

Learning From Jesus

Week 16

Kingdom Simplicity: How Living in the Kingdom Cures Greed

Key Verse: Jesus (Matthew 6.33)

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (ESV)

Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. (The Message)

Thoughts: Richard Foster (Celebration.. LG p.100)

The central point for the discipline of simplicity is to seek the Kingdom of God and the righteousness of his Kingdom *first*, and then everything necessary will come in its proper order.

The inward reality of simplicity involves a life of joyful unconcern for possessions.

Because we lack a divine Center, our need for security has led us to an insane attachment to things.

Prayer

Suffer us, O Father, to come to Thee.

Lay thy hands on us and bless us.

Take away from us forever our own spirit and replace it by the instinct of Thy divine grace.

Take away from us our own will, and leave us only the desire of doing thy will.

Give us that beautiful, that lovable, that sublime simplicity which is the first and greatest of thy gifts.

Amen.

J.N. Grou

Richard Foster Video: Simplicity

Central Truths:

- Simplicity is an inward reality that results from a focus on the Kingdom of God
- Within us there is a whole conglomerate of selves vying for attention and dominance. As a result, we often feel distracted, torn and overcommitted.
- Only when we experience life at the center – where our many selves come under control of the divine arbitrator – do we enter into balance and equilibrium in life.
- Trust that God desires our best interests is at the heart of the inward reality of simplicity.
- Simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle.
- Freedom from anxiety is characterized by three inner attitudes:
 - If what I have I receive as a gift from God, and
 - If what I have is to be cared for by God, and
 - If what I have is available to others, then I possess the inward reality of simplicity.
- Because trust is at the center of a life of simplicity, a good image for the inward reality of simplicity is that of falling back into the arms of Jesus – like a person falling backwards into a swimming pool (taking the 'Nestea' plunge)
- Three controlling principles for the outward reality of simplicity are these:
 - Buy things for their usefulness rather than for their status.
 - Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you.
 - Develop a habit of giving things away.
 (see Celebration of Disc. Pp.90-95 for an expanded list)
- Soren Kierkegaard reminds us that the only reliable path to simplicity is to seek first the Kingdom of God.

Notes:

A Conversation With Dallas Willard and Richard Foster

OUTWARD DISCIPLINES

Simplicity

- RF: That's why the Discipline of simplicity, for example, is a great—well, actually frugality is the Discipline, and simplicity is the result of a life of frugality.
- DW: But the way simplicity has been understood, it really is frugality. And it leads to a life where you are able to get rid of the clutter, and you are able to have a unified purpose. And that means, among other things, you can throw stuff away.
- RF: I remember this wonderful phrase—I think it was from William Penn—about letting go of “cumber.”
- DW: Yes, and think of a society in which we have all these rental places where you can put your junk.
- RF: Right, I've got to rent another storage place.
- DW: You've already got your garage full. But what that says about the person—I mean, that they are inwardly in bondage!
- RF: Exactly, because simplicity is an inward reality [such] that, when that change comes about, the inward reality results in an outward lifestyle free of cumber.
- DW: I guess the thing you practice most in simplicity is letting things go. It's actually trusting God instead of keeping everything around that you might need, or on the other side (the really wealthy), [it would mean not] buying all this stuff.
- RF: I remember once feeling drawn to experience this, and it wasn't much really; it was a ten-speed bike, and I felt I needed to just let go of it. I just listened for a couple of weeks, and I heard a man mention that he wanted very much to get a bicycle for his son, but didn't have the ability to do it. I went to him and said that we had one—used, but good—and I remember going to his house to give it to him singing that little chorus, “Freely, freely did we receive, freely, freely give.” When we gave it to him, he came out to the car to talk to us, and he was only connected to the church in a really distant way, and he said, “Why are you doing this?” That gave a little opportunity to share a little about what was going on with me, and it was just a wonderful experience of letting go.

DW: Well, then, you know what you did was to bring the kingdom near to that man. You might just as well have said, "Because the kingdom is at hand."

I think after this talk, I'll go home and throw away twenty-five books.

RF: And your wife will rejoice; so long as they are not her books.

Spiritual Tool: Simplicity Exercises

Thoughts

Commit Matthew 6.25-34 to memory this week. Meditate on it, pray over it, and write down any resulting thoughts, insights and questions.

Emotions

Clean out your clothes closet and give away everything you have not worn in the past year. What do your feelings teach you?

Will

Monitor your attitudes and behavior regarding material possessions as you encounter them in your daily activities this week.

Behavior

What is something you can do to simplify your life? Tell a friend, then do it.

Social Interactions

Simplify your speech. Make every attempt to avoid words used either to draw attention to your accomplishments or to flatter the other person.

Evening Prayer

(Celtic Daily Prayer, Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community;
Harper 2002, pp 22-25)

Said or sung all together except for the sentences marked 'Call' which are for the Leader only.

+ indicates that you may make the sign of the cross.

*All say together the sections in **bold type**.*

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Opening sentences

**My soul waits for the Lord
more than those
who watch for the morning,
more than those
who watch for the morning.**

Call: Out of the depths I have cried to You.

Response: **O Lord, hear my voice.**

Call: With my whole heart I want to praise You.

Response: **O Lord, hear my voice.**

Call: If you, Lord, should mark iniquities:

Response: **Who could stand? who could stand?**

**I will wait for the Lord.
My soul waits,
and in His word
do I hope.**

Expressions of faith

**Lord, You have always given
bread for the coming day;
and though I am poor,
today I believe.**

**Lord, You have always given
strength for the coming day;
and though I am weak,
today I believe.**

**Lord, You have always given
peace for the coming day;**

**and though of anxious heart,
today I believe.**

**Lord, You have always kept
me safe in trials;
and now, tried as I am,
today I believe.**

**Lord, You have always marked
the road for the coming day;
and though it may be hidden,
today I believe.**

**Lord, You have always lightened
this darkness of mine;
and though the night is here,
today I believe.**

**Lord, You have always spoken
when time was ripe;
and though you be silent now,
today I believe.**

Scripture readings

Psalm
Old Testament scripture
New Testament scripture

Meditation for the day of the month

Prayers for others

Canticle

**In the shadow of Your wings
I will sing Your praises, O Lord.**

**The Lord is my light, my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the refuge of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?**

In the shadow of Your wings

I will sing Your praises, O Lord.

**One thing I ask of the Lord,
one thing I seek;
to dwell in the presence of my God,
to gaze on Your holy place.**

**In the shadow of Your wings
I will sing Your praises, O Lord.**

**I believe I shall see the goodness
of the Lord in the land of the living.
O wait for the Lord!
Have courage and wait,
wait for the Lord.**

**In the shadow of Your wings
I will sing Your praises, O Lord.**

Blessing

**See that ye be at peace among yourselves, my children,
and love one another.
Follow the example of good men of old
and God will comfort you and help you,
both in this world
and in the world which is to come.**

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

**Readings for April 22nd
Celebration of Discipline, Ch 3**