

A Week of Simplicity

“God made man simple; man’s complex problems are of his own devising.”

– Ecclesiastes 7:29 (*Jerusalem Bible*)

**Simplicity is the art of letting go;
of un-complicating and untangling our lives
so we can focus on what really matters.**

Monday:	Simplifying Time	Rocks & Calendars
Tuesday:	Simplifying Words	Let Your Yes Be Yes
Wednesday:	Simplifying Stuff	Letting Go & Giving Away
Thursday:	Biblical Reflection	Matthew 6:19-24
Friday:	Simplifying Prayer	Breath Prayer: Jesus Wept
Saturday:	Simplicity Experiments	Simple Foods, Pleasures, Choices

Simplifying TIME

Jeff talked about the ‘rocks in a jar’ illustration. As long as the ‘big rocks’ go in first, there will be enough room in the jar for all; however if you allow other things to take up space ahead of the big rocks, the most important things will never fit.

1. Spend a few minutes reflecting on your life, using the chart below to track your answers:

- What are the ‘big rock’ items to you? *What is absolutely essential AND most important?*
- What are the second-level priorities more like ‘gravel’? *Important, but less essential.*
- What would the ‘sand’ items be? *Beneficial and valuable, but not quite as important.*
- What is best left to the ‘water’ category? *Great when they fit, but lowest in priority.*

<u>Big Rocks</u>	<u>Gravel</u>
<u>Sand</u>	<u>Water</u>

2. Does your calendar reflect your priorities as stated above?

3. What do you need to get rid of from your life in order to create the space to really live it?

Pray: Ask for God’s help to identify and honour the truly big rocks in your life. Ask for the courage to live a life of simplicity – particularly when it’s no longer forced on us.

Tuesday

Simplifying WORDS

Today, practice the art of keeping your words simple.

- **Ask God to help you speak the simple truth.** No double meanings or half-truths. No exaggerations. Don't use superlatives. Say what you mean, plainly and simply.
- **Practice offering no excuses and no justifications for yourself.** When you want to make an excuse or justify something, simply let it go. Accept yourself and the reality of your life. Allow others to freely do the same.
- **Try to speak only when it is important or could be helpful to someone else.** We often use words to build our image or create a self-serving narrative in conversations. Lay that down.

“And don't say anything you don't mean. This counsel is embedded deep in our traditions. You only make things worse when you lay down a smoke screen of pious talk, saying, ‘I'll pray for you,’ and never doing it, or saying, ‘God be with you,’ and not meaning it. You don't make your words true by embellishing them with religious lace. In making your speech sound more religious, it becomes less true. Just say ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ When you manipulate words to get your own way, you go wrong.”

- **Matthew 5:33-37** (The Message)

Wednesday

Simplifying STUFF

Jesus looked him hard in the eye – and loved him! He said, “There's one thing left: Go sell whatever you own and give it to the poor. All your wealth will then be heavenly wealth. Then come follow me.”

- **Mark 10:21** (The Message)

- **Practice letting go of possessions.** Choose one room in your house – or even just a closet. Go in and empty out everything you don't truly need. Give it away.
**Note: While donation centres like Goodwill and Value Village are once again accepting used items, please be mindful of both social distancing and sanitization if you intend to give things away to individual people. Alternatively, consider setting items aside to donate later.*

Reflect:

1. What's it like for you to give away things you still want and like? Why is that good to do?
2. In the passage above, why do you think the author notes Jesus' deep love for the man before He gives him the instruction to give all his possessions away?

Thursday

Biblical Reflection: Matthew 6:19-24

Don't hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust – or worse! – stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars. It's obvious isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a dank cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have!

You can't worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can't worship God and Money both.

- **Matthew 6:19-24** (The Message)

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you think our hearts follow our treasures, or our treasures follow our hearts?
2. What are your earthly treasures?
3. What are your eternal or spiritual treasures?

Pray and ask God to give you a deeper Kingdom mindset and perspective.

Friday

Simplifying PRAYER

Learning to pray with simplicity is a deep and powerful practice.

We are in the midst of some hard moments right now as a society. Words often feel inadequate next to the mountain of grief and turmoil around us.

Lean into God's heart for the hurting by engaging in this simple but powerful breath prayer below, based on John 11:35 "Jesus wept."

YouTube Video Version - www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNse33YYlhg&t=3s
Downloadable Audio Only - southridgechurch.ca/spiritualpractices/prayer/
(* Choose "Jesus Wept")

Saturday

Simplicity Experiments

This weekend, consider engaging in any number of these simplicity experiments:

- Choose to eat only simple foods
- Make the choice to downsize something, instead of upgrading
- Choose to take joy in simple pleasures that require no money
- Pray only one-word prayers
- Intentionally limit your choices: do you really need 6 kinds of cereal, or 150 TV channels? Where else can you cut back on the normal buffet of choices you offer yourself?
- Limit your wardrobe to only a few items (check out bemorewithless.com/project-333/)
- Watch a Marie Kondo episode or Minimalism documentary on Netflix
- Only use one screen at a time; limit your own overall screen time
- Read a book instead of engaging in a multimedia experience
- Walk instead of driving
- Give away anything you haven't used in the past 12 months; learn to share and borrow instead of owning one of everything
- Watch Season 8 Episode 2 of The Office
- Unsubscribe from every email list that isn't essential or genuinely life-giving to you
- Reflect on Philippians 4:11-12