

3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021

## Simple

**“Let people hold to these:  
manifest plainness, embrace simplicity,  
reduce selfishness, have few desires.”**

*Lao Tzu, Tao-te Ching (c. 600 BC)*

### **Resolution 2 – “Keep it simple”**

The Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism, who lived six centuries before Christ, had it right. Manifesting plainness, embracing simplicity, reducing selfishness and having few desires is a maxim for life that we would all do well to live by. I'll chose simplicity for now ...

When I decided to train for the ministry, my old granny was delighted. A profoundly Christian woman, a convert at the Billy Graham crusades in Glasgow in the 1950s and having a lasting influence on me, she was never one to cast praise around willy-nilly. But she was a woman of wisdom, and would drop the occasional gem into a conversation, which, if you were rightly attuned to hear it, would do you the world of good. Reminiscing about ministers she'd known, she said to me once, “Ah like the yins that keep it simple, son. Keep it simple. Aye, that's whit a' ministers should dae.” It's advice which still resonates with me. And I do wish sometimes it might be heeded by other ministers too ...

When I was small, a new minister came to our church. He regularly preached for a good half-an-hour – pretty standard for the time – and his sermons weren't always the easiest to follow. Not at all happy with this, my mum took to writing down all the words in the sermon she didn't understand. Then she would phone the minister on Monday morning and ask him to explain each of these words in simpler terms. I can't recall whether this improved the minister's preaching, but it certainly improved my mother's understanding – *and* her peace of mind.

No one has ever phoned me with a litany of words they didn't understand. They don't have to. I know well enough myself when I make things too wordy or complicated. After all, I still have my granny whispering in my ear, “Keep it simple, son. Keep it simple.”

### **A prayer for today**

*That voice in my ear ... My granny's or God's? It should be simple to work out.*

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