

Simplify

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Week 2, October 15, 2023

Simplify is about more than doing less, it is about being God's best version of YOU!

Can I suggest you do this as God's call to simplify and come apart with him before you hit a wall and have no choice. Here is a rule of thumb about making changes.

You are not likely to make the appropriate changes, unless you become dissatisfied with what *you have become*.

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." ³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. (Mark 6-NIV)

As I was reviewing this text in a variety of translations, this past week, I heard the Spirit remind me...

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

Oh, that is so good, because to be honest, I don't often do a very good job of looking out for my emotional, spiritual, and relational health. Am I the only one? Or would others join me in this confession?

By the way, confession is not only good for the soul, but also what God expects from his children. To come clean. To be honest. To freely and willingly volunteer to confess.

Confession is an important part of Christian growth. Salvation and confession go hand-in-hand. How will we ever grow in Christ, if we don't make regular acknowledgements that changes are in order.

And it is the word of God that helps us identify those changes. From a dungeon in Rome, the apostle Paul, in 2 Tim 4, tells his associate, his padawan learner, his understudy Timothy to Preach the Word.

Now, listen to the elements that make up preaching and teaching. ² *Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. (2 Tim 4-NIV)*

Look closely for a moment as to what the word of God is supposed to do for each of us as we listen to it, study it personally and deliver it as God provides opportunity.

We are instructed to **be prepared** to receive God's instruction on any occasion. Be prepared in season and out. The word **be prepared** is a military term, it means to stand at your post and be ready to act. You are always on duty to apply God's word to any area of your life.

So, put away your iPhone. Sit up. Pay attention. Take some notes. And make the appropriate changes. There you go, you just experienced what **being prepared** is all about. Again...put away I-Phone. Sit up...Take some notes...I think you get the point.

And Paul describes for each of us with blinding clarity what being ready looks like. In the imperative command, three strong verbs are highlighted:

Correct-you are to make adjustments to your heart's condition based on facts. Correct. Convince. Expose wrongdoing. Renounce sloppy faith. Make protests against a heart condition that needs immediate bypass surgery. A stint. Open heart surgery.

Rebuke-This is what I call the shock factor of the heart work. The notification by the doctor, you need to change your lifestyle or suffer the consequences. To be rebuked by the word of God, the Holy Spirit leading to change because of wrongdoing. To say it with sharp word even. Come on son or daughter, change is in order.

Encourage-And finally to add some love, positivity, and admonishment that you can do this. Offer some hope.

So how do these verbs operate in our lives and produce transformation? They are implemented by means of confession. *If we confess our sins, (weaknesses, short comings and needs), God is faithful and just to forgive us and purify us. (1 John 1:9)*

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9-NIV)

The Greek word for confess means to "agree" or "concur." It means to say the same thing God is saying about a matter in your life. Why is this element of confession so important to spiritual formation?

You and I must be willing to accept God's brazenly accurate assessment of our hearts condition. And it is the word of God that helps us come to that conclusion. And when you are honest about your hearts condition, you are confessing to God living in agreement, Father that is accurate about my life.

I am exhausted. I am stressed out. My life is out of order.

I do need to make changes in my world, and the **order of the day is to SIMPLIFY.**

I need to make some **adjustments** as I SIMPLIFY.

Father, I need an **overhaul** in the area of priorities, scheduling, rest, bible study.

You and I must stop playing games with God and our faith.

We must quit making excuses and start making adjustments.

We need to agree with God about our hearts condition.

And sometimes this will only work if you come out of hiding and agree that you need an otherworld overhaul, and sometimes agreeing with God's assessment of your hearts conditions means you must be honest before God **and others**. Perhaps this illustration will help.

If you SIMPLIFY you will hear God's whisper.

That was my confession moment. God I am in agreement with you, I must make the appropriate change to my heart condition. Coming to my senses on the Hwy-400, on my way to Springfield, Mo was like an alcoholic waking up in his neighbor's wheelbarrow at 3:00am, and finally admitting I am addicted.

Before you leave today, make a vow to God, you are not going to allow yourself to become depleted. To hit rock bottom. Replenish your soul's energy, must be top tier. No one else can help you keep your energy and spiritual reserves in order.

Depleted moms end up shaking their kids.

Out of reserve dads end up hanging out in places they should be avoiding.

Depleted ministers become anxious when the order of the day should be courage.

When you are running on fumes, it is the anger fuming that causes you to pop off.

When you are neglecting your bible reading, it is the lies of culture that cause you believe in behavior and activity that God rejects.

When you are emotionally drained, you want to mess with people, just to mess with them.

When you are depleted, you will often overspend, neglect attending your church, withdrawal from your spouse and kids, and most of all isolate and neglect your faith journey.

