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Christmas has become increasingly complex. There is a myriad of things that compete for our attention around Christmas time, and the simplicity of our devotion to Christ (be quickly compromised. This series aims to cut through the clutter of Christmas and get back to the basics of what Christmas is really about: Christ! Included in this series will be New Year's Eve weekend with the focus of new beginnings, featuring a special baptism emphasis! Let's go!

"What is your goal for Christmas and will the way you celebrate Christmas accomplish that goal?"

Week 1: A Simple Deception

A Simple Meaning:

- The fulfillment of the promised and prophesied Messiah

Isaiah 7:14 (NIV) - 14Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

- The coming of the Christ – God with us

John 1:14 (NIV) - 14The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- To bring the light of life into the darkness

John 8:12 (NIV) - 12When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

A Simple Purpose:

- Celebrations (Feasts & Festivals) were to serve as a reminder for God's people of the faithfulness, provision, character, commands and promises of God.
 - Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:4-34)

Christmas is intended to be a celebration in which we remember the faithfulness, provision, character, commands and promises of God.

So, what complicates Christmas? **We do.**

A Simple Deception:

Simple Christmas Questions with Significant Christmas Impact:

- "What do **I want** for Christmas?"
- "What do **you want** for Christmas?"
- "What do **we want** for Christmas?"
- "What do you think **they want** for Christmas?"

2 Corinthians 11:1-3 (NIV) - I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me! I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him (Hosea 1:2; Hosea 2; Colossians 1:22,28; Ephesians 5:25-27). But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning (Genesis 3:1-7; James 1:13-17), your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Genesis 3:1-7 (NIV) - 1Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" 2The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

James 4:1-10 (NIV) - 1What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. 4You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? 6But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." 7Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

How do we repent, resist and simplify? Start by asking the right questions:

- What does *Jesus want* for Christmas?"
- "What is your goal for Christmas and will the way you celebrate Christmas accomplish that goal?"
- Does this _____ help us remember the faithfulness, provision, character, commands and promises of God?
- Are we celebrating Jesus like Jesus or like us?
 - Benevolent, Relational, Memorable, Intentional, Meaningful...
- Do I Remove, Restore, Renew or Replace?

Some Simple Ideas:

- Advent Calendar – it's not too late! See the app & web
- Build a Nativity together
- Read the Christmas story 1st on Christmas morning – the 1st gift to celebrate
- Pursue truth over tradition – Elf on the Shelf, Santa, Candy Advent, etc.
- Invite friends and family to celebrate at Christmas Eve Services
- Adopt a family
- Qualify your "what do you want" questions and your "here's why we _____" reasons

For Small Group Discussion

Questions:

- What was/is your favorite Christmas tradition? Least favorite?
- Do you have a purpose for the Christmas celebrations? If so, what are they and why?
- What is a new action you can incorporate into your Christmas based on the message today?

Main Point: Christmas is made simple by being intentional. How can you simplify by being intentional this year?

Main Scripture: 2 Corinthians 11:1-3