LESS is MORE

A Lenten Guide for Personal Renewal

RENOVARÉ
Table of Contents

A Introduction to Less is More....................5

How to Use This Resource.........................8

Ash Wednesday Week..............................13
Confession: Less Guilt / More Grace

Week One.............................................26
Solitude: Less Noise / More Listening

Week Two.............................................42
Fasting: Less Consumption / More Compassion

Week Three.........................................58
Simplicity: Less Stuff / More Freedom

Week Four............................................78
Frugality: Less Spending / More Peace

Week Five...........................................95
Intercession: Less Me / More Others

Week Six.............................................110
Holy Week: Less Fear / More Love
An Introduction to
Less is More
An Introduction to Less is More

The season of Lent has traditionally been set apart by much of the Christian community as a time of reflection, repentance (changing our ways), and renewal. The forty days of Lent (excluding Sundays which are always a celebration of Jesus’ resurrection) mirror forty years of wilderness wandering for the people of Israel and the forty days Jesus endured in the wilderness after his baptism.

This Lenten resource, Less is More, is a guide for this reflection, repentance, and renewal. Each week we will explore another classic spiritual discipline. In the Renovaré community we talk about spiritual disciplines as activities undertaken through our own power that open us to power beyond our own — the power of God’s Spirit. This season we invite you to practice these disciplines:
**Confession:** Less Guilt/More Grace  
**Solitude:** Less Noise/More Listening  
**Fasting:** Less Consumption/More Compassion  
**Simplicity:** Less Stuff/More Freedom  
**Frugality:** Less Spending/More Peace  
**Intercession:** Less Me/More Others  
**Reflective Reading of Holy Week Story:**  
Less Fear/More Love

Our hope is that the daily immersion in the life of God through these disciplines becomes a life-giving habit that extends well beyond this season of Lent.

Peace,

Kai Nilsen
How to Use This Resource
How to Use This Resource

Use this resource with grace and love! Seriously. Too often when we invite people into experiencing the disciplines of the faith, the first response is heaviness and demand — one more thing to do. We hope they open up your heart and mind and soul to experience the surprising and un-surpassing love of Christ. So, enter with grace and love.

Each week will include a description of a spiritual discipline, a scriptural reference, reflections on the discipline, and questions that can be used individually or in what we are calling “Formational Friendships.” Formational Friends are people willing to make an intentional journey of grace with us through the engagement of these practices of the faith. Use this guide as a way to strengthen existing relationships, deepen superficial relationships, or open up new and vital relationships.
Remember, the point of this journey is not simply to complete every page. If you miss a day, start again the next. The point is to open your life to God’s renewing Spirit through intentional practice and reflection. We know you won’t continue all these disciplines, all the time. We hope, though, that one or two of them become an integral part of the rhythm of your life, turning from activity to habit to new way of being!

About the Author:

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ASH WEDNESDAY WEEK

Confession: Less Guilt / More Grace
ASH WEDNESDAY WEEK
Confession: Less Guilt / More Grace

It is fitting that we begin our Lenten journey focusing on the spiritual discipline of confession. The ritual action of Ash Wednesday, ashes being marked on our foreheads in the sign of a cross, reminds us of our brokenness, our mortality, and our dependence on God to work new life in us and through us. Confession connects us with that work of God and the potential of new life each day.

Confession tears down the facades we build around ourselves, revealing our common brokenness and imperfection, shaking the leaves of pride off our trees of humility, and opening our wounds to the healing power of God’s grace. Confession calls us to community, to be a place where we can live authentically. Confession also reveals the heart of God—a God who has forgiven even before we ask, a God whose mercy extends beyond our capacity to sin, a God whose grace flows like living waters, washing away all guilt and
shame. Less Guilt/More Grace.
ASH WEDNESDAY Time of Reflection

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me.”

(Psalms 51: 1-3)

What do you need to release to God?  
Confess that now.

What would it be like for you to be washed clean of past sin?

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit.”

(Psalms 51:1-3, 10-12)
God longs to put a new and clean heart in you.

Thank God for his forgiveness and love.

