.

What kind of business is Paul talking about here? It’s the Lord’s business! You might say, “I’m too busy to serve the Lord.” If that is the case, then you are too busy, and your priorities are all wrong. We will talk about priorities in another point. We are to keep ourselves busy in serving the Lord with the different gifts and abilities He has given to us. We are to serve Him by faithfully giving to the Lord’s work and ministry. We are to serve the Lord in

serving others, reaching out to them, seeking to witness to them with the Gospel and seeing their lives changed.

“Tis not for man to trifle; life is brief, And sin is here.  
Our age is but the falling of a leaf, A dropping tear.  
We have not time to sport away the hours;  
All must be earnest in a world like ours.”

The word “fervent” (zeo) means to be hot or boiling. It connotes metaphorically of being spiritually on fire for God as we launch out and serve Him. We cannot afford to lose our fiery passion and zeal for the Lord and His work. We must stay hot. We must keep a fire burning in our soul as we engage in the Lord’s service.

“Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning.  
Give me oil in my lamp, I pray.  
Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning.  
Keep me burning till the break of day.”

There is no future for a man whose faith has burned out! Our prayer must be, “Lord increase our faith.” We need to remain simple in faith and simple in our service rendered unto God! The areas of life that really count are building character and serving God.

Psalm 100:2

“Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.”

Yes, there is definitely gladness in serving the Lord, but there is sadness as well.

Acts 20:19

“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind (*timidity and serving Christ*), and with many tears (*tears and serving Christ*), and temptations (*trials and serving Christ*), which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews.”

Paul served the Lord with true humility and self-denial. In relation to his ministry there was a constant strain on his emotional system; there were

tears of sorrow and trials. He constantly suffered persecution as a result of the plotting of the Jews. Yet in spite of all the adverse circumstances, his ministry was bold and fearless. So there is a gladness related to serving the Lord but there can also be times of sadness because of the hardships we must endure as soldiers of the cross.

This reminds us that Satan wants to keep God's people from effectively and faithfully serving Him. The Evil One throws many distractions in our way and places many excuses in our minds that would keep us from serving the Lord in a committed fashion.

The old Serpent the Devil tries to get us to look back in our gloomy past, or at our present growing problems, and even at the grievous failures of other people so that we become discouraged and drop out of the Christian race. So we stop serving the Lord. But Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). This meant that Paul's entire motivation and life centered upon serving and living for Jesus Christ, remaining devoted to Him. He was not going to allow Satan, the temptations, and tears to sidetrack him, to pull him away from being devoted to Jesus Christ. There is no other life that is satisfying and which will produce eternal dividends (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

"Living for Jesus Who died in my place,  
Bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace;  
Such love constrains me to answer His call,  
Follow His leading and give Him my all.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,  
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me.  
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne.  
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone."

Keep it simple! Serve Jesus!

I remember my seventh-grade math teacher going up to the blackboard to write down a new arithmetic equation. I could not believe what He wrote.  $1+1=3$ . He turned around with a sheepish smile on his face and said that this was true according to some new math we were learning. I don't remember how he came to this conclusion, but I do know that he had

departed from the unchangeable standard, the basic truth of mathematics. We are living in a day when everything is changing. The unchangeables are now changeable and Satan is trying to complicate the Biblical teachings on marriage, sex (through transgenderism), and getting rid of every Biblical and ethical boundary that is necessary for a society to function, and to keep it from collapsing morally and imploding from anarchy and division.

Satan always tries to complicate and confuse things. This is true even in relation to the Christian life. He wants us to get rid of all the boundaries and says, “live and let live.” But Paul was concerned that the Corinthian Christians might lose their “simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3) or their single-hearted devotion and commitment to Christ and His ways.

## 7. The simplicity or devotion of making right priorities as taught by Christ.



Dr. Heller always reminded us to remain “singular in focus.” Jesus spoke about what the main focus of our Christian life should be in a very well-known; howbeit, not a well-practiced verse.

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus taught the principle of priority: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Now this too is simplicity! Jesus taught His followers to possess a simple priority in life. They were to be devoted to living according to the principles He established for kingdom living on earth which is the time when the earthly theocracy would be set up over the earth. In short, they were to start living like kingdom citizens right now in view of the future.

This means they were to make the right priority to seek those things that relate to spiritual living in the coming kingdom such as righteousness

(righteous living), humility, peace, expressing mercy to others, and maintaining a proper testimony of light in the world as He previously taught (Matt. 5:5-16). Kingdom living, according to what Jesus taught, means to possess a right priority in life. It would mean that they would prioritize the very things that the King wanted them to do and how He wanted them to live on a daily basis as children of His earthly kingdom.

First things first! When Jesus says “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” He was establishing a very strong priority for living a life that is filled with character, integrity, and service toward others. He was declaring to His disciples that they should always make kingdom living a priority in their lives.

We can update this for our Christian lives today. We too need to also make the right priorities for our daily lives and realize what is most important in life. And what is most important? To put spiritual matters before secular things. To put the sacred above the secular. In other words, living right, worshipping God, seeking His will, possessing a good testimony before the unsaved, upholding truth, and maintaining godly Christian character (Gal. 5:22-23) could all be included under the umbrella which is labeled sacred things.

Satan wants us to commit our lives and time to only secular goals and interests to get us away from our commitment to those sacred things which will bring eternal reward or yield great eternal dividends.

Jesus also taught the principle of priority in Matthew 6:19-21:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Jesus told His disciples to seek the “treasures in heaven” (future reward and honor) instead of the “treasures upon earth” (riches and pleasure). Jesus concluded that a man cannot serve God (spiritual living) and mammon (secular living) at the same time.

Someone said:

“It’s good to have the things money can buy, provided we don’t lose the things money cannot buy.”

Satan knows this is true and tries to deter God’s saints from making the right spirituality priorities in life, keeping them from their devotion to Christ, Christlikeness, and the simple way of living. Our lives can become trapped in secular things (money, position, work, sports, hobbies) instead of being committed to the spiritual things in life that matter – God, Christian character, Church, family, sanctification,

Jesus said in Luke 12:15:

“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

It’s hypocrisy to say that you are living for Christ when all your days, activities, and time are devoted to secular things. When secular things and activities choke out the sacred way of living, or your commitment and devotion to Christ, then you can be sure that you have developed heart trouble!

This is why Jesus taught in Matthew 6:21 – “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” When we have a problem with our priorities (replacing the spiritual with the sacred) we demonstrate that our hearts are not right before God because we are not committed to His purpose and priority for our lives. When our hearts are not right, we cannot live the simple life. We lose the simplicity of living by right priorities and finding joy and fulfillment in life.

For instance, secular activities such as jobs, sports, and so many other things can affect the priority you are to have in attending church regularly and faithfully.

Acts 2:42

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”



We are to possess a real commitment to being together with God's people. We need each other. Attending church should be a priority in our Christian lives. We need to think about this in a very practical way. Satan wants to keep you from having personal devotions, special times with the Lord, attending prayer meeting, from fellowshiping with God's saints, and from being an accountable part of a local church ministry.

The Devil wants to keep us "from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3) or our devotion to Him and His purposes for our life. This is why he wants to isolate us from the spiritual leadership of the local church, which God has given to help teach, provide stability, and comfort for God's saints (Eph. 4:11-16).

Dr. Wendell Heller often shared with us how as a boy he remembers attending every service at the church. When the doors of the church were opened his daddy made sure the family was in church. Yes, an important part of our priority and commitment to God relates to the area of our church attendance. The Evil One wants to keep God's people from attending church faithfully (Heb. 10:24-25). Satan wants to hinder God's people from their loyalty, devotion, or commitment to the local church.

1 Chronicles 21:1 states:

"And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

This reminds us that Satan provokes and persuades (through enticement) God's people to turn away from doing what is right and moves them away from their devotion or commitment to Christ by causing them to create a system of perverted priorities.

Perverted priorities are the problem we can often face in our lives. In order to get things right we must get our priorities right. Lack of attendance and commitment to the local church today is a common way that Satan takes God's people away from their devotion to Christ. Many of God's saints fail to realize how Satan works in their minds to keep them from joining and committing themselves to the local church. Satan is a master at keeping us from attending church faithfully and serving the Lord in the context of local church ministry. He keeps us from attending, serving, and giving faithfully

to the local church. He brings many excuses to our minds. "And they all with one consent began to make excuse" (Lk. 14:18).

"Excuses, excuses; you'll hear them every day.  
The devil will supply you, if from Church you'll stay away."

So what really happens? What occurs in our minds and lives? Satan gets us to make perverted priorities and excuses (Luke 14:16-20) instead of right priorities (Matt. 6:33). Beware. We can commit family idolatry, sports idolatry, and hobby idolatry when they keep us from being a disciple or follower of Christ (Luke 14:26). Wrong priorities eventually break us down spiritually and keep us from living the simple or devoted way of life.

It becomes hypocritical to say that we want to do God's will when we become lenient and lax in our church attendance. How often do you miss church? Are you really serving Christ today through a good local church ministry and using your gifts for the Lord? Are you committed to a local church? Don't' allow the Devil to bring gradual spiritual erosion into your devotional life and commitment to the local church.

Not only does the Devil keep us from church, but he also adds the pressures and "cares of this world" (Mark 4:19) to his destructive menu to bring us to the place of spiritual defeat. The worldly pressures we face on the job, dealing with life in general, and losing a sense of spiritual priority all have a debilitating effect on our lives. It will certainly keep us from being devoted to Christ and living the simple way of life.

Satan knows how to get us away from priority Christian living and the simple way of life. He wants to take us away from our devotion to Christ by getting us to replace spiritual priorities with secular priorities. How often do you spend time with God in prayer, personal devotions, and worshipping God? Are you sharing the Gospel with others? Dear friend, the main things are the plain things. We must put first things first! We must put the sacred before the secular or we will lose our devotion to Christ and the simple way that God wants us to live.

