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Our modern world can be characterized in three words: complexity, congestion, clutter.

So great is the rate of change, our lives take a “hit” with the congestion for our attention and the general clutter in life.

“Eliminate physical clutter. More importantly, eliminate spiritual clutter.” —D. H. Mondfluer

One of the great challenges in my life and ministry is disciple-making in this context.

Paul was an apostle, missionary, prisoner and pastor—a disciple-maker. No where do you get a better “feel” for Paul’s pastoral heart and ministry than in the book of 2 Corinthians. (1 Corinthians— younger brother and more popular)

2 Corinthians is not only a book of principles, promises and precepts, it is also a book that addresses some problems Paul faced in the church.

It is easy to see this book as a “preacher’s discussion,” but in reality, it relates to all believers. Paul writes in defense of his ministry— though embarrassing, necessary.

Other newer, popular teachers came along and gained a hearing and many began to dismiss the old, worn voice of the Apostle. The result was an antagonism toward Paul’s leadership. (An interesting perspective is to study these issues and Paul’s relationship with the church). A challenge is issued to Paul’s authority and integrity.

### **2 Corinthians 1:12**

“For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.”

Paul describes his behavior, attitude and outlook in his walk—“simplicity” (series title).

“Complexity means distracted effort; simplicity means focused effort.” —Edward de Bono

Later, Paul uses this same expression again.

### **2 Corinthians 11:3**

“But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the **simplicity** and purity of devotion to Christ.” NASV

“... from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” ESV

Paul spoke of the need for every believer to guard and maintain a “simple faith.” In fact, there is a great danger in being moved from a “simple faith.”

The danger exists today—so many voices, studies and publications. There are so many perspectives and distractions that Satan can and will use even good things to distort and disrupt the purity of our devotion to Christ.

“Every age has its own characteristics. Right now, we are in an age of religious complexity. The simplicity which is in Christ is rarely found among us.” —A.W. Tozer

Today—religious, cultural and global complexity.

Satan loves to confuse, complicate and bring chaos into our lives. Hence, Paul’s concern is that every believer guard and pursue simplicity.

“Simplicity” is not the equivalent of saying we must be simplistic.

>Simple = plain, uncomplicated, innocent, singular, sincere—a child, but not a theologian can comprehend.

>Simplistic = reductionism

The problem in Corinth and in the lives of many today is that we have compounded and compromised our devotion to Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:1. Descriptive language. Paul speaks of “jealousy”—Hosea in the OT. God is a “jealous” God. God wants pure and uninhibited devotion like a husband and wife.

There are many matchmaker shows on TV today—reality “marriage brokers” and lots of “viewers” with hidden fantasies and dreams. (Bachelor—plot—diary of the departed on line)

Marriage among Jews: two ceremonies—(1) the betrothal, (2) the nuptial. Often as much as a year would transpire between the two ceremonies, but the couple were regarded as legally bound—only broken by formal divorce. Example: Joseph and Mary. Shame and disgrace followed a divorce—usually unfaithfulness was involved.

The nuptial was the final ceremony and consummation of betrothal. Jeremiah spoke of Israel as losing their purity of love for God from youth. (Jeremiah 2:2)

John the Apostle wrote of a church that lost its “first love”. (Revelation 2:4)

Paul’s goal was to betroth the church and to see the day of consummation of a pure bride at the coming of the bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

But a complication occurred. False teachers wooed, seduced and now compromised devotion. Then Paul gets to the root: the serpent deceived (cunning).

How? Satan cluttered the mind and divided the heart in devotion. Satan uses the same method over and over again.

Satan is cunning and crafty:

>He questions God’s Word

>He denies God’s Word

>He substitutes a new word

Spiritual simplicity gets back to our hearing and handling of the Word of God. This is essential in Simple Faith. So very important!

Every generation is complicated by Satan’s effort to dilute, substitute and supplement God’s Word. And the result is always the same: a divided heart and a diminished devotion.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

“...so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:10).

“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation” (1 Peter 2:2).

“For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as men of sincerity [simplicity], as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:27).

There is a lot of peddling of God’s Word today—people using the Word to create their own audience and to gain their own profit.

I want to encourage you to simplify. Get in the Word and grow in the Word.

Do you own your Bible? Not *a* Bible, *your* Bible.

## HOW TO MAINTAIN SIMPLE FAITH

“Scripture induced meetings with God must have priority in our spirituality.” —Donald Whitney

### Read God’s Word Effectively

It has been said, “Efficiency is doing things rightly, but effectiveness is doing the right things.”

I’m not talking about Costco quantity (5 gallons of mayonnaise), but rather a meal at a time.

We are to live by “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

“The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.”  
—Hans Hofmann

This is a brilliant statement provided by a writer, I also believe an excellent instruction for every believer.

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

### **Absorb God’s Word Carefully**

We are so consumption-oriented we fail to allow for saturation—like “super size” meals...long-term injury rather than benefit.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16 ).

“Reading is exposure to God’s Word, but meditation is absorption of God’s Word.” It is absorption that leads to transformational living.

### **Pray God’s Word Repeatedly**

God likes to hear His Word. When you pray, you can shape your prayer by praying Scripture. Don’t just emote—repeat!

“... we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

### **Memorize God’s Word Intentionally**

This is a discipline. It requires attention and intentionality.

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7).

### **Obey God’s Word Promptly**

Simple obedience is vital for devoted Christian living. Follow the instructions!

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing” (James 1:22-25).

Simple faith is active faith.

### **Trust God’s Word Completely**

“This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him” (Psalm 18:30).

“Our experiences do not determine whether the Bible is true. Rather, the Bible determines whether our experience is true.”

Nothing renews, strengthens, reinforces and revives my heart spiritually like regaining simple faith, rooted and ground in God’s Holy Word.

Simply stated: “You can have a revival with your Bible!”