

Uncluttered Christianity!

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Oh, to have the attitude of a child! They don't worry about anything! They live by the philosophy, *"Play hard, laugh hard, and leave the worries to mom and dad!"* They are so excited with life they can't wait to get up each morning and start a new day!

So, what's happened to us adults? Why is it that instead of saying, "I can't wait until I wake up," we have a tendency to say, "I can't wait to go to bed!" We have to have the heart of a child again! That's what Jesus called us to be as His people.

To have a simple, uncluttered faith, we have to remove the obstacles that are holding us back. Work, money, and man-made rules seem to stand in the way. Unfortunately, another one of those obstacles is the middle man! Let me explain. In the Old Testament, God gave His commandments to His people. He gave these so they would know what He demanded of them as His children. He only needed 10!

But the Jewish leaders weren't satisfied! They felt God wasn't complete enough, so they wrote 260 more rules for people to follow! Those rules got to be so important they got in the way of the people worshiping God and growing in their faith. The leaders felt that nothing could be done between God and man without it going through them! They made religious life difficult!

Turn to Matthew 23. What Jesus wants us to have is an overhaul of the heart. He wants you! All of you! He wants you to be so caught up in Him that nothing stands in the way and the problems and difficulties of life fade away and life with Him is your continual focus.

But that's not what the religious leaders were doing! Look what Jesus says they're doing and how He wants His disciples to be in verses 6-9, *"and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven."*

In this section, Jesus tells us about the first two steps in simplifying faith. First, Discover truth for yourself! You have one teacher, Jesus Christ! It's important you're in God's Word every day! You don't need someone else to help you discover truth! You can do it as you open His Word and focus on what He's saying to you and wants you to know!

Listen to what Jesus said in John 8:31-32, *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* The Holy Spirit is there standing at your side guiding you through every step you take! Be in the Word discovering Jesus and His truth!

2nd, Develop trust for yourself! You and I sin every day! We turn our own way and make our own decisions of what we think is right. The things of this world continually challenge our trust. We find ourselves living a life of distrust because we've been hurt often. But we have a God we can always trust!

First, stop and ask God to lead, and then follow Him even if it's not what you would usually do. You can rely on the One who created the whole world with His words and loves you enough to give His Only Son to be your Savior! If you can't trust Him, who can you trust!

Turn to Ephesians 1. As you're in His Word and trusting in His guidance you can start to Discern His Will for yourself! Look at verses 7-10, *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."* In these verses, I think there

are four thoughts you need to note about God's Will. He has a purpose for you, He has a plan for you, He has a goal for you, and He's chosen the right time to fulfill all this in you!

The world pulls at us and tries to move us in a variety of ways. But we need to realize that we only have One Master and that's Almighty God! The purposes of this world seem to change like the weather! But our God is constant. His Will never changes! He wants everyone to come to a knowledge of Him and be saved for eternity! He has loved us with a never-ending love since creation! He proved that as He sent Jesus Christ to take our punishment for our sins!

The fourth step is to Disregard the Crowds for a change! We all like to be liked and fit in with the crowd, but many times the philosophy and lifestyle of the crowd is going the wrong way! The crowd says we're to work to make ourselves look good and be number one! But God gives an opposite message. Jesus said in Matthew 20:26, "*Whoever would be great among you must be a servant.*" The measure of greatness is not position, power, or prestige; it's service!

God wants you to have the heart of a servant! Listen to this story about what it is to be a servant. In 1936, the Olympics were held in Berlin. Adolf Hitler wanted the world to see the power and perfection of the German people. He did everything he could to show the world he was in control. The Germans were winning gold medal after gold medal. Until a thin, black runner named Jesse Owens competed.

The final event was the broad jump. The world record holder was Lutz Long from Germany. After fouling by stepping over the board on his first two qualifying jumps, Owens was pulled aside by Lutz. He showed Jesse how to put a towel four inches in front of the board and told him to jump from the towel. Jesse followed his advice and made it to the finals. He and Lutz were going to battle for the gold.

Long tied the heavily favored Owens on his second jump, but Owens answered the challenge with a mark of 26' 5 1/2" even though he jumped from the towel and they measured from the board. This was the first jump over 26 feet in Olympic history, and an Olympic record that would stand for 24 years! As Owens finished the jump in the sand, Lutz ran over and picked him up and held his arm high! Then Lutz Long started to clap and led the crowd in applause for what they had just witnessed. As Owens and Lutz walked arm in arm around the track, the German crowd roared its approval. Hitler promptly left the stadium, skipping the medal ceremony.

Unclutter your faith! Put aside all the obstacles the world throws at you! Discover God's truth by being in His Word continually! Develop trust in Him as a God that will never let you down! Discern God's Will of salvation for you! Disregard the crowds and show the world what a servant of Jesus looks like!

Seek the simple faith! Long for God! Worship Him in all you say and do!