Christ commands us “to seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” This is the right priority. And when you have the right priority you have the promise of God’s supply – “and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). This has been called God’s social security program. In other words, God will supply our needs in life if we give Him first place. He will pull through for us and make sure that we have our basic needs taken care of on a daily basis.

A farm boy accidentally overturned his wagonload of corn in the road. The farmer who lived nearby came to investigate. “Hey, Willis,” he called out, “forget your troubles for a spell and come on in and have dinner with us. Then I'll help you get the wagon up.”

“That's mighty nice of you,” Willis answered, “but I don't think Pa would like me to.”

“Aw, come on, son!” the farmer insisted.

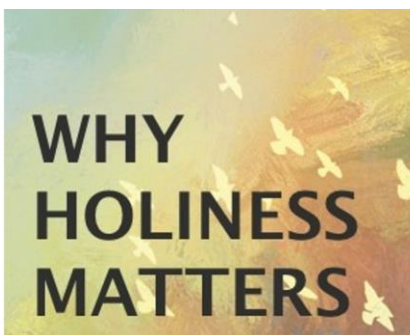
“Well, okay,” the boy finally agreed. “But Pa won't like it.”

After a hearty dinner, Willis thanked his host. “I feel a lot better now, but I just know Pa is going to be real upset.”

“Don't be foolish!” exclaimed the neighbor. “By the way, where is your Pa?” The boy said, “Under the wagon.”

It’s important to have the right priorities in life! It keeps things simple!

## **8. The simplicity or devotion of striving to be holy like Christ.**



Another important area of devotion or commitment to Jesus involves basic holiness or Bible separation. The simple life is a separated life. Being devoted to Christ involves living a holy life which means to separate from those things which are not holy and emulate those things in our lives

which are holy. Our holiness and separation is to be “set apart” from evil but at the same time “set apart” unto God – consecrated to His will and purpose for our lives and remaining pure inwardly and outwardly.

1 Peter 1:16 informs us of God’s call to holy living when it states: “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” This reminds us that we are to respond to God’s holy character in a way that we too reflect holiness in our lives. We are to emulate God’s holiness through our speech, conduct, what we think about, reflecting His character and ways in our everyday living, possessing spiritual goals and ambitions in life, and by having a pure or clean heart that is dedicated to the Lord.

The Greek word behind “holy” is *hagios* which speaks of reverence and sacredness, something that is hallowed, and therefore indicates something that should be set apart, sanctified, and consecrated to God (His purposes or ways). This means that we as Christians are to be set apart for God, separated from all defilement, consecrated and devoted to God’s purity as we abstain from earthly defilements. Holiness is both negative and positive. We set ourselves apart from the spiritual filthiness of this world while at the same time we devote ourselves to God. We set ourselves apart FROM that which is unholy and set ourselves apart FOR God’s use, to follow His righteous ways and honor Him.

Essentially, holiness and sanctification involve the practice of Bible separation. We separate FROM those things which are unholy and separate ourselves FOR God’s glory. In emulating God’s holiness, we are giving ourselves to God. We are reverently consecrating our bodies, hearts, and minds for His sacred purposes.

Many Christians today do not reflect very much on living a holy life that really honors God. They are so culturalized by the world system that they really have lost sight of the crowning attribute of God which is His holiness. Instead of being holy in their hearts and thoughts, instead of being devoted, consecrated, and separated to God in their daily walk, they choose to follow cultural worldliness and unholiness. They pattern their living after worldly ambitions and amusements that do not reflect God and honor Him. They live by the culturally corrupt dictates of the world system,

conforming themselves to the same physical, sexual, musical, and spiritually flawed patterns of the world.

Many today are what I have called chameleon Christians who want to blend in with society instead of separating from societal wickedness and corruptness. They want to emulate worldliness instead of holiness, but God says, “Be ye holy; for I a holy” (1 Pet. 1:16).

If we don’t practice holiness in our lives, which is practical Bible separation from the world and dedication to God, we will find ourselves being swept away into the cultural wickedness of the last days, imbibing and trying to reflect the moral rot of a society that has abandoned God.

You might say, “Preacher, you are very negative. No, I’m actually very positive. If you put God first in your life and separate yourself unto Him (this is positive), you will get rid of the junk and gunk in your life which conflicts with His holy character and ways.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 commands:

“For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”

1 Thessalonians 4:7 concludes:

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

The Bible is teaching that our bodies are compared to God’s “vessel” that He owns and therefore we should use our bodies for His holy purposes. The word “sanctification” (*hagiasmos*) is similar to the word “holy” and implies consecration, purification, possessing moral purity in our hearts and lives that reflect God’s purposes and ways. This word always signifies separation to God. You see, holiness and sanctification mean we are to practice Bible separation from the things which are corrupt and be separate to the Lord and for His glory.

2 Corinthians 7:1 says:

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

The word “holiness” once again means something that is morally pure or sanctified. How do we cleanse ourselves and practice this sanctification or holiness? The answer to this is not difficult. We obey God! We learn to say no to sin and the things of the world and yes to the things which are holy. We apply God’s holiness (separation from the world and separation unto God) to our daily living.

- ✓ Do my inner thoughts and actions reflect that which is holy or cultural corruption?
- ✓ Do I possess a pure heart?
- ✓ Is my inner life consecrated to God’s will and purpose?
- ✓ Do I have an unforgiving spirit?
- ✓ Am I filled with pride because of my position and accomplishments?
- ✓ Are some things in your life patterned after the age of compromise?
- ✓ What parts in your life reflect ungodliness?
- ✓ Are the words that I speak consecrated to God?
- ✓ Is the meditation of my heart acceptable in His sight?
- ✓ Am I following worldly ideologies instead of Biblical ideas?
- ✓ Does my dress, music, and worship reflect holiness or cultural contamination?

You will notice that our practice of separation or holiness occurs externally (“the flesh”) which in this context is a reference to our bodies and specifically refers to those physical impurities which are practiced by our bodies. But holiness also must occur inwardly (“the spirit”) which involves our desires, affections, thinking, ambitions, and motives. God wants us holy on the outside as well as the inside. In fact, if we get cleaned up on the inside we will eventually get cleaned up on the outside.

Jesus gave a scathing rebuke in Matthew 23:27:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men’s* bones, and of all uncleanness.”

These people (the scribes and Pharisees) would today be considered the fakers of Christianity. Their inner life was corrupted by lustful, prideful, and evil thoughts but at the same time they looked good on the outside. They came to church with their shoes spit-shined and polished. They looked impressive on the outside with their rules and regulations. We might conclude that they played the game of Christianity but did not possess the Christ of Christianity.

Jesus said, “You guys are nothing but whitewashed sepulchers and inside you stink and are nothing but a graveyard of rotting flesh and bones.” In other words, they were living a life of hypocrisy by trying to look good on the outside while being full of sinful corruption in their hearts.

There is certainly some application of this to our Christian lives. The rebuke of Jesus reminds all of us that God wants us to be clean on the inside as well the outside. Both are important to God. This is what 2 Corinthians 7:1 is teaching. We are to be clean on the outside and inside.

The concept of “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” means that we are to possess reverence (a reverential fear) for God’s holy character, not wanting to displease Him with our lives. As we learn to properly fear (reverence) God in His majestic holiness we will keep growing in our own holiness. The word “perfecting” does not mean to live perfectly and never again sin. It means to “bring to an end” or to reach a goal in life where we are more mature and Christlike in our character and conduct. When we are “perfecting holiness” we are growing and reaching a goal of greater consecration, devotion, and holiness. We are making spiritual progress and advancement in our Christian living and consecration to God.

Again, this verse does not suggest that it is ever possible to become perfectly holy while still here on earth. Practical sanctification is a process that goes on through our lifetime. We are to keep perfecting it over a lifetime, striving to reach a goal of greater sanctification and conformity to Christ’s character and ways.

The godly Robert Murray McCheyne once wrote:

“Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a man to be on this side of heaven.”

The Bible teaches progressive sanctification - not sinless perfection. We should not strive for perfection but greater sanctification, holiness, and Christlikeness in our lives.

2 Corinthians 3:18

“But we all (*every Christian*), with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord (*we are to see the beauty of Christ in our lives*), are changed (*progressively – not perfectly in this life*) into the same image from glory to glory (*from one manifestation of the beauty of Christlike character to another*), even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (*through the Holy Spirit’s life-transforming power*).

Living the Christian life is not really that complicated. We are to be holy and practice sanctification (consecration to God) in our everyday deportment, decisions, and directions that we take in life. It’s a separation from sin and all ungodly patterns and ways that reflect cultural worldliness and which dishonor God’s holiness. We are to practice holiness progressively (not expecting perfection) but at the same time we must be absolutely devoted to it, without hypocrisy and compromise.

Paul’s goal was not to reach perfection but to become more Christlike in his walk on a daily basis.

Philippians 3:13 -14

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended (*laid hold on perfection or perfect Christlikeness*): but *this* one thing I do (*the ultimate priority for Christian living*) forgetting those things which are behind (*past defeats, regrets, sins*), and reaching forth unto those things which are before (new victories, new vision, fresh starts), I press (*press on, pursue with great intensity and effort*) toward the mark (*the goal of being more like Christ – progressive sanctification and Christlikeness*) for the prize (*reward*) of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (*God’s high or heavenly call for us to live a holy and consecrated life*).



Although we can enjoy many victories in this life and get certain sins behind us so they no longer rule our lives, we can never reach the state of perfection. This means our goal should not be perfection for this is an unrealistic and unachievable goal. Our goal should be to strive for greater Christlikeness on a daily basis. In doing so, we will overcome sin and be freed from its enslaving power. Sanctification and holiness is a journey that lasts a lifetime. Over the period of our lives, we are to become more like Christ in our character and conduct. Christlikeness should be winning over carnality.