How does joy emerge from forgiveness?  
When has that happened for you?

Confession:  Less Guilt/More Grace
THURSDAY: How can we talk about this with others?

The themes of forgiveness, cleansing, God’s desire for newness and joy open our Lenten journey. As you talk with a Formational Friend or reflect upon this experience individually, consider these questions:

When have you experienced the power of forgiveness from God, through others?

What did you learn about yourself through that experience?

In what ways do you routinely experience God’s grace?

Is there someone you need to seek forgiveness from or forgive?

Confession: Less Guilt/More Grace
FRIDAY: A personal reflection

On my way to a Bible study class for teens, two friends and I decided to add a little spice to the gathering. We stopped in a local drug store, picked up a few cap guns, tiny fake-metal bearings to toss like grenades across the table at unsuspecting classmates (probably girls), and other small weaponry of chaos. The problem was we had no money to pay. No problem, we thought. A drug store with all this merchandise won’t miss a few insignificant knick-knacks. The store manager, who met us at the door, had other ideas, including calling the local police who chauffeured us to the police station, filed their report, and called our parents.

I’m not sure what was worse, facing the police or facing my mom. (Actually, I know what was worse!) To each I pleaded my case. “I was just the look-out guy. Yes, I was part of it but I didn’t take anything!” It was a convincing argument to everyone but
myself. The tiny bag of fake metal bearings buried in my pocket screamed a different story. “Liar! Thief!” They knew. I knew.

When I returned home, I snuck off to our garage, tucked many yards behind the house, extracted that tiny bag from my pocket and flung it into the darkest corner hoping, praying that I would never have to confront it again. Yet, I didn’t tell anyone for years about the fact that every time I walked past that part of my garage the tiny voice persisted, “Liar! Thief!”

Is there anything you need to say to God today or to someone else to clear that tiny voice from your head and replace it with God’s voice? Hear the truth from God: “You are forgiven. You are loved. Welcome home, again.”

Confession: Less Guilt/More Grace
Saturday: Insights for the journey

Each Saturday, we hope you will gather the salient experiences, the accumulated insights, the inner promptings from the week and write them down on this page.

How have you experienced God’s presence this week?

How has your connection with yourself, with others deepened because of your intentional work with this discipline?

What about this discipline will you continue to build into your life?

Ask God for continued guidance and encouragement as you make the journey of this season.

Confession: Less Noise/More Listening
WEEK ONE

Solitude: Less Noise / More Listening
WEEK ONE
Solitude: Less Noise / More Listening

Multi-media. Multi-sensory. Multi-tasking. We are bombarded on a daily basis with sounds, sights, and smells. As exciting and stimulating as life in the 21st century can be, it can also drain our soul’s resources.

The discipline of solitude is a purposeful retreating from all the stimuli of everyday life, withdrawing to a place of quiet and rest, if only for a few minutes at a time. Practicing this discipline may seem foreign to those who are accustomed to being perpetually connected via phone, email, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. But all this connection produces a great deal of noise in our minds and hearts — and it can dull our ability to hear God’s voice.

Imagine yourself sitting next to a loved one, saying nothing. There are times when no words need be spoken. It’s enough to be together. Nothing spoken. Yet, nothing left
unsaid. That’s the discipline of solitude. Less Noise/More Listening.
Monday: What can I do?

If you are accustomed to solitude, make sure you build it in to the rhythm of this week. If not, here is a place to start:

• Find a quiet time, maybe before others wake up or after they are asleep.

• Choose a place that is good for your soul and removed, as much as possible, from the noise of the world. Create a place in your home. If you love nature, go to a beautiful spot.

• Sit in quiet beginning with five minutes and increasing as you become more comfortable.

• Breathe deeply, focusing as you start, on each inward and outward breath.

• As thoughts come, imagine a little conveyor belt next to you. Place the thought on
the conveyor belt and let it go away, knowing you can get back to it when finished.

• Some people find that focusing on a word (peace, love, etc.) or an image allows them to bring their focus back when their minds wander. Whatever is helpful for you, do it.

• When finished, say something like, “Thank you God, for being present in my life.”

