

WEEK 5: SIMPLICITY

Simplicity allows us to focus on what's important. It's a countercultural way to live in our materialistic society. Richard Foster describes three attitudes that allow us to live simply.

1. Whatever we have is a gift from God.
2. If it belongs to God, what happens to it is his business not mine.
3. Be willing to make what we have available to others.

Here are ten outward signs of simplicity:

1. Buy things for usefulness not status.
2. Reject anything producing addiction in you ("gotta have it" impulse).
3. Develop a habit of giving things away.
4. Refuse to give into latest, greatest tech or gadgetry hype.
5. Learn to enjoy things without owning them.
6. Develop a deeper appreciation of creation.
7. Have a healthy skepticism about any commercial (especially if it's buy now, pay later).
8. Speak simply.
9. Reject the things that breed oppression of others.
10. Shun things that distract you from your main goal.

Here are a few suggestions for ways you can practice simplicity this week.

- Set aside one day this week to live as simply as you can. Enjoy a simple meal that a person without a lot of money could afford. (ex. beans and rice) Pray for those who live and eat simply.
- Give something away that you don't need.
- Do a chore or activity the simple way not some high-tech way.
- Give thanks for everything that you have. Enjoy them. Know that they are a gift from God.

Discussion Questions About Study

These are the questions we discussed about our practice of study last week.

- What did you do differently this week to practice the habit of study?
- If you studied the Bible this week, what did you learn/discover?
- If you studied nature this week, what did you learn/experience?
- Did you experience any deep, meaningful conversations you wish to share?
- Are you reading a good book?
- Have you seen a documentary that is worth mentioning?
- Are there any other ways you have practiced Study this week?

Scripture for the Week

- Wednesday – Simplicity as singleness of heart - [Matthew 6:19-24](#)
- Thursday – Simplicity as trust - [Matthew 6:25-34](#)
- Friday – Simplicity as obedience - [Genesis 15](#)
- Saturday – The generosity of Simplicity - [Leviticus 25:8-12](#)
- Sunday – Simplicity in speech - [Matthew 5:33-37, James 5:12](#)
- Monday – Simplicity and justice - [Amos 5:11-15, 24, Luke 4:16-21](#)
- Tuesday – The freedom from covetousness - [Luke 12:13-14](#)

WEEK 6: SOLITUDE

"Settle yourself in solitude, and you will come upon Him in yourself." - Saint Teresa of Avila

Solitude goes hand in hand with silence.

Sometimes we resist silence or being alone because we don't want to be alone with our thoughts. Even when we are alone, we may have the TV on or the radio or some other source of noise. If sad thoughts or worries and fears do come during these quiet times, bring them before God.

When we can be comfortable with ourselves, we are better equipped to be part of community. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, *"Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. But let him who is not in community beware of being alone."*

The difference between solitude and meditation is during meditation we focus on specific things like our breathing or the scripture. During our practice of solitude we don't need to think on anything specific. We just spend time in the quiet. Try listening. Many people find that their best ideas come in solitude when they're away from distractions.

The challenge this week is to find quiet times to be alone throughout the week. It may be just a few minutes at a time or could be a chunk of 30 minutes or longer.

Some suggestions of times you can find little solitudes throughout the day.

- Quiet time when you wake up.
- During your morning cup of coffee.
- During a drive. Don't turn on the radio or make any calls.
- Before or after work when you're alone at the office.
- As you go to bed.
- It might help to have a place in your house or outside that is your "quiet place."
- You could go somewhere like a park to sit, walk or run.
- The church has a prayer room that you're free to use during our open hours. (Mon-Thurs from 9 AM to 4 PM and on Sundays)
- At the public library

You can find the time and place that works for you, and the length of time that works for your life. The important thing is for it to be a time when you're not distracted by any outside noise.

Discussion Questions About Simplicity

- Did anyone have a simple meal? Tell us about it.
- Did anyone give anything away? Tell us about it.
- Did anyone do a chore in a simpler way? Tell us about it.
- Did anyone start each day by thanking God for the good things in your life?
- In what ways does the habit of simplicity affect our attitude?
- In what ways does the habit of simplicity affect our actions?
- Are there other ways the practice of simplicity has benefited you this week?
- Did any of the Scripture for the week speak to you in ways you would like to share?

Scriptures for the Week

- Wednesday – The freedom to control the tongue – [**James 3:1-12**](#)
- Thursday – Prayer and solitude – [**Matthew 6:5-6, Luke 5:16**](#)
- Friday – The insights of solitude – [**Psalm 8**](#)
- Saturday – The dark night of the soul – [**Jeremiah 20:7-18**](#)
- Sunday – The solitude of the garden – [**Matthew 26:36-46**](#)
- Monday – The solitude of the cross – [**Matthew 27:32-50**](#)
- Tuesday – The compassion that comes from solitude – [**Matthew 9:35-38, 23:37**](#)

WEEK 7: SUBMISSION

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. - Ephesians 5:21

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. - Philippians 2:3-4

All of the habits we're practicing during this study are intended to set us free from something that holds us back. The habit of submission will set you free from having to have your own way. Submission is self-denial without self hatred. It's not putting yourself lower than anyone else, it's seeing everyone else as equally important as you are. It's about mutual respect, mutual submission and the Christian call to serve.