God wants us to live our lives in the present tense! He wants us to be determined and fully committed to our pursuit of holiness and Christlikeness.

“I’m pressing on the upward way,  
New heights I’m gaining every day;  
Still praying as I onward bound,  
“Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.  
Lord, lift me up, and let me stand  
By faith on Canaan’s tableland;  
A higher plane than I have found,

Holiness is Christlikeness. Sanctification is spirituality. If we lack this commitment or devotion to Christlike living, then we are going to become carnal and worldly. We must make the choice between Christlikeness or carnality, holiness or hellishness, righteousness or rebellion.

The old saying is still true:

“If it looks like the world and sounds like the world - it is the world.”

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 commands us as Christians:

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial (*the worthless one – another name for Satan*)? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”



Paul is essentially saying, “Don’t compromise.” Mixing righteousness with unrighteousness, spiritual light with darkness, Christ work with Satan’s work, and living like and infidel (unbeliever) in our daily lives is nothing but compromise. We cannot mix the two in a blender and expect to live a holy and devoted life to Christ. Trying to mix these two incompatible

realms of living creates a hybrid creature of the world that is not the “new creature” of creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Mixing that which is righteous with unrighteousness or light with darkness creates a pot of worldly mixture that is not pleasing to God. An old Plymouth Brethren once said to me: “Remember that God hates a mixture!”

Satan wants to keep us from living the kind of separated and simple life that God requires for His people. In Leviticus 10:10 God commands His people to put a “difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.” It’s true - God hates a mixture. The principle of distinction has not changed but is carried through into the New Testament (2 Cor. 6:14-17). By the way, this means we should not use the sound and musical style that Satan introduced into society to bring about the hippie movement, a type of sensual and musical rebellion created to support so-called free sex or immorality, rebellion against God and the government, and the promotion of drugs. The principle behind God’s moral or ethical commands do not change. If we really want to live the simple or devoted life that is free from hypocrisy, we will not mix truth with error, light with darkness, right with wrong, righteousness with unrighteousness, or holy living with unholy living.

Compromise divides your loyalty between God and Satan and ultimately affects your consecration to God. Attempting to be holy and unholy at the same time takes us away from our “simplicity” or devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).

Bob Jones Sr. has likened the Christian who compromises to a soldier in the civil War who tried to save his neck by wearing a Confederate jacket and

Union pants at the same time. The Yankees fired at his jacket and the Rebels shot at his legs! It never pays to compromise!

Instead of living the simple life of devotion to Christ we can easily compromise with that which is unholy and find ourselves unsanctified, unholy, and unfit for God's use.

2 Timothy 2:21

"If a man therefore purge himself from these (the errant ways of evil doers and their false doctrine), he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified (hagiazo = reverent or hallow and therefore set apart unto God with purity and holiness), and meet (fit, profitable) for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work."

Purging and purity is necessary in the Christian life if we want to be used by our Master the Lord Jesus Christ. James 1:27 speaks of the importance of keeping ourselves "unspotted from the world" (*the system of spiritual wickedness that is against God*).

My wife and I have been eating low-carb and calorie popsicles. They are not as good as the real ones, but they are not bad either. Well, one of the problems I have is when eating them the dark chocolate coating breaks off and falls on my shirt or pants. Of course, dark chocolate is not the easiest stain to remove from clothing. When James says to remain "unspotted from the world" he is saying, "Don't let the world soil you." The word "unspotted" means to remain spotless (unsoiled) from vice and worldly ambitions and loves.

What is the world? The word is an organized system made up of a set of ideas, ideologies, people, activities, and purposes that are opposed to God and take us sway from his holy purpose for our lives. The world has its own idea of success, its own plans, programs, and purposes, its pride, lust, pleasures, and corrupt principles and motives that are contrary to righteousness.

Here is the point. If we don't have a strong, Biblical, separatist, philosophy, and backbone to go with it we are going to eventually compromise with the

world. Instead of colliding with the age and refusing its allurements, we are going to compromise with it.

Romans 12:9

“Let love be without dissimulation (hypocrisy). Abhor (detest) that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

If we are going to stay devoted to Christ and therefore remain simple in our living and walk with God, we must remain committed to Him in a separated or holy way. Christians should remain separated from all evil, unrighteousness, unholiness, false teaching, and the “last days” apostasy. Compromise takes us away from our devotion or commitment to Christ and this is what Paul feared.

The old saying is true:

“Compromise takes us further than we want to go, keeps us longer than we want to stay, and costs us more than we want to pay.”

2 Corinthians 11:3

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

If Satan corrupts our minds, he will corrupt our lives. God’s people must remain devoted to Christ by keeping their own lives pure from sin and spiritual contamination.

God wants us to live the simple life which involves a decision to remain unmixed from the world in our outward actions, associations, and activities. Living the simple (unmixed) life is living a daily, separated life where we are not conforming ourselves to the world (Rom. 12:1-2). When unholy mixture occurs, this corrupts our simple devotion to Christ. This is what Satan wants. The Devil wants to get us off course and take us away from our simplicity or devotion to what is holy and right.

Dr. Heller said:

“We might sometimes conclude that 90 percent is good but what about the 10 percent that is bad?”

We often overlook what should be shunned and put out of our lives. We forget the principle that says, “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). Satan wants to confuse us from a spiritual perspective by diverting us from God’s intended spiritual course for our lives. He is a master at this trade. Satan wants to complicate things for us by keeping us from practicing old-fashioned Biblical separation.

The Devil wants us to walk down little rabbit trails that consist of wrong thinking and a wayward direction which ultimately moves us away from the “old paths” (Jer. 6:16) and “the good and the right way” (1 Sam. 12:23). The Devil detours our lives and sidetracks us from living the simple or devoted way of life which involves a wholehearted commitment to doing what is right and living as God would want us to live, holy, completely surrendered, and ready to do His bidding.

“Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;  
Spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone.  
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;  
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.”

Keep it simple! Stay consecrated or devoted to God’s holiness.

### **9. The simplicity or devotion of glorifying Christ in our lives.**



Another area of simplicity or devotion to Christ revolves around glorifying God with our lips and life. In today’s culture people tend to glorify other people. Athletes are glorified (praised and given great honor) for their physical talents and championships. Political leaders are glorified for

their leadership. Unfortunately, we are often disappointed by these all too human objects of glory. We discover that the glorified athlete cheated and the glorified politician lied.

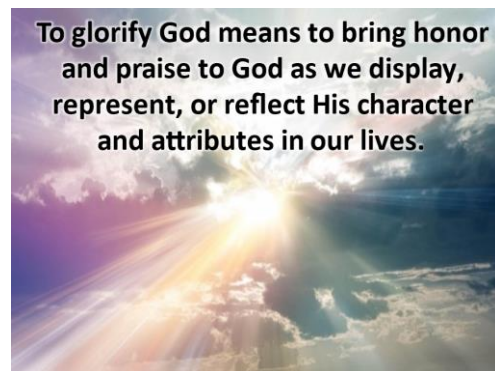
This is why the Christian is to focus on giving God glory. What is the chief end or purpose of man? This well-known and classic answer has been given in the Westminster Confession. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Now this is keeping it simple! Just glorify God and enjoy His presence in our lives.

The glory of God signifies the magnificence or awesome splendor of the display of His attributes, perfections, and person which are vividly portrayed as brilliant light coming forth from His throne (Dan. 2:22; 1 Tim. 6:16; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 22:5). It is this glory (God's attributes and character) that we as Christians are to reflect and display in our lives and before others. This is called glorifying God or properly representing God's character and ways in our daily conduct. In other words, we bring a small sample of God's magnificent and resplendent glory down here where we live when we act like God!

This is what Isaiah 43:7 means when it states: "For I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." This is true for every Christian. When we become God's new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) we are born again and are now to glorify God with our lives – revealing His glory in our conduct and living.

The Bible teaches that we glorify God in both worship (our lips) and our conduct and character (our life).

To glorify God means to bring honor and praise to God as we display, represent, or reflect His character and attributes in our lives. Think about it. We cannot bring glory or honor to God if we are not properly representing who God is in our daily living and relationships with others.



1 Corinthians 10:31 says:

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory (*doxa – praise and honor*) of God.”

In other words, in all our giving, living, eating, drinking, working, worshipping, and playing of sports God is to be glorified. This means God is to be honored as we reflect His character through all our actions and attitudes that pertain to our everyday living. In order to glorify God or give Him the honor He deserves we must display and represent Him in everything we do. In other words, we glorify God when we represent His holiness, righteousness, love, mercy, and grace in our worship, relationships, and everyday living.

The New Testament word for “glory” (*doxa*) is where we derive the word *doxology*.

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heav’nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!”

To glorify God means to give Him *doxology* or praise. The etymology of the Greek word actually connotes forming an opinion, judgment, or view of something or someone. In the case of God, we form a right opinion of Him for He is holy, good, righteous, loving, and merciful. Our estimate of God results in glorifying Him in praise, honor, worship, thanksgiving, and with all aspects of our living.

This is how glorifying God works. First, we form a proper opinion, sense, and understanding about God from the Scriptures (God is holy, righteous, loving, merciful, gracious, etc.). Second, we then bring praise and honor to Him (ascribe His worth back to Him) as we reflect these same Godlike qualities in our own worship, character, and conduct. In other words, glorifying God is always linked with a proper assessment and understanding of His character and ways - who God really is in His eternal being and attributes. Therefore, I glorify or honor God when I properly assess what

God is like and then represent or display His character and attributes in my time of worship and lifestyle choices.

