

Simplify

Pastor Ken

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⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12-NIV)

Two California highway patrol officers were conducting speeding enforcement along highway 15 just north of the air force base near Mira Mar. One of the officers was using a hand-held radar device to check speeding vehicles approaching the crest of a hill. The officers were suddenly surprised when the radar gun began reading 500 miles per hour.

The officer attempted to reset the radar gun, but it would not reset. And then it just shut down. Just then a deafening roar over treetops revealed that the radar had locked in on a USMC F18-Hornet which was engaged in a low flying exercise near the crest of the hill.

Back at the CHP headquarter, the patrol captain fired off a complaint to the USMC Base Commander the reply came back in true Marine Corp style:

Thank you for your letter. We can now complete the file on this incident. You may be interested to know that the tactical computer on the F-18 detected the presence of and subsequently locked onto your hostile radar equipment. And automatically sent a jamming signal back to it.

Which is why it shut down. Furthermore, an air to ground missile aboard the aircraft had already locked on to your equipment location.

Fortunately, the marine co-pilot flying the hornet recognized the situation for what it was. And quickly responded to the missile system alert and was able to override the automated missile system before it was launched to destroy the hostile radar position.

The pilot also suggests that you cover your mouths when you are cussing at them, since the video systems on these jets are very high resolution. Sergeant Johnson, the guy holding the radar gun, should get to his dentist so that he could have his left rear molar checked. It appears the filling is loose.

Also, the snap is broken on his handgun holster. Thank you for your concern. Semper fi. It is funny how we think we are the ones in charge, when in fact there is another whole system of things going on that reveal how, "not in charge we are."

And I know that attacks anyone that has a big ego. As you live longer your ego will reduce, shrink, and disappear in Christ. And as you go through enough pain, suffering and God's

providence and sovereignty and shocking and stunning incidents in your life you will finally realize it is not you who is in charge, it is the one that is guiding and guarding your life.

In our series Simplify, we have attempted to listen to what God has to say about our overscheduled, exhausted, anxious riddled, isolated, and frustrated lives. I hear these words all too often.

For so many of you, the idea of simplifying your life has never been on the radar screen. There is too much to do.

And so little time. More often than not, we seem to have no choice, the pace of life is often carrying us along at a torrid river pace. I have suggested from the beginning that simplified living is more than making a new to-do list. Cleaning out a few closets.

Simplifying is about uncluttering your soul.

And in my experience, there are a handful of key practices and strategies that are vital to keeping my soul from clutter. We started out by looking closely at Jesus. We saw that it really matters to him and his co-workers(disciples), that you get adequate rest and fuel.

Jesus is always looking out for your spiritual, emotional, and physical health.

The Apostle Paul, in 2 Tim 4, while in the last hours of his life, asks us this question, *“What would really matter to you, if you knew your time was short?”* How would you simplify? It was here that we were introduced to how to Simplify your relationships.

The key word from that sermon was, get over those who hurt you, and watch out for those who want to harm you.”

Then we went to the tomb of Lazarus, and watched as Jesus expressed love, sympathy and compassion like no other person that ever lived and showed us, Jesus knows what it is like to be YOU!

Finally, last week, we took a close look at our work patterns in our family, church, and employment. We asked you if you were truly satisfied. I showed you how to go from Simplify to Satisfy. And I suggested that God’s work in your family, church and employment never moves ahead uncontested by the evil one.

And so, on this Veterans Day, I want to build on this theme. If you should choose to Simplify your one-and-only life, you will have to do so while the enemy is making every effort to stop you.

Today, let's look at how to live a heavenly life, in a hell-like world. How to Simplify while there is a war going on. And so, I suggest that today, you go from Simplify to Simper Fi.

The word, Simper Fi, comes from the words, Simper Fidelis, which is Latin for "always faithful," **Semper Fidelis** has been the Marine Corps motto since 1883. It embodies the Corps' value of honor, courage, and commitment.

God is always faithful to protect and guide you in times of war. We parachute right into the middle of a fire fight. Israel is rebuilding the walls around their ancient city of Jerusalem. For years, the people have lived in disgrace and without the protection of walls. We read right from the autobiographical pen of Nehemiah these words,

¹⁷ Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." ¹⁸ I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work. (Neh 2-NIV)

¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?" ²⁰ I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it."

This prayer comes from the lips of Nehemiah and reminds us to Pray diligently for relief, then accept God's grace to sustain and strengthen you in adversity, affliction, and anxiety.

In the National Football League, the acrostic YAC, perhaps is only known by a few diehard football fans. It stands for Yards After Contact. The phrase was coined by network analyst, John Madden. Madden a former coach of the Oakland Raiders, has compiled this new measurement by "counting the number of yards that a runner makes after an opposing player hits him." (Rebuilding, OS Hawkins, pg. 81-82). You will never be able to simplify unless you can win over the encroachment of the enemy.

