

"Simplicity"

Overview



Do you ever find yourself wishing your life was simpler? In the midst of all the schedules and responsibilities and deadlines and plans and material stuff we own, it's not unusual for many of us to wonder – how did life get so complicated?

Slowing down and simplifying our existence is not a new idea. “In Praise of Slow” (a book that talked about the worldwide movement challenging the “cult of speed”) was an international bestseller in 2004.

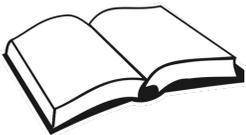
As anyone who has tried to do it knows – adopting a simpler lifestyle is harder to do than it sounds. Nevertheless, this lesson will explore what approaching “simplicity” as a spiritual discipline can mean for our walk with Jesus.

Getting Started



1. If your house was on fire and you could only leave with 2 things, what would you grab and take with you? (NB: All people and pets are elsewhere so you can't choose them.)
 2. A vacation is often the time we get to slow down and uncomplicate life - at least for a little while. Describe your dream vacation.
 3. What single thing (more than anything else) would you say is complicating your life right now?
-

The Text



Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:1-17 (NIV)

The Audio (optional)



"Simplicity" - by Kyle Corbin, Nov. 24/19

NOTES: _____

Understanding



1. What is true about those who have come to believe in Jesus (according to Col. 3:1-4)? How does a person's life change when he/she comes to faith in Christ? What impact should this have on our lives according to verse 1?
2. What does it mean to set our hearts and minds "on things above"? What are the different ways we can do this? Review the following: Col. 3:5-14, Romans 12:1-3, Phil. 4:8-9.
3. Is there a guiding principle in Col. 3:15-17 that we can focus on to help us achieve simplicity? State that principle in your own words.
4. What should our attitude be towards the accumulation of wealth and material things? Consider Psalm 62:10, Prov. 11:28, Matthew 13:45, Luke 16:10-13, 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19. Why is material wealth a danger to our souls? How does simplicity help guard against this threat?

5. Does the pursuit of simplicity mean we should never enjoy abundance and that we should renounce all our possessions? Check out Mark 10:17-22 and then Deut. 8:7-10.
6. Are there other areas of life (aside from our material possessions) which would benefit from the practice of simplicity (eg. our schedules, relationships, etc.). Name some of these areas (and try to identify any related belief or motivation that may contribute to unnecessary complexity in that area).
7. "To have what we want is riches, but to be able to do without is power" (George Macdonald). Agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

Applying



1. Does our surrounding culture promote simplicity (or make it harder to practice it)? Discuss.
2. What impact do you imagine the discipline of simplicity would have on society (if practiced widely)? Consider, for example, the year of Jubilee described in Lev. 25:8-12, 25-28. Could this be practiced in our age today? What would it look like? What impact would it have?
3. How will you decide when "enough is enough"? What factors will you consider in determining whether or not a possession or an activity of yours is a) to be retained and enjoyed as a gift/calling from God, or b) to be discarded as you practice the discipline of simplicity?
4. Does the concept of the discipline of simplicity convict, challenge or encourage you? Why?
5. Is there anything in your life that you know (or suspect) you are a little bit too much attached to? What makes you think you need to hold on to it a little bit less (or discard it completely)?
6. Review the following steps that can be taken to incorporate the discipline of simplicity:
 1. Reorienting your inward reality
 - a. Come up with a statement of who God wants you to be
 - b. Recognize the value of Christ
 - c. Set your hearts on things to do with Him
 - d. Get rid of everything that belongs to our earthy nature

2. Conforming your Outward Reality (a.k.a. Practicing Simplicity)
 - a. Review your schedule – and make one change that will organize your time better for the glory of God.
 - b. Assess your talents and grow in them
 - c. Declutter (decrease consumerism, decrease digital life)
 - d. Review what you spend money on and what you save – and make an investment or change for the glory of God.

Which step will you take to better practice the discipline of simplicity in the coming week?

Memory Verse(s)



Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Colossians 3:1 (NIV)

Extra Resources



- ❖ *"Simplicity"* by Pastor Kyle Corbin ("Immanuel Church" website, Nov. 24, 2019). In this sermon, Pastor Kyle addresses the importance (and outlines the practice) of the discipline of simplicity.
- ❖ *"Freedom of Simplicity"* by Richard J. Foster (HarperPaperbacks, 1981). In this extended treatment of the discipline, Foster discusses the complexity, Biblical roots, potential, and the method of pursuing simplicity.
- ❖ *"Some Main Disciplines for the Spiritual Life"* by Dallas Willard (chapter 9 of *"The Spirit of the Disciplines"*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1988). Dallas gives a very brief introduction into what he calls the discipline of "frugality" as part of a larger discussion on the disciplines of "abstinence".