

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
***Simplicity! From Exhausted to Energized***  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - April 12, 2015**

Simplicity. It is a popular topic these days. There is new book out by blogger Jen Hatmaker called '*Z*' and it looks at 7 things in our lives that can be simplified. She is an intriguing read. I have been reading *Simplify* by Bill Hybels, a new Christian book by the pastor of Willow Creek Church with their 24,000 members/attenders every Sunday morning. Now that does not seem *Simple* to me.

In the on-line magazine *Fiscal Times*, there was a recent article on *The New American Lifestyle*, Blaire Briody wrote:

“A growing number of American families who, even as the economy begins to recover, are stepping back from the exhausting ascent toward bigger and better. They’re moving to smaller homes, selling valuables, slashing bills, eating out less and making small adjustments to simplify their lives, and in the process, changing their attitudes toward the meaning of success and the American dream.”

Have you seen the tiny homes or micro homes? Do you find those intriguing as I do? If you have been to IKEA maybe you have seen those 400 or 500 sq. ft. living space units.



This is an 8 by 24 foot house, 192 sq. ft., and \$56K



There is even a documentary film about micro home living called *TINY: A Story about Living Small*. Living simply is not a new idea. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, St. Thomas Aquinas took a vow of simplicity and poverty and even wrote a theological essay on the *Simplicity of God*. The early Quakers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century held to a *Testimony of Simplicity*: In this testimony it was noted that “a person’s spiritual life and

character are more important than the quantity of goods he possesses or his monetary worth. *Friends* believe that one should use one's resources, including money and time, deliberately in ways that are most likely to make life truly better for oneself and others."

That seems reasonable but the reality is our new homes are 40% larger in 2014 than they were in 1970 and 140% bigger than they were in 1940. The Gallup people tell us that on average, we work 46.7 hours a week, essentially squeezing in another day into our work week. We struggle with credit card debt, crowded schedules, crowded closets, and crowded arteries. We are at once being physically, physiologically and spiritually killed by the stress of busyness and while at the same time we are addicted to the endomorphic squirt of adrenaline that a high-octane, performance-driven lifestyle is known by.

Most of us would say we need to make a lifestyle change. We're going to talk about it for the next four weeks because I believe that the Scriptures and Jesus had a lot to say about how we live our lives and how we arrange our life priorities.

DISCLAIMER!! I AM NOT THE EXPERT ON THIS SUBJECT MATTER!

2012-13 was a bad time for me. Three parents died in 7 months of each other. While dad was alive I was trying to finish 4 seminary classes and complete my requirements for ordination was laboring long and seemingly fruitless hours trying to find a church home. In 2012 I went blind in my right eye and things were not looking up so to speak. It was not a simple lifestyle and I was suffering spiritually and psychologically, though at the time, I think if you had asked me, except for the insomnia, I would have said I was hanging in there.

**Wake up call! – This is life and death!**

**John 10:10**

<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

You see life is seemingly made to be so complex. So complicated. Staying in front of our professional disciplines is a task. There is continuing education and professional journals to read. Keeping up with technologies is a chore. Did you stay up late and order your new apple smart watch? Keeping your car running, your lawn mowed, the kids on schedule for soccer and violin, the baby safe, the bills paid. Finding time for relationships, finding time for God. Life seems complicated, but the reality is there is really only one thing we need to be thinking about. All other things come from this one simple reality. If we were to simplify our lives around this single principle, the rest would fall into place.

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6r9iX39wUAg> 1.33 seconds, 'city slicker' cut, "One Thing"**

**Luke 10:38-42**

<sup>38</sup> Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. <sup>39</sup> And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, <sup>42</sup> but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

You can keep these gals straight by thinking of Martha as Martha Stewart. "Jesus I see that you and your friends are hot and tired. So to help you cool down I have whipped up a nice mint and lime drink with some nice sugared rims and for an appetizer I have some small bread, cucumber and jalapeno sandwiches that I call manna with a kick."

I think Jesus is saying to Martha, I didn't come for food. I came for friendship. I came to be with my friends and to bring encouragement and truth into your lives. I didn't come to chastise your sister or you. But now

that you have pressed me, Martha Martha, will you please simmer down and just sit down with us and share a bit of your life with me. Tell me how you have been and what you are feeling. “

Three things stick out when I read this story with an eye for this subject of simplicity.

1. Martha is doing her best to be helpful, but she gets angry with the fact that her sister won't help. So she asks Jesus to intervene, *Jesus don't you care?* One of the first things that happens when our lives are not in control is we blame God. You should step in and give me what I want in my timetable. Don't you care?!? I guess that could be turned around. Jesus could be saying “I came to earth to have a relationship with you, “Don't *YOU* care?”