Solitude: Less Noise/More Listening

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Tuesday: What do the scriptures say?

The Psalmist writes, “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)


*How does quiet, solitude help us focus on who we are as God’s people?*

*What keeps you from moving to that quiet place? Desire? Logistics of life?*

Quiet can be renewing but also unsettling. Thoughts may flood your mind that you would rather keep at bay. Has that ever happened to you? Rather than avoid quiet and solitude, place those thoughts and emotions on a piece of paper. Looking at them ask, “What do I need to do or who can I talk to about what I just wrote down?”
Solitude: Less Noise/More Listening


Wednesday: What do our guides say?

“Solitude is more a state of mind and heart than it is a place. There is a solitude of the heart that can be maintained at all times. Crowds, or the lack of them, have little to do with inward attentiveness.” -Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline

Imagine what it would be like to be in a continual state of solitude? How would that affect how you approach your work, your relationships, your daily life?

Do you know anyone who seems to approach life in that way? What distinguishes their life, their attitude and their interactions from others?

If you know someone like that, make a point of talking with them about how they got to that place in life and that state of mind.

Solitude: Less Noise/More Listening
**Thursday:** How can we talk about this with others?

The themes of quiet and rest, renewing presence and active listening are gifts of solitude that have woven their way through this week. As you talk with a Formational Friend or reflect upon this experience individually, consider these questions:

*What has been your greatest challenge in finding solitude?*

*If you have had the opportunity to practice solitude, what have you discovered? Have you had any insights or leadings that could be God’s way of speaking to you?*

*What is the greatest source of “noise” in your life? What tangible steps can you take to diminish that noise in your life and be more open to the voice of God?*

*What can you learn from each other as you*
begin to practice solitude?

Solitude: Less Noise/More Listening
Friday: A personal reflection

A confession: I have contemplative envy! I’m riddled with jealousy over those who seem to effortlessly move from active engagement in the world to active listening to God through times of quiet and solitude. I’d rather be studying, serving, and engaging others in life-giving conversations than just sitting and being quiet. For years, I didn’t see the point. Even when I did begin to understand the reasoning behind it, I couldn’t talk myself into it. What’s the benefit? What will I gain? Will it work?

My questions uncovered the false assumptions I had about solitude in particular, and the spiritual disciplines in general. I was assuming a cause and effect relationship with God. I am quiet. You, God, speak. I give. God, you reward. If I didn’t get the response I wanted, I would say something like “That didn’t work” and move on to something else.
Then, one day, my daughter said, “Daddy, come and sit with me.” I assumed she wanted me to do something. She just wanted me next to her.

Aha. So does God. Solitude became God’s invitation to “come and sit with me.” If, in the quiet, I heard something from God, I was grateful. But, it was enough just to be together.

Does wanting something or needing something from God keep you from just being with God?

How does that image of a daughter wanting to be next to her daddy, inform your thoughts about solitude?

Solitude: Less Noise/More Listening
**Saturday:** Insights for the journey

Each Saturday, we hope you will gather the salient experiences, the accumulated insights, the inner promptings from the week and write them down on this page.

*How have you experienced God’s presence this week?*

*How has your connection with yourself, with others deepened because of your intentional work with this discipline?*

*What about this discipline will you continue to build into your life?*

*Ask God for continued guidance and encouragement as you make the journey of this season.*

*Solitude: Less Noise/More Listening*
WEEK TWO

Fasting: Less Consumption / More Compassion
WEEK TWO
Fasting: Less Consumption / More Compassion
In a super-sized culture, with obesity rates and eating disorders, including all their physical implications escalating, fasting may be an important discipline to consider. When we fast, we abstain from consuming food for a given time. Though this discipline may seem antiquated, in a food obsessed society fasting encourages us to reflect on our eating habits and needs, reminds us of those who go hungry each day, and finally, and most importantly, re-claims our dependence on our God — the provider of all good gifts for life.

Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:16 serve as a guide to our motivation for fasting. “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so to show others they are fasting.” Fasting is never a tool for self-promotion. It is a discipline that helps you examine the patterns of your life that can control you, experience
the pangs of hunger that grip the everyday lives of many, and enter anew into the gracious hands of your God, the Source of life.
Monday: What can I do?

If you have not used fasting as a discipline in the past, here is a guide:

• Choose a day that would work best for you.

• Eat a good breakfast then fast (go without food) until the next day’s breakfast.

• Water and juices can be used to keep you hydrated.

• During the day, pay attention to your body. When hunger pangs come, ask yourself, “What would I normally do to satisfy these hunger pangs?” “What patterns of my life do I create around eating?” “Are they healthy?”

• Expand your thoughts to others. Ask yourself “What must it be like for so many people to feel like this every day?”
• Focus your thoughts on God. Be grateful for the daily bread you receive. Offer thanks to God for providing in ways that you often take for granted.

Fasting: Less Consumption/More Compassion

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**Tuesday:** What do the scriptures say?

In the writings of the prophet Joel and Jonah, fasting and repentance (changing your life direction) walk closely together (Joel 2:12-16, Jonah 3:1-10). When faith communities wanted to focus their attention on God, fasting was often a means to consciously claim what was standing in their way of trusting God and thrusting them back on the mercy and love of their God.

Jesus himself fasted for forty days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2) prior to being tempted by the devil. As a centerpiece for what we know now as the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus invites us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

**What stands in your way of trusting God?**

**Have you or can you imagine yourself being dependent on God in the face of temptation?**
How do you give thanks to God for “daily bread”?

Fasting: Less Consumption/More Compassion
**Wednesday:** What do our guides say?

“Fasting helps us keep our balance in life. How easily we begin to allow nonessentials to take precedence in our lives. How quickly we crave things we do not need until we are enslaved by them. Paul wrote, “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything’ (1 Cor. 6:12).” Our human cravings and desires are like a river that tends to overflow its banks; fasting helps keep them in their proper channel.”

-Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

What is out of balance in your life right now?

Do your life patterns give life/build up or do they take away life/tear down?

What other fasts might be helpful for you to consider for a time? Television. Social Media. Shopping.

What next step can you take now toward
greater freedom in your life?

Fasting: Less Consumption/More Compassion


**Thursday:** How can we talk about this with others?

The themes of trust, dependence on God, awareness of life patterns both healthy and unhealthy, and the abundance of God’s mercy and love have woven their way through this week. As you talk with a Formational Friend or reflect upon this experience individually, consider these questions:

*When have you had to be dependent on others, on God for living each day?*

*What did you learn about yourself, others, and/or God through that experience?*

*What rituals did your family have around meals? What can you do to remind yourself that food is not just fuel for your body, but a gift of God for your soul?*

*Identify someone you know who may need an extended hand of compassion. What can you*
do? How can you be God’s presence for them?

Fasting: Less Consumption/More Compassion

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A LENTEN GUIDE FOR PERSONAL RENEWAL
Friday: A personal reflection

When I was growing up, there was a weekly ritual in our family that I heard about but never questioned. Every Monday my mother would fast. All we knew as we gathered at the table, around a meal she cooked, is that we would ravenously descend on the prepared food and my mother would drink her water. “I’m fasting” she would say if anyone asked. For us, it simply meant more food. For her, the spiritual implications were deep.

One day, I finally asked, “Why?” Her response was simple and indescribably beautiful. My mom and a friend had been overwhelmed by reports of starvation sweeping across the African continent. The rhythms of their lives wouldn’t allow them to drop everything and journey to Africa. So, they simply did what they could, without fanfare, but with great faithfulness. They fasted every Monday, taking the money they would
have spent on food and sending it to a relief agency, trusting that a life would be preserved by the simple gift of daily bread. Less consumption/More compassion.

*How does fasting connect us with the life of God, the lives of others?*

*These days, there are many who go hungry in our neighborhoods and our extended communities. What can you do?*

Fasting: Less Consumption/More Compassion
Saturday: Insights for the journey

Each Saturday, we hope you will gather the salient experiences, the accumulated insights, the inner promptings from the week and write them down on this page.