For instance, when we seek to glorify God in our worship we are essentially saying: "God, this is what I think about You." This is my opinion and assessment of your character and attributes." This is somewhat alarming when we see the marketing of worship today which in various ways has become fleshly-oriented, man-focused, man-pleasing entertainment instead of truly God-glorifying.

Johann Sebastian Bach once said:

"All music should have no other end and aim than the glory of God and the soul's refreshment; where this is not remembered there is no real music but only a devilish hub-bub."

Bach headed his compositions with the words: "Jesus help me." He ended them with "To God alone the praise."

When we think of the glory of the Lord, our minds are often flooded with images of brilliant light.

1 Timothy 6:16 declares this about God:

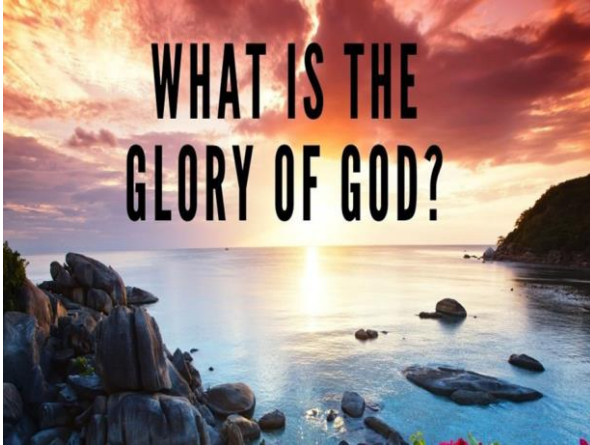
"Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

This is why we sing:

"Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise."

It is certainly fitting to understand God's resplendent glory as a visible expression of light. Scripture often describes the glory of God in terms of a radiant light that shines brighter than anything that we experience on earth. The term glory is a word used in the Bible to describe God's eternal splendor and majesty which is reflected in radiant light.





The brilliant light that emanates from God's eternal being represents who God is in His unchanging attributes, character, and ways. In the simplest of terms, God's glory is the essence of His nature, and we give glory or honor to Him by recognizing and representing His nature and likeness in our everyday living. God's glory is the radiance of his

crowning attribute of holiness and the radiance of his many other infinitely worthy and valuable perfections. This means we can only give Him glory when we properly reflect His attributes in our daily lives in relation to everything that we do.

When I am holy I glorify God. When I am loving I glorify God. When I am righteous I glorify God. When I am merciful and gracious to others I am glorifying God. When I am humble, a servant, compassionate, and forgiving I am glorifying God with my life. This is why we can sing these words.

“In my life Lord,  
Be glorified, be glorified;  
In my life Lord,  
Be glorified today.

Only when possessing a right view about God can we properly reflect God in our worship, music, and overall lifestyle. When glorying the Lord, we demonstrate before the world who God is and what God is like in His eternal character and ways. Everything we do is to revolve around God's glory which means we are to bring honor to God as we reflect and display His attributes, character, and righteous ways in our daily conduct and living. In other words, we can only glorify God when we uphold His character and properly represent Him in everything we do.

I'm convinced that God is not getting the glory in what man identifies as worship. The theatrics and entertainment of men have entered the worship scene and has overtaken the glory of God. God is not represented in His character of holiness and righteousness and man's entertainment is stealing the glory away from God by placing it upon people and their religious performances. Many today possess the mentality that going to church is "showtime for the sheep."

Wendell Heller once said:  
"You can fill a building but not build a church."

Hand waving, the sound of a rebellious rock culture, dancing, wiggling around on the stage, comedian type preaching, organs playing in the background while a man tells tear-jerking stories have turned the church service into the atmosphere of a hockey arena or football game, where certain people are playing on the field, and the rest are like spectators sitting in the grandstands, clapping and waiving their hands. Is God really getting the glory in such an atmosphere as this or has the glory and focus been shifted to man? It's clear that much of what is happening today in the modern church is focused on man's glory but not God's honor.

Isaiah 42:8

"I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name (*not Buddha, Allah, or any other false god or cult leader*): and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

When people are praised, applauded, and when they draw attention to themselves through entertaining actions and rock music God's glory is essentially replaced with man's glory.

A. W. Tozer once said:

"People have been over stimulated to the place where their nerves are jaded and their tastes corrupted. Natural things have been rejected to make room for things artificial. The sacred has been secularized, the holy vulgarized and worship converted into a form of entertainment."

John 12:43 states, “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” Matthew 6:5 reminds us how human nature wants “to be seen of men.” God’s Word teaches that we should not serve “with eyeservice, as menpleasers” (Eph. 6:6) nor seek glory from men (“nor of men sought we glory” – 1 Thess. 2:6). I personally believe that many church services have become a reflection of entertainment since it is the reflection of a society that is bent on expressing praise to man in some way instead of directing all praise toward God. We must remember that God deserves all praise (Ps. 49:18; 107:8; 109:30; 1 Pet. 4:11).

God cannot get any glory when our worship becomes fleshly and self-oriented. The real tragedy today among many Christians and churches is that they are misrepresenting God and sometimes don’t realize it. God cannot be truly glorified (properly honored, revered, and praised) when we are reflecting musical rebellion in our time of worship and when we are living by the dictates or promptings of our flesh in our daily living instead of the Holy Spirit’s leading (Gal. 5:18).

Understanding and applying the glory of God to our actions and decisions is lifechanging. We need to possess a better grasp on what God’s glory is and how to glorify God with our lives so that others can see His glory reflected in us.

This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:16:

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

So how do we really glorify God? How do we devote ourselves to God’s glory? The Biblical concept behind glorifying God involves two basic matters.

- We recognize who God is by assessing and knowing Him better - His attributes, character, righteous perfections and holy ways.
- We reflect who God is by applying His attributes to our lives and therefore honor Him as we reflect and represent Him in everything we do.

Once again, God cannot be glorified if we are not properly representing Him. We glorify God when we have a proper *assessment* of His attributes and ways and then *ascribe* praise and honor to Him in our worship and everyday living which is to be a reflection of His eternal attributes, unchanging character, and ways. We cannot glorify God if we are not acting like God! We cannot glorify God if we are not representing God in our worship, conduct, character, and attitudes.

Here are some application questions.

- ✓ Are you more concerned about what you want in your time of worship (a feeling, a buzz, rock beats, an emotional high) than properly representing God's character of righteousness and holiness?
- ✓ Are you giving back to God in your time of worship, ascribing worth to Him, or have you been greedily taking what you want out of a self-made worship experience?
- ✓ Can you really be glorifying God with your daily life when you have unforgiveness and bitterness in your heart?
- ✓ Can you be honoring or glorifying God with your life when your heart is filled with pride, jealousy, and worldly living?
- ✓ Can you honor God if you are enslaved to some sin?
- ✓ Can you glorify God in your marriage when there is a rift or division between you and your spouse?
- ✓ Can I glorify God when I am creating unwarranted division in a family or church?
- ✓ Have you been glorifying God, properly represent Him in your speech, inward life, and attitudes?

God's honor and glory does not really matter to many Christians today. Many of God's saints are more concerned about their own honor and ways instead of God's honor or glory. We are to be a reflection of God's glory (representing who God is) in our worship, speech, and living.

- First, to glorify God pertains to being devoted to Christ in worship (our lips).

We certainly bring praise and honor to the Lord as we worship Him.

Psalm 86:12

“I will praise thee (in worship), O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.”

The Old Testament word “glorify” (kabad – pronounced kawbode) refers to something that is heavy, weighty, and therefore by extension something that is significant, dignified, honorable, exalted, and revered. This is certainly true of God. He is weighty, He should be revered and exalted for He is filled with kingly majesty which belongs to Him alone as the supreme ruler, possessing majesty in the sense of the absolute perfection of His deity within His exalted state of dignity and holiness in Heaven.

Remember that glorifying God in our time of worship is giving back to Him – not primary getting something from Him. We have a lot of greedy worshippers today in modern Christianity. They claim they need and want a certain beat, sound, atmosphere, and style of worship for without this they cannot truly worship God. They tell me, “I need my Sunday buzz!” I’m afraid that some Christians have fallen into the trap of worshipping their worship instead of worshipping God!

Notice the repeated emphasis of giving back to the Lord in our time of worship. Worship is not getting what we want but giving back to the Lord, so He alone gets glory and is both the beginning and end of all worship.

Psalm 18:49

“Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.”

Psalm 29:1

“Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.”

Psalm 29:2

“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.”

Psalm 96:7

“Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.”

Psalm 96:8

“Give unto the LORD the glory *due unto* his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.”

Psalm 105:1

“O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people.”

Psalm 106:1

“Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.”

Psalm 107:1

“O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.”

In all these worship verses we discover that worship is to be geared around giving back to God His worth, expressing praise and thanksgiving to God for His glory, the revelation of who God is in His eternal and unchanging holiness, righteousness, mercy, grace, love, and goodness.

We have a smorgasbord in our home area called “Shady Maple Smorgasbord.” Wendell Heller loved eating here when he would have meetings at the church. We would often take speakers for lunch and they could choose anything that they wanted. As I think of a smorgasbord, this is the way some have come to view worship.

Sadly, for many today Sunday has turned into a cafeteria style of worship which says, “Give me what I want, or I cannot or will not worship God.” Many have lost sight of what true worship is all about. Worship is not greedily getting something that we think we need to worship God – a rock beat, a certain sound, a specific atmosphere, smoke coming out of the stage, flashing lights, synthesizers, etc. Again, many Christians have fallen into the trap of worshipping their form of worship instead of worshipping God in His eternal character and being. They have come to the table not to give to God but to greedily get something from God in their time of worship – a certain feeling, stimulation, a specific sound, an emotional buzz,

jamming, or some kind of euphoric experience which is based upon one's own desires and flesh.

It's very important to know that worship is reserved only for God – not for our own greedy wants and desires. If we are not careful our worship style can become a god to us, and we can end up missing out on true worship.

