

Simplicity

What is Simplicity:

Simplicity is really about focus, and unity of purpose. The Spiritual Discipline of Simplicity removes the noise and clutter that threaten to steal our sense of peace and intimacy with Christ. Simplicity lets us make the “main thing the main thing.” In Matthew 6:33, Jesus tells us to, “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

To develop simplicity in our lives, we must put our priorities in the right order. We must be determined to put God first in our lives. Truth be known, the person who does not seek God’s Kingdom first, does not seek it at all. For as worthy as any other cause, concern, or person may be, the moment they take precedence over our efforts to “seek first His kingdom,” they become idolatry.

Practicing the discipline of simplicity doesn’t mean our lives will be any less busy, for it does not control the quantity of things we do so much as the type of things. So while your schedule may be just as full as before, it will no longer be littered with the draining and pointless tasks, and will lead to feelings of fulfillment and contentment.

What we choose to become involved in will have a singleness and unity in purpose: God’s purpose. Once we have our lives centered on God, then all our decisions, priorities, and goals will be easy to determine because everything we do will emanate out of our desire to please Him.

Getting Started:

- *Possessions*
 - Buy things for their usefulness rather than for their status. For example, consider your clothes. Do you buy clothing only when new clothes are needed or to keep up with the latest fashions?
 - Develop a habit of giving things away. If you are becoming attached to some possessions, get rid of the things that clutter your home and life and give it to someone who needs it.
 - Make assessments about how useful the latest gadget will be in your life before purchasing.
 - Learn to enjoy things without owning them. Borrow and share with others.

- *Dependence*
 - Reject anything that causes an addiction. Eliminate or cut back on the use of addictive, non-nutritional drinks: alcohol, coffee, tea, Coke, etc. Refuse to be a slave to anything but God.
 - Avoid all “buy now, pay later” schemes. The Bible views charging interest as exploitation of another’s misfortune. These schemes are traps that deepen our bondage to money and material items.
- *Relating to Others*
 - Obey Jesus’ instructions about plain, honest speech (Matt. 5:37) Honesty and integrity are practices of simplicity. Avoid speaking flattery and half-truths. If you promise to do something, do it. Simply put, “let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'” (Matthew 5:37)
 - Reject anything that would allow you to profit off the misfortune of others of others. Consider how your choices affect other human beings. Know where and how products are produced. Reject anything that exploits or contributes to the oppression of others.
- *Time*
 - Develop a deeper appreciation for creation. Discover once again that “The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.” (Ps 24:1)
 - Eliminate anything that distracts you from seeking first the kingdom of God.

Ideas for more in-depth practice:

Go through your house and take a note of what is a necessity and what is a luxury item. For each luxury ask yourself:

- Would I be willing to give this up if God asked me to?
- Could the time, energy, thought, and money I spent acquiring this have been invested in better ways?
- How would God have me use these things?
- How would God have me give any or all of them up? If you are convinced that He is asking you to rid yourself of them (after listening in prayer, study, and consultation with a trusted mature Christian friend), then get rid of them in the most appropriate manner.

Go through your daily schedule. Note how much of your day is spent on trivial things and all of the “extra” things that you are involved in. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is this really worth the amount of time I give it?
- Why am I spending this amount of time on this activity?
- How much time am I spending with God? Is this activity hindering that?
- How much time do I spend with my family? Is this activity keeping us from that time?

Relevant Quotes:

- “O, how amiable this simplicity is! Who will give it to me? I leave all for this. It is the Pearl of the Gospel.” Francois Fenelon
- “There are two ways to get enough: one is to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less” G.K. Chesterton
- “Simplicity is openness, unselfconsciousness, naturalness. It is the opposite of subtlety, cunning, duplicity.” Richard Foster
- “I place no value on anything I possess, except in relation to the Kingdom of God” David Livingstone
- “Living simply so that others may simply live.” tenent of the Salvation Army

Biblical Basis:

- "God made man simple; man's complex problems are of his own devising" Eccles. 7:30, JB
- “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.” Matt 6:33
- “for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content” 1 Timothy 6:7-8
- “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- “‘So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.’ And he said to his disciples, ‘Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.’” Luke 12:21-23