How have you experienced God’s presence this week?

How has your connection with yourself, with others deepened because of your intentional work with this discipline?

What about this discipline will you continue to build into your life?

Ask God for continued guidance and encouragement as you make the journey of this season.

Fasting: Less Consumption/More Compassion
WEEK THREE

Simplicity: Less Stuff / More Freedom
By Rachel Quan
WEEK THREE
Simplicity: Less Stuff / More Freedom

Storage units galore. We have so much stuff that we cannot even fit what we have in our homes any longer. Fifty percent of Americans renting storage units are simply storing what wouldn’t fit in their homes — even though the size of the average American house has almost doubled over the past 50 years.

We are constantly bombarded by messages that tell us we need more. Our credit cards and debt, and all of the extra stuff that accumulates in our storage units has not served to free us. We have become prisoners to our “stuff.”

The discipline of simplicity asks us to deliberately say “no” to those things we do not need. We’ve been so indoctrinated by the world around us, however, that truly knowing the difference between a need and a want is difficult. This discipline asks us
to stop and really think about that which is a need and that which is a want. When we begin to practice this type of deliberate way of thinking, we begin to realize how very little we do need. Freedom to be generous with others is a result. When we spend and accumulate less, there is more room to give. When we don’t need things to define us and give us status, we are freed from the worry of what others think. We are free to focus on relationship instead of things.
Monday: What can I do?

Simplicity is a way of life that begins from the inside and works its way out. If what is happening within our own soul is truly the path to simplicity, then it will automatically have a deep effect on the way we outwardly live. It is almost overwhelming to think of where to begin practicing this discipline in the midst of our current culture, but here are some places to start:

• Make a list with two columns. In one column list your current needs. In the other column list your current wants. Take the time to prayerfully look at each item you’ve placed on your list. Do you really need the things in the need column? Are there items on the “needs” list that are actually wants?

• Break your list down even further. What do you need for just this week? List the items you believe you need. Then reassess that list.
• Ask yourself “What is it that the accumulation of things and wealth mean to me? Security? Status? What am I afraid of if I begin to make choices of simplicity?”

• Ask yourself “Am I afraid of what others will think of me if I have less and live with less? Is status more important to me than relationship?”

• Expand your thoughts to others. Ask yourself “How much more generous could I be if I chose to assess my needs versus my wants and practiced only acquiring my needs? How much more might I be able to focus on my relationships with others if my mind is not occupied with accumulating more?”

• Focus your thoughts on God. Thank him for providing for all your needs and more. Commit to trust him to provide for every need. Ask him to continually remind you that security comes from him and not from
material goods. Pray for a generous heart that would make decisions to follow the simple path.

Simplicity: Less Stuff/More Freedom
Tuesday: What do the scriptures say?

Hebrews 13:5 says, “Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have: for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?’” For most of us the accumulation of “stuff” is about a lack of contentment and a lack of trust.

Is your security wrapped up in what you have or own?

What do you believe contentment really looks like in God’s economy?

Simplicity: Less Stuff/More Freedom
**Wednesday:** What do our guides say?

Wendell Berry, in his poem titled, “The Want of Peace” uses the line:

“I lack the peace of simple things…”

What is the “peace of simple things?”

When is it you have felt the most content?

What are the things that sow the seeds of discontentment in your life?

What are the next steps you can take in following the path of simplicity in your life?

Simplicity: Less Stuff/More Freedom
**Thursday:** How can we talk about this with others?

The theme of contentment is the key to the beginning of walking the path of simplicity. Understanding that true contentment comes from a growing and healthy relationship with God that then extends to others is when simplicity is able to be lived out in our day-to-day lives. Freedom comes when we find our contentment in having what we need. As you talk with a Formational Friend or reflect upon this experience individually, consider these questions:

*How has your family shaped your view of your needs, your wants and where your security comes from?*

*How has maintaining a certain status affected your desire for things?*

*How might a life of simplicity be something you can share in your relationships?*
How is it that you can make day-to-day decisions in light of the path of simplicity?

How might your relationship with God and others be affected when you choose to live this type of life?

