

# LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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Lesson 5 w/Answers

The Discipline of Simplicity

We continue our Christian Living study of the twelve spiritual disciplines by examining the discipline of Simplicity. Simplicity is the first of the four disciplines that Richard Foster classifies as "outward". It is perhaps one of the most difficult for us to practice, primarily because we live in such a material world.

Simplicity is "the blessedness of possessing nothing" (as Richard Foster defines it); it is realizing that all we have is not ours—it is God's. Surrounded by technology, we have instant access to information through the Internet, and we find ourselves living in a world full of social networking tools that allow us to lead a busy and very active life without ever leaving our homes. Driven by the need to build a retirement nest egg, or to save for our children's education, or to build an emergency fund to protect ourselves from the financial uncertainties of this world—we are so focused on our physical and material needs to the point that we feel exhausted, and sometimes even hopeless. Clearly, it is time to simplify our lives and go back to focusing first on Christ and His kingdom.

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*Using the Bible, complete the assignments below.*

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1. Read the following passages and describe the insights they provide us in terms of getting simplicity back into our lives:
  - a. Luke 12:15
    - i. ANSWER: This passage tells us that life is not about our possessions. The goal of living is not so that we can accumulate more and more things.
  - b. Ephesians 5:8-10
    - i. ANSWER: Paul instructs us that our lives should focus on what pleases God, and not what pleases man.
  - c. Luke 12:13-21
    - i. ANSWER: This parable teaches us that if our life is focused on building up more and more on this earth, we are wasting our lives accumulating things are worthless, because once we die, it does not go with us. We need to focus on laying up treasures in heaven, and not on earth.
2. Furthermore, when we simplify our lives, we hold back nothing from God; and that act of withholding nothing allows God to be the central figure in our lives—instead of our possessions and physical needs. Read the following Old Testament account of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:1-18, and note what it tells us about Abraham and how he held nothing back from God. What did Abraham believe God would do once Abraham sacrificed his son Isaac, and why did he believe it?
  - a. ANSWER: Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac up from the dead, because he believed God would not go back on his promise to produce a great nation from Isaac's seed. God promised Abraham that his descendants would outnumber the stars, and Abraham believed that God had the power to do it. Abraham realized that, even though he had great possessions, he owned nothing—everything belonged to God, even his son Isaac. Accordingly, he withheld nothing from God.
3. Read Matthew 6:25-34, and note below some of the things that Christ teaches us in this text.
  - a. ANSWER 1: God knows what we need and will provide it—not necessarily our wants and desires, but definitely our needs.
  - b. ANSWER 2: God wants us to live anxiety free.
  - c. ANSWER 3: If we seek God's Kingdom first, then all of the things we need will be provided. God never turns His back on us.
  - d. ANSWER 4: We cannot serve God and man, i.e., the material world. Where our treasure is, that is where our hearts will be. We can't focus on God if we are focused on "things", or the need for things, in our lives.

4. What do the following verses tell us about the folly of pursuing the material things of this world? What do they tell us regarding where our focus should in fact be?
- a. Ephesians 5:5
    - i. ANSWER: Here we are told that those who seek after the material things of this world have no place in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.
  - b. Colossians 3:5
    - i. ANSWER: In this passage, we are instructed that in order to live a life of simplicity, we are to avoid sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, and any other form of idol.
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Throughout the Bible, there are many references to the alluring things of this world, and how they can lead us to sin. The more we focus on these material world, the more likely we are to sin. 1 John 2:16 sums it up for us, "For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world." [NIV]

Let's commit this week to really examine ourselves and diligently seek ways to bring simplicity back into our walk with Christ.

Thanks for studying with us.

In Christ,

**Wes**