Exodus 20:3-6 - Quote

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me.”

Sadly, we can put other gods before the true God in our worship – the god of our feelings, fleshly desires, and false representations of God. True worship is always to be God-centered– not man-centered worship. When we draw attention to ourselves, we are not giving God the glory. Christians can very easily get caught up in where they should worship, what music they should sing in worship, a specific atmosphere of worship, and how their worship looks to other people. Focusing on these things misses the point of worship. True worship occurs from within our hearts. It has nothing to do with outward manmade requirements and preferences such as strobe lights, rock rhythms, and other religious trappings like altars, candles, and the wearing of robes.

Jesus said in John 4:24 says “God is spirit.” We communicate with God “in spirit” (the location of worship - from within) by possessing a sincere desire to worship Him from the inward spiritual part of our human existence – not by worshipping in material buildings or outward locations, with liturgical patterns, and with empty and external forms of ritualistic or self-made worship. All true worship occurs from within – not from without. We also worship God “in truth” (the way to worship - according to Scripture) by not falsely misrepresenting Him or His character of holiness and righteousness.

We worship according to the divinely revealed truth found in the Bible concerning God, His character, and His ways. The human “spirit” that is born again (John 3:6) is the higher part of our human existence. It’s from within the realm of our spirit (“the inner man” – Eph. 3:16) that we delight in communicating with God who is a spiritual being. But we are to do so with “truth” which means in accordance with divinely revealed truth, to worship the true God in a correct manner that represents Him and His ways (John 4:22).

Someone remarked that when we attempt to worship God without truth it becomes "Scarecrow worship" and therefore "It would be better if it only had a brain." Scarecrow worship is a brainless type of worship that lacks truthfulness – it does not align with God’s truth concerning Himself and ways. They also explained there can be “Tin Man worship" that would be better "if it only had a heart!" Tin Man worship means that we can worship God externally but not internally, without any heart and desire to really honor Him. This is basically what Jesus is teaching in John 4:24.



God wants us to inspect our worship (John 4:22) and make sure it is not “strange fire” (Lev. 10:1; Neb. 3:4; 26:61) and therefore a reflection of the worldly culture (Rom. 12:2). A holy and righteous God cannot be properly glorified (represented) when we imbibe and mimic the sounds of a rock and roll culture of rebellion in

our time of worship. Righteousness and unrighteousness and light and darkness are incompatible realms (2 Cor. 6:14-17). From the very beginning and throughout the Scriptures God tells us how to worship and lays out His code of ethics for worship. He states that we are to worship Him alone, reflecting order, reverence, His holiness and attributes, and therefore glorify Him through our worship (Exodus 20:3; 34:14; Isa. 42:8; 48:11; Lev. 23; Ps. 96:9; 1 Cor. 14:40).



In a very practical way in our Christian life, we need to be devoted to Christ's glory through our continued worship of Him. This means that if we want to make our life simpler, then we must keep worshipping the Lord on a daily basis and maintain our focus upon Him and His glory. Our hearts need to remain open to God and give Him the worship that He alone is worthy of.

Praise changes things. It will change your life. It will bring freshness and victory into your life as you focus your attention and worship upon glorifying God instead of glorying in your own flesh.

“When morning gilds the skies,  
My heart awaking cries:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!  
Alike at work and prayer  
To Jesus I repair:  
May Jesus Christ be praised!”

- Second, to glorify God means to be devoted to Christ in our character and conduct (our life).

1 Corinthians 10:31 again states:

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

This includes much more than just our worship. We must apply God's glory to everything we do in life – right down to our eating habits! We should want to properly reflect His name (character) in all of our actions, attitudes, and aspirations in life. In other words, we also need to be devoted to Christ in our daily living. Reflecting the glory of God should always be our aim and purpose in life (Rom. 15:7; 2 Cor. 4:15). We should always strive to glorify God in our speech, business, work, hobbies, sports, singing, marriage, relationships, churches, and overall character. Our goal in life should be to glorify God in all that we do and desire.

Remember that the word “glory” means to form a proper opinion or judgment about God and therefore we not only worship with this correct opinion in our hearts, but we also are to live for Him in a way that reflects

our opinion we have about God (His holiness, mercy, love, kindness, giving, etc.). To glorify God therefore is to bring honor and praise to His name by the way we live, as we mirror His image and likeness in our character and conduct, or when we seek to uphold His reputation and character in our daily lives.

Again, when we glorify God by the way we live or how we conduct ourselves, we are essentially saying: “This is what I think about You God.”

To glorify God means that our attitudes, decisions, character, conduct, emotions, worship, what we do in life, and every area of our lives becomes a living expression and testimony of what we think about God, how we view God, what our opinion is concerning God.

1 Corinthians 1:31

“That, according as it is written, He that glorieth (*boasts*), let him glory (boast) in the Lord.”

2 Corinthians 10:17

“But he that glorieth (*boasts*), let him glory (boast) in the Lord.”

As Christians we have nothing to glory or boast about. It’s all about the Lord, who He is and what He has done for us, and what He is doing in our lives today. Look at the cross, remember the hell and damnation we deserved, remember how He made us into a new creation, remember how we were nothing until He found us, remember His saving and sanctifying touch upon our lives. We have absolutely nothing to boast about!

These verses remind us that the more we take ourselves out of the picture and put God and His glory first, the more devoted we will be to Christ and the simpler life will become for us. However, the more we promote ourselves and our own glory, the less devoted we will be to Christ and our life will become more difficult and complicated.

Simplicity boils down to representing God in all our worship, actions, and attitudes of life. Keep it simple! Give God all the glory by glorifying Him in your life as you properly represent Him in everything that you do.

“To God be the glory, great things he has done!  
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,  
Who yielded his life an atonement for sin,  
And opened the life-gate that we may go in.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
Let the earth hear His voice;  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
Let the people rejoice;  
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,  
And give Him the glory; great things He hath done.”

### **10. The simplicity or devotion of looking unto Christ.**



I heard about a man in Texas who invited a lot of bachelors out to his ranch. He got them all around and then stood up before them and said, "Look over there at my Olympic size swimming pool. I have filled it with crocodiles and alligators." He said, "If there is anyone willing to swim from one end of that swimming pool to the

other end of that pool and get out on the other side alive, I'll give him one of three things. I'll give him a 500-acre ranch, a million dollars in cash, or the hand of my daughter in marriage. Whichever one you want."

He had no sooner said it than somebody jumped into that pool. "Splash," he heard it and looked and there was a guy in that pool who didn't even take his shoes off. He still had a three-piece suit on.

He was swimming for all he was worth. Water was flying everywhere. Crocodiles snapping and alligators chasing him, and this guy was going through it all. He swam all the way to the other end. He climbed out soaking wet without a scratch on him. He was breathing mighty deeply trying to get his breath. The rich Texan went over to him and said, "Son, I

meant this as a practical joke. I didn't really mean for anyone to swim that pool. But you did it and I'm as good as my word. Which one do you want, the five-hundred-acre ranch, the one million dollars in cash, or my daughter's hand in marriage?" The young man looked at the rich Texan and said, "I just want to get my hands on the man that pushed me into that swimming pool!"

I have discovered over the years that some Christians need crocodiles and alligators to motivate them! But our final point in our study on the simple life reminds us that Jesus is to motivate our lives to live the Christian life. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, we will have all the motivation we need to live a dedicated and devoted life for Him.

Our theme verse for this study has been 2 Corinthians 11:3 which speaks of the importance of "simplicity" (devotion to Christ). We have discovered that when we are devoted to Christ our lives are much simpler and less complicated from a spiritual perspective. A final area of "simplicity" or being devoted to Christ relates to the importance of keeping our eyes focused on Jesus. Satan wants to keep us from "looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:2) who is to be our true inspiration and motivation for Christian living. Instead of keeping our Christian life simple by focusing on Jesus and finding our sufficiency and inspiration in Him, we can very easily be sidetracked from Christ and the example and legacy of faith He leaves behind for us.

Hebrews 12:1-2

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed (*surrounded*) about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author (*originator*) and finisher (*completer*) of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

There are three important observations from this text.

A. The faithful that went before us.

Hebrews 12:1 says, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed (*surrounded*) about with so great a cloud of witnesses.” The words “compassed about” speaks of being surrounded by a large crowd in an amphitheater or sports arena. For this reason, some have taken Hebrews 12:1 to mean that the heavenly saints are sitting in the arena of Heaven watching the earthly saints live out their lives here on earth.

Many over the years have interpreted verse one to mean that while God’s children are living down here on earth, they are in some sense surrounded by the heavenly saints, who are sitting in the celestial grandstands of Heaven, watching the saints run the earthly race of their Christian lives. In other words, many believe that the saints in Heaven are like spectators in a stadium (like the fans sitting in the stands at the Super Bowl) witnessing our every move and cheering us on.

While this may seem comforting to contemplate, the Bible does not teach that the saints in Heaven are watching us. It must be acknowledged that this interpretation does not align with the context and flow of thought from Hebrews chapter eleven.

Let me give you some deep theology as we begin to look at this subject. Put on your thinking caps. Hebrews chapter 12 follows Hebrews chapter 11. I know that this is a brilliant deduction! But seriously, the two chapters are connected together for a reason, and the writer is not introducing something unrelated to chapter 11 such as the saints in Heaven watching us.

The Bible is teaching that the “witnesses” in Hebrews 12:1 are not our modern-day loved ones who have departed and are now in Heaven looking down on us, but the faithful saints in Hebrews 11 who lived victorious lives by trusting in God. The Old Testament saints like Noah, Moses, Abraham, Rahab and all the rest mentioned in Hebrews 11 (the heroes of faith) in a figurative sense become a witness and example to us (like a martyr) on how to live by faith today when the world around is against us.

