

Growth Pt 3 Simplicity & Service

I. Last week, in our Growth series, we talked about the spiritual disciplines of fasting and study.

A. With fasting, we learned that:

1. Fasting involves abstaining from something, usually food.
2. That fasting is almost always linked to prayer and worship.
3. It helps us to center our attention on God.
4. It reveals the things that control us.
5. And that fasting should be a regular practice.

B. Concerning study, we talked about:

1. How what we study determines the kind of habits that are formed.
2. That study requires humility if it is to be transformational.
3. That focus is the key to study.
4. That one way to study God's word is with SOAP.
 - a) Scripture
 - b) Observation
 - c) Application
 - d) Prayer

II. Simplicity

A. Francois Fenelon calls simplicity the "_____".

1. Simplicity brings joy and balance.
2. Complexity brings _____
 - a) If you don't believe me, just wait till tax season.

B. Simplicity is a discipline because our natural craving is for **more**.

1. To own more, do more, experience more, etc.
2. Consuming comes natural.

C. The Christian discipline of simplicity is an _____ that results in an **outward lifestyle**.

1. If we simply strive for the outward lifestyle of simplicity without the inward reality of simplicity, it can lead to deadly legalism.
2. Experiencing the inward reality liberates us outwardly.
 - a) Speech becomes truthful and honest.
 - b) The lust for status and position are gone because we no longer NEED status and position.
3. We learn that we can live without so many of the things that we thought we had to have.

D. Simplicity centers on what's important - Jesus.

1. When we lack divine center, our need for security leads us into an attachment to _____.
2. Richard Foster writes, "We crave things we neither need nor enjoy. We buy things we do not want to impress people we do not like. Where planned obsolescence leaves off, psychological obsolescence takes over. We are made to feel ashamed to wear clothes or drive cars that are worn out. The mass media has convinced us that to be out of step with fashion is to be out of step with reality."

E. What does the Bible have to say about simplicity?

1. Psalm 62:10 tells us, "**And if your wealth increases, don't make it the center of your life.**"

2. In Luke 16:13, Jesus says, “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

3. Matthew 13:44-46 says, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!”

a) Jesus calls all who would follow Him to a joyful life of carefree unconcern for _____.

b) Luke 6:30 says, “Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back.”

(1) In other words, hold on to your things loosely.

F. How do we cultivate an inward reality of simplicity?

1. Matthew 6:25-33 says, “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life— whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.”

2. **Seek _____ and a life of righteousness** before anything else.

a) A “Kingdom first” life produces a spirit of trust.

(1) We get to experience His provision.

b) Kingdom simplicity produces a life of joyful unconcern for possessions (as stated earlier).

3. **Realize that all we have is _____.**

4. **Realize that God cares for all He gives us.**

5. **Make what we have available to others.**

a) When we come to see God as the almighty creator and our loving Father, we can share because we know that He will care for us.

b) Holding loosely to possessions and clinging tightly to the Father releases the grip of anxiety and brings peace.

G. How can we outwardly express simplicity?

1. **Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status.**

a) Think strategically. How can my possessions be used to expand God’s Kingdom?

2. **Reject anything that is producing _____ in you.**

a) Certain foods, television, Facebook, etc.

b) Simplicity is freedom, not slavery. Refuse to be a slave to anything but God.

3. **Develop a habit of giving things away.**

a) Notice I didn’t say “selling things”?

- b) Giving something away that is a blessing to you produces joy and is a great example to the next generation.
- c) De-accumulate. Having lots of stuff complicates life.
- 4. **Refuse to believe those who tell you that you need the latest and greatest gadget.**
 - a) The United States has less than six percent of the world's population, but consumes about twenty-five percent of the world's energy.
 - b) The average American generates 52 tons of garbage by age 75.
- 5. **Learn to enjoy things without _____ them.**
 - a) The belief that, by owning something, it will bring us more pleasure is an illusion.
 - b) Enjoy the beach without the feeling you have to buy a piece of it.
 - c) Enjoy public parks and libraries.
- 6. **Develop a deeper appreciation for creation.**
 - a) Walk, listen to nature, smell the flowers.
 - b) Psalm 24:1 says, "**The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.**"
- 7. **Do not go into debt to buy things you want.**
 - a) There is a great freedom and simplicity to in living debt free.
- 8. **Obey Jesus' instructions about plain, honest speech.**
 - a) Let your yes be yes and your no be no (Matthew 5:37).
- 9. **Reject the idea that any form of service is _____.**
- 10. **Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the Kingdom of God.**
 - a) Keeping God first, before jobs, relationships, hobbies, or interests brings simplicity.

III. Let's talk about service.

- A. Bernard of Clairvaux once said, "Learn the lesson that, if you want to do the work of a prophet, what you need is not a scepter but a hoe."
- B. Matthew 20:25-28 says, "**But Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. ²⁶ But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. ²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."**"
 - 1. The spiritual authority of Jesus is an authority not found in a position or a title, but in a _____.
 - 2. True service finds it almost impossible to distinguish the small from the large service.
 - 3. True service isn't motivated by feelings.
 - a) The service disciplines (or directs) the feelings rather than allowing the feeling to control the service.
- C. True service is paired with humility.
 - 1. Service is the spiritual discipline most conducive to the growth of humility.
 - 2. William Law wrote that, if we want humility, we should "...condescend to all the weaknesses and infirmities of your fellow creatures, over their frailties, love their excellencies, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperities, compassionate their distress, receive their friendship, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind."
- D. **Humble service** causes us to see people differently.
 - 1. With compassion. As individuals.
- E. The discipline of serving is not just something we do, but a **way of living**.

1. It values _____.
 - a) It's not concerned with being noticed or appreciated.
 - (1) Hiddenness helps reduce pride.
 2. It values doing the small things as well as the big things.
 - a) Large tasks require great sacrifice for the moment; small things require constant sacrifice.
 - b) In the spiritual life, the real issues are found in the tiny, insignificant corners of life.
 3. It is done, in submission to Jesus, without complaining or backbiting.
 - a) Guarding the reputation of others is a deep and lasting service.
 4. The lifestyle of humble service values others and affirms their worth.
 5. It values **listening**.
 - a) Sometimes the greatest service you can give is a listening ear.
 6. It requires _____ **and compassion**.
 - a) Galatians 6:2 tells us to "bear each others' burdens".
- F. The risen Christ beckons us to the ministry of the towel.
1. Humble service is a calling we all share.
 2. Try starting each day with a prayer like this, "Lord Jesus, as it would please you, bring me someone today whom I can serve."

IV. Pray/close.