

## **Relationships**

**Sermon Series: Draw Near**

**Sermon Title: Simplicity: Life That is Truly Life**

**Sermon Text:** 1 Timothy 6:3-19

**Supporting Scriptures:** Acts 17:24, Mat 6:19-2, Acts 20:35, Matt. 6:33, Psa 73:25-26, Psa 39:3, Eph 3:20-21

**Sermon Summary:** This message deals with a discipline which has fallen in disrepute in recent years due in part to the unwillingness of evangelical leaders to model it. Even worse is the “name it claim it” prosperity preaching that has led people to believe faith is a path to worldly wealth. The discipline of simplicity and frugality is based on the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and the teachings of Paul the Apostle in the epistles. After an introduction on the concept of simplicity as a discipline we will look at one thing simplicity is not and four things simplicity is! This discipline is one of the hardest disciplines for those of us who live in very affluent parts of the world. However, it is absolutely necessary we learn this discipline if we are to show the world the proper priorities in life which lead to life that is truly life!

## **Full Sermon Notes**

“Lord, I need You, oh I need You! Every hour I need You!” How many of us truly understand our desperate need for Jesus every hour of our lives? So many times we live our lives as if they depended on everything else but Jesus! I’ve certainly been guilty of that and I think all of us, if we’re honest would say, “yep, I’ve been guilty of that!” The practice of the discipline we’ll talk about today could help us understand our deep, deep need of our Lord and Savior Jesus every single hour of our lives! Let’s pray and ask The Holy Spirit to make us teachable today! Pray!!

What I’m about to show you will bring up some tough memories for some of us! I understand that. However, the life lessons on simplicity that come from the event this video showcases are valid and very important. Please turn your attention to the screen...

### **Video Katrina**

Katrina took our church building, but not our church! Glory to God! We tried to get our building back so we could rehab it. We had been in the building less than two years and had spent a good bit of funds and a lot of manpower to build out that 16,000 square feet. However, we were on a lease-purchase and the owners decided not to work with us. I was so disappointed. However, a year or so after the storm, Dr. Jeff Nave and I were talking. He asked me a striking question. “If we could have gotten our building back what would we have done?” I said, “We would have gone to work on our building and we would have our own building now!” Jeff said, “that’s right, but what did we do?” I said, “we’ve met in borrowed spaces,” He said, “yes, but what did we do during the rest of the week?” I said: “Cut trees, gut houses, and rebuild houses.”

He said, “That’s right! We were helping the people. Right where God wanted us. If we could have gotten our building back we would have been working on it instead of helping the people.”

Wow! What a revelation! What a conviction gripped my heart! Is God more concerned with buildings or people? We all know the answer: People. I realized if we can't be the church without a building, we won't be much of a church with a building!"

Besides, we must remember

Acts 17:24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.

Katrina should have taught us the most important things in life are not things at all, but our relationships with God and with others. Now I know first hand that it's not an easy thing when the pile of stuff by the road to be hauled off to the dump is your stuff! So this is not a flippant, just get over it, it's just material things, because I understand how hard it is when it's the old antique dresser that belonged to your wife's great grandmother. But having said that, we have to learn the truth that you can't put your trust in things because things can be gone in an instant. However, the sad thing is that many folks after Katrina missed those lessons. Debbie and I were in Natchez less than a year after Katrina celebrating our anniversary. We were having breakfast with another couple who had lost a lot during the storm. The lady said something like this: "I'm here to buy antiques. this go 'round money's not an option. Ya might lose it all tomorrow so you might as well go big while ya still can!"

I was saddened. That's the age old philosophy that says "This life is all there is so grab all you can while you can. You only go around once, go for the gusto!"

Richard Foster in Celebration of Discipline says this...

"Inwardly modern man is fractured and fragmented. He is trapped in a maze of competing attachments...because we lack a divine Center our need for security has led us into an insane attachment to things. We must clearly understand that the lust for affluence in contemporary society is psychotic. It is psychotic because it has completely lost touch with reality. We crave things we neither need nor enjoy. 'We buy things we do not want to impress people we do not like.' The mass media have convinced us that to be out of step with fashion is to be out of step with reality. It is time we awaken to the fact that conformity to a sick society is to be sick.

This morning we will speak of the discipline of ...

### **Simplicity "Life that is Truly Life"**

1 Timothy 6:3-19

I want to read to you the two verses that are our focal verses for today. 1 Timothy 6:18-19...

