



Lent Day 20, March 12, 2012 Simplicity, a Not-So-Simple Choice

Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Matthew 6: 31-33

Through this week of Lent, we will be looking at the discipline of simplicity. Simplicity is actually a lifestyle that comes about as a result of choices we make in our inner beings. It is a choice we make to not be tied to or driven by possessions, the accumulation of money for money's sake, the pursuit of worldly stature. It also has to do with how we spend our time and how we use the words we speak. It helps to understand simplicity by knowing what simplicity is *not*.

Simplicity is not the following things:

- A life of extreme asceticism. God wants us to enjoy His creation.
- A life of poverty. God wants our needs to be met. Poverty does not make you spiritually better than someone else. Poverty hurts people.
- A hatred of money and those who have it.

Simplicity is the following things.

- Living a lifestyle that seeks God first, because then everything else will fall into its proper place.
- Using the wealth we have to meet our needs and to meet the needs of others.
- Keeping a proper perspective on our needs and our wants.
- Acknowledging God as the source of our gifts, and seeking Him on how to use them.
- Maintaining balance in all areas of our lives, including our time and our words.

*Disclaimer: I am not presenting myself as someone who has this all under control in my life, but rather as someone who is learning along with you.

I think we need to focus on the above verse, as it is the key to the discipline of simplicity. First and foremost, God wants our hearts to be seeking Him. When we do that, when we let God's plans for us become implanted in our own hearts, superseding our own, then we have the guidance and direction we need to make the rest of life's decisions. Everything else will fall into place.

The problem is that it is very easy to be distracted by the world and what it offers--the pursuit of money, of things, of stature, of fame--you name it, it's easy to get off the path and chase after glittery things. And it can be very hard to "die" to our own plans. However, the more time we spend getting to know Jesus, the more His plans and ours will become one. And remember, God gives us giftings for a reason--to be used. God does not want our service to Him to be a drudgery, but to be a passion.

Each one of us must pursue God and use His viewpoint as the one to guide us through life. As we do that, we will have a better understanding of what living a life of simplicity will look like for us. I think it's a life-long pursuit, for us to pray through and puzzle out. Simplicity can look very different from person to person. A wealthy person can still be wealthy and live a life of simplicity (using those gifts as God directs) just as much as a non-wealthy person can live a life of simplicity.

Application: To start out this week, we all need to pray and ask God how we're doing in putting His kingdom first in our lives. Perhaps the following questions may help.

- 1) Am I living a life that is seeking God first?
- 2) Am I generous with my money?
- 3) Can I identify areas of my life that I need to let God take control of?
- 4) Am I more concerned of what others think about me and my stature than of how God views me?
- 5) Is there an area God is asking me to re-examine this week?

For the rest of the week, we will look at our time with God, our schedules (time), clutter in our homes and lives, and our words.

Prayer: Lord,

It's never easy to look honestly inside myself. Show me your view of simplicity and how that relates to my life. Help me to hear, listen, and simplify what I need to.

Amen.