



Peninsula City Church

The Summer Season

**Can you do the Dance of the Simple
Minded?**

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Can you do the dance of the simple minded?

An Introduction

Q. What is your goal for life?

How is your week gone? What stands out to you from this week? Are you feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, overscheduled, and stressed with the way your year is heading? You probably have a lot of 'to-do's' on your calendar, but are you feeling cluttered as you try to get things done. So, how do you intend to reach those goals and do those activities?

“Maybe you can resonate with the words of Charles Wagner a French reformed pastor: ‘Amid the confused restlessness of modern life, our wearied minds dream of simplicity.’ It is mind-boggling that he wrote these words in Paris in 1895, before the invention of the car, the airplane, the television, the computer, the internet or social media.”¹

Let me give you a morsel of my story. In 2005 I hit a brick wall and was feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, overscheduled, and stressed of the chart. I was trying to do all that needed to be done at work, church and in my family life, but I felt that I was going backwards. But, where was God in the midst of my darkness. He was there all of the time, but I just couldn't see Him. Then in 2007, the Lord showed me that I had finally come to the end of myself up to that point in my life. Since, then He has been slowly renewing my perspective from a more kingdom level.

I used to believe that I was a strong Christ-follower. Now don't get me wrong, I had made my peace with God in 1982 and had a hunger to know Him and His ways. But some habits die hard. I had to die to my desire for self-fulfilment, and my self-centred quests. He wanted to give me a more kingdom focused perspective and teach me to trust Him more even in my darkest hour. He has taken me on the dance of the simple minded. I am more comfortable in my skin today than I ever have been in my entire life. This does not mean that there will not be any more trials, but He is teaching me what it means to be simple minded as the dance continues.

Here I would like to redefine what it means to be simple minded. Instead of thinking of the normal definition of someone who does not have the capability to use reason and understand who is naïve or slow. I would like to propose a more kingdom focused perspective. I would like to suggest that to simple minded is more like a dance of trust.

1. The power of simplicity

Q. What is your perspective?

How do you understand the idea of simplicity? A notion of this is, “the fact that something is easy to understand or do.”² But we all know that not everything is easy to understand or do (especially thinking and behaviour), but it can become easier. Paul picked up this idea in his letter to the church in Corinth when he said,

¹² “For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we (Paul and his team) behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. ¹³ For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand— ¹⁴ just as you did partially

¹ “The Power of Simplicity... Part 1.” http://www.sermoncentral.com/pastors-preaching-articles/lance-witt-the-power-of-simplicity-part-1-2678.asp?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=button&utm_campaign=p2p&mpweb=256-2211762-742153102 (23rd January 2017).

² “Simplicity.” <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/simplicity> (23rd January 2017).

understand us—that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you” (2 Cor 1:12-14 ESV). See also Rom 12:8; Cor 8:2; 9:11; Eph 6:5, Col 3:22.

The New Testament word simplicity used here can also mean sincerity, purity, or graciousness; it represents the Old Testament word *yashar*. This Old Testament root word suggests to be ‘straight or to be right.’ It may be where we get the saying for someone to be on the ‘straight and narrow’.³

Jesus dealt with the kingdom perspective of simplicity one day when some parents brought their children to Him for Him to bless.

¹³ “And they were bringing children to Him that He might touch *and bless* them, and the disciples haul them over the coals. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, He was outraged and said to them, ‘Let the children come to Me; do not stop them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God! ¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.’ ¹⁶ Then He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands on them” (Mk 10:13-16 ESV).

According to Jesus then, the kingdom of God needs to be received from a childlike perspective. That is, not being childish, but simply, sincerely, openly and not from an anxious and cluttered perspective. It is interesting that Jesus used children as an example here and not the parents, disciples or the religious leaders.

It would appear that Jesus was outraged against the disciples was because He had already taught them on this matter as He dealt with humility. They had been arguing as to who was the greatest among them when Jesus said,

“Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me” (Mk 9:37 ESV).

Also in Matthew it records His saying,

¹ “About that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?’ ² Jesus called a little child to Him and put the child among them. ³ Then He said, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you turn (change your heart and turn around) from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. ⁴ So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. ⁵ And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on My behalf is welcoming Me” (Matt 18:1-5 ESV).