1 Timothy 6:18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

1 Timothy 6:19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Today we're going to discover ways to find life that is truly life by discussing the spiritual discipline of Simplicity. The word simplicity means...

1 : the state of being simple, uncomplicated, or uncompounded.

Is there anybody in this room who would like to simplify their lives? Can I see your hands? Wow, you came on a good Sunday, but I'm not entirely sure you will like the prescription the good Doctor is going to give you today! So many of us would very much like to simplify our lives, but too many of us have become addicted to the very things that complicate our lives! You'll see what I'm talking about by the end of the message. There's another word some use for the spiritual discipline of simplicity and it is this word...

"Frugality."

Frugality is the practice of

1. acquiring goods and services in a restrained manner, and
2. resourcefully using already owned economic goods and services, to
3. achieve a longer term goal.

What might some longer term goals be for a disciple of Christ when it comes to simplicity? Maybe it could be...

To live more simply than others may simply live!

To simplify and un-complicate our lives!

To free up resources for God's work!

We're talking about God's work that makes a difference in the lives of hurting people who need to know the love of our God! Most of you know a group from our church is preparing for a mission trip to Baja, Mexico this summer. They will be building a very modest house for a family who have great needs. Keep them in your prayers as they prepare for this trip! If you are participating in our fasting on Fridays, you know we will be taking up a love offering at our Good Friday worship service to help fund this trip. Now some of you may be thinking: "Okay Pastor Larry, just get on with the part about simplifying our lives. I need to hear all about that. You got it. Let's look at our larger text in Paul's first letter to Timothy.

Paul wrote to Timothy about life that is really life and if we can understand, take home, and practice the truths we will learn today, you'll be surprised at how it will help you un-complicate your life. Simplicity and frugality can help us find the life that is truly life.

What is it about simplicity and frugality that helps us find that life? We'll look at Paul's wisdom to Timothy in our text to find out, and the first thing we discover is what simplicity is not!

## **Simplicity is Not Being a Simpleton!**

What is a simpleton?

Simpleton: a foolish or gullible person.

Paul told Timothy this...

1 Tim 6:3 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching,

1 Tim 6:4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions

1 Tim 6:5 and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

Simplicity doesn't mean that we are to take a light hearted stance towards what we believe or our doctrine and theology. Those things are so important to get right and if we become simpletons in those areas we will totally miss the concept of the discipline of simplicity. So our doctrines and our beliefs on the spiritual discipline of simplicity really do matter. Paul knew that there were people who would use religion and faith as a means to acquire financial gain. He wasn't talking about those who have a vocational calling to ministry being compensated for their work, but about those whose motivation was to use their positions and their influence merely for financial gain. Our theology behind the spiritual discipline of simplicity is informed by the very teachings of Christ! Teachings like...

Mat 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

Mat 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Acts

20:35 ...remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Mat 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Here's the problem! There have been so many who have ignored the teachings of Jesus on this issue and have tried to use Scripture to teach a "name it claim it" prosperity gospel. When Richard Foster first wrote this book, this was a major problem in the church here in the U.S. Here's a brief section I wrote in my doctoral project back in 2003...

“To live simply so that others may simply live” is a powerful statement that has been repeated many times but is rarely lived out. Frugality is the abstention from flippant and careless use of material possessions merely for oneself. According to Willard,

‘The spiritually wise person has always known that frivolous consumption corrupts the soul away from trust in, worship of, and service to God and injures our neighbors as well.’

This discipline has fallen in disrepute in recent years due in part to the unwillingness of evangelical leaders to model it. Even worse is the “name it claim it” prosperity preaching that seems to prevail in much of religious broadcasting today. The following is a sobering example of the struggle that Christian leaders have with this subject.

‘When Billy Graham and Hudson Armerding called together about eighty evangelical leaders in Atlanta in December 1977 for a Consultation on Future Evangelical Concerns, the question of a simpler lifestyle frequently surfaced. The reaction was always positive. We agreed that the urgent need for increased efforts in evangelism and development call for sacrificial giving. Global economic trends also require reduced consumption by the affluent. Then, about the fourth time the issue of a simpler lifestyle emerged, Loren Cunningham, president of Youth With A Mission, made a crucial comment: “Yes, I believe the evangelical community is ready to adopt a simpler lifestyle--if we evangelical leaders will model it.” That ended the discussion of simpler lifestyle.’

Ronald J. Sider, ed., *Living More Simply: Biblical Principles and Practical Models* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 11.

