CORE VALUE 9 OF 10 · WEEK 9

ANABAPTISH

Living Simply

We value uncluttered lives, which free us to love boldly, give generously, and serve joyfully.

John Dixon | Sunday, November 8, 2026 | Crest Community Church

For the Nightstand

THE TEACHING

There's a voice in our world, and it plays 24/7. More is better. More stuff. More followers. More square footage. More. It gets louder at Christmas, when every ad tells you that what you don't have is what you need. So what if the stuff you have is keeping you from the life you were made for? There's a word for the water we're swimming in. Affluenza. It's not a bad habit. It's a virus, and every one of us has been exposed.

Right in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus puts his finger on four places clutter gets into a life. What are you holding? Moths and thieves get it all, and wherever your treasure is, your heart follows. What are you looking at? A simple eye is a generous eye. Who are you serving? You can't serve both God and money. What are you afraid of? Look at the birds. Your heavenly Father knows what you need. So seek first his kingdom.

So how much is enough? Ecclesiastes says one handful with tranquility beats two handfuls with toil. Two fists full, and you can't hug your kid or help anyone up. One handful, and you've got a free hand. That's your margin, and it's for your neighbor. Because I have Jesus, I have enough.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Matthew 6:21
Follow the treasure and you'll find the heart.

Matthew 6:33
Seek his kingdom first. Your Father knows.

Ecclesiastes 4:6
One handful, and a free hand left over.

Philippians 4:11
Contentment is a skill Paul learned in prison.

A PRAYER

Father, you know what we need. Forgive us for the two fists we've been carrying around and calling a life. Jesus, we want you first. Not in the background. In front. Holy Spirit, open our hands. Train our eyes to be simple, and generous. Because we have you, we have enough. In Jesus' name, amen.

PART TWO

For Your Home Church

Gather together. About 60 minutes, after your meal or around it.

FOR LEADERS

This is shared language, not a script. Everyone in the room can see these notes, so feel free to read them out loud. The times add up to an hour. Hold them loosely. If a conversation is alive, stay with it and trim somewhere else.

Check In

5 min

Start by hearing how last week actually went.

LEADER NOTE

Go around the room. **How did last week's practice go?** Three were offered: read the Sermon on the Mount a little each day and ask which line Jesus wants you to practice, pray each day for the one name that came to mind, or go the second mile (do one real good for someone who doesn't love you back, or take one step toward peace in a conflict you've been avoiding).

Some people will not have done it. That is fine, and it is worth saying out loud so nobody performs. Ask them instead what the week was like. No fixing and no follow-up questions. Just receive it.

Take Communion

5 min

We come to this table with open hands, and he fills them.

LEADER NOTE

Share the bread and the cup, before, during, or after your meal. If your group doesn't have its own words yet, have someone read this psalm out loud first.

PSALM 131 · NIV

A song of ascents. Of David.

1 My heart is not proud, Lord,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.

2 But I have calmed and quieted myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.

3 Israel, put your hope in the Lord
both now and forevermore.

Read This Overview

5 min

LEADER NOTE

Ask someone to read this out loud.

Read our core value slowly and notice the grammar. It isn't, "We value uncluttered lives." Period. Done. It's uncluttered lives *which free us*. This value has a "so that" built into it. We don't simplify so we can have a cleaner garage. We simplify so our hands are free. Free to love boldly. To give generously. To serve joyfully.

And living simply isn't about square footage or counting your shirts. Ryan Stockton, one of the writers of *Compelling Convictions*, our series book, says we have to be careful not to "should" ourselves. "Cultivating simple living is not accomplished through shame, but rather, is framed in freedom." The real test is this. Does what I have free me, or own me?

Here's what that freedom can look like. Years ago, Warren and Connie Hoffman were young pastors in our family of churches, the Brethren in Christ, serving a struggling neighborhood on the edge of Salem, Oregon. Their bishop helped them get a loan for a little one-bedroom house. But they had nothing for the down payment. Their college friends, John and Esther Spurrier, offered to loan them the whole thing. No interest. John was a doctor in training. "John is earning money, more than we need," they said. "Use these funds as long as necessary and return them when you can."

