

Simplicity (slide)
The best news you don't want to hear
1 Timothy 6

God created me. He knows me and knows what makes me work best. He would never ask me to do something that is not for my good or to enable me to function at my best.

Any product that has been created is best known by its creator. The more I learn the product the more I know what it needs to function best and how to maintain it. The sermon on the mount reveals to me the consequences of the fall in corrupting my instincts. My instincts have been duped by the enemy and so I don't instinctively know how to function the way the one who created me intended. I tend to want to do the opposite.

There are many things in this book that I don't really want to know about because then I have to obey and my natural instincts want to do the opposite...love your enemy, turn the other cheek, give to those who ask, Take up your cross, forgive those who persecute you.....That's why , at least initially , we call these spiritual practices, disciplines. They should come naturally but they don't, so we choose to embrace them until we experience the life and freedom they give and then they become a part of us. So, today we go after something that opposes everything our culture says to us: SIMPLICITY. It's is so completely counter cultural that it will require significant discipline and some radical decision making.

Are you ready for this? I have been messed up preparing for this so I would like you to get a little messed too. Everything I share with you today is a challenge to my own heart. However, you get challenged, get talking with your life group and community and together take some risks, make some radical choices.

1 Tim 6 vs 6- 10,17-19 (slide)

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.⁹Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

I believe these words contain all that we need to embrace the discipline of simplicity. I want to focus on three guiding words but let this phrase sink deep into your heart, write it on your forehead: **Godliness with contentment is great gain (slide)**

Three guiding words to simplicity: (slide)

1. Godliness (slide)

Choosing to embrace simplicity requires a life that is grounded in godliness.

A personal attitude toward God that results in actions that are pleasing to God.

A God-consciousness- an awareness of God in every aspect of my life. He is ever before me and I seek to please Him in every thought, word or deed. I bring His presence into all my relationships.

So, when it comes seeing my life and how I engage the world around me I am looking at it through His lens. From the perspective of His kingdom to which I chose to belong to the moment I accepted Christ. As I embrace this life and experience the freedom it brings, suddenly everything He says moves from being upside down to right side up.

Following Jesus, the life of obedience, embracing simplicity, has to start here where I am fully centered on Him. He is my life, my all, and I am fully surrendered. Now we can go after simplicity. Without godliness, there is no place to discuss simplicity as it will make no sense and I will have no desire to embrace it.

2.Contentment (slide)

Godliness with contentment is great gain

Philippians 4 vs 11-13 (slide)

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Paul's joy and contentment was not based on how much or how little he had. He knew both and neither circumstance changed his level of contentment. This helps us understand what contentment means.

What does contentment mean?

It comes from the Greek word Independence or self sufficiency

I need to save and work, so I don't have to depend on anyone right? We have corrupted this idea of needing to be independent, God Included, so we don't have to depend on Him. This is the very opposite of what Paul is saying.

Godliness means I am all in with Him and that means I can do all things through Him because He is my source. So, the independence is from outside circumstances. Contentment was used to describe a person unmoved or unflappable by outside circumstances. This is what Paul is saying. My sufficiency comes from a dependence on God (godliness) and an independence from my circumstances. I do not rely on my circumstances for contentment. God will supply all my needs according to His riches in glory.

When I choose to depend on God and live simply there is a freedom from fear, stress and anxiety about tomorrow...Fear, worry and stress are the source of how many illnesses? How much medical savings or insurance do I need to manage these illnesses? If I embrace godliness and contentment how much could I be freed from? I can begin to be sustained in the way He intended it to be.

The world connects riches and abundance with contentment. This is a deception.
Kierkegaard

Riches and abundance come in the sheep's clothing to protect against anxieties but then become the object of anxieties. They secure a man from anxieties as much as a wolf is put to caring for the sheep to secure them from the wolf.

Charles clients

I am also free from worry, anxiety, envy, coveting because, when I am content, I am satisfied with what I already have. I am free from needing status and position and possessions to show my value and worth.

