

Simplicity of the Simple Life  
Week #8 No Bench Plan

Romans 12:1-8 NLT

*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. <sup>2</sup> Don't copy the behavior 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.*

*<sup>3</sup> Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.*

*<sup>4</sup> Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, <sup>5</sup> so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.*

*<sup>6</sup> In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. <sup>7</sup> If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. <sup>8</sup> If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.*

Review of past weeks addressing the simplicity of God's plan:

Authenticity dialogue with Amy Lukachik. The importance of learning to be honest and truthful with yourself and God.

Spiritual gifts and how the Father gives specific attributes for the health of the body of Christ, His church.

**Relationship:** It's personal between you (us) and God because we have believed (**faith, hope, and love become personal**)

**Focus:** Big picture of a healthy body not just personal health. (**making it about the mission and not yourself**)

**Discovery:** Spiritual gifting is personal confirmation of your importance to God and His body (**embrace who you are and how you can bless**)

**Practice:** Learning to function and do your part for health of the church for the glory of our Lord Jesus (**learn to walk in it**)

**Pursuing God is the most meaningful choice you can make – transforming your life and inspiring others.**

This begs the question.....Do we trust Him?

Our deep struggles that affect our trust:

- Make excuses for ourselves - can be true for others but cant be for me (is God a liar?)
- I'm not ready
- I'm too busy
- There is someone better for the role
- When I grow in my faith and understanding of my faith - Disqualified (Past or Current Struggle)

**We do this individually and we do it together.**

We have talked about the importance of identity being in Christ. I discussion involving my daughter Jacquelyn.

**“Our doing directs our identity”**

**“Our identity directs our doing”**

**“At the root of so many of Satan’s temptations is just the question of who you are and how God feels about you. The rest of the temptations are secondary. Satan starts by making you question who you are and how God feels about you.”**

**“Satan starts with what you did and tears down who you are: the Holy Spirit starts with who you are (in Christ) and calls you to rise above what you did.”**

Ephesians 4:1-16 NLT

*Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. <sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. <sup>4</sup> For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.*

*<sup>5</sup> There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

*<sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all,*

*who is over all, in all, and living through all.*

*<sup>7</sup> However, he has given each one of us a special gift (grace) through the generosity of Christ. <sup>8</sup> That is why the Scriptures say,*

*“When he ascended to the heights,*

*he led a crowd of captives*

*and gave gifts to his people.”*

*<sup>9</sup> Notice that it says “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. <sup>10</sup> And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.*

*<sup>11</sup> Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup> Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup> This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.*

*<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. <sup>15</sup> Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. <sup>16</sup> He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

Illustration of the bench or from a church building.....a pew.

**We feel that one of the biggest lies or biggest misunderstandings in the western church has to do with the perspective of "The bench plan".**

Ministry has become an "all star" event where a few people are visible and in the game while most people view themselves as on the bench.

Sadly, it's not like most people that are on the bench are looking for an opportunity to get in the game as they feel that it is their roll to simply show up and occupy the bench or pew.

Honestly discuss the spiritual roll of spiritual leaders as outlined in Ephesians 4 along with what Paul reinforces in Romans 12.

**Every single follower of Jesus should be personally "growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church".**

Address visible ministry roles vs not so visible roles.

**Visible roles are more public in nature. (Public stage)**

**Not so visible roles are more private or behind the scenes in nature. (Everyday life)**

We believe that if you study the New Testament record, you will see that the early church modeled an amazing balance in ministry.

**We will suggest to you this morning that unlike many church models across America, the majority of the gospel ministry in the early church was done by "average" followers of Christ who embraced their gifts and the importance of their participation.**

**The power of the Holy Spirit in the NT church is due to the power of each individual pursuing Christ and participating with the gospel message on the most personal level of life and living.**

Address our belief and approach at MVC which is based on personal faith growing to create group faith to function as a healthy body of Jesus. Everyone participating because they want to and for no other reason.

We are not trying to create anything of man but rather experience a movement of God through people that are learning to love Him and learning to love others.

We understand that some of you have been deeply wounded by religious systems, church people, and/or religious leaders. We understand that some of you don't trust us. Trust is something that is often earned and sometimes over a longer period of time.

If you don't trust then you naturally question our motives.

We are doing our best to live true to the teachings of our Lord Jesus and the holy scriptures. This is about what Jesus said and what Jesus asked of us.

We are learning, growing, and changing to glorify God.

We are striving to get back to the simplicity of a simple faith lifestyle, individually and together.

We are asking you to consider your value to God and your identity through Christ.

We are asking you to practice your grace gifts from our Lord.

We are asking you to function in your God designed roll so that we can edify one another in love.

We are asking you to promote health within this body and the body of Christ in this area.

There is no bench in God's plan.

**God's design for His body, His church:**

**Everyone has a role.**

**Everyone matters.**

**Everyone ministers.**