The Spurriers went on to give nearly three decades of service at Macha Mission Hospital in Zambia. Esther wrote the chapter on Living Simply in our first Brethren in Christ core values book. And Warren sums them up in a single word. Enough.

Living Simply

We value uncluttered lives, which free us to love boldly, give generously, and serve joyfully.

Because I have Jesus, I have enough.

Go Deeper in the Scripture

20 min

Find the four places clutter gets into a life. Then picture a free hand.

LEADER NOTE

Have two people read the passage out loud, switching at verse 25. Read it slowly. You won't get to every question. If time is short, start with the three marked START HERE

MATTHEW 6:19–33 · NIV

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin
destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves
treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where
thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart
will be also.

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body
will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be
full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that
darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the
other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve
both God and money.

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink;
or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the
body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap
or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not

much more valuable than they? [27] Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

[28] "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. [29] Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. [30] If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

[31] So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' [32] For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. [33] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Treasure and heart. Moths. Vermin. Thieves. Everything you can hold, you can lose. In verse 21, Jesus isn't telling you where your heart *should* be. He's stating a fact. As Richard Foster puts it, "wherever you find the treasure, you will find the heart." Want to know what you love? Check your bank statement. Check your calendar.

A healthy eye. The Greek word translated "healthy" (*haplous*) literally means single. Simple. Undivided. Older translations say, "if thine eye be single." A related word is the one Paul uses for generosity (2 Corinthians 9:11).

An unhealthy eye. Literally, an "evil eye." In Jesus' world, that was an everyday way of saying someone was stingy. Tight-fisted. Deuteronomy 15:9 uses the same picture for refusing to help a neighbor in need. So a simple eye is a generous eye. Levison Soko, a Brethren in Christ pastor in Zambia, lived this when the rains failed in 2019: "We had to train our greedy eyes away from keeping our staple food, maize, to ourselves."

Money. Older translations say "mammon," the Aramaic word for wealth. Jesus talks about it like a rival god. Not a tool on a shelf. A master on a throne. You can own stuff. The question is whether your stuff owns you.

Therefore. Verse 25 ties the money to the worry. Why do we hang on so tight? Because we're scared.

Barns. Birds don't have barns. In Luke 12, Jesus tells a story about a rich farmer who tears down his barns to build bigger ones. Foster says, "we would call him prudent; Jesus called him a fool."

Solomon. The richest, best-dressed king Israel ever had. And he can't compete with a wildflower.

So how much is enough? A wise teacher in Ecclesiastes gives us a picture you can hold in your hands.

ECCLESIASTES 4:4–6 · NIV

4 And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

5 Fools fold their hands
and ruin themselves.

6 Better one handful with tranquillity
than two handfuls with toil
and chasing after the wind.

THREE WAYS TO HOLD YOUR LIFE

Zero handfuls. Arms folded, hands empty (verse 5). Empty hands aren't the goal. **Two handfuls.** Toil and chasing. Both hands full, and you can't shake a hand, hug your kid, or help someone up. **One handful.** Rest. And a free hand. In Hebrew, "one handful" is *kaph*, the flat of an open hand. "Two handfuls" is *hopnayim*, both hands cupped and full.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Jesus puts his finger on four places clutter gets into a life: what we hold, what we look at, who we serve, and what we're afraid of. Find each one in verses 19–33. Which one jumps out at you? START HERE
2. In verses 25–32, what reasons does Jesus give for not worrying?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. A simple eye is a generous eye. What does a generous eye see that a grabby eye misses? START HERE
4. What cultural messages surround you where you live, and how do they push against living simply?
5. Zero handfuls, two handfuls, one handful. Which one looks most like your life right now? Why?

WHAT DOES IT ASK OF US?

6. Think through your calendar, your possessions, your relationships, your screens. What's getting in the way of an open hand? START HERE

7. Loving boldly, giving generously, serving joyfully. Which one do you want to grow in this year?

DOES IT FREE ME, OR OWN ME?