“we buy things we don't need to impress people we don't like.”

Fifth century, a man named Arenius determined to live a holy life. So, he chose a simple lifestyle in the desert. Yet whenever he visited the great city of Alexandria, Egypt, he spent time wandering through its bazaars. Asked why, he explained that his heart rejoiced at the sight of all the things he didn't need. Can you try that the next time you go to a mall? What freedom this is. How counter cultural. Imagine going to the mall for that!!

Minimalist movement- the world is seeing the emptiness of having abundance and hoarding.

Documentaries, podcasts, and books have been made and written all about minimalism and how it can change your life for the better—leaving you debt free and with extra time to work on personal relationships.

Be free from financial worry

Get rid of clutter that doesn't add value to your life

Spend more on experiences rather than stuff

Be happier and less stressed

Go green

Develop better relationships

And so much more...

Have you tried reading the Bible and reading what it says?

Contentment is not focusing on what's missing but appreciating what is there. UZ- I was stripped. Toilet, wash, room, heat vs water, bread, people, pillow, time, mattress, roof, His presence. When the music fades...Ghana and China and UZ...what is required to have the experience of worship. Simplicity helps reveal reality.

As I have lived and worked with the poor, I have learnt that contentment is all about perspective. Until we can learn, understand, and embrace the true meaning and source of contentment we will always be chasing rainbows and never get there. It will make us miserable. What are you chasing?

Are you living with no margin in your time and resources? Time and life groups. Kids 4 sports, extra classes...the more we leave no margins the less we have to invest in the kingdom---what are we chasing? What are our kids learning? There's no contentment, just exhaustion. No time for the kingdom and things that matter because we are chasing the so-called American dream which is really just chasing rainbows. Always another one as soon as we get there. We will never be content.

A rich industrialist who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. "Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked.

"Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman.

"Why don't you catch more fish than you need?' the rich man asked.

"What would I do with them?"

"You could earn more money," came the impatient reply, "and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me."

The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?"

"You could sit down and enjoy life," said the industrialist.

"What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied.

He who dies with the most toys wins. This has to be one of the most tragic statements ever made. In Gods economy you take nothing with you.

Will you make a choice to simplify your word in all areas and focus on what counts? 5 minutes after we die, we will know how we should have lived. What am I going to hope I did 5 min after I die? Will you sit before the Lord and see what you are giving all your time and resources to? Commit to simplify and focus on what matters. One life to live focus on what matters.

When I have learnt the secret of contentment then I am set up for the most fulfilling adventure of a life time- generosity.

2. Generosity (slide)

1 Tim 6 vs 17-19 (slide)

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Did Jesus say don't be rich? Is it a sin to be rich? No. He but he said it's a lot harder? How does that work? Doesn't seem that way. Robinson:

We may think that the opposite of adversity is prosperity. Not so. Prosperity is a character test in disguise. Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish essayist, understood this when he wrote, "Adversity is sometimes hard upon a man, but for one man who can stand prosperity, there are a hundred that will stand adversity. Precious few are those who can keep their moral, spiritual, and financial equilibrium ... while balancing on the elevated tightrope of success."

Most of us can handle a demotion better than a promotion. Why? Because when adversity strikes, life becomes rather simple. We have no choice but to stand up to it or quit. Prosperity, on the other hand, doesn't seem like a test, yet it often creates in us a sense of discontent. We crave more and more of what we have enough of already.

When I experience prosperity, contentment is an elusive thing to find. Will I ever have enough? Ghandi "there is enough for everyone's need, not everyone's greed."

26 people own the same amount of wealth as 3.8 billion of the world's poorest

Exodus 6 vs 16-20 (slide)

¹⁶ This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’”

¹⁷ The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. ¹⁸ And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.

¹⁹ Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.”

²⁰ However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

What’s going on here?

The theology of enough is connected with trust and brings contentment which leads to generosity. Theology of greed connected with distrust and brings fear which leads to hoarding.