The word “witnesses” in this context does not mean “spectators.” Our English word “martyr” comes directly from the Greek word *martoos* which

is translated here as “witness.” Therefore, the people of Hebrews 11 are not witnessing what we are doing as spectators in Heaven; rather, like a martyr as this word suggests, they are bearing witness to us by their own exemplary living how God can see us through life. So, these saints are not witnessing or watching us – we are to be looking at them, the testimony they have left behind for us on how to maintain a strong and vibrant faith in the hard and difficult trials of life. They are heroes of faith and give an authentic witness to us on how to keep on keeping on and remain faithful to God to the end of our days on earth. They are not looking at us; we are to be looking back to them (the Old Testament saints) and they become a witness and example to us on how to live by faith (Heb. 11:4,5,7,9, 11, 17, 20, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31).

So, these are not heavenly saints witnessing us but earthly saints of the past who have left behind a great legacy of faith and bear witness to us on what it means to walk by faith in hard times. These “witnesses” are not the saints floating around on clouds in Heaven as spectators watching us. Instead, the saints of Hebrews chapter 11 are compared to a great “cloud” (an idiom or symbolic expression of many people – a great assembly, multitude, a throng) who went before us to give us an historic witness or demonstration on how to live by faith to the end of our days on earth.

William MacDonald concurs with this:

“This does not mean that they are spectators of what goes on on earth. Rather they witness to us by their lives of faith and endurance and set a high standard for us to duplicate.”

So, the Old Testament saints are not literally witnessing or watching us but rather they become witnesses to us in a figurative sense, giving us an example, testimony, and inspiration on how to walk by faith. The writer’s main point is that we have many good examples of people who faithfully trusted God in the past who are bearing witness to us by their lives and testimonies how to walk by faith in difficult times. Go back and read Hebrews chapter eleven!

One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling

to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness. As can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: "Jump! I will catch you." But the boy protested, "Daddy, I can't see you." The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters."

We are reminded that God sees what we are passing through and that when we place our faith in His purpose and plan for our lives, whatever that might be, we can know that God will see us through. We can jump by faith, live by faith, and find that God will take care of us.

Glen Davidson felt God's call to the ministry while working as a successful businessman. He began taking Bible courses at night, and eventually obtained his Bible school degree. Prior to graduation, he informed his boss that he'd be leaving shortly to work as a pastor in a rural church. Neither the owner of the company nor the boss believed it, and they neglected to obtain a replacement for Glen. Eventually Glen told the boss that he really was leaving, and they needed to locate a replacement as soon as possible. The owner of the company still doubting Glen's sincerity, instructed Glen's boss, "Offer him a \$500.00 raise, and if he takes it, fire him on the spot!" Well, Glenn did not take the raise for nothing could deter him from doing God's will for his life. He was not motivated by money but by being devoted to Christ and His purpose for his life.

#### B. The race that is set before us.

Hebrews 12:1 goes on to say, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

The writer now paints the picture that Christians are involved in a race that must be won. The imagery of a race is seen elsewhere in Scripture.

1 Corinthians 9:24

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."

Christians are pictured as athletes running in a race. Of course, we do not enter a race to lose it. We enter a race to ultimately win it. We should strive to be winners – not losers! This should be our goal and ambition when it comes to participating in the race of the Christian life. Of course, we must understand that the race of the Christian life is not a competition against other saints but an individual race that needs to be won against the world, the flesh, and the Devil and which ends in victory and awards.

Paul brings this out in 2 Timothy 4:7-8:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Paul said, “I have finished my course.” He had won the race. There were many bumps and curves along the way, but he ended up gaining a win in the end. This reminds us that there is a race to be won, victories to gain, and reward at the end when we stand before Jesus Christ!

How do we stay in the race?

1. We get rid of the things that bog us down.

The Bible says, “let us lay aside every weight.” Weights in the Christian life can appear in many different forms. They might be specific people that are getting in the way of us winning the race. The weights might be money, fame, hobbies, or something else that steal away your devotion from Jesus Christ and keep you from running an effective Christian race. Weights bog us down! We need to stay loose and light in the race or else we will get far behind and in the end lose the race and reward which we otherwise could have gained.

My wife and I will exercise at a local track in our area that is open to the public. I remember seeing a man who was training for some event. He actually had a parachute hooked up to him so when he ran around the track the parachute would open and slow him down. I suppose he was



trying to build endurance but the sad thing is that the parachute was bogging him down.

You know, there are many things that can slow us up in the race of the Christian life. Sometimes there are things in our lives that are not necessarily sin, but which can get in the way of us serving and living for Jesus Christ as we should and therefore these weights bog us down. They act like parachutes that slow us down and keep us in the back of the race. Instead of advancing we are bogged down by the various weights that can impede our spiritual progress.

- ✓ Has something been holding your back from gaining ground in your race?
- ✓ Can you identify some weights in your life that might be bogging you down?
- ✓ Do you have a plan to get rid of the weights?

## 2. We get rid of the sin that overtakes our lives.

The Bible also speaks about “the sin which doth so easily beset us.” The word “beset” means to surround us and cause impediment. Any sin can bog us down from a spiritual perspective, but I suppose the writer could have a specific sin in mind after speaking about the faith demonstrated by all the saints (Hebrews 11) and the faith of Christ (“the finisher of faith” - Hebrews 12:2). The saints of the past and Christ Himself exhibited tremendous faith in their lives. In other words, “the sin” may very well be focusing on the specific sin of unbelief or not possessing faith in God’s plan and purpose for our lives, doubting God’s spiritual sufficiency or supply for us as we pass through trials and persecution.

This is a specific sin that can haunt us if we don’t deal with it. It keeps coming back to us and impeding our running ability in the race of the Christian life. If we are doubting and not depending on Christ’s power and sufficiency to meet our needs, we are going to lose our spiritual breath and stamina and stop running!

If we doubt God's purpose and providence over our lives, and His power to sustain us in the race, we can quickly revert to the back of the pack where there are many other losers! In fact, we might get out of the race completely and end up sitting in the grandstands eating popcorn and hotdogs! Some Christians allow the sin of unbelief to take them out of the race. They do not believe God can sustain them; they do not accept the changes God brings their way and flop in their faith. As a result, they stop running.

### 3. We get rid of the spirit of lethargy.

The Bible goes on to say that we must "run with patience the race that is set before us." Patience is an important aspect of running the race of the Christian life. We must pace ourselves and save some strength for the end of the race. We must learn to patiently endure the trials that come into our life and face them with God's grace. Patience is a virtue, a Christian virtue that is part of our maturing process.

James 1:3

"Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

You are not going to be effective in the race without perseverance or patience. Patience is what keeps us in the race, so we do not give up. It's what gives us the persevering spirit to go on and not quit. We are called upon to get rid of a spirit of lethargy and laxity and regain a spirit of endurance, enthusiasm, and motivation to live for Christ.

Ryan, Wendell Heller's grandson, who served in Iraq told his grandfather: "Sometimes the hard road is the best road!" He was right for it's the hard road that grows us and brings greater spirituality maturity and Christlikeness into our lives.

### C. The focus that is before us.

Hebrews 12:2

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus leaves behind the legacy of the greatest example of someone who lived by faith. His life, death, resurrection, and ascension inspire us to live by faith as He did while we pass through God's purpose and way for our lives. We are to keep our focus on Christ – His suffering, faith, and victory so we can be encouraged and inspired to go on in life.

Someone said:

“Look around and be distressed. Look within and be depressed. Look at Jesus and be at rest! “

I never saw an effective runner who was always looking behind his back. Lot's wife looked back and she was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26). We are not to be looking back while in the race. Instead of looking back we are to be “looking unto Jesus.” This is because Jesus is ahead of us - He is at the finish line waiting for us! If we are going to be effective in the race, we must be looking in the right direction – our eyes must be fixed upon Jesus!

“Open our eyes Lord,  
We want to see Jesus  
To reach out and touch Him  
And say that we love Him.  
Open our ears Lord  
And Help us to listen  
Open our eyes Lord  
We want to see Jesus!”

The secret of persistence is found in this phrase - "looking unto Jesus." Like all good runners, we must look away from all the distractions. Many times we look at other people and look at the past and look at the obstacles that are before us instead of looking unto Jesus.

The word “looking” conveys the idea to consider attentively. It means to turn the eyes away from other things and fix them on something. In this case, It's Jesus! Jesus is our inspiration and motivation to go on and live the Christian life! This is why we must look to Jesus, His example of faith, how He was beaten and bruised for each one of us and find the inspiration we need to go on in life. We must ultimately look to Jesus instead of the past,

people, or the pressures that we are facing. Christ's life and testimony will inspire us to go on!

We can stay in the race because our vision of Jesus thrills our souls and keep a fire burning in our hearts! We are to be looking to Jesus! When we get our eyes off Jesus we will not remain in the race. Of course, we cannot visually see Jesus so the writer obviously means we must be constantly reflecting on Jesus. Jesus is the answer! Jesus!

“Jesus, Jesus, Jesus; there's just something about that name.  
Master, Savior, Jesus, like the fragrance after the rain;  
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, let all Heaven and earth proclaim  
Kings and kingdoms will all pass away,  
But there's something about that name.”

How do we keep looking unto Jesus? How do we keep our focus on Jesus?

- a. We must look at His personal example of faith.

The Bible states that Jesus is “he is the author and finisher of *our* faith” (literally – “faith). The word “author” means, “one who takes a lead and gives an example” as a captain of a ship would. The word can also suggest a pioneer or trailblazer since they are people who take the lead and open new pathways of exploration. They are examples of leaders and originators of good things. The word “author” was used in Hebrews 2:10 and suggests here that Jesus “pioneered” or trailblazed the path of faith Christians should follow.