- Our first act of submission is to submit to God.
- Second we submit to the scriptures.
- Third we submit to those we are in relationship with: friends, family, romantic partners
- Submitting to these things help us to submit to others beyond our immediate close circles.

One word of caution, we should never submit to things we know are wrong.

Our challenge this week is to choose one day during the week when we will be intentional about not always doing things our way. Don't tell anyone you're doing this (unless you're doing it as a couple, then you may need to make sure you don't both choose the same day to practice this.) You shouldn't avoid any of your responsibilities or decision making at work or in other areas, but simply be open to other people's ideas and doing things their way. Some examples include letting someone else choose what to watch on TV or what's for dinner. Everyone's day will look different and the opportunities to practice this will be different for everyone, just make an intentional effort to do things someone else's way.

Discussion Questions About Solitude

- Did anyone take advantage of the “little solitudes” of the day?
- Did anyone do a silent blessing over food?
- Did anyone take an intentional 10-20 min or more solitude break?
- Did anyone make any changes in your routine to include more solitude?
- What keeps you from solitude?
- Did you learn anything from this experience?
- Did the Scripture of the week speak to you in any ways you would like to share?

Scriptures for the Week

- Wednesday – The Call to submission – [Mark 8:34, John 12:24-26](#)
- Thursday – The example of Christ – [Philippians 2:1-11](#)
- Friday – The example of Abraham – [Genesis 22:1-19](#)
- Saturday – The example of Paul – [Galatians 2:19-21](#)
- Sunday – Submission in the marketplace – [Matthew 5:38-48](#)
- Monday – Submission to the family – [Ephesians 5:21-6:9, 1 Peter 3:1-9](#)
- Tuesday – Submission with reference to the state – [Romans 13:1-10, Acts 4:13-20, 5:27-29, 16:35-39](#)

WEEK 8: SERVICE

Serving helps us to strengthen our humility. It's about seeing a need and doing something about it.

This week our challenge is to serve in a ministry as a volunteer and/or choose two of Richard Foster's types of service listed below to try.

Foster's List of Types of Service

The service of small things. ([Acts 9:39](#))

"The second service that one should perform for another in a Christian community is that of active helpfulness. This means, initially, simple assistance in trifling, external matters. There is a multitude of these things wherever people live together. Nobody is too good for the meanest service. One who worries about the loss of time that such petty, outward acts of helpfulness entail is usually taking the importance of his own career too solemnly." - Bonhoeffer

The service of hiddenness. Not everything we do to serve needs to be hidden, Jesus himself said that when others see our good works it brings glory to God. (Matthew 5:16) But serving privately in some ways that we don't receive credit for helps us to do things for the right reasons and to build up our humility.

The service of guarding the reputation of others. This is about serving by not gossiping.

The service of being served. Many of us struggle to accept help from others or to be the one who is served. It's humbling to be served, our pride may not want to allow it. But allowing others to help us and to have the blessing of serving is also a gift of service.

The service of common courtesy. In a culture that has become very rude, meanspirited and divisive it's a powerful Christian witness just to be kind. This act of service is treating people with respect, kindness and courtesy.

The service of hospitality. This type of service is about being welcoming to people, whether it be welcoming them into your home or welcoming them to church.

The service of listening. Be present in the moment with someone and really listen to what they want to share with you.

The service of bearing one another's burdens. ([Gal. 6:2](#)) We all have burdens that are ours to bear, but some burdens become too heavy and we need help. This type of service involves paying attention so we notice when someone can't bear a burden alone, and being

willing to take on some of that weight. Part of being a Christian is knowing that we need each other.

The service of sharing the Word of Life with one another. Sometimes someone needs specifically biblical encouragement that comes from the scripture.

Discussion Questions About Submission

- Tell us about your day of practicing submission.
- Have you ever seen submission abused?
- What is the freedom that we gain from submission? Did you experience this?
- What images come to mind when you hear the phrase, *self-denial*?
- What are the limits of submission and why are they important?
- Are there any other ways the practice of submission has benefited you this week?
- Did any of the Scripture for the week speak to you in ways you would like to share?

Scriptures for the Week

- Wednesday – The call to service – [Matthew 20:20-28](#)
- Thursday – The sign of service – [John 13:1-17](#)
- Friday – The commitment of service – [Exodus 21:2, 21:5-6, 1 Corinthians 9:19](#)
- Saturday – the attitude of service – [Colossians 3:23-25](#)
- Sunday – Service in the Christian community – [Romans 12:9-13](#)
- Monday – The ministry of small things – [Matthew 25:31-39](#)
- Tuesday – Service exemplified – [Luke 10:29-37](#)