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KEEP IT SIMPLE

The title of this article is the “mantra” of a friend of mine. When it comes to the preaching and teaching of God’s word, he tells me often, “Keep it simple.” This sentiment was impressed on my mind even further when a sister told me, “The main problem that high school students have today is not which church to go to, but whether or not to believe in God in the first place.” Think about it: We live in a society that has so pushed God aside that high school students need to be convinced about the very existence of God! This sister’s observation told me that I need to “keep it simple” as I preach. It also tells me that I need to be preaching and teaching these “simple” sermons not only to the teenagers but also to the *parents* of teenagers! After all, children are the students of

their parents. Therefore, if parents do not expose their children to God, the Bible, to truth, etc., how can we expect their children to know these things? God has placed the responsibility of teaching with parents (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:6-9, 11:18-21; Eph. 6:4; II Tim. 1:5). Yet, “Keep it simple” does not mean make things simplistic or speak down to people. Rather, it places responsibility on the teacher to make sure things are said so that folks can understand. Brethren have said for many years that one does not need to be a “Greek scholar” to go to Heaven. True. We do not need to have Ph.D.’s to understand the Bible! The apostle Paul said, “*Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*” (Eph. 3:4). Jesus encouraged reading and

searching the Scriptures, for He knew that in so doing, mankind could understand the truth and follow it (Jn. 5:39, 17:17; Rev. 1:3). Not only did He state this truth, but He lived it (Acts 1:1)! When Jesus spoke, *"the common people heard him gladly"* (Mk. 12:37). Those who listened to Jesus were often the "unknowns," the "rejected," or "general population." The social "elites" and their ilk did not like Jesus. In fact, they conspired against Him to keep Him from preaching (Jn. 11:47-53). After Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, the apostles continued preaching His simple message (Acts 2, etc.). When they preached, the "elites" marveled at their words, noting, *"...they had been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13). Therefore, to "keep it simple" means to preach like Jesus and the apostles. Can we think of any better examples to follow than Christ and His apostles when one wants to communicate God's will in the best way? I can't! When we determine to preach and teach as Christ, we will "keep it simple" for all listening to the truth. Let no man get so caught up in his own ability and talents that he forgets to "hide behind the cross" when preaching! Keep it simple

so that the "common people" can hear the truth, believe it, and obey it! Start at home! – Jarrod Jacobs **Liberty In Christ** July 4th we celebrate the 245th anniversary of the birth of this nation. In the beginning of this nation, a Declaration of Independence was written and signed by those we call "Founding Fathers." This document stated that God granted unto men "certain unalienable rights," among these are "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Therefore, every July 4th, we pause to celebrate the anniversary of the day we declared our freedom or liberty from England. While celebrating freedom is a wonderful thing, have we considered the fact that God granted liberty to men long before this nation ever existed? When we read the Bible, we find the word "liberty" used 27 times, and the word "free" used 59 times. The truth is that God, not man, has granted us liberty! In fact, He is the author of liberty or freedom. II Corinthians 3:17 states, *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."* Liberty is a wonderful gift that God has given us. Therefore, even if a man or woman is enslaved physically, this one is still free in Christ. A Christian is truly free



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Bible Study Challenge

Exodus 12:21-22 *"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the Passover lamb. You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.'"* It is amazing how all throughout the Old Testament, there were constant pictures and themes of Jesus, which He was constantly fulfilling throughout His time on earth. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29. Jesus was constantly making references to these prophetic statements about Him to reveal He was the Christ the Old Testament was preparing the world for. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up," Jn. 3:14. "I am the bread that came down out of heaven," Jn. 6:41. Take some time this month to go through statements like these that Jesus made and see how many references and pictures from the old testament you can find that show God was revealing Jesus the whole time!

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Ecclesiastes 7:11-22

"Wisdom along with an inheritance is good and an advantage to those who see the sun. For wisdom is protection just as money is protection, but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors. Consider the work of God, for who is able to straighten what He has bent? In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider – God has made the one as well as the other so that man will not discover anything that will be after him. I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time? It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them. Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. Also, do not take seriously all words which are spoken, so that you will not hear your servant cursing you. For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others."

(Jn. 8:36) because we are free from sin and free from Satan, which is true freedom. How can we obtain this liberty? The Bible tells us how. **God's Word Brings Liberty.** David made this clear when he said, "*I will walk at liberty: for I have sought your precepts*" (Ps. 119:45). David understood the relationship between God's word and freedom. Isaiah and Jeremiah also used God's word to "*proclaim liberty*" to the people (Isa. 61:1; Jer. 34:8). Incidentally, Isaiah 61:1 was a prophecy concerning Jesus (Lk. 4:18-21). Therefore, not only was Isaiah using God's word to "*proclaim liberty,*" but so was Christ when He spoke! James called God's will "*the perfect law of liberty*" (Jas. 1:25). Can there be a better description of God's word than this? God's word brings liberty to men! By following the word of God, one can be free from sin and Satan (Rom. 6:16-18). **Christ Brings Liberty.** We cannot separate the work of Christ and the work accomplished in His word. Christ came to bring spiritual liberty to men, and this is revealed in the written word. He said, "*If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*" (Jn. 8:36). Our Lord sacrificed Himself that we might

be delivered from the bondage of sin. His death on the cross and shed blood provided the means by which all men can be saved (free) from sin. It is for this reason that when those at Rome were "*obedient from the heart to that standard of teaching ...*", the Christians were then "*set free from sin*" (Rom. 6:18, 22).

Distinctions Between Liberty And Bondage It seems obvious that there is a vast difference between liberty and bondage in the physical realm, but many do not recognize this difference in the spiritual realm. This fact is apparent when we look and see so many who are struggling in sin daily. Many love being in sin and do not wish to change. These people do not recognize the difference between spiritual liberty and spiritual bondage! Why would one wish to be in oppression and bondage when he could be free? The answer to this question seems obvious, yet, multitudes today remain enslaved in sin. Why is this? One reason people refuse to leave the slavery of sin for freedom in Christ is that they have been deceived. Peter warned of false teachers who "*promise them (the beguiled, v. 14, 18) liberty, but they themselves are slaves of corruption.*" – Jarrod Jacobs