This issue of stewardship certainly arises here and God must be heartbroken over our reluctance to let go of material things.”

Now let’s discuss what Simplicity is! What is it about simplicity that helps us find the life that is truly life?

### **Simplicity is True Contentment!**

1 Tim 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

1 Tim 6:7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

1 Tim 6:8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

The world doesn’t want you to be content. Did you know the U.S. economy is driven by discontent? Advertising is designed to make you discontent so you just have to have the latest and greatest. Kids, I’m so glad you’re with us this morning. How many of you have a favorite toy? What if you could only have one toy? Which one would you choose? There are kids in the world who only have one toy, and sometimes it’s a toy they’ve made themselves. Watch this video...

## Haiti video

The cool thing about that toy is it needs no batteries! It's the kid that will need to recharge after a day of rolling that old bicycle rim around with that piece of rebar! And it provides a lot of fun, exercise for the body, and imagination for the mind! A lot of children in America have closets full of toys and they can't seem to find a toy that's any fun! "But Mom, if I could just have that newest toy I saw on TV or at the store, I'm sure that one would be the best ever!" Of course it just ends up in the closet with the other toys. And kids, it's not just kids, adults have this problem too. The old saying goes, the only difference between kids and adults is the price of their toys! And here's the problem with us adults. If we don't have the money, we hear this little voice saying, "What's in your wallet?" You know the "buy now, pay later" thing. We've all been guilty. And I'm not against all uses of credit, but that's an area of our lives, if we're not careful, things can get out of hand! Many times our lives get complicated because of things!! This is not a new thing. Some forty years ago I talked with a couple who between the two of them had five jobs. I asked them why the husband had three jobs and the wife had two. They said it was to pay for their ski boat, camper, custom van to pull the camper, his work car, which was a sports car, and then her work car, and of course their house note and the expenses that come along with children! The kids and house are keepers, but you need to sell some things so you can have some time for one another and for your children. Maybe get rid of the camper, and then you won't need the big custom van you use to pull it, and that would be two major bills out of the way. Their reply, "but those are for our family to spend time together!" I asked this question: When's the last time you went camping or skiing? They looked at each other and said, we can't really remember, because we work so much! Folks, sometimes, less is more and sometimes more is less! Let me explain it like this...

I'd rather have a tent, which is less, and be able to actually go camping with my family than have a huge, modern camper, which is more, and never be able to go camping because I'm too busy working to pay for the camper! Again, I'm not against campers, I would love to have one someday, but you have to do the math. How miserable would it be to get a camper, which is more, when the math says you really can't afford it, but you do it anyway, and the whole time you're on your first camping trip you're thinking, how in the world am I going to pay for this, what have I done? That equals less enjoyment than you would have had with a tent.

We must be wise about these things and realize that true contentment is not found in what we possess materially, but in who possesses our heart and mind. Does the Lord sit on the throne of your heart? Does your relationship with God and with others take precedence over your relationship with your stuff? Remember, frugality is the abstention from flippant and careless use of material possessions merely for oneself. Dallas Willard wrote:

"The spiritually wise person has always known that frivolous consumption corrupts the soul away from trust in, worship of, and service to God and injures our neighbors as well."

A life of simplicity and frugality will help us learn the joys of Contentment!

But is there anything else about simplicity and frugality that helps us find the life that is truly life?  
Yes!

### **Simplicity is Godly Restraint!**

Paul once again instructs Timothy with great wisdom...

1 Tim 6:9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

1 Tim 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

1 Tim 6:11 But you, man of God, flee from all this...

People in our world today know little in the way of restraint. They say and do what their impulsive, fallen nature desires. This leads to untold tragedies. Crippling debt brought on by compulsive buying, bursts of anger leading to road rage incidents, perverse language, name calling, abuse, mass shootings, immorality, and the list could go on and on. But as followers of Christ we are to flee from all this! We should be able to see through the lies of the enemy. But if we are not willing to exercise the spiritual disciplines, then we too become vulnerable and susceptible to enticing powers of sin. However, when we exercise the discipline of simplicity and frugality, we are refusing to allow ourselves to be chained and trapped by the illusion that money and things bring happiness. Don't get me wrong, we have to have some money and some things to live, but money and things should only be tools to support life. They are not life and should not be the goal of life. Did you notice in our text this very critical truth...