Jesus was the greatest example of One who walked and lived by faith, according to God's will, and He alone is our prime example that we must look to or think about daily and hourly! He also was the “finisher of faith.” This means that Jesus “perfected” or consummated the way of faith (how to live by faith) since He reached the end of the race successfully. He followed the Father's will and died upon the cross and then rose again demonstrating to us how to live by faith and be victorious.

What was it that enabled our Lord to endure the cross? It was His faith that enabled Him to endure. He kept the eyes of His faith on “the joy that was set before Him” as we will see in a moment. What a pioneer He was! What an example of one who lived by faith and finished the race victoriously! Jesus provides us with the greatest example of someone who lived by faith and His faith legacy provides us with incentive to stay in the race today and do God’s will. We must keep looking unto Jesus, reflecting or thinking about Him and His tremendous faith in the Father’s purpose and plan for His life. He is our pioneer and trailblazer that gives to us the inspiration to go on in life and never quit!

b. We must look at His passion upon the cross.

The Scriptures go on to say that Jesus “endured the cross, despising the shame.” The cross speaks of Christ’s passion. The cross of Jesus! We need to embrace the cross of Jesus once again and in a greater way.

“Embrace the cross  
Where Jesus suffered  
Though it will cost  
All you claim as yours  
Your sacrifice will seem small  
Beside the treasure  
Eternity can't measure  
What Jesus holds in store.”



If you will but see Jesus dying on the cross for you in agony, great pain, and shame, you will get back in the race. If you see Jesus on the cross with the crown of thorns upon His head, with his face so marred more than any other man, and taking your sins upon Himself, you will get back in the race!! You will throw off the weights immediately, get rid of your unbelief, and start running! There is a cross that must remain before us if we are going to stay in the race – it’s the cross of Jesus.

Why don't we serve Jesus more than we do? Why don't we do what is right? It's because we do not see Jesus lifted upon the cross. We forget that Jesus died for me! Christians are flocking to motivational seminars today to try and discover how to recharge their spiritual batteries in life. But there is only one seminar that I must attend to motivate me and keep me in the race. It's called the seminar of the cross. At the foot of the cross my heart will be broken. At the foot of the cross my tears will flow from my cheeks. At the foot of the cross I will be motivated to live for Jesus. Jesus endured the cross and He sets the example for us to endure.

"As at the cross I humbly bow  
And gaze upon Thy thorn-crowned brow,  
And view the precious bleeding form  
By cruel nails so bruised and torn,  
Knowing Thy suffering was for me,  
In grief I cry, "How can it be?"

The cross will change our attitudes in life and get us off of our lazy chair! The cross will change everything! I don't need a four-point sermon on how to get up when I'm down. I need to see only one thing – Jesus dying for me. Jesus died for me! It doesn't mean a whole lot to some Christians anymore! This is why they are disobedient, and this is why they have dropped out of the race.

Jesus endured the cross! Since He endured for us, we should endure for Him today and stay in the race and be committed to Him and His cause. We have lost sight of the wonder of the cross and the wonder of it all! You are a lazy, uncommitted, and going to Church only once in a while because you have not seen Jesus dying for you on the cross!

I am reminded of what A.J. Gossip said:

"Get the people in the sight of Calvary. Pause there... hushed and reverent; enable them to look, to see it, make it real to them, not just an old tale that has lost its wonder and its stab, but a tremendous awful fact."

Jesus was "despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2) which means He was thinking little or nothing about the shame He would face. This is because He was

thinking about you and me. Reflect on all the shame that was associated with Calvary. Oh, the shame of it, my Lord, crucified Him that day! The cross was the most cruel and disgraceful death known to mankind.

Galatians 3:13 says, “Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree.” It was on the cross that Jesus was stripped of His garments, and He hung upon the cross in open nakedness and shame. Then too, there upon the cross Jesus experienced the legal or judicial separation of the Father in the hours of darkness when he bore the sins of the world (Matt. 27:46). Jesus experienced great shame for you and me. We will never understand the depth of His shame that He went through in those hours of darkness upon the cross.

Jesus suffered and died on the cross for a reason: “who for the joy that was set before him.” Jesus went to the cross because of the joy that He looked forward to after His sufferings were complete. What joy was this? It was a twofold joy.

First, Jesus looked forward to the joy of His exaltation. It was the anticipated joy of His resurrection and ascension to the Father. Jesus saw the joy of His resurrection and exaltation at the Father’s right hand and this helped him to endure the cross.

From Psalm 16:8–10, Jesus knew that He would come out of the tomb alive. “I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.”

So “the joy that was set before Him” would include Jesus completing the Father’s will on the cross, His resurrection, and exaltation. This is alluded to in the context where Jesus assumed His triumphant position and is “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

Jesus anticipated this joyous occasion in John 17:5:

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

Second, Jesus looked forward to the joy of saved souls. The joy that Jesus possessed was also centered upon His joyful anticipation of presenting believers to the Father in glory.

Jude 1:24

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

The joy that Jesus looked forward to would also include the joyful anticipation and prospect of the salvation of lost people. Jesus did not enjoy the pain and agony of the cross, but he did look forward to the many souls that would be saved through the completion of His redemptive work. He looked forward to the joy and anticipation of seeing you and me saved! So Jesus looked past the suffering and shame and kept His eyes on you and me.

“I shall forever lift my eyes to Calvary  
To view the cross where Jesus died for me.  
How marvelous the grace that caught my falling soul  
He looked beyond my fault and saw my need.”

c. We must look at His position at God’s right hand.

The Bible continues to say that Jesus is “set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” This is His place of victorious exaltation which Jesus possess today at this very moment (Heb. 1:3; 8:1). Jesus is the Victor who defeated sin, death, Hell, and grave and is today at the right hand of God where He shares the very same nature of the triune God. He is rewarded with the exalted position at the right hand of God. The writer of Hebrews mentions this exalted position several times in the epistle. Jesus is the great Victor, and this inspires us to keep on keeping on knowing that there is coming a day of great reward and blessing after the time of suffering! There is a crown or time of exaltation after the trials we face on earth.



Jesus' victorious risen and ascended life at the Father's right hand reminds us that we too can have victory and will one day receive reward and exaltation after the race is finished.

James 4:10

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

So we must stay in the race and stay on course! Jesus as the Victor at God's right hand also reminds us that we too can be victors when passing through suffering and sorrow. We do not have to be defeated in the race that is before us. What a compelling example Jesus is to each one of us today as we see Him exalted high on the Father's throne. He is a winner, and we can be a winner too! It's true, the crown awaits the conquest!

Lead on, O King eternal; we follow, not with fears,  
For gladness breaks like morning, where'er your face appears.  
Your cross is lifted o'er us, we journey in its light;  
The crown awaits the conquest; lead on, O God of might.

After the race there is coming a day of reward and great blessing. Don't quit! It will be worth it all when we see Jesus!

d. We must look at His pain in the hands of sinners.

We are also to "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself" (Heb. 12:3). The word "consider" speaks of perceptive contemplation ("to think carefully about" or "to reason thoroughly"). In other words, we are to create a mental analogy of Jesus Christ and analyze what He went through for us. The Greek word was used in the field of mathematics and business for adding a column of numbers or figures. We are to mentally ponder what Jesus went through for us at the hands of sinners. The "contradiction [opposition] of sinners" refers to the terrible mockery, vocal ridicule, and scourging that Jesus took at the hands of His enemies. The nails that were driven through His hands and feet also came from sinners.

Think of the mental anguish and physical pain Jesus went through as he was opposed by sinners. It was a dreadfully horrible experience.

1 Peter 2:21-23 declares:

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously.”

What is the application of this passage to our lives today?

- The example of Jesus keeps us from discouragement.

The text says we are to remember what Christ passed through for us and how He was victorious in the end “lest ye be weary and faint in your minds” (Heb. 12:3c). When we think of all that Jesus went through for us it should keep us from a drooping and discouraged spirit. His example of suffering inspires us to take our suffering and lot in life and live by faith as Jesus did during His terrible sufferings and hardships.

On the cross Jesus suffered greatly and yet He endured or persevered by faith and finished the work the Father gave Him to do (John 17:4). Jesus’ example of courageous faith during His time of suffering and His triumphant victory through His resurrection and ascension to Glory should inspires us! His example of suffering, faith, and victory keeps us from overcoming discouragement and depression when the days are weary and the long nights dreary!

The word “weary” (tired and sick) is talking about psychological discouragement (“in your minds”). Depression is normally a spiritual problem. The word “faint” means to be unloosed, weakened, exhausted from a mental and therefore spiritual standpoint which often leads to all kinds of spiritual problems. Depression keeps us from living by faith and following the example of Jesus who lived by faith in spite of great persecution – even the death of the cross.

We become mentally depressed when we keep thinking about ourselves! Depression is a selfish thing! We start to sing: "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen." "Swing low sweet chariot." The leader and pioneer of faith is our example to look to in the time of suffering and when we see Jesus being separated from the Father, suffering, dying on the cross, and yet keeping His faith in the Father's plan and becoming a great victor through His suffering.

Christ's suffering puts our own earthly suffering in a different light and helps us to keep trusting the Lord in spite of great difficulties. The example of Jesus' suffering and faith inspires us to rest in the Father's plan for our own lives and go on and walk by faith – even when it means heartache and hardship. The example of Christ's faith during His suffering helps us to walk by faith during our own suffering. We must keep our eyes on Jesus! The cross will help maintain our focus. Our focus and the inspiration we receive from the great pioneer of faith will keep us from depression. It will help us to maintain our spiritual equilibrium.

An old legend tells of an angel who was sent by God to inform Satan that all the methods he uses to defeat God's children would be taken from him. The devil pleaded to be allowed to keep just one. "Let me retain depression," he begged. The angel, thinking this is a modest request, agreed. "Good!" he exclaimed, as he laughed to himself. "In that one gift, I have secured all."

