

Sticky Handprints



When my children were little, I would often find their little sticky **handprints** all around the house, especially on the windows and sliding glass door in the kitchen. I could see the perfect outline of their tiny hands and noses where they had leaned in to the window pressing against it to eagerly watch snowflakes falling or a hungry bird at the feeder. Those little prints said, "I lingered here. This was important."

Last Wednesday, Mary and I launched our first **online Bible study**, The Simple Life (still plenty of time for you to join us if you would like). In the first week's lesson, author Cynthia Heald asks a question on page 16 of *Becoming a Woman of Simplicity*: "What do you sense the Lord is saying to you about what a life lived in single-minded devotion to Him would look like?"

To me it looks like a handprint ~ God's **handprints**.

I like looking for God's handprints in His world, particularly in the little, simple, often-overlooked things in nature. They're *there*, all around us, but it takes time and intent to see His handprints in the **small things**. And in a typical over-scheduled day in my life, I don't leave myself much time to slow down and savor things.



I wonder how much I'm missing.

What small gifts has God put right under my nose that I'm missing because I'm not looking for them? Instead, I have my eyes firmly fixed on my schedule, complete with my check-off-the-next-thing-on-my-list glaze in my eyes.

I love that this study makes me reevaluate what I'm doing. And one thing I want to do is to put my eyes on God so that I don't miss His handprints that say "I lingered here. This is important." Each one is a gift. Sometimes the gift is purely for my enjoyment, as when I bask in the radiance of a creamsicle-orange sunset. Or when I see the smooth, mahogany acorn nestled among the rocks and leaves in the woods. Other times these small gifts hold a lesson for me to discover, like the methodical persistence I see in the caterpillars I captured in the amazing video below. I almost missed that, but fortunately, God got my attention.

I want God's sacred and my everyday to meet in a holy collision of life lived in single-minded devotion to Him.



Tweet This

I want God's sacred and my everyday to meet in a holy collision of life lived in single-minded devotion to Him. I want to see His sticky handprints wherever I go. That's my answer.

Pray on!

Jane

photo credit: Duncan Brown (Cradlehall) via photopin cc (Changes added in PicMonkey)

What Is the Simple Life?

As Mary and I are preparing to kick off our first ever online Bible study offered by Only By Prayer called The Simple Life, I've naturally been doing some reflection on what I think the **simple life** looks like. I've come to the conclusion that I definitely know what the simple life *doesn't* look like based on past and current experience. I can tell you that it doesn't look like any of the following things, all of which I've done

at some point in my life.



- It doesn't look like working until 9:30 p.m. every weeknight grading students' English papers.
- It doesn't look like staying up until 10:30 p.m. or 11 p.m. every night writing an e-book.
- It doesn't look like doing household chores all day Sunday to try and prepare for the next week.
- It doesn't look like skipping my **devotion time** repeatedly because I'm too tired to get up in the morning.
- It doesn't look like watching the whole summer pass by with the realization that I've only sat down twice in the evening on my deck to relax and read a book.
- It doesn't look like my children and I only seeing my husband every other weekend for the duration of six months while he works across the country.
- It doesn't look like wading through a house filled with too much junk!

I'm pretty good at knowing what the **simple life** isn't; it's what it *is* that I need to figure out.

Now, I know that life has its seasons, and some seasons just have to be endured, **but when you realize it's gone from a life season to a life pattern, then it's time for a life change!**

So far, in my early prestudy ruminations, I'm beginning to see that *simply* doesn't necessarily mean easily. Here is what I think I want the simple life to look like: To me, the simple life means 1) sitting at the feet of Jesus 2) undergirding everything with prayer 3) being intentional with my time and resources, and 4) pursuing and listening for God's next thing for me.

Now I just need to learn how to do all that! How about you? What do you think the simple life looks like for you?

Would you like to join us in exploring **The Simple Life** ? There's still time for you to sign up.

Jane

Holy Week Devotions



As we head into **Holy Week**, I'd like to share an poem/excerpt that gives us much to focus our hearts and minds on as we walk through the sorrow and joy of this week. Being that this version of the poem **True Lenten Discipline** has seven suggestions, it works out perfectly to look at one each day during Holy Week. On Monday we'll begin with a brief devotion to encourage us and start a discussion on the first topic in the excerpt—judging. We'd love to have your participation—a conversation is always better with more two or more people! If

you'd like, please add your comments each day at the end of the devotion.

