

SIMPLIFY

WILLIS 5/116/10

Dt6:1-5

We are all familiar with the saying “seeing the forest from the trees.” The saying is an idiom used to describe the challenge of sustaining the big picture while working out the daily detail.

- **Seeing the forest from the trees is remembering why we do what we do while we are in the midst of doing it.**
- A people who live in pursuit of the ever advancing Kingdom are a people who must forever be reminded why we do what we do lest we forget what we are doing while in the midst of doing it.
- As the one who sees over this Community I am concerned we are in the danger of forgetting, forgetting some of the core values that define us as a people and provide the alignment that produces momentum.
- So I want to begin a series today on “Seeing the Forest from the Trees.”

I have entitled what I want to share today “**Simplify.**” As complex and epic Christianity can be, the Scriptures repeatedly simplify God’s expectation down to basic desire. Though there is nothing simple about ruling and subduing the earth, nothing simple about doing business until Jesus comes...

- **All of Christianity begins and is sustained by one basic desire...LOVE.**
- “You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart...soul and might.”
- Wait, you forgot “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Yes hundreds of years later Jesus added the 2nd command but if we are talking “Simplify” let’s not forget, the 1st and greatest command of all has to do with our intimacy and love for Him...period.
- Though the second command is like the first it’s not equal to the first.
- For hundreds of years the command to love God with all of our heart, soul and might stood alone meaning everything that follows after it must emerge from it. **If love for our neighbor doesn’t emerge from intimacy with our God, it is dead works...if not iniquity.**
- Mt7:21-23 “Lord, Lord...I never knew you, depart from me you workers of iniquity.” Apparently love for our neighbor that doesn’t emerge from intimacy with our God is iniquitous in the eyes of God.

So to simplify desire God breaks it all down to basic expectation, “Love the Lord with ALL of your heart, soul and might.” “**All**” meaning **without limit and without condition.** This word for love in the New Testament it is the Greek word “Agapao.”

- Agapao: “Love as a directive of the will.” Agapao is rooted in Agape meaning it is without conditions and without limits. But agapao adds one nuance to agape in that agapao activates the will.
- **Agapao is an intimacy with Christ that is without limit and without condition. Agapao is a love not dependant upon feelings for if it doesn’t feel, it wills.**
- “I really don’t feel like worshipping today.” That’s why you have agapao. His worth is such that when we don’t feel like worshipping, we will to worship.

Lk10:27 “You shall agapao the Lord your God with all your heart.” **The simplicity of intimacy means our primary focus is placed on loving Him not understanding Him...serving Him or even obeying Him** (all of which are essential but not first and foremost)

- What if we spent as much time loving Him as we did trying to understand Him?
- What if we spent as much time on the greatest command as we did on the second one “like” it? Though the second command is like the first it is still second...very close and difficult to separate but still second.
- Like we plan outreaches to serve our neighbors what if we planned upreaches to love God? Why can the Eastside Church mobilize 1500 hundred for a work party but only a couple hundred for a worship party?
- **Could it be the Church at large is more comfortable working for Jesus than it is loving on Jesus?** Could it be we are more comfortable with the service of Martha than we are the intimacy of Mary?
- Could it be we need a family room intimacy in place of our kitchen service? Could it be we need to simplify and return to our first love? As Bob Sorge states it, “We need to become lovers who work rather than workers who love.” (Secrets of the Secret place)

Jesus simplifies in His great priestly prayer of Jn17. In v.26 He prays... **“I showed them what you are like and I will show them again then they will have the same love you have for me.”**

- Same love? What kind of love? Agape love...love without conditions, love without limits. Love that decides when it doesn’t feel. Crazy love...irrational love...unreasonable love...intimate love...Song of Solomon love.
- I think we all understand Agape in relationship of God to man but here Jesus prays for Agape in relationship of man to God.
- Just like Father eliminated all conditions and limits in His love for man; Jesus prays man would eliminate all conditions and limits in his love for God. “I showed them what you were like...now they will agape you just like you agape them.”
- **As epic as The Kingdom is, couldn’t it also be simplified to Father’s desire to see us love Jesus the same way He loves us? Perhaps then the greatest prayer we can ever pray is “Jesus, reduce me to love.”**

Jesus simplified it for Peter in Jn21:15-17

Two times Jesus asks, “Peter do you agape me?” Three times Peter answers, “Lord you know I phileo you.” Two times Jesus asks, “Peter is your love for me like Fathers love for me? Is it without conditions...without limits?”

- Two times Peter answers, “Lord you know I love you philanthropically, I love you without intimacy...I love you like a friend...with common interest.”
- **How often does Jesus draw us with agape and we respond with phileo? How often does our will place a phileo like limitation on our worship when we should be responding with an agape like passion?**

The third time Jesus changes His agape focus and asks, “Peter do you phileo me.” The first two times Jesus was asking about Peter’s choices the third time He was asking about his feelings. Intimacy is both the directed will of agape and the feelings of phileo.

To simplify is to trust. To trust is to attach oneself. We saw it last week. Pr3:5 “Trust in the Lord with all of your heart...” **Attach yourself to the Lord with all of your heart.** Religion can be defined as “form without attachment...involvement without intimacy...rules without relationship.”

- Attachment is a function of the heart long before it is an expression of the head. Attachment is spiritual before it is intellectual. Attachment is the fruit of emotion not the law of obligation.
- **When the heart gets attached life simplifies. Hearts that are attached to Christ are able to discern the one thing from the many things.**

David simplified in Ps27:4 when he said, “One Thing I have desired of the Lord and that I will seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life...” Though David was a business man called as a King of a Nation, David knew the simplicity of intimacy.

- **David practiced the simplicity of intimacy even in the complexity of reality.**
- To simplify is the wisdom to prioritize the “one thing” in the midst of the many things. To simplify is the willingness to embrace the intimacy of the one in the business of the many.

This is a call to return to the “one thing...” a return to the “first thing.” This is a call to return to the simplicity of intimacy.