

INTRODUCTION

In my opinion, one of the greatest television shows ever produced was the Andy Griffith show. I'm talking about the old black-and-white episodes when Ron Howard played a young Opie. One of my favorite episodes was "The Sermon for Today." Here's a question for you TV trivia buffs. What was the name of the church in Mayberry where everyone attended? It wasn't First Baptist or First Methodist. Give up? It was called "The All Souls Church." And in this particular episode they had a guest preacher all the way from New York who was going to preach on "What's Your Hurry?" Dr. Harrison Everett Breen was played by actor David Lewis who went on to star on the soap opera General Hospital for 25 years.

Mayberry is pretty slow-paced but this preacher from NYC wanted to stress the need to slow down and enjoy life. He said, "Consider how our lives are today. Everything is run, run, run. We bolt our breakfast, we scan the headlines, we race to the office. We drive ourselves from morning to night. We have forgotten the meaning of the word relaxation. What has become of the simple pleasures of the past? Who can forget the old-fashioned band concert on the twilight on the village green? The joy, the serenity of just sitting and listening. We should strive to recapture this simple pleasure. And so I say to you my dear friends, 'Relax. Slow down. Take it easy.'" At this point his voice is quiet and soothing and the camera pans to Barney who is falling to sleep. Some of you are familiar with that experience in church. First his eyes begin to cross, and he fights to stay awake, until finally his chin hits his chest and he's dozing. At that very moment, Dr. Breen ends his message by shouting, "What's your hurry?" Barney jumps up as if he's ready to run a race.

As they're leaving church Barney says, "Wonderful message, Reverend. You can't ever hear too many sermons against sin." After lunch, they decide to try to put the sermon into practice, so they plan a concert on the village green. Of course, they have to repair the bandstand, repair the band uniforms, and rehearse the band. As you might imagine, they spend the next few frantic hours working feverishly to get to the point where they can slow down, until they give up, worn out and exhausted. The comical point of the show was that it's good to simplify, but you ruin it if you have to work too hard to simplify.

Those of us who live in East Texas live much more hectic lives than the good people of Mayberry. We rush around from place to place and seldom take time to rest. Do you need to simplify your life? That's what this message is all about. The basic message Jesus gave His disciples when He sent them out was to SIMPLIFY. For many years I have followed a formula for preaching that I call the KISS theory. KISS stands for Keep It Simple and Short.

Let's read the simple instructions Jesus gave His disciples in Mark 6:7-13.

"Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. These were his instructions: 'Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against

them.' They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them."

There is great beauty in simplicity. The great medieval pastor Thomas à Kempis wrote: "By two wings man is lifted from the things of earth: simplicity and purity."

This is a simple message. When Jesus taught it was profoundly simple, and simply profound. In these few verses Jesus gave us a simple approach to ministry; a simple attitude toward possessions; and a simple act to recover from failure. We'll spend most of our time talking about how to recover from failure.

I. A SIMPLE APPROACH TO MINISTRY: Go out preaching and healing in the authority of Jesus

Jesus sent the disciples out with the good news and in verse 12 we read, "They went out and preached that people should repent." The message of the Gospel is simple. I can summarize it in one sentence: God loves us, but because we're sinners, we can't enjoy a loving relationship with Him until we're willing to repent.

A few years ago I visited the Arlington National Cemetery across the river from Washington D.C. It is a moving experience to visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It is an honor for a soldier to be chosen to serve as a Tomb Guard who marches back and forth in front of the Tomb. In the summer, the guard is changed every thirty minutes, and in the winter, the guards change every hour. Even at night, when the cemetery is closed the guards carry out their duty and change every two hours. When the Tomb Guard is being relieved of duty he always says to the Guard taking his place, "Post and orders remain as directed." The new guard says, "Orders acknowledged." And they do this 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in every kind of weather.

That reminds me that 2,000 years ago, Jesus gave us our marching orders. Fifty generations of Christians have carried out His orders and they have passed this command on to us. It's as if they said, "Post and orders remain as directed."