Feel free to adapt this to your life. Perhaps you want to spend a meal or a day in **fasting**. Maybe you want to take an afternoon and set aside some time for **prayer** to prepare your heart for Easter. Whatever you decide, I pray this blesses you.

(I received this poem in an email from my friend a few days ago, and the author was credited as "Anonymous." I Googled the title and several versions popped up, some much longer, but I wasn't able to ascertain the true author. If anyone knows, please let me know.)

Here's the version we'll use this week:

TRUE LENTEN DISCIPLINE

FAST from judging others; FEAST on Christ dwelling in you.

FAST from bitterness; FEAST on forgiveness.

FAST from apparent darkness; FEAST on the reality of God's light.

FAST from thoughts of illness; FEAST on the healing power of God.

FAST from words that pollute; FEAST on phrases that purify.

FAST from discontent; FEAST on gratitude.

FAST from anger; FEAST on patience.

Author Unknown

You may also be interested in a **podcast** Mary and I will be recording tomorrow evening on this topic. I'll insert a link to it as soon as it is up. We'll see you tomorrow!

Pray on!

Jane

Image courtesy of lamnee / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Ash Wednesday: The First Step To Easter

Today is **Ash Wednesday**, the start of a time of **repentance** and **prayer** on our journey to Easter Sunday. I'd like to repost a short devotion I wrote last year to set the tone for this 40-day season. Whether you will be attending services today or praying on your own, I trust that this will be a time for you to deepen your walk with Jesus.



Ash Wednesday

Jane

Worshipping with Abandon

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. Mark 14: 3 (Read Mark 14:1-9)

In my Bible study the other morning, I looked at this passage from Mark. A couple of things really stood out to me as I was reading.

Simon the Leper

The first thing I notice is that **Jesus** is at the house of Simon the Leper. We don't know this for certain, but most likely Simon is one of the lepers that Jesus miraculously heals in the Gospels. While he was probably healed physically, most likely some stigma was still associated with him, which would make most people want to avoid him. Do you notice how the text still refers to him as *Simon the Leper*?

How would you like to be forever immortalized as a disease or perhaps a bad character trait you had as a child or adult? I would hate to be introduced as *Jane the Fearful* wherever I went! But what I love is that Jesus didn't let a little thing like a disease or bad name slow him down. No, He went right to Simon's house and had dinner with him. Actually that's very reassuring, isn't it? When I'm feeling like I'm not "good enough" for Jesus to want to spend time with me, I just think of this story or the story of him going to the tax collector Zacchaeus' house, and I realize Jesus accepts me just as I am.

Mary of Bethany

The aspect of this story that just does me in is the woman's response to Jesus. John 12:3 identifies this woman as **Mary of Bethany**, Lazarus and Martha's sister. Some believe that she is the same woman as Mary Magdalene, but we don't know for

certain.

What she leaves no doubt of are her feelings for Jesus.

She takes her alabaster flask of spikenard, breaks it, and pours it on His head. What a lavish, all-in response to Jesus! I had to stop and think about this for a few minutes. First of all, Mary had to have known that she was opening herself up to ridicule and criticism by doing this, and that's exactly what happened. Women were supposed to stay in the background in this culture, and she boldly moves forward and does what the men probably considered to be a brazen act.

To make matters worse for herself, she used a very costly bottle of perfume. Spikenard had to be imported from India, and the cost of it was about a year's salary for a working-class man. Sure enough, she was roundly criticized for not selling the perfume instead and then using the money for the poor.

After reading about her actions, I had to ask myself, **Am I overwhelmed with that kind of love for Jesus that I don't care what others think?** On the contrary, I think that too often I am inhibited by what others may think.

Rather than rebuke Mary, Jesus instead rebukes those who are criticizing her and says that what she has done will be told to others as a memorial to her. And we are still reading about her and her brave act today.

I want to more like Mary in my response to Jesus. And to do that, I'll have to learn to "get over myself." Whether I want to be more bold in how I worship in church or more bold in using my money in ways Jesus wants me to, it certainly gives me something to pray about!

How about you? Please share any thoughts that you have about Mary's act of love and devotion and how free you feel to express your feelings for Jesus.

Pray on!

Jane

Illustration courtesy of
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3e/Schnorr_von_Carolsfeld_Bibel_in_Bildern_1860

Lent Day 38-The Cleansing of My Temple by Mary Kane



Just as Jesus needed to cleanse the temple before His crucifixion, we need to ask Him to cleanse our temples—our bodies. To do the devotion, *The Cleansing of My Temple*, please click on the link.

Image: africa / FreeDigitalPhotos.net