2. I see that Jesus didn't come for food, he came for fellowship. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were family friends and some speculate were family, perhaps cousins. Jesus wasn't looking for free food. God had been delivering food from Heaven for a long time. Food is not the issue. Relationship is!

3. Even well intentioned serving can be overdone (v40). Simplicity isn't so much getting in control of your behavior; it is getting in control of your attitude.

***Simplify: It is not just about saying no and throwing things out!  
A life of Simplicity is not just having few things. It is more of a state of being than it is a state of having.***

When I think of having a lifestyle marked by simplicity I think of clutter. Clutter is a good work for me as I have an easy time getting a word picture on it. My sports trunk with all my sports stuff in it. My garage work bench, the closet in my home office, my shoe rack, my office desk here at church. Don't get too proud. You have those junk drawers at home too.

But the clutter that really scares me is different. The emotional clutter of the heart, of the mind and of the spirit - this is the clutter that has my attention:

- The emotional clutter of held grudges and unforgiveness.
- The clutter of the memory of past sins and the clutter of shame long paid for by Christ
- Mentally going over pessimistic worst case scenerios over and over till you get so troubled you can hardly think. Cluttering your mind and heart with coulda's and shoulda's that were never meant for you to carry.
- The clutter of religious habits and legalism that is holding you back.

I hear over and over - “I am so tired.” I hear it from myself; I hear it from my family and the staff here at church. I hear it from my pastor friends (pastoring is one of the careers highest in burnout, and maybe a better word is flame out). From people I bump into at the grocery store and gas station. The clutter and pace of life wears us out!

Therefore, I want this series to be particularly practical. So each week you will get from me a small list of potential action steps that you can do to move from ***exhaustion to being energized***

***From Exhaustion to Energized***

Have you noticed that hard work makes you tired? But you know what really makes me tired? Hard work that is going nowhere. It's one thing to do tough physical labor knowing that the end result is something that will be really helpful to your world and will last a long time. But hard physical labor that is incidental or redundant and purposeless, that makes me tired really fast. There are things that fill my emotional and spiritual bucket and there are things that empty my bucket.

1. Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status (status is a funny word, only you can know)
2. Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you (Facebook, Instagram, chocolate, sugar, vampires, tech, Disney, TV, internet, video games)
3. Develop a habit of giving things away (this may be the most important, it is the medicine for the world)
4. Refuse to be propagandized by modern marketing and gadgetry (the evil one uses media to lie to you)
5. Learn to enjoy things without owning them (things will own you: boats and RVs and mountain property, collections of many sorts, tools, sports and sports equipment)
6. Come to enjoy creation as your main method of unwinding (I need to be self-disciplined at this)
7. Reject anything that will breed the oppression of others (and I rarely think of this and it is far more prevalent than you think) – become aware of what you buy, including where your stock portfolio invests

Here is what I want you to remember, your takeaway for this morning. The evil one is trying to strip from you the things that give you life. He will lie and steal and murder to keep you from enjoying life and finding purpose in life. But you must resist him. If you do he will flee you and look for easier prey. Let him go look elsewhere. You must be resolved to unencumber your life so that you are a good soldier for Christ.

***“You are not as useful to God as both He and you would like if your life is encumbered with sin and unnecessarily complicated with temporary affairs of the world.”***

***Matthew 6:25-27, 31-34***

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

<sup>31</sup> Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. <sup>34</sup> “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

***The One Thing?*** But ***seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*** The simplicity of knowing Christ your king will set you free from the worries and momentary light afflictions of the relentlessness of life.

***Discussion Questions***

On Sunday Dave brought up the topic of simplicity. He asked in church why downsizing and simplifying our lives seems to be so difficult even when we know it would be a good idea. Why do you think that is? Do you think that a complicated life plays into Satan’s ploys and lies? How so?

Have you seen those small micro homes? Do you think that “living small” would appeal to you?

Dave used the story of Mary and Martha as an example of lifestyles with very different priorities. Are you more like Mary or Martha? How so? Does it sometimes happen that you are usually a Mary but sometimes you turn into a Martha? How so?

Dave sought to define simplicity as a term of the heart when he said “To *simplify* is not just about saying no and throwing things out! A life of Simplicity is not just having few things. It is more of a *state of being* than it is a *state of having*. What do you think he meant by that? Do you agree with that? How do we change our hearts on these matters?

What do you think it means to seek first the Kingdom of God? What one thing would help?