

BUT LIFE CAN BE SO SIMPLE. . .



We live in a complicated society. Technology, media, the economy have increased both the speed and complexity of life. We are often baffled and bewildered by our choices and decisions. Our senses are bombarded by sensations "24/7". In fact many of us now

live "24/7". In the midst of all this stuff, we find ourselves on overload and fall like a slug onto the sofa and channel-surf till we fall into an agitated sleep.

It's all because we tend to move from the simple to the complex?

This movement may be understandable in our current society due to the advancement of communication and electronics, but the idea was not born in our generation. It appears to be a characteristic flaw in the nature of humankind. Governments, education, and religion are and always have been, subject to these phenomena. Most governments have tended to evolve from somewhat simple oversight to the ultimate complexity of bureaucracy. Education often moved from the old view of "A university as a professor on one end of a log and a student on the other," to the complexity of liberal arts undergraduates and a specific advanced degree with all kinds of addendums.

Religion must be the most difficult of all to keep simple. Something inside us seems to demand more and more ritual and great and greater complexity. Each reformation has sought to return, in some measure, to less complicated forms. However, nothing can seem to hold back the tide and eventually the rituals become more and more complex.

The worship assemblies of the early church appear to have been rather informal and generally centered on simple needs and experiences. While each individual was intimately involved, the assembly was a time of shared relationship. Over time,

however, it became a pageant rivaling or exceeding the great temple worship of Judaism.

Look at prayer, for example.

How can one compare the lengthy and involved prayers of today's assemblies with the pattern Jesus produced when asked, **"Teach us to pray"**? (Luke 11:1) Even the admonition that discourages us from long prayers — remember Jesus said that the pagans liked to use long prayers — did not impact current practices. In His model prayer, Jesus taught the following very simple principles about prayer:

- Praise the Father and seek His will
- Request the essentials of daily life
- Remember that forgiveness of others is prerequisite to personal forgiveness
- Know that it is God who orders one's daily life

Does this sound complicated? Not in the least.

Is it the only form for prayer? Of course not. Paul and James both teach prayer for various reasons not specifically included in the prayer of Jesus. The point is not so much in finding a rigid formula or list to pray, but in knowing our purpose for praying to the God who knows our needs before we ask and wants us to pray to remind us of our dependency upon Him and need for a relationship with Him.

Do you sometimes wish for the days when life was less complex? You will not turn back the complexity of the world, but you can restore a semblance of simplicity to your own life. If we spend more time listening to God than trying to impress Him, or each other, we might just find that real power and peace are still found in simple things.

David Thoreau said "simplify, simplify" and I have a suggestion along those lines, **TAKE THE SIMPLE ROUTE FIRST**. It's easy to believe everything in our society is complicated, but not everything is. Some things have a simple fix. Unfortunately we often compound our problem when we look for a complex solution when a simple solution will do the trick. Let me give you some examples.

Before tossing your lawnmower out, make sure you haven't overfilled it with oil. My brother poured a half gallon out of mine recently. . . it subsequently worked just fine.

And don't be like my neighbor . . . make sure the TV is plugged in before calling the repairman.

Simple solutions need to be checked first. We put ourselves out for complex answers when they may not be needed. Only when the simple fails should the complex solutions be explored. Now let's look at some spiritual life applications.

You speak to someone, and they don't speak back. You spend the night tossing and turning wondering why someone snubbed you, only to later find out they didn't even hear you.

You may feel no one cares, when in fact you are just staring too hard at your own problems.

You wonder why you don't feel well, when you eat a continuous diet of junk food, work late every night and don't get enough sleep.

You wonder why God feels distant while your Bible gathers dust in some forgotten corner of your house and you have not stopped to utter a word in prayer to the Heavenly Father in weeks.

You feel isolated from others even as you roll over in bed on Sunday morning and promise yourself NEXT week you will find a church that has a good Bible class.

You experience loneliness of Friday night, when a phone call to a friend earlier in the week could have meant a fun evening spent together.

GO FOR SIMPLE. FIX THE SIMPLE STUFF. GET RIGHT WITH YOURSELF AND GET RIGHT WITH GOD. If something is still needed, then prayerfully search for the more complex solution with the help of spiritual friends. The main point, don't make life more complicated than it has to be!

P.S. Why not start collecting God's wise words from the book Proverbs on notecards and putting them into practice. God's

words of straightforward simple advice will help prevent a boatload of problems to begin with and will also tune your heart to God's simple preventative tools to complex problems!