Simplicity: Less Stuff/More Freedom
Friday: A personal reflection

I enjoy giving gifts. In fact, through the years I have become more and more deliberate about the kind of gifts I give. Throughout Advent my family and I have consciously thought of the kinds of gifts that are about relationship instead of “just one more thing” for someone.

Every year we trek to the same place for our anniversary. It is only a two and a half hour drive from home, not too far from towns and cities. We go to a lovely bed and breakfast that is in the middle of a nature preserve in the Texas Hill Country. Just a few miles in any given direction are small towns with unique shops and crafts. But in between these towns is a larger city that has one of the most gigantic discount shopping malls around. As we passed it on our way to lunch one day, we noted that there was a particular shop in the discount mall that we wanted to go to for a specific gift on our
Christmas list. We told ourselves it was a way to save money when buying this special gift for someone in our family.

We went, found the store and bought the gift. And suddenly, we were in the store next door. And the store next door to that. We began to look at shoes and clothes and other items that seemed to be deeply discounted. Being in that environment, we were convinced for a while that we should perhaps buy these items because they were discounted.

Something hit us. Did we need any of the stuff we were looking at? No. We felt the urge, the sense that we might need it just because they appeared to be items that cost less. But our original intent was not to stop to pick up any of these additional items. We were only there to pick up one gift. And beyond that, we were on our anniversary trip! Why would we spend it in a discount shopping mall instead of hiking the trails outside
the room of our bed and breakfast on the nature preserve? What in the world were we doing? My husband wisely said, “That’s it. Let’s get in the car. We don’t need a thing here, no matter how cheap we think it is.”

How is it that we can avoid being in situations where we begin to feel we need something we don’t really need?

How can we deliberately choose to give gifts of relationship instead of just more “stuff” to those in our lives?

Simplicity: Less Stuff/More Freedom
Saturday: Insights for the journey

Each Saturday, we hope you will gather the salient experiences, the accumulated insights, the inner promptings from the week and write them down on this page.

Howard have you experienced God’s presence this week?

How has your connection with yourself, with others deepened because of your intentional work with this discipline?

What about this discipline will you continue to build into your life?

Ask God for continued guidance and encouragement as you make the journey of this season.

Simplicity: Less Stuff/More Freedom
WEEK FOUR

Frugality: Less Spending / More Peace
WEEK FOUR
Frugality: Less Spending / More Peace

One way to uncover our true “gods” is to ask ourselves these questions, “What drives us? What consumes our thoughts? What guides our actions?” In a consumer based society, the answer, too often, goes back to the almighty dollar. No wonder why so many are crushed by the burden of debt, obsessed with the accumulation of more, and driven to career choices based primarily on their return of investment.

In the midst of such a culture, the discipline of frugality leads to greater personal freedom, a more vibrant connection with others, and deeper sense of contentment. Money is not the enemy. Earning a good wage is not to be disregarded. Frugality helps break the bonds of our addictive need to replace a God of plenty from the center of our lives with the things we want. Anxiety lightens. A greater peace emerges as our sense of contentment with what we already have grows.
Less Spending/More Peace.
**Monday:** What can I do?

“Gain all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can.” -John Wesley

As we start our week, let’s reflect on each of those categories:

- **Gain all you can:** In your earning, what are the costs to your life, relationships, and health? Are you able to maintain a good balance between what you can earn and what you give up to make a living?

- **Save all you can:** What choices do you need to make between immediate needs and longer term peace of mind?

- **Give all you can:** Our earnings are a gift from God. Our response back to God is generous giving. We become generous people through the gift of God’s Spirit and the consistent act of giving. Where can you
start giving? How can you grow in giving?

Frugality: Less Spending/More Peace

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Tuesday: What do the scriptures say?

Read Matthew 6: 19-34 focusing on these phrases:

- Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (vs. 21)
- You cannot serve God and wealth. (vs. 24)
- Do no worry about your life... (vs. 25ff)

What is Jesus teaching us about the tensions between money and our relationship with God?

What is Jesus teaching us about the focus of our anxiety?

What challenges you in these texts? What encourages you?