Here is the unchanged command Jesus has given to us, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Churches sometimes forget this command and adopt a "Field of Dreams" mentality. They think, "If we build it they will come." But Jesus never told us to come and sit; He told us to go and share. When we gather on Sundays we don't come to church, we ARE the church. This is where we receive strength, inspiration, and encouragement to go out and do what Jesus told us to do. That's a simple approach to ministry.

II. A SIMPLE ATTITUDE ABOUT POSSESSIONS: Don't let "stuff" slow you down

Jesus told the disciples, "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic." (Mark 6:8-9)

Do you know someone who tends to overpack for a trip? My standard advice when I'm giving an orientation for a trip is to pack your suitcase, and then take half of the stuff out. That's called packing light. But Jesus didn't tell His disciples to just pack light, He said pack NOTHING.

Jesus wasn't teaching that we should approach life unprepared. Elsewhere He taught that before you build a tower, you must count the cost. Planning and preparation are wise steps for anyone.

The problem with most of us is that we have over-packed our personal suitcases because we love our precious stuff. The great American dream involves spending money we don't have to buy things we don't need to impress people we don't like. We spend our adult lives accumulating more and more stuff. And don't you dare mess with my stuff. And we have so much stuff now that we have to rent storage buildings to hold all our excess stuff that we can't keep in our own houses. It's all about the stuff! And I worry about getting more stuff and I worry about my stuff getting ripped off. That's what Jesus said about our stuff we store away on earth. He said thieves steal it and it gets eaten away by moths.

Here's what Jesus said should be our attitude about possessions. "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:28-33)

So, if we aren't going to worry about possessions, how will God take care of us? First, God's work speaks of the value of good, honest work. If you can work, don't worry. If you can't work, don't worry either, because God will take care of you too. Jesus knew that in every village there would be good people who would be generous to those who came announcing the Good News. God uses a variety of sources to meet the needs of His people. He fed the children of Israel for forty years with manna from heaven. And in Deuteronomy 24 God instructed the Israelites to leave some of their grain unpicked, some of their olives on the trees, and some of their grapes on the vine. Why? Because God said there would always be strangers, widows, and fatherless who would need to depend on their generosity.

So here's a life changer for you. Unpack your suitcase. Give your stuff away to people who don't have much stuff. And when you do that God will give you more stuff; but don't store it—give that stuff away. And the more stuff you give away, the more stuff He gives you to give away. Don't let stuff slow you down. Pack light for the journey of life.

III. A SIMPLE ACT TO RECOVER FROM FAILURE: Shake off the dust and move on

Jesus knew the disciples wouldn't be welcomed into every village, so He gave them this advice, "If any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave." (Mark 6:11) Jesus said this would be a testimony against them. He didn't want to punish the people of a city who rejected them. Jesus just didn't want that kind dusty, dirty attitude to linger on the disciples.

Clebe McClary is a wounded Vietnam Veteran. He lost an eye and an arm fighting for our country. He spoke at Green Acres more than twenty years ago and I still remember a little acrostic he shared with us. It was the word FIDO. It stood for Forget It and Drive On. Bad things happen in life, and when they do, FIDO: Forget it and drive on. You meet some bad people in life, and when you do, FIDO: Forget it and drive on.

Too many people are slaves to their past mistakes. The Apostle Paul had once been an enemy of Christ who persecuted and arrested Christians. He stood by while Stephen was stoned to death. Even after he started following Jesus, he faced trouble of all kinds. He was stoned, arrested, tortured. He was shipwrecked on the island of Malta and to add insult to injury, while he was making a fire, a poisonous snake bit him on the hand. But you know what Paul did? He just shook him off and forgot about it. Everyone expected him to die, but God wasn't finished with him. Paul's secret was that he didn't live in the past. He wrote, "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things." (Philippians 3:13-15) Are you wise? Have you learned to shake off the dust and move on? Some of you are still carrying a load of dirt and dust today that you need to shake off. I'm serious. You need to shake it, shake it, shake it off, baby. Here are five areas of your life that might have accumulated dust.