Lord’s prayer – daily bread. His principles have not changed

Sermon on mount ---seek first

When I know what enough is, I am free from extravagance not because I can’t afford it but because I don’t need it. I am then free to make what I have available for others.

If I believe it’s mine and I got it—I hold on. If I believe God owns everything and I am His manager I let go.

Generosity is about giving

Giving is freedom.

Antidote to materialism

Giving is so powerful

Breaks the spirit of mammon

It is surrender

Dethrones me and exalts Him

Giving shifts me to a new center of gravity- heaven

My heart goes where I put God’s money

Then my treasures are in the right place. God doesn’t say don’t have treasure.

Store it in the right place. You can’t take anything with you, but you can send it ahead.

Alcorn “I don’t go to bed feeling that I have “sacrificed” money. I go to bed feeling joy, because there’s nothing like giving. It infuses life with joy. It interjects an eternal dimension into even the most ordinary day. You couldn’t pay me enough not to give.” (**Book: treasure principle-pic**).

American Christians give between 2-3%

Tithing is not the ceiling it’s the floor- the training wheels. It gets me on the road

I can’t afford to tithe- income reduced by 10% would you die. It’s not about how much you get. (Siya- debt)

You cannot out give God. Prosperity gospel is for you...God prospers us to raise our standard of giving not living. God gives me more than I need so I can be more generous.

Charl – poor, worshipped mammon, MBA – surrendered. Sat with God to figure out what is enough. Gets excited every month at how much he can give away. The Bible is very clear that we must be generous. So, one could argue that if we are not generous, we are being disobedient. Which then makes it a sin. The Bible is also clear that those we give we a cheerful heart, will be blessed.... By being disobedient, we are withholding blessings. God also uses those who are generous to provide for believers who are on their knees, trusting God to provide their daily bread...it is through our obedience, that God receives the glory. (Gladys)

There is nothing more liberating than to be freed from the love of money. When the joy of giving is greater than the joy of receiving, then God blesses us, because He knows that we’ll be wonderful stewards of that which He has entrusted us with, and we’ll be a blessing to others who are in need.

We can never out give God. This has been my own personal experience since the first day my heart was freed from being selfish. God knows our hearts, and our motives... we don’t give with the purpose to receive.

Trust the Lord to change your heart, if your desire to change is genuine and with honest intentions.

There is definitely a direct relationship between simplicity and generosity.

If we are not satisfied with living a simple lifestyle, we'll also struggle to be generous. A complex lifestyle is a costly lifestyle...we'll always find a way to spend what we earn, if we are never satisfied with what we have. The world has plenty to offer, and greed is a fleshly desire that comes knocking when the money starts flowing. Then we start justifying why we need the bigger and better, because we earned it, and deserve it. This is not from God.

Conclusion

Repent of greed and worship of Mammon spirit

Seek first His kingdom – this is the life of simplicity.

“Lord I repent of greed and seek your kingdom first.” (slide)

Principles (slide)

1. Buy for use rather than status

2. Reject anything that is producing addiction in you

Can you stop? Can you live without? (Uz exp)

Food, drink, entertainment, media, money—give away. Don't be a slave to anything

3. Develop a habit of giving things away

Too attached? Give to someone who needs it De-accumulate

4. Stand against modern gadget propaganda

“new” features

5. Enjoy things without owning them- what is free to enjoy?

6. Appreciate creation- pay attention

7. Forget the buy now pay later culture (debt free)

8. Reject anything that breeds oppression in others

Selfishness is the pursuit of gain at the expense of others

9. Reject anything that distracts you from seeking first His kingdom

Steps (slide)

Just 1 hour – give away- do something that blesses others (abilities, skills, time)

Give something away that means a lot to you but you don't need to someone who has a need.

\$10 challenge

Keep 10 dollars in your pocket and ask God who you can give it to this week

Share with Life group...mystory@heritagecc.org