Frugality: Less Spending/More Peace
Wednesday: What do our guides say?

“In our current world, a large part of the freedom that comes from frugality is freedom from the spiritual bondage caused by financial debt. This kind of debt is often incurred by buying things that are far from necessary, and its effect, when the amount is substantial, is to diminish our sense of worth, dim our hope for the future, and eliminate our sensitivity to the needs of others.” -Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines

On whatever level, have you ever experienced the burden of financial issues?

How do financial issues impact your sense of self, your future, your connection with others?

Imagine yourself taking a step toward more frugal living. What would that be? Then, imagine taking a portion of that savings and giving it to someone in need. Finally, imagine the joy of the
receiver as a portion of the great burden they bear is lifted.

Frugality: Less Spending/More Peace
Thursday: How can we talk about this with others?

The themes of bondage and freedom, anxiety and peace, scarcity and abundance permeate our experience as people living with our financial resources. As you talk with a Formational Friend or reflect upon this experience individually, consider these questions:

*How have these themes been apparent in your life experience?*

*What have you learned about your own habits and attitudes about financial issues this week?*

*What needs to be reinforced? What needs to change?*

*What can you pray about or have your friend pray for you in regard to financial issues?*

Frugality: Less Spending/More Peace
Friday: A personal reflection

As I was growing up, I often remember a solitary check on the center of our kitchen table. The check was not a payment for a bill or a down-payment for another kid’s activity. It was my parent’s tithe (10% offering) to their church. Some months the check would remain on the table for a week or two if the family had been overwhelmed by other unexpected expenses. Trust me, growing up with a pastor’s income and five kids in a small, rural town, almost any unexpected expense erased any financial comfort margin. So, the check would sit on the table for a time, but it always went out.

Only as an adult did I appreciate the significance of writing the check first, even though they knew they couldn’t give it at that moment. The simple action revealed their priorities. They considered their offering to God first and then lived on the rest.
What do your spending habits reveal about your priorities?

What would it be like for you to give back to God first, in response to God’s generosity, and then live responsibly on what’s left?

Frugality: Less Spending/More Peace
Saturday: Insights for the journey

Each Saturday, we hope you will gather the salient experiences, the accumulated insights, the inner promptings from the week and write them down on this page.

*How have you experienced God’s presence this week?*

*How has your connection with yourself, with others deepened because of your intentional work with this discipline?*

*What about this discipline will you continue to build into your life?*

*Ask God for continued guidance and encouragement as you make the journey of this season.*

Frugality: Less Spending/More Peace
WEEK FIVE

Intercession: Less Me / More Others
WEEK FIVE
Intercession: Less Me / More Others

Followers of Jesus know, deep in the marrow of their bones, they are bound to each other intimately, mysteriously, for the good of all. Intercessory prayer is the thread that binds us together.

Intercessory prayer gathers our concern for and delight in others, placing them foremost in our minds and hearts by lifting them to the mind and heart of God. We know that God is already aware of the need but the prayer of intercession weaves together our life with the life of God and the life of another person, connecting us to a power beyond our own and a depth of loving concern that we could not muster on our own power and initiative. Intercessory prayer lifts us out of ourselves and puts the care of another person at the center of our journey together with God. Less Me/More Others.

Intercession: Less Me/More Others
Monday: What can I do?

Make a list of people to pray for. Be specific. Commit to pray for them each day.

Also, throughout the week, as names of people come to mind, say a prayer for them or better yet, make contact with them and tell them their name came to mind. See where it goes.

Intercession: Less Me/More Others
Tuesday: What do the scriptures say?

“Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not lose heart.”
(Read Luke 18:1-8)

What does this say about our persistence in prayer?

Do you ever wonder if your prayers are being heard?

What is your response when that happens? Do you doubt God? Do you doubt prayer?

Have you ever considered that a prayer of disbelief, of struggle, of doubt, is a prayer God wants to hear?

Intercession: Less Me/More Others
Wednesday: What do our guides say?

