

## Notes on Simplicity

- “Simplicity is freedom. Duplicity is bondage. Simplicity brings joy and balance. Duplicity brings anxiety.”
- Simplicity frees us from stuff and from the need to impress others.
- The Christian Discipline of simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward life-style.” (think in terms of the opposite of a sacrament, which is an outward sign of an inward grace...Baptism, The Lord’s Supper)
- “To attempt to arrange an outward life-style of simplicity without the inward reality leads to deadly legalism.”
- Inward reality liberates us outwardly
- When we embrace simplicity we find that status, position, even stuff becomes less valuable to us.
- Simplicity helps in the recognition that too often we live from a space in which the phrase “first world problems” is too applicable.
- Without simplicity we may shift from sound reason to fear of what others may think of us.
- “Because we lack a divine Center our need for security has led us into an insane attachment to things.”
  - We are seeing this now with meat and toilet paper among other things.
- “We buy things we do not want to impress people we do not like.” Arthur Gish
- “Covetousness we call ambition. Hoarding we call prudence. Greed we call industry.”
- We are not defined by the clothes on our back or the numbers in our bank account.
- The Old Testament year of Jubilee was a reset to the economy and a leveling of the playing field for the sake of all...it is a reminder that everything is God’s and we are just stewards.
- Jesus challenges his followers in Matthew 6:24 to choose God or money as master...but the truth is the word for money there is “mammon” which is better translated wealth.
- *Woe to you who are rich...blessed are the poor...where your treasure is there your heart will be also...* -Jesus
- Show me your bank account and I will show you what you love.
- Read all of Jesus’ teaching on money...it probably doesn’t say what you think it will say.
- Simplicity is not a call to renounce possessions and choose the life of ascetism, it is a call to examine what drives our heart.
- “Simplicity is the only thing that sufficiently reorients our lives so that possessions can be genuinely enjoyed without destroying us.”
- Simplicity keeps mammon on one end and legalistic ascetism on the other while it invites us to the middle.
- “The central point in the Discipline of Simplicity is to seek the Kingdom of God and the righteousness of His Kingdom first and everything necessary will come in its proper order.”
  - First things must be first...then and only then will we be able to see other things clearly.

- We must not “choose” where to go to work unless we know it is God’s desire. There are many great things to be engaged in, but they may not be what should be our “first.”
- “Focus upon the Kingdom produces the inward reality, and without the inward reality we will degenerate into legalistic trivia. Nothing else can be central. The desire to get out of the rat race cannot be central, the redistribution of the world’s wealth cannot be central, the concern for ecology cannot be central. Seeking first God’s Kingdom and the righteousness, both personal and social, of that Kingdom is the only thing that can be central in the Spiritual Discipline of simplicity.”
- Focusing on the Kingdom produces an inward reality.
- “The person who does not seek the Kingdom first does not seek it at all.”
- Simplicity can lead to freedom from anxiety (see Matt 6:25-34)...not to negate the need for therapeutic help.
- We can be wrapped up in love of money if we have a lot of money or very little.

### 3 Inward Attitudes for Simplicity:

1. To receive what we have as a gift from God...everything we have is His
2. To know that it is God’s business, and not ours, to care for what we have
3. To have our goods available to others

### 10 Practical ways to practice Simplicity:

1. Buy things for their usefulness, not their status
  - a. Cars, clothes, houses
2. Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you
  - a. Non-essential drinks (cola, alcohol, coffee, tea)
  - b. Media (social media, news, magazines, etc.)
  - c. Money, technology, etc.
3. Develop a habit of giving things away
4. Refuse to be propagandized by the custodians of modern gadgetry
  - a. Evaluate the true usefulness of technology
  - b. Don’t let it own you
5. Learn to enjoy things without owning them.
6. Develop a deeper appreciation for the creation.
7. Look with a healthy skepticism at all “buy now, pay later” schemes
  - a. Debt is a master...we don’t want to be its slave
8. Obey Jesus’ instructions about plain, honest speech
  - a. Make honesty and integrity paramount in your life
9. Reject anything that breeds the oppression of others
  - a. Pay attention to what you buy and where you buy it
  - b. Look for systems of oppression and make sure we don’t say that is just how it is
10. Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the Kingdom of God.