When a runner is hit at the line of scrimmage by an opposing player, he doesn't throw down the ball, and immediately return to the huddle. He doesn't get up and start a fight or complain to the referees that the hit was too painful. He doesn't get up and bad mouth the opposing player and say, "He is going to take his ball and go home."

What does he do? When he is hit, he keeps the legs churning. He keeps his momentum moving forward. He is looking for someone to throw a block. To free him. Great runners in the NFL make their most significant yards after they have been hit. Yards After Contact is the number of yards a runner makes after the opposing player hits him. (John Madden)

The runner simply keeps moving forward. Some of us never achieve all that God has for us because as soon as we are hit, we give up. Throw a temper tantrum. Tell everyone we are taking our ball home. It's the Yards After Contact that really count, not just as in football, but in real life. Nehemiah's kept the wall rebuilding moving through YAC. Let's look at the contact by Satan. It was painful. It was a bell ringing. It was continuous. And most of all it was dirty. When you are lying on the ground under a pile, and your opponent is spitting in your face, kneeling you in the groin, biting your hand, before the pile gets up, that is dirty. The enemy never plays fair.

I want to show you 5 strategies the enemy uses to keep you from simplifying your life.

(1) Satan is a relentless foe.

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, ² and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? (Nehemiah 4:1-3).

Look at all the different ways that Satan tries to get at his servant thinking they are inadequate to the task at hand.

- *What are they doing?
- *Will they restore?
- *Will They offer?
- *Can they bring back?
- *What are they building?

What we see in Sanballat we see in Satan. You need to learn this about the devil.

- ...he never has a good day!
- ...don't think that he relaxes or takes a vacation.
- ...he never says, "I think I'll go easy, send my third string troops."

A lesson for the wise, those attacks come in waves. Don't let your guard down for a minute. Don't get side-tracked in his petty announcements of your incompetency. His real concern is his loss of power or control.

Sanballat was ticked off because Nehemiah has come with letters representing greater authority. His very place and power had been shelved. He didn't like that.

(2) Satan attacks your weaknesses.

¹³ Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears, and bows. (Nehemiah 4:13-NIV)

One of the weaknesses Satan always tries to expose is motivation or intent. Sanballat was suggesting that the rebuilding was being done for the purpose or conspiracy against the king. The truth was that Sanballat cared nothing of the king's domain. His problem was a loss of control. Sanballat's comment, "they'll fortify and rebel", is only indicative of Satan's dissatisfaction with lost control. It also shows the great lengths that Satan will go to, so he can create doubt in people's minds.

Listen to some oft-deployed devices:

*God wants you sick, so you'll trust him more.

*Financial difficulties are his plan, so he can keep you humble.

(3) Satan ridicules your worship of God.

² and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? (Nehemiah 4:2-NIV)

Sanballat's third question, is designed to attack the people's worship of God. Sanballat knows that when people can worship unhindered, real power is generated. As long as the walls are in ruin, people's worship was still threatened.

Has anyone ever heard the question, "**and you call yourself a Christian?**" The obvious point of the remark is to embarrass and expose your weakness. The idea is that you should withdrawal from the race.

And our weaknesses and frailties can be embarrassing. Satan loves to capitalize on your mistakes. This is the Satanic question behind; will you offer sacrifices? You are not worthy to do anything but retire from the race.

Our response to him when he challenges us at a place of worship because of our frailties is God's promise, "*He who began a good work in me will complete it*". (Philippians 1:6). I have access to him through forgiveness and he has invited me to enjoy Him through worship, and I will. Be gone you foul spirit!

(4) Satan mocks the pace of your growth.

Will they finish in a day? (Nehemiah 4:2-NIV)

In the fourth challenge, Sanballat is ridiculing them about the length of the effort. It's the same mockery that Satan tries. You know you've tried this before. What makes you think this time is any different? The enemy will seek to wear you down with the length of the rebuilding process in your life. This project for rebuilding has been on the drawing board for well over seventy years! When things don't seem to get done fast enough in your life, be careful, this ridicule will come! In a day, Ha.

Boy, you sure been at this a long time. All I see is two steps forward, and three steps back! Haven't you been down this road before? Haven't you learned that yet? But this time things are different. For Nehemiah has come on the scene.

(5) Satan laughs at the quality of your building materials.

Can they bring these stones back to life from the heaps of rubble burned as they are?
(Nehemiah 4:2-NIV)

Finally, Sanballat questions the qualities of the materials used for the project. Remember, Nehemiah came with only lumber from the Kings Forest in Lebanon. And Sanballat asks, are you going to use this broken and burnt rubble to rebuild with? The answer to what God is showing us is so insightful, the walls will be built by reclaiming, retooling, remaking, and recovering that which was destroyed.

