

Spiritual Disciplines #3 - Simplicity

March 2, 2014

Matthew 6:19-34

1. How might you be storing treasures up here on earth? (v.19)
 - a. What does it mean to store up treasures in heaven?
 - b. What point do you think Jesus is making when He points out that earthly treasures can be destroyed or consumed or stolen from us?
2. What is the meaning of verse 21?
 - a. How does this impact how we live as followers of Jesus?
 - b. How will it impact how you live this week?
3. Jesus says that we cannot serve both God and material gain\possessions (Mammon). What makes this true?
 - a. How can you shape your heart towards storing up treasures on earth, rather than Heaven?
4. How would you respond to someone who asked you what God's kingdom and righteousness are?
5. Jesus says that the lives of those ignorant or out of relationship with God (pagans) chase after earthly treasures like money, food, clothes, etc... So how are the lives of Jesus' followers to be markedly different?
 - a. How is your life different than those around you who don't know Jesus when it comes to possessions and money?

Scripture Memorization:

Matthew 6:33

Simplicity - March

Simplicity as a discipline can take many forms and bring to mind various thoughts. It can relate to money, time, even our words. At the heart, the discipline of simplicity is about developing an attitude of contentment and gratitude. Simplicity shows in a life that is not concerned about trying to do too much or have too much. This discipline directly strikes against both the temptation to overvalue material possessions and the temptation to see ourselves as critical to everything around us. Simplicity in our words looks to follow the instruction of Jesus, to let our 'yes' be 'yes' and our 'no' be 'no'.

In terms of economics, simplicity can be practiced by those of any income or stage of life. Those without much can obsess over money and material things just as much (or little) as those who have more than enough. Simplicity calls us to seek adequate housing, clothing, food, and transportation for the needs of the season of life we find ourselves in. If we have more than what we need, we look to where we can give to those in need.

In terms of time, simplicity calls us to build a balanced rhythm to our lives where we have work, play, and rest. No matter our stage of life we can allow one of these areas to overshadow the others, or one of these areas to be overshadowed. Each area is one where we are called to honour God and bring glory to Christ.

Engaging in the discipline of simplicity is an exercise in reflecting and making choices so that our lives allow for God to bless our life, as well as provide availability to others. When we allow our lives to go out of balance between the need to care for ourselves and the need to care for others, in the midst of the responsibilities we have upon us, we will be less ready, willing, and able to be a blessing to others in the name and for the glory of Jesus.

If we engage honestly in the discipline of simplicity, it can lead to a healthier life enjoying the blessings of joy, peace, and balance that God desires for us and designed for us to live in and live out.

For anyone:

- Reflect on what your needs are for the season of life you are currently in? How much income do you need to support those dependent upon you? How large a house? How many vehicles? If you have more than what you need, what can you do to help someone who may be below their level of need? If you have less than you need, how might you restructure your finances or lifestyle to remove the shortfall?
- Go through your purse, wallet, and/or briefcase. Look at each item and ask if you really need it. Carrying heavy bags or cases will eventually do damage to our bodies.
- Next time you are asked to do something you don't want to do, can't do, or feel you are not supposed to do, say no. Fight the temptation to justify your decision to the other person, speak simply giving your true reason without excuse.
- Take note of how many conversations you have that are about possessions or your time/schedule? Do these conversations express gratitude or complaint/argument? Spend some time praying about the proper use of your possessions and time?
- For the month, use a notebook and write down 3 blessings from that day. When you struggle with feeling that you don't have enough, read your notes.

- Examine any thought you have about comparing your possessions to those of someone else. What emotions or attitudes underlie or come from those thoughts? What do these say about your attitude towards possessions and wealth?
- Make a list of everything you do. Is there enough time to accomplish all of these and still have time to re-create yourself and re-create with your family? If not, find an activity to drop from your schedule or something you can postpone.
- Take a look at the next celebration your family is hosting. Are you looking forward to it? Will it take you days to recover from or weeks to pay off? Consider what you could do differently to bring more peace and joy to those involved.
- Are you afraid of not having enough? Talk to a friend about why you are afraid (perhaps even seek out a professional to walk this through). Pray for the ability to trust God's provision for you, rather than trust in either your possessions or give into fear of not having enough for whatever may come.
- Do something for someone with no expectation of a thank-you or return from them. If they do, encourage them to do something for someone else.
- Take a day/week/month and seek to remind yourself to be content in your possessions and lifestyle: meals, clothes, car, job, home, etc... Look for where you are tempted to think *if only I had* or *I wish* or *my life would be better if...* Stop, give thanks to God for what you have, and reflect on why you are tempted to think those thoughts.

For Families:

- If you don't give your children an allowance, consider starting to give an age appropriate allowance so they can begin to learn wise decision making related to money. Don't allow them to 'go into debt'.
- Encourage your children to give something they own away to someone in need.
- Look at the tags on the clothes your children wear. Look for the countries the clothes are made, then go onto the internet to look at the lives of children in that country. Pray as a family for the children of that country(ies).
- Plan a family play day. Put it on the calendar so it is as important as any other appointment, meeting or event you have.