Jesus was pointing out to His disciples that it is the spontaneous trust that children have, which they need to understand and have. But instead the disciples were more interested in position and greatness. Jesus was attempting to equip them to think from the kingdom perspective.

2. The impact of simplicity

Q. How does simplicity of mind impact you and your world?

a. The simplified life

So, if we need a more simplified life, what should our perspective be on this subject? In a selfie-centred world, this has nothing to do with our self-fulfilment, and our self-centred quests in life. That is, the quests of employment, family, Bible reading, church attendance, education, fitness or doing more good stuff. Although these are all good and wholesome things to attain to, there is something on a much higher level to achieve.

³ “Simplicity.” <https://www.wildbranch.org/teachings/word-studies/36simplicity.html> (2^{3rd} January 2017).

Have you had someone in your life who modelled a life of God's kingdom simplicity? Do you model this principle of simplicity in your life? Since, you do know that God's kingdom simplicity of mind can have an impact on you and your world?

b. Our perception and transformation

What is your perspective is regarding simplicity? Given that, our thinking is who we really are. The way we think is the key to everything that follows in our life good or bad, success or failure. Last week I mentioned that to have a better perspective all starts with a complete turnaround, an 180 degree turn. That is, we need to repent. Then once that has taken place, and then we need to be open to the work of God's Spirit as He transforms our thinking.

Paul has something to say on this matter,

¹ "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice-- the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him. ² Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect" (Rom 12:1-2 NLT).

As Paul pointed out in these verses, this is part of our ongoing transformational process in Christ. In actual fact, this needs to be the goal for the life of every Christ-follower. This needs to be something that we pursue, namely our transformation. We need to desire to be like Jesus Christ, declaring His glorious image as we grow towards maturity in Him. As Paul has said,

"For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (Rom 8:29 NLT).

"So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord --who is the Spirit-- makes us more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image" (2 Cor 3:18 NLT).

"Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labour pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives" (Gal 4:19 NLT)

So, our goal for life should be; for Jesus Christ to be formed in us, i.e. our transformation.

c. Features of simple mindedness

There are certain features that are part of the simplified life and its thinking. Paul highlighted some of these in the book of Philipines while under house arrest in Rome. I find these verses to be a great encouragement and crucible of wisdom. Paul said that,

⁴ "**Always** be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again--rejoice! ⁵ **Let everyone see** that you are considerate in all you do. **Remember**, the Lord is coming soon. ⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:4-7 NLT).

A number of powerful kingdom truths are clear from these verses,

- The Joy in the Lord – e.g. Ps 118:24 "this is the day that the Lord has made; I will rejoice in it and be glad." What a great declaration to start each day with.
- Pray about stuff instead of worrying or being anxious.
- Be thankful for all He has done and even what He will do.
- Then experience His peace as a guard of your hearts and minds.

d. How do we practice this simple mindedness?

i. Hold fast in your thinking

Paul went on in this chapter to highlight how Christ-followers are to put this into practice. They are to be intentional in their thinking about things from God's perspective. Then we shall experience His peace. That is,

⁸ "And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. *I strongly urge you for your own good to fix your thoughts on what is true, and honourable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.* ⁹ Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me! That is, everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you" (Phil 4:8-9 NLT)

ii. Make your peace with God

One feature that can help us to live from this perspective of simple mindedness is to make and then keep our peace with God. That is to say, we need to be at peace with Him at all times with all our heart, all our soul, and our entire mind. When we made our peace with God, we received His peace in an instant. However, we can also have it interrupted in an instant by our disobedience. What I have found from my own experience when this happens and I am aware of the loss of His peace, I back track in my mind until I remember being aware of having His peace. Then under the direction of the Holy Spirit, I slowly and purposely think about what I may have done, said, not done or said that might have grieved Him. Once I have identified what the problem is, I then prayerfully deal with it under the guidance of His Spirit. So, we will all need to learn what it means to continually live from that place of simplicity and peace in God.

iii. Make your peace with your neighbour as you are at peace with your self

Once we have come to that place of making our peace with God, we also need to be at peace with our neighbour as we are at peace with our self. The hardest thing here for most of us is to be at peace with our selves. As a result, we are frequently not at peace with our neighbour. We can have a tendency to be at war within ourselves, and for some they even hate themselves. But, we need to come to a place of being comfortable in our own skin. Paul tells us that, a Christ-followers peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, Gal 5:22-23. But we need to give Him complete control of our life as He works in this area of our life. It could be that, the neighbours that are in our lives who are causing us unrest are divinely put there so that the fruit growing in our lives may be tested. That is, it is tested to know whether it is the Spirit's fruit or our flawed fruit.