What a message of hope and a beautiful picture. God is able to completely redeem, and restore, He can glorify Himself out of the pieces of your broken past. He can remove the broken pain of your past and rebuild with burnt stone. When you lose heart, you lose your confidence and what is affected most is your motivation.

We all face discouragement! It's a sign that you have a heartbeat. But discouragement usually runs in seasons. The good news is that around the corner is a new season of hope, joy, and motivation to pull off the rebuilding project. Let me remind you of the enemy's plan.

One thing that Sanballat (Satan), failed to realize was that God has a personal stake in your wall building. The people are living on prophetic timeline, that God was personally interested in. To oppose Nehemiah is to oppose God himself.

Stephen King is a horror novel writer, as many of you know. While some readers gravitate toward heartwarming love stories or informative nonfiction, others love the wide-eyed suspense and fear of a great horror story or thrilling mystery novel.

Stephen King has become a legendary writer since his first book, and most famous, *The Shining*, was published in 1974. He has garnered worldwide fans, earned countless awards, and topped bestseller lists with his horror, thriller, science-fiction, and crime reads.

Stephen King is rich. He is not just famous, he is fortunate. Only by the grace of God I might add.

Neither his notoriety nor his wealth could protect him from a serious car accident. This hit-n-run happened many years ago. The other car fled, and Stephen and his car were damaged significantly. Stephen landed in a ditch, thrown from his vehicle bleeding. All of this happened in a remote area in the countryside. He was seriously injured and had he not been found and airlifted to a local hospital, he could easily have died.

That car accident left him not only scared, but it also left him scurrying for new meaning in life. As he says, “it was his wakeup call,” as he put it. This time it was not some horrifying story that he created in his mind for later publication, it was an actual horrifying event in his life.

For all he knew he could have been crippled for the rest of his life. After the accident Stephen King put into words what happened on that fearful day. Around 4.30 p.m. on June 19, 1999, I was walking on the shoulder of a road in North Lovell, Maine, when I was struck from behind by a Dodge Caravan whose driver, a construction worker named Bryan Smith, who had lost control of the vehicle.

King was badly hurt in the accident and transported first to Northern Cumberland Hospital, then flown by helicopter to Central Maine Hospital. This event caused him to do some serious thinking about life. Stephen said, “from the accident I learned, you can’t take anything with you.” I found it out in a ditch on a country road, covered with mud and blood and the tibia of my right leg poking out of the side of my jeans, like the branch of a tree taken down in a thunderstorm.

I had a master card in my wallet, but when you are lying in a ditch with broken glass in your hair, and blood all over you, no one accepts master card.

We all know that life is temporary, but on this particular day, and in the months that followed, I got a painful but extremely valuable look at life’s simple backstage truths.

We come into this life, naked and broke. We may be dressed when we go out, but we are just as broke. Warren Buffet going out broke. Bill Gates is going out broke. Tom Hanks going out broke. Stephen King going out broke. All of the money you earn, all of the stocks you buy. All of the mutual funds you trade. All of the real estate you possess. All of that is just smoke and mirrors.

It is still going to be a quarter past getting late, whether you tell time on a Rolex or Timex. No matter how large your bank account. No matter how many credit cards you have. Sooner or later things will begin to go wrong. There are only three things you have that you can call your own.

Your body. Your spirit. And your mind(soul)

So, I want you to consider making your life one-long gift to others. And why not? All you have is on loan anyway. All that lasts is what you pass on. **End of his story! I would go on to add:**

As Job reminds us in *Job 1:21*: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.” (NIV)

If you are not sure what happens after your death, I suggest you make that search your most important spiritual journey. Because even Stephen King and his countless horror books and movies, cannot describe what will happen to a life who rejects Christ and spends eternity in the most horrifying place in the universe.

Stephen Kings words of horror will look like Mary Poppins, Kelce-Swift love, and Simon Cowells American Idol winner compared to these verses: ⁹*They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might. (2 Thess. 1:9-NIV)*

It would be spiritual malpractice if I did not remind, God loves you, Christ died for you, and you must choose before you die, where you will spend eternity. Do it now. Give your one and only life, over to the Only God who loves you with and shows it to you through his atoning death on the cross.

¹⁶*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16-NIV)*

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:21-NIV)

⁴*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. (Titus 3-NIV)*

Let's pray. Larry King joined the U.S. Air Force following 9/11 and served for 10 years around the world. He finished his military career as an In-Flight Refueling Specialist stationed at McConnell AFB on the KC-135. In 2012 he was injured during a military operation and was medically separated from the military. He lives with the effects of his service to his country daily.

In 2017 the Lord got ahold of his heart and life, and he's been walking with Him ever since. Larry and Ashley are the founders and owners of SoJourney's Coffee that offer support through groups to those who have served in the military. Welcome Larry with me to the stage.