A. Shake off the dust of personal failure

Everyone fails at times, but God uses people who understand that failure isn't fatal and failure isn't final. You're going to fall down at times in life. The thing that separates a wise person from a wicked person is that a wise person gets back up. The Bible says, "Though a righteous man falls seven times, he will get up, but the wicked will stumble into ruin." (Proverbs 24:16 HCSB)

Thomas Edison once worked for months to find a filament that would burn for more than a few seconds in his light bulb. He tried over 700 different filaments and they all failed. A reporter asked him, "It must be frustrating to work so hard and see so little results." Edison replied, "Oh, I have lots of results. I know 700 things that don't work!"

The Bible is full of stories of personal failure. Abraham was a liar but he shook off the dust and became the father of a great nation. Moses was a murderer, but he shook off the dust and became a great leader. David was a womanizer and an accessory to murder, but he shook it off to finish strong. Peter cursed and denied Jesus three times in one night, but he repented and shook off the dust and became the leader of the first church.

Sure you have failed; we've all failed. But don't let that slow you down. Shake off the dust and move on.

B. Shake off the dust of broken relationships

Did you hear about the two twin brothers who hated each other? Their father was a wealthy businessman. The younger twin was wicked and devious. He manipulated his old father and cheated his older brother out of the family fortune. The older brother was filled with rage and vowed to revenge this injustice. He publically announced that he would destroy his backstabbing younger twin. So the younger brother moved the business out of town and the older brother pursued him.

This isn't a story from today's financial times; it's the story of Jacob and Esau in the Bible. Esau was furious and chased Jacob for twenty years and finally confronted him. But by now, the younger brother had met God and God had changed him. Instead of being arrogant and greedy, the younger twin was humble and remorseful.

When they finally met, Esau had 400 soldiers ready to slaughter Jacob and his family. But Jacob was a changed man. In fact, God had changed his name from Jacob, which meant "grabber" to "Israel" which means "Prince of God." Jacob approached Esau and bowed down before him seven times. That said it all. It said, "Brother, I'm sorry. I was wrong. Will you forgive me? Let's be reconciled." And Esau started weeping and embraced his brother. They both shook off the dust of a broken relationship.

Maybe you have a broken relationship from your past. It may be a friend, a family member, or even a former spouse. If reconciliation is possible, you should seek it. But it takes two people to be reconciled, and that may not be possible in your situation. But you can do is forgive that person and shake off the dust and move on.

C. Shake off the dust of bitterness

Have you been holding a grudge against someone who has wronged you in the past? The Bible says to be careful that you don't miss the grace of God by allowing a root of bitterness to grow up in you. Bitterness begins as a small root of resentment, but it can grow into a hedge of hatred. But bitterness is an acid that will destroy its container. Bitterness hurts the person who carries it more than the person who caused it.

One of Aesop's fables is about a man who hated his neighbor and carried bitterness and resentment toward him. In this fable the bitter man met Zeus and asked him to grant a wish. Zeus said, "I will grant any wish that you want. The only stipulation is that I will grant to your neighbor, whom you hate, twice as much of whatever you ask. If you ask for 100 diamonds, your neighbor will receive 200." The bitter man thought for a moment. So intense was his bitterness that he made his request of Zeus. He said, "Fine, I ask you to make me blind in one eye."

Maybe you've been carrying a load of dirty, dusty bitterness toward a person or a perceived injustice in your past. Shake it off. Move on.

D. Shake off the dust of unforgiveness

Is there someone who has wronged you in the past and you haven't forgiven them? It might be the same person you just thought about in the broken relationship. When Jesus taught us the model prayer He said, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us." (Matthew 6:12 TLB)

I've sometimes heard bitter people say, "I can NEVER forgive that person for what they did to me." And I always think, "Wow, I sure hope you never need the forgiveness of God." Sometimes you'll hear people say, "Forgive and forget." That's misleading, because forgiving isn't the same thing as forgetting. Or they say, "I'll forgive you, but I won't forget it." Well, outside of brain damage, senility, or hypnosis, chances are you won't forget it. But when you hear someone say, "I'll forgive you but I won't forget it," what they really mean is, "I'm going to say you're forgiven but I'm still going to hold this against you for the rest of my life. That's not forgiveness.

Did you hear about the old elephant drinking at a waterhole in Africa? He saw a turtle and suddenly walked over and swatted the turtle across the pond. A passing giraffe said, "Why did you do that?" The elephant said, "When I was a baby elephant 47 years ago, I remember that turtle biting my trunk." The giraffe said, "Wow. You must have a great memory." The elephant said, "Yes, I have turtle recall."