“If we truly love people, we will desire for them far more than it is within our power to give them, and this will lead us to prayer. Intercession is a way of loving others.... When we move from petition to intercession we are shifting our center of gravity from our own needs to the needs and concerns of others. Intercessory prayer is selfless prayer, even self-giving prayer.” -Richard Foster, Prayer

Notice the intersection between love and intercessory prayer. Can you recall an experience when your love for someone was deepened as you held them in prayer?

If, indeed, intercessory prayer is a way of loving others, what prayer habit can you build into your life so that you can love others more fully?

Intercession: Less Me/More Others
Thursday: How can we talk about this with others?

The themes of connection, compassion, and caring concern rise up from within us as we practice intercessory prayer. As you talk with a Formational Friend or reflect upon this experience individually, consider these questions:

What has been your experience with intercessory prayer?

What questions does it give rise to? What comfort does it bring?

What does it make you think, feel when others say they are praying for you?

For whom can you pray today? Say the names and what they need, then say a prayer for them.

Intercession: Less Me/More Others
Friday: A personal reflection

I had the opportunity to be in the presence of this remarkable man only a few times. Bill had built the foundations of his life and ministry on the power of prayer. His career was an overwhelming success by any external measure though you would never know as you engaged this humble man, sensing the internal strength of God’s spirit and his spirit in concert. Prior to meeting him, his wife had died after a prolonged battle with cancer.

In an early conversation, I decided to take a risk. “Bill” I said, “You can choose not to respond if this is still too raw but I’d like to know how you dealt with the reality that your whole ministry was/is built on prayer and, my guess is, thousands of people were praying for your wife’s healing, yet, she died.”

A tear peered over the edge of his eyelid as
he said, “I don’t know. And I haven’t fully come to grips with the why question. But, what I do know is that I have seen and experienced the power of healing prayer many times in my ministry. That it didn’t happen for me in my wife’s case is a mystery. All I know is that it is possible.”

What is your response to Bill?

How you experienced the power of prayer?

Have you experienced a time when your prayers were not answered in the way you hoped?

How does Bill’s response inform your response?

Intercession: Less Me/More Others
**Saturday:** Insights for the journey.

Each Saturday, we hope you will gather the salient experiences, the accumulated insights, the inner promptings from the week and write them down on this page.

*How have you experienced God’s presence this week?*

*How has your connection with yourself, with others deepened because of your intentional work with this discipline?*

*What about this discipline will you continue to build into your life?*

*Ask God for continued guidance and encouragement as you make the journey of this season.*

*Intercession: Less Me/More Others*
WEEK SIX

Holy Week: Less Fear / More Love
We enter the holiest week of the Christian year. Throughout this week, we will read continuously from Mark’s version of the Last Supper, the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of our Lord. The temptation in reading any familiar story is to gloss over it quickly. We’ve heard it all before. Thus, we miss the opportunity to immerse ourselves in this grand narrative of tragedy and triumph, human sinfulness and Jesus’ faithfulness, paralyzing fear and sacrificial love, bitter death and sweet resurrection to new life.

Each day, read the text slowly one time, then again, and even a third time if possible. Allow the story to move from your head to your heart to your soul. Note what words strike you, what characters resemble you or repulse you, and what Jesus endured for you. God’s story is your story. Less Fear/More Love.
Holy Week Readings:

**Monday:** Mark 14: 1-25  
**Tuesday:** Mark 14: 26-50  
**Wednesday:** Mark 14: 51-72  
**Thursday:** Mark 15: 1-24  
**Friday:** Mark 15: 25-47

After each day and time of reading, ask yourself:

*How is fear exhibited?*

*How is love shown?*

Holy Week: Less Fear/More Love
Saturday: Insights for the journey.

This Saturday of Holy Week, we hope you will gather the salient experiences, the accumulated insights, the inner promptings from this season and write them down on this page.

How have you experienced God’s presence this season?

How has your connection with yourself, with others deepened because of your intentional work?

Which discipline will you continue to build into your life?

Say a prayer of gratitude to God for the work that God’s Spirit has done in your life this season.
Easter Sunday: Attend worship and/or read Mark 16: 1-8

Christ is Risen! Less Fear/More Love