

## The Simplicity of It All

n/a

### **Ready:**

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.

-Matthew 22:37-38 (NIV)

### **Set**

I grew up in east Texas. Texarkana, to be precise. If I were to sum up my east Texas experience for someone unfamiliar with its culture and people, I would simply tell them about Gary Mills. He was a man who worked for my dad. Sort of. Gary worked when Gary wasn't in jail.

Gary Mills owned a van that he'd bought at a pawn shop. Now, only in the piney woods of eastern Texas and portions of rural West Virginia can vehicles be acquired from pawnshops, for like two dollars. These are my people.

One-day Gary's accelerator cable broke. (The accelerator cable is a cable that goes from the accelerator pedal to the engine where it attaches to the accelerator arm.) When he stepped on the accelerator pedal, the van moved neither forward nor backward. But Gary is almost brilliant.

If you've spent much time in vans, you may have noticed a large intrusion of plastic bulging into the forward space between the driver's right knee and the passengers left knee. This is often crowned with faux wooden beverage holders, and it covers what mechanics like to call, "the engine." It's funny to think that mere plastics separate the operator and the machine.

Being almost brilliant, Gary, who knew this to be the case, took a drill and drilled a hole through the plastic cover. He then ran a rope through the newly drilled hole and attached the rope to the engine's accelerator arm. Thus, the rope became the accelerator pedal! Now to move the vehicle in a forward direction, Gary needed only to reach over to his right and pull on the rope.

Astounding! But his mastermind genius didn't stop there. He then took a saw and cut a slit down from the freshly drilled hole, effectively forming the shape of an antique keyhole. He then tied knots in the rope at different speed increments. Cruise control. You want 40 mph? Simply pull on the rope until you see the second knot then slide the rope down the freshly cut gap, and the knot holds the rope securely at 40 mph. Almost genius I say.

This strikes me as too closely metaphorical of my faith. Living here in the American South,

being born into it, it often feels cheap and rigged to me. Like things kept breaking along the way and now I'm pulling on this ridiculously intricate array of ropes that spread to so many levers and pulleys. My hand is getting rope burn from all the tugging, the knots are starting to fray, and I think duct tape is involved.

I think the simplest description of our faith is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. I think that is the sum of it. And, for me, it just so happens that when I attempt to rid myself of all the modifications and amendments I've collected along the way and get back to this—the simplest of tenants—I also find it to be the most costly. I pray that today we attempt to pursue God to the point at which He occupies our total heart, soul and mind. I pray that we love others as we love ourselves. I pray that, as athletes and coaches, you would understand what it means to bring the gospel to teammates and competitors in an authentic and loving way. I pray that we let go of the complexities of our ideas of Christ in order to get a better grip on the simplicity of it all.

## **Go**

1. Is your life full of complications and distractions?
2. Do you often get caught up and confused?
3. How is being a Christian simple? What are the basics?
4. Do you need to get back to the basics?

## **Workout**

Mark 12:28-34

## **Bible Reference:**

Mark 12



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