When you decide that you never want to run on fumes, or allow your spiritual tank to come up dry, then you start to pay closer attention to the replenishment side of the equation. Of the issue. Of the challenge.

Again, turning to the Apostle Paul, we are reminded that this challenge to SIMPLIFY has been around since the beginning of time.

³ But I am afraid that, even as the serpent beguiled Eve by his cunning, your minds may be corrupted and led away from the simplicity of [your sincere and] pure devotion to Christ. (2 Cor 11:3-AMP)

There you have it, simplicity, simplify, solitary, streamline and I could on, but it all means one thing, daily replenishing your spiritual, social, and physical energy in your soul.

What does it feel like when your soul or energy bucket is filled to the brim? What does it feel like when you are running on all cylinders, when your schedule is sane, when you eating and exercising and resting properly? Let me suggest this glimpse of replenished souls and buckets.

You are at your best emotionally. Anxiety, anger, and discouragement are at a minimal.

You win more over sin, than lose.

You sense and feel the presence of God, more consistently.

You take more initiative in your love for your spouse, kids and friends.

You make better choices.

You look and sound like life is a thrill instead of a pill.

You are eager to do God's will, make appropriate corrections and confessions and live in the power of the Holy Spirit as you engage people about faith.

How about you, can you recall a time when you lived at that level of satisfaction? Jesus came to give you life, and to give it to you in the fullest.

If you SIMPLIFY you will see opportunities to serve and give.

Ok, go with me to the Sea of Galilee. The disciples are two-by- two returning from one of their preaching junkets. This is the disciples first ministry tour without Jesus. And out into the villages of Galilee they went. Chatting with people in the marketplace.

Teaching in the synagogues. And encouraging many on the roads that crisscrossed in the shadow of Mt Hermon. Two events run in the background to add color to Jesus need for some retreat time with the disciples in Mark 6.

First, he is still reeling emotionally from calling out his hometown for their unbelief and this angered the people of Nazareth so much they took him outside of town to throw Jesus off a cliff.

That's a bad church service, when the church folk turn on the preacher and want to toss him over a cliff. No thanks and no offering, just a heave hoe, and off you go.

²⁸ All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. ³⁰ But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way. (Luke 4-NIV)

Also, Jesus is deeply hurt and grieving from not only the death of his cousin, John the Baptist, but the gruesomeness of the death. In Mark 6:14-29, we are told of the account at Herod's birthday party where Herod regrettably ordered the death of John the Baptist.

²⁶ The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, ²⁸ and brought back his head on a platter. (Mark 6-NIV)

Jesus has been looking over his back now for weeks, and he is deeply saddened and sorrowful over John's death. So, he capitalizes on an opportunity to pull away for some needed replenishment. Refreshment. Recharging. Rebooting.

Relationships and Responsibility in life drain your energy bucket.

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, (Mark 6-NIV)

Mark's gospel continues the account of the mission of the 12, after having interrupted the occasion with a flash back to the death of John the Baptist.

Jesus is always ministering to people. But now he has those closest to him to invest in. As the disciples all try to speak at the same time, I can see Jesus organizing a leadership debriefing, so they all get a chance to report on their accomplishments. ...reported to him all they had done and taught....

Peter talks about the power of healing where the lame walked. John refers to the brokenness of people's lives. James one of the sons of thunder, describes an occasion where demonic activity surrounded a person to the healing power of Christ. With each story came head nodding, gesture affirming and backslapping of approval by the disciples.

Perhaps, like Jesus the disciples had drawn large crowds, such that as the disciples were reporting the good news, the text tells us that there were people everywhere. Hey Jesus, let me introduce you to Joseph, he wants to be a follower. Over here is Mary, she remembers when you came to her village a few months ago, she too wants to join up.

Jesus was aware of how hard it was to be alone with his disciples and continue their mentorship, their learning because... ³¹ *Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, (Mark 6-NIV)*

Replenish your energy bucket with solitude, boat rides and time with Jesus.

...he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." ³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. (Mark 6-NIV)

Jesus announces to the disciples to gather up their belongings, you have done enough for the Kingdom of God, and you clearly are running on fumes, so let's put some distance between the work and begin to recharge. Hypothetically, Jesus tells Matthew to call ahead to the local pita shop and let them know we would like reservations for 13.

And on into the night the disciples tell stories, eat pita, and take some much-needed rest away from the crowds. Remember, the retreat is more than a meal and a break from the work, it also a time to reflect and perhaps mourn the death of John the Baptist.

Some of the disciples followed John before they were traded to team Jesus.

³⁵ By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. ³⁶ Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." (John 1-NIV)

When a person is exhausted, overscheduled, running the rat race, and they neglect their emotional health, it is only a matter of time before they crash. Hit a wall. Perhaps, Jesus reminded the disciples before the boat trip, of important words that begin his public ministry months ago.

⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Matt 5-ESV)

This beatitude shows us how to handle the losses of life. My guess is that many of you are figuring out how to heal from some very painful losses. The best time to do it, is away from people, with Christ and in a setting that offers life. A boat ride.

I want to provide you with **2 supporting beams of truth** about grief and loss that can open the door to God's comfort.

The first supporting beam of truth about grief: God does not expect you to be happy all the time. There is a myth and truck loads of nonbiblical teaching that declares that Christians should be happy all the time. Always cheerful. Joy filled. Skipping the hills.

Picking flowers. And talking about peace and love. No that is Rainbow Brite, not a Christian. The bible reminds us that sometimes life is filled with weeping, mourning, tears, sorrow, sadness and grief.

The world is filled with a lot of pain and heartaches. Sometimes the only appropriate response is grief. God does not expect you to simply grin and bear it. No, God says, blessed are those who mourn.

The appropriate response is not to fake it, to face it.

The second supporting beam of truth about grief: Grief is critical to my emotional, spiritual, and physical health. If you don't grieve or are saddened or shed tears about the appropriate experiences in life it means one of three things **about you:**

- (1) You are out of touch with reality.
- (2) You are out of touch with your own emotions and living in denial.
- (3) You don't love. When you love and you experience sad things, you mourn. When you do sinful things and because you love God, you grieve.

If you don't grieve or mourn, perhaps you don't love correctly. Grief is the appropriate emotion to get through the painful experiences in life.

There are 2 wrongful responses to grief: **repression (unconsciously) and suppression (consciously)**. Both are denial and this will hurt you in the long run. When you go through a tough time. God does not want you to suppress it, God does not want you to repress it.

God wants you to **express it** to friends (small groups) and **confess it to Him**.

God doesn't want you to grin, he wants you to grieve.

God doesn't want you to fake it, he wants you to face it.

If I don't let it out, I am going to act it out.

When you do the work of replenishing, and restoration of your body, soul and emotions, now you are ready to return with a full energy bucket to the task at hand.

Return to your God given assignments with a full energy bucket.

³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. (Mark 6-NIV)

And into the boat they went, and onto the other side they headed. But as they drew closer to the shore, they noticed familiar faces. Familiar needs. And familiar challenges.

The disciples were wondering how those people got around the lake shore so fast, there were boats to step around, there were nets to not get entangled in, houses, fences, dogs and marshy land to wade through, and yet here they were.

Obviously, the ill and handicapped could not have moved that quickly. Rapidly. The same would have been true of women and children. The story is clear, Jesus was once again moved by the heartache of the people.

While the disciples may have been discouraged the time off was so short, Jesus stepped out of the boat and went right to work, with a heart filled with compassion.

And it was not long before the day had passed, the teaching was complete, and the crowds had swelled to sizes as far as the eye could see, and all of this happened in a remote place. And we will end with disciples' advice to Jesus.

³⁵ By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. ³⁶ Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." (Mark 6-NIV)

So, we have come full circle. Same song, second verse. Too many people. Perhaps, as many as 10,000. It is late in the day. The disciples have been suggesting for some time, the cut sign. We have to stop this. We are working on the overtime clock. If we don't get these people moving, they will not get back into the countryside and villages in time to buy food.

God wants you to refill and recreate times you can capture energy and vitality so you will have enough to offer others. What is it for you that replenishes your soul? Whatever it is, you need to do it regularly. Reading. Exercise. Painting. Motorcycle riding. Coaching. If you don't make course corrections, you will live in a depleted state.

And living this way has consequences for your health, marriage, vocation and most of all, walk with God. If you have lived for too long at the bottom of the bucket, you are not living the way God designed you to live. God has designed better. A replenishment plan looks different for each person. We are all refilled by different replenishment streams and activities. Craft a plan that works for you.

Learn how to recharge. Reenergize. Replenish.

Here is a list of replenish factors to help you craft a new plan. Spend time with Jesus. Be around some good friends. Take a boat ride. Eat some enjoyable food. Get away from the grind of people and performance. (take a vacation and enjoy your day off).

When you decide that you never want to run on empty again, then you will start to SIMPLIFY!

God expects Christ followers to stop making excuses and start making changes. Will you this make 1 adjustment to your life that will begin to replenish your soul and energy bucket? I want to pray for you if you will. Stand.

Father, I want to be the best version of me, to be. I want to live in a fully recharged, reenergized, and replenished life with Christ.

When I am not, I am sinning against you, myself and those who love me the most. Father, my first step is taking a sober assessment of where I am. God, reveal to me what is underneath my tendency to run on empty.

Holy Spirit, I invite you to do some digging into my life and reveal areas that I must become dissatisfied with. Then help me Holy Spirit to craft a new replenishment plan. I do this so I can offer a needy world a fully replenished servant of Christ. In Jesus Name. Amen.