- The example of Jesus keeps us from deception.

Hebrews 12:4

"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

When we think of the way that Jesus suffered at the hands of sinners, we must not deceive ourselves by making a wrong judgment declaring that we who are still alive have suffered to the same extent and intensity that Jesus suffered. This is absurd! The phrase "not yet resisted" is a word for martyrdom – "to be put in the place of another." Also, "unto blood" means that no Christian who is still living has been martyred or no Christian still alive has been put to death in the place of another person and has died the

same cruel death like Jesus did! You can't compare your suffering with the suffering of Jesus! You have not endured people crucifying you on a cross, where your face was disfigured beyond recognition, and where you ultimately died as a martyr.

Also, you have not faced the same "striving against sin" or struggle against sin as Christ did with sinners. The point is this. No person who is still alive in his body has faced sin as Jesus did when suffering at the hands of wicked sinners or the forces of evil. The readers of this epistle (you and me today) must stop deceiving ourselves. We have not gone through hardship and suffered untold agony as Jesus did. Our suffering cannot be compared with His. It pales in comparison to Christ's suffering. In other words, we who are alive have nothing on Jesus and His suffering at the hands of sinners. Nails were never driven through your hands and feet by sinners. You never hung on a cross in total shame and agony as Jesus did.

Looking unto Jesus! When we look down and see all the problems we must then look up and find the solution! Looking unto Jesus! He is our inspiration for faith, constancy, and commitment.

Don't tell me you can't go on! Don't tell me you are tired, worn out, and want out of the race! Keep looking to Jesus! And when we do, we can go on in our Christian life. Let us go on! Hebrews 6:1 says, "Let us go on!" We can go on for Jesus provides us with the inspiration, incentive, and power to do so!

If you don't want to serve Jesus and commit your life to Him, then you will have to do it over Jesus' death and look past the cross and refuse to consider Him who died the sinner's death and suffered so greatly for you. If we would have a fresh vision of Jesus dying for us on the cross, we would stop all the excuses and get back in the race.

Jesus is our inspiration, our role model of faith, and our Lord and Savior who loved us unto the end when dying upon a cross. The cross stimulates us to love God, live for Him, and run the race that is set before us!

“O my Savior, make me see  
How dearly thou hast paid for me.”

I read about a small boy who was consistently late coming home from school. His parents warned him one day that he must be home on time that afternoon, but nevertheless he arrived later than ever. His mother met him at the door and said nothing. At dinner that night, the boy looked at his plate. There was only a slice of bread and a glass of water. He looked at his father’s full plate and then at his father, but his father remained silent. The boy was crushed.

The father waited for the full impact to sink in, then quietly took the boy’s plate and placed it in front of himself. He took his own plate of meat and potatoes, put it in front of the boy, and smiled at his son. When that boy grew to be a man, he said, “All my life I’ve known what Jesus is like by what my father did that night.”

Christ’s suffering, faith, and victory inspires us to go on in life and live by faith in God’s plan for our own personal lives. If we keep looking unto Jesus, we will simplify our lives. We will not become bogged down, depressed, and get into ruts that we cannot get out of. Keep it simple! Keep looking unto Jesus! Staying devoted to Christ simplifies our living and outlook on life.

The songwriter beautifully wrote:

“My heart is stirred when’er I think of Jesus!  
That blessed name that set the captive free,  
No other name through which I find salvation  
No other name has meant so much to me.”

There is a fable about a dog who loved to chase other animals. He bragged about his great running skill and said he could catch anything. Well, it wasn't long until his boastful claims were put to the test by a rabbit. With ease the little creature outran his barking pursuer. The other animals, watching with glee, began to laugh. The dog excused himself, however, by saying, "You forget, folks, that I was only running for fun. He was running for his life!"

Motivation makes a difference in everything that we do. In fact, it determines the way believers serve the Lord. It changes their attitudes and outlook on life. Some people serve the Lord halfheartedly because they feel obligated. But there are others who serve Him with great urgency and zeal for they are deeply grateful for God's saving grace in their lives. The love of Jesus stirs their heart, and they rekindle the flame. The secret is to keep looking unto Jesus for inspiration, motivation, faith, and endurance.

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.”

Beloved, we need to devote ourselves to the areas mentioned above lest the Devil gets a foothold in our lives. Satan wants to keep us from living out a simple life of devotion and commitment to Jesus Christ. Satan's aim is to keep us from our loyalty to Christ. Satan wants to distract us from the simple or uncomplicated way of living and those things in life that are most important.

Once again, 2 Corinthians 11:3 warns us about our minds being “corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” It's the business of Satan to keep God's people from their simple, sacred, and sincere devotion to Christ. He wants to keep our eyes away from Jesus!

A newly saved Christian was attending his first prayer meeting and was afraid to pray aloud because he couldn't do it like the others. After some encouragement, he stood and said, “Lord, this is Jim. I'm the one that met You last Thursday night. Forgive me, Lord, because I can't say it the way the rest of these people do, but I want to tell You the best I know how: I love You. Amen.”

God wants us to remain simple! Keep it simple! As Dr. Heller so often said, “Remain singular in focus and simple in faith.” The believer is to have a simple faith in the Lord, a simple love for the Lord, and a simple obedience to God's Word. Life's pressures and Satan's temptations have a way of crowding out these simple things or areas of devotion from our lives.

Someone said:

“One thing there is which all Satan's cunning and all the snares of temptation cannot take by surprise. That is simplicity.”

Satan's strategy is to get us away from our simple devotion to Christ and complicate our lives from a spiritual perspective. The Evil One gets us to sidetrack our devotional way of living. He does this by getting us to believe that God's truth is not reliable, by keeping us from following God's ordained path for our lives, and by drawing us away from walking close to the Lord. He steals away the joy and love for the Lord we once had (Rev. 2:4 - “thou hast left thy first love”). Satan tries to keep us from obeying what we originally knew to be true and right and then diverts our living from the spiritual to the secular and from communion with the Lord to careless living. He keeps us from attending church faithfully and serving the Lord in the local church.

Eventually our commitment to Jesus Christ becomes less and less. One compromise leads to another. Soon we are far away from the simple life!

“Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just from sin and self to cease,  
Just from Jesus simply taking  
Life and rest, and joy and peace.”

I would say that “the simplicity that is in Christ” (a sincere devotion to Jesus Christ) is one of the most important phrases found in the Bible for nothing is more important than keeping life simple as we seek to remain committed to Christ. The world around us is becoming increasingly complex because it is drifting farther and farther from God. Likewise, with increased activity our lives can very easily become more complicated and complex to the point where we lose our singular focus in life which is loving Jesus (John 21:25), living for Him (Phil. 1:21), obeying Him (1 John 5:3), and becoming more like Him (2 Cor. 3:18). The last days are pressing upon us and we see things waxing worse and worse (2 Tim. 3:1-14). How wonderful and comforting to know that in the midst of complexity and perplexity we can have simplicity! At the heart and center of our lives we are to maintain our simplicity in Christ or a sacred, simple, single, and sincere devotion to Christ.

Someone once wrote:

“Our life is frittered away by detail ... simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!”

It is true. Some things are so simple they are easy to miss!

Several years ago, there was a memorable devotional time among some of God’s saints. Four little boys from a Christian institution for impaired children demonstrated that their mental handicap did not hinder them spiritually. They recited the books of the Bible and readily answered questions about it. Those saints who were listening were deeply stirred, and many eyes were filled with tears as these lads spoke of Heaven. When the boys talked about the Lord's coming, their faces glowed. One of them sang, "It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus." Though he stumbled a bit, God’s saints knew that he really believed the words of this precious song. How surprised they were at the simple trust and sincerity displayed by these youngsters! May God give us a singular devotion and may we remain simple in faith. The little children’s song is still very true.

“Teach us delight in simple things,  
And mirth that has no bitter springs;  
Forgiveness free of evil done,  
And love to all men ’neath the sun.”

Dear friend, if you are reading this study and are not saved, then you cannot experience the simple way of living which results in liberty from sin (John 8:32-36) and true lasting satisfaction (John 10:10). In order to experience the blessings of the simple life you must first possess a simple faith in Jesus Christ so you might be saved from Hell. The Bible teaches that Jesus died on the cross bearing your own sins. 1 Pet. 3:18 says, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit.” Jesus also took upon Himself the curse of judgment that you deserved, while hanging upon the cross, and as a result died in your place. Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”



While hanging on the cross Jesus Christ took your sins and the judgment connected with those sins upon Himself. Jesus died *for you, as you, and in your place* to provide you with salvation or deliverance from Hell. Today you can believe on Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior and be completely forgiven of all your sins (past, present, future), be restored to a right relationship before God, and know that you are going to Heaven when you die. Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ...". Believing on Christ is the same as expressing faith in Christ. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God."

Faith in Christ is a simple thing! Faith is a childlike thing! Right now you can place simple childlike faith in Jesus Christ to save you. Again, Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Will you trust Christ right now to save you? A little child places simple faith in his parents for food and survival. What a beautiful picture this is of the kind of faith that you need to place in Jesus Christ to save you from Hell. You can come to Jesus Christ right now and transfer your faith in Him to save you from Hell's awful judgment.

Revelation 22:17 says:

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,  
Look upon a little child;  
Pity my simplicity,  
Suffer me to come to thee"

Address God in prayer right now and tell Him that you are trusting in Jesus Christ, God's Son, to save you from Hell forever. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). Transfer all your trust in Jesus Christ today then you too can sing:

“Oh, how sweet the glorious message,  
Simple faith may claim;  
Yesterday, today, forever,  
Jesus is the same.  
Still He loves to save the sinful,  
Heal the sick and lame;  
Cheer the mourner, still the tempest;  
Glory to His name!”