1 Tim 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

It's the love of money that is a root of all kinds of evil, not money itself! And I've known people who had lots of money, but were not in love with it at all, and were extremely generous in giving to others in need and to missions and the work of God. They were in fact "cheerful givers!" But on the other hand, I've known some not so wealthy people who were extremely in love with money! Getting money and catching up with those who had more than them was their passion in life and their reason for living. So you don't have to "have money" to be in love with money! Remember Matthew 6:21 states...

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Today we must all ask, "Where is my heart?" Can we say with the Psalmist?

Psa 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

Psa 73:26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Our Children's minister, Lacey, put it this way: "You might even think of Godly restraint as saying no to something so we can yes to something else!" And I can tell you this, when we say no to the world's lies and yes to God's truths, we are saying no to things that would harm us and saying yes to things that would help us find the life that is truly life!! And there's another way simplicity helps us find the life that is truly life...

### **Simplicity is Chasing What Matters!**

Do you remember when Chase Bank had the catchy saying, "Chase what matters"? We should chase what matters, but I can tell you their idea of what matters and what God's Word says matters, are polar opposites! Paul told Timothy in our text to...

1 Tim 6:11 ... pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

1 Tim 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1 Tim 6:13 In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you

1 Tim 6:14 to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Tim 6:15 which God will bring about in his own time--God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

1 Tim 6:16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Examine your goals. Are they materialistic or Godly in nature? What are you chasing? It's okay to have financial goals and even some material goals, but if those goals are your main goals in life, you will be left sorely disappointed! Paul said we should chase what really matters the most in life by pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. And let me remind you again of what Jesus said...

Mat 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

The tragedy is that the lasting satisfaction and pleasure that humankind so desperately needs will not be found in the temporary and trivial pursuits so many seek after. Only in a daily, growing, and passion-filled relationship with Jesus Christ can the deepest longings of the soul be satisfied.

•A.W. Tozer, in his classic work "the pursuit of God," said...

"To have found God and still pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too easily-satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart."

Listen to this dynamic statement by the Psalmist...

Psa 39:3 My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned...

I really want that kind of passion in my relationship with God! I desire it, I need it, I'm desperate for it!

•And one more very important thing a life of frugality and simplicity teaches us...

### **Simplicity is the Freedom to be Generous!!**

1 Tim 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

1 Tim 6:18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

1 Tim 6:19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Now I want to close by telling you about a very powerful example of serving one another, and loving your neighbor as yourself and how God will honor the true spirit of generosity. We started out with a video of Hurricane Katrina. We're going to end with something that happened afterwards. I'm not going to mention any names, I'm just going to tell you the story. After Katrina, a church planter up north saw online what had happened to our church. He was starting a church in his home like we had done. They had 17 people meeting in his home and he told them about us. They had made the decision that one of their core values was going to be radical generosity. Now remember, they're trying to raise money to start a church but those 17 people took up a love offering for Northshore Church. They sent us \$700.00, wow! I've been in churches of three or four hundred people and a 500.00 love offering would have been considered great. Let me just tell you this...when they had their 3 year anniversary they had five thousand people, and still didn't have their own building. They were meeting in two local high schools. I would say God blessed their commitment to radical generosity. Right? Amen. And just so you won't be worried, they have their own building now!!

When we choose to live more simply so that others can simply live, God will bless that kind of commitment! In fact Paul said this to the church at Ephesus...

Eph 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Eph 3:21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

When we choose to live more simply so that others can simply live, God will bless that kind of commitment! It is hard to imagine the truth in what Jesus said when He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" until you've actually practiced generosity! I remember sitting on the

mountainside in a poor village in Haiti in the late 1980's. We were taking a lunch break. As I opened my lunch, a little brother and sister were watching me. I motioned for them to come over to me and I handed them the bag. The big sister tore the peanut butter and Jelly sandwich in half and gave half to her little brother and then they danced off like they had been given a million dollars. I just wept with joy! That was over 30 years ago. Ask me what I got for Christmas that year. I couldn't tell you! But I'll never forget the look on those little faces. Let's pray!

Some questions to ponder...

- Why is it so hard to have proper priorities when it comes to wealth? Matthew 13:22
- Why is it impossible to find contentment in worldly possessions? Proverbs 23:4-7
- How can the discipline of simplicity and frugality help us say no to ungodly things? 1 Timothy 6:9-11 Hint: It has to do with restraint and pursuits.
- A simplistic and frugal lifestyle becomes easier as we pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Matt. 6:33
- Simplicity and frugality produce generosity and generosity produces freedom. Explain. 2 Corinthians 9:6