Richard Foster offers three questions to ask about anything you own.

1. **Do I receive it as a gift?** You worked for it. But you didn't make the air, or the sun, or the body you went to work in.
2. **Do I trust God to take care of it?** Lock your door. But the lock isn't what protects the house.
3. **Is it available to others?** Why do we hoard? Foster's answer is our fear of the future.

FOR ANOTHER NIGHT

Where have you seen the church harmed by treating lesser issues as the most important ones? What would a simpler faith change?

Sometimes our desires line up more with "the ads on our phones rather than the desires of Jesus." What practical steps help you notice and resist that?

Foster warns that "simplicity itself becomes idolatry when it takes precedence over seeking the kingdom." How could living simply turn into its own kind of pride?

Practice for the Night: One Handful Together

20 min

Name what's filling both hands. Then open one.

LEADER NOTE

Bring a dessert with exactly one piece per person, and no extras. Brownies or cookies work well. If anyone has a food allergy, make sure their piece is one they can eat. Have paper and pens on hand too. The silence will feel long. Don't fill it. When it's time to pray, go first, and keep it simple.

Some people may not follow Jesus yet. That's welcome here. Invite them to simply notice what they're holding.

1. **Enough, and a free hand** · 3 min
   Phones face down. Pass the plate around the room. When it comes to you, take **one** piece. That's enough. Then use your free hand to pass the plate and serve the next person. Don't eat until everyone has been served. If anyone had grabbed two, someone would go without. There's enough because everyone took one. Then enjoy God's good gift together. The leader prays: **"God, give us less of what doesn't matter. And more of what does."**

2. **Name what's in your fists** · 5 min
   In silence, ask yourself, **"What is filling both my hands right now?"** Think about your stuff, your screens, your schedule, your speech. Write one thing down where only you can see it. Then ask, **"Jesus, what would it look like to open one hand?"**

3. **Pray in pairs** · 8 min
   Turn to one other person. Share as much as you want about what you wrote. Then pray for each other, one at a time. Keep it simple: **"Holy Spirit, open my friend's hand. Show them they have enough."**

4. **Say it together** · 4 min
   Come back together. Read Matthew 6:31–33 out loud, all at once, from the Go Deeper reading. Then say this together, twice: **"Because I have Jesus, I have enough."** Anyone who wants to can name which hand they'll open this week.

KEEP THIS

Because I have Jesus, I have enough.

God, give me less of what doesn't matter. And more of what does.

Cut this card out and keep it close this week.

Practice for the Week Ahead

3 min

Choose one small, honest step. Start where you are, not where you think you should be.

IF THIS STILL FEELS NEW

Pray it every day. Each morning this week, pray, "God, give me less of what doesn't matter. And more of what does." Then pay attention to what you reach for during the day.

IF YOU'VE FOLLOWED JESUS A WHILE

Open one hand. Pick one. Delete one app for seven days and see what your hands reach for. Leave one empty space on your calendar and ask God to fill it with an interruption. Or say one honest "no" this week, with no excuse attached.

IF YOU'RE READY FOR MORE

Give it away. Give away one thing that has a grip on you. Not the thing you don't care about. The one you do. Then tell your home church which hand you opened and what happened.

Next week, we'll start by checking in on how it went.

Close in Prayer

2 min

LEADER NOTE

Gather everyone and close your time in prayer, however the Spirit leads.

COMING UP · SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15

Core Value 10: Relying on God

We confess our dependence on God for everything, and seek to deepen our intimacy with Him by living prayerfully.

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Compelling Convictions, the companion book to this series, is free to borrow from the church library. Chapter 9, by Scott MacFeat and Ryan Stockton, is on this week's value, with responses from Warren Hoffman and Pastor Levison Soko. Ask your home church leaders.

Richard Foster's ***Celebration of Discipline*** has a chapter called "The Discipline of Simplicity." This week's teaching draws on it.

Sunday Potluck. Sunday, November 22, after the gathering.

Free financial counsel. Mark Gordon, our church treasurer, is offering free financial counsel. Ask your home church leaders how to connect with him.