We tend to forget all kinds of things, but isn't it interesting that we have total recall when it comes to how other people mistreated us? Forgetting is passive, but forgiveness is an active decision. The word literally means, "To release." When you choose to forgive someone you release him or her from your desire to punish or hurt them for what they did to you.

Or for some of you, your dust today is that you haven't forgiven yourself for something in your past. God has forgiven you, but you are still carrying a dusty load of guilt around. Someone said when you forgive others it's your gift of grace to them. When you forgive yourself, it's your gift of grace to yourself. Is there a spirit of unforgiveness lingering on you today? Shake off the dust and move on!

E. Shake off the dust of rejection

Jesus understands rejection. We read earlier in this chapter that Jesus had returned to His home synagogue in Nazareth. The people He had grown up with just couldn't accept the fact that He was the Messiah. Instead, they forced Him out of Nazareth and tried to stone Him to death. The Bible says He walked through the crowd and they weren't able to stone Him. I would have loved to see how He simply walked through a screaming mob ready to kill Him. I don't know if He just stared them down, or if He pulled that effect from the Matrix movie where everything slowed down to super slow motion and He just walked through the crowd and the next thing they knew they looked up and Jesus was gone. But we do know Jesus simply shook the dust of their rejection off and moved on with His ministry. He didn't curse them or call down fire on them; He just shook off their rejection and moved on.

Chances are you've suffered rejection in your past. Just as there were people who didn't receive the disciples, there are people in your past who have held up a hand and said, "I don't want you in my life." Do what Jesus told the disciples to do. Shake off the dust and move on.

CONCLUSION

If you want to simplify your life, remember Jesus' simple approach to ministry: Go out and tell people the Good News. Remember Jesus' simple approach to possessions: Pack light for the journey of life. And most of all, the best way to recover from failure is to shake off the dust and move on. Like Clebe McClary said, "FIDO!"

Jay Strack has been my friend for decades. He's an evangelist and the founder of Student Leadership University in Orlando, where our students have been several times. He has had a great impact on the Kingdom. Jay wrote *Shake Off the Dust*, a book about his life. He grew up in a wealthy home in South Florida where he experienced physical and emotional abuse as a child. He started doing drugs at age 13 and by the time he was 16 he was an addict and a drug dealer. He was busted and spent time in a juvenile facility as a junkie and a criminal. But someone told him about Jesus and he gave his heart to Christ. Even though he was a new creation in Christ, it took him a long time to shake off the dirt and dust from his troubled past.

He writes: "As long as you remain a prisoner to your past, you will never know the freedom of the future. You can't spend the rest of your life sitting in the ashes of devastation, crying over what went wrong. You'd don't have to carry around the dirt of your past mistakes. Get up, shake off the dust, and go on."

You may be carrying around a load of dirt and dust from your past and God's word for you today is to get up, shake off the dust, and move on. Have you failed morally? Shake off the dust and move on. Have you failed relationally? Shake off the dust and move on.

OUTLINE

I. A SIMPLE APPROACH TO MINISTRY: Go out preaching and healing in the authority of Jesus

Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." *Matthew 28:18-20*

II. A SIMPLE ATTITUDE ABOUT POSSESSIONS: Don't let "stuff" slow you down

Jesus said, "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." *Matthew 6:28-33*

III. A SIMPLE ACT TO RECOVER FROM FAILURE: Shake off the dust and move on

"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things." *Philippians 3:13-15*

Shake off the dust of:

- A. Personal failure
- B. Broken relationships
- C. Bitterness
- D. Unforgiveness
- E. Rejection

— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations and/or use material that is not under copyright. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material stimulate your own Spirit-driven preparation—*it is never intended as a substitute for your own study of Scripture.*

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, it is good scholarship (not to mention the right thing to do) to cite the source. If you are teaching, you may simply preface your remarks by saying something like: **“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”** This simple citation also applies to any work you may publish, too, as I routinely publish my material in books that are protected by copyright.

This careful effort on your part may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you. I trust you will find that additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners.

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas*