²² "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!" (Gal 5:22-23 NLT)

e. But will it work for me?

However, we all know that this is not the frame of mind of many, even countless Christ-followers. For example, you may be thinking, 'I don't get it.' 'I can't do this.' Or you may be thinking, 'Even this works for others, it doesn't work for me,' 'I'm not there.' In that case, let me encourage you to 'Take a deep breath' or maybe 'Go for a short walk.' Then come back to this idea and simply add the word 'yet' to the end of your sentence and then read it. As in,

- 'I don't get it... yet.'
- 'I can't do this... yet.'
- 'This doesn't work for me... yet.'

- 'I'm not there... yet.'

It may not be easy for you, but it doesn't mean you are never going to meet the challenge of Christ to be formed in you, i.e. your gradual transformation.⁴

This is what I have called the dance of the simple minded. It is a divinely arranged dance that the Lord has us joining in with Him throughout our life here on earth. He is leading us from beginning, to the end of the dance. Remember that, there is plenty of movement with its dips, swirls, ups and downs, back and forward between its beginning and end. Our dance may be short, or it may be long, it may be forceful at time and charming at other times. But whether we realise it or not we are in the dance with the Spirit, overseen by our Heavenly Father and the price to be part of the dance was paid by Jesus Christ. However, in the midst of the dance of the simple minded, remember the 'Power of Yet.' That is, 'I don't get it... yet.' 'I can't do this... yet.' 'This doesn't work for me... yet.' 'I'm not there... yet.'

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. What is your goal for life?

We all need to have our perspective tested, as we participate in the dance of the simple minded. So, will you choose this life of simplicity, now, today? What are some of the benefits of applying this to our life?

To be simple minded, is to allow ourselves to be transformed by the divinely selected sequence of movements. He is leading us and desires to entwine our mind with the Spirit of God as we dance to His rhythm. This in reality is a divine dance that God desires to have with each of us. It is a dance of simplicity, sincerity, purity, and graciousness. He wants to dance us on the straight and narrow of life. Okay, as has it has been said, it will have its dips, swirls ups and downs, but He is leading us and we simply need to trust Him. Will you surrender leadership of your life and let Him lead you in the divine dance of the simple minded?

It's time for us to simply trust Him; put away self-fulfilment, and our self-centred quests. It's time to let Him lead us in the dance of the simple minded into His quest for us. It's time to simply trust Him and let Him continually transform us into the image of His dear Son. Our Heavenly Father has drawn us into His presence and always desires to transform us in to the image of His of own unique Son as His beloved sons and daughters. As John Piper has been said,

"As we are conformed to the image of Christ, He is made more and more the center of all things."⁵

The mystery of all of this is that, to become simple minded may feel like, it's not that simple to achieve. However, if we let Him have control, it is more likely to occur sooner than we think. The problem is that, due to our lack of clarity, attempts of self-fulfilment and our self-centred quests we tend to end up in difficulty and disorder. So, in closing,

- What is your goal for life?
- Can you do the dance of the simple minded?
- What are the obstacles to applying this to your life?

⁴ "Milk Jug." <https://holtzy1652.com/2015/03/22/yes/> (29th January 2017).

⁵ "Romans 8:29: Conformed to the Image of Christ." <http://www.desiringgod.org/labs/conformed-to-the-image-of-christ> (23rd January 2017).

- As we have been discussing this, what is the Holy Spirit showing you personally?

Don't put off asking our Heavenly Father to help you to become simple minded until another time, deal with it now. Stop right now, and ask our Heavenly Father for His help in this matter. That is, to be more childlike in our perspective of life and to have a kingdom view of what it means to live as simple minded. This is the power of transformation into the image of Christ,

“A person whose life has been transformed by Christ cannot help but have their worldview show through.” C.S. Lewis⁶

⁶ <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/593404> (25th January 2017).