

THE DISCIPLINE OF

Simplicity

... is learning to be content with a minimum amount of things, in order to focus on the Mission of God. Simplicity is the ability to share with others, giving away that which is not needed.

WEEK FOUR • DAY ONE

Monday, March 5, 2007

Simplicity

WARM-UP...

Psalm 1

WORKOUT ...

Matthew 6: 25–34

Matthew 16: 24–28

COOL-DOWN ...

The Lord God says to us, Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened down, and I will give you rest. Talk to the Lord, and let out the things that are weighing you down, and breathe in the Spirit of the living God. Feel free to write below all those burdens that you bear. Then give them to God. He is able to help.

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WARM-UP...

Psalm 42

WORKOUT ...

T.B. Maston: A Simple Life Whose Teachings and Example Inspired an Entire Denomination

Thomas Buford Maston did not look like a crusader. He was a small man but with great upper body strength developed from more than sixty years of caring for his only child, Tom Mack, brain-damaged at birth. His wife Essie also devoted her life to Tom Mack's care.

He was a gentle, disciplined man. He became known by many as the Baptist apostle of Biblical ethics. He deeply influenced the lives of thousands of ministers and public figures, including Bill Moyers, PBS journalist; Foy Valentine of the Christian Life Commission; Jimmy Allen, former SBC president; and James Dunn of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

After completing a degree at Southwestern Seminary (1923), he later enrolled at Yale to earn a doctorate in Christian ethics under renowned scholar Richard Niebuhr. Upon returning again to teach at Southwestern Seminary he began to deal with the ethical issues of racial and gender justice, church-state relations, war and peace, sexual, and business behavior. Foy Valentine said, "When Maston responded to God's call to bear the Christian ethics standard as his life's work, the idea of Christian ethics among Baptists existed only in very rudimentary form. No Baptist seminary had a course on the subject. No Baptist agency had published a book on the subject."

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Maston led the movement among Southern Baptists for racial desegregation—a stance quite unpopular at the time. As early as 1927, he urged integration and racial justice. He taught inclusion of the love of God on college campuses, churches, and associational settings.

Jimmy Allen commented, “Due partly through his influence it became socially unacceptable for congregations to ignore the needs of the poor, the disinherited, the hungry, and the hurting. Preaching on the ‘sweet bye and bye’ was seen as incomplete without dealing with the dirty ‘here and now.’ The seed sown by this quiet professor teaching in the same school, living in the same house and worshipping in the same church for well over forty years has produced a harvest that touches us all.”

His favorite scripture was 1 John 2:6, “He who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.” T. B. Maston walked that walk and lived out an authentically Christ-like ethic until his death at the age of ninety-one, only a few months after the death of his 60-year-old brain-damaged son. His task was finished.

—Patricia Garrett

COOL-DOWN ...

Give some thought to the ways that you can share yourself and what you have with others. Try to determine what God would have you give today—something of significance, something of value—to some person or ministry who needs your gift, today. Focus your prayer on the poor, the down-and-out, the hurting, and the hungry.

WEEK FOUR • DAY THREE

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

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WARM-UP...

Psalm 73

WORKOUT ...

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19

COOL-DOWN ...

Focus your prayer today on the church you belong to. Give thanks to God for the UBC family. Pray for people in your group—your Life Team, or your Weekend Bible Study group—pray for these in whatever they struggle with today. Pray that God would give you a sensitive heart to see the needs around you.

WEEK FOUR • DAY FOUR

Thursday, March 8, 2007

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WARM-UP...

Psalm 90

WORKOUT ...

Micah 6: 6-8

Malachi 3: 1-12

COOL-DOWN ...

Give thanks to God for your own salvation. Call out to the Lord the names of people who, as far as you know, don't have a personal relationship with God. Write their names below. Take the time to pray for them, and to pray for us all, that we might have the courage and the wisdom to share our faith with those who need to know the Lord.

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WARM-UP...

Psalm 107

WORKOUT ...

A Simple Discovery

"There are two ways to get enough: one is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less."

—G.K.Chesterton

College students live fairly simple lives. It is their nature. They have yet to collect the artifacts of age—and furniture. Furniture often encumbers the call of God to consider a new move, since every move requires taking lots of stuff from one place to another.

Clint Dobson had very little furniture in the summer of 2005 and was very open to the call of God. He applied for a UBC internship and worked with UBC and the Emerald Pointe Fellowship in 2005. He moved his few possessions into an efficiency apartment in the complex.

During the summer of 2005, Clint began to notice the differences between the Clear Lake advantages, with which he grew up, and the economic and other disadvantages he experienced in the complex. Plus, he had just come from the Baylor community, where discussions about designer clothes were commonplace. Then he found himself in the middle of conversations about whether or not there would be food to eat this week.

This tension was good for Clint as he sought to live an incarnational witness in the apartments. It also gave him more questions with which to pursue his theological training.

When he needed an internship for his Master of Divinity work at Truett Seminary in Waco, Texas, Clint returned to Emerald Pointe

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for the summer of 2006. He had won the affection of the children and parents at Emerald Pointe in 2005, so he knew what to expect. In addition to reconnecting with the people, he sought to reconnect with his questions by reading books by authors Jim Wallis and Shane Clairborne. He learned what is meant by the words of Jesus in Matthew 6.

It was a summer to go beyond book-knowledge. For most of his life, his world taught him about gaining more and getting more, but Clint learned about simplicity. He learned that simplicity and stewardship go hand in hand. Stewardship is more than tithing or giving. It is sharing.

In addition to the lessons of simplicity and sharing, he wrestled with Chesterton's statement about getting enough and learned about desire. Learning to control desire at a young age has its advantages, especially before the depths of debt ensnare the young. The gospel does not necessarily call believers to material and aesthetic asceticism, but the gospel does call believers to account for their lifestyle and the mission of God.

Being in the world without being of the world is one of the ancient Christian tensions. Simplicity, giving and sharing helps believers remember to which world we belong.

— *Clint Dobson and Jeff Waldo*

COOL-DOWN ...

As you pray today, consider what God has given you in the way of spiritual gifts for service and ministry. Give thanks to God for those gifts. Think of those you work with, go to school with, or interact with. Pray that God will help you to help someone you meet today.

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WORKOUT ...

The apostle Paul wrote, in 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own."

Taking care of the body is important. Eating well, getting proper rest, and participating in appropriate exercise are all important to maintaining the body, which is the temple where God resides on this earth.

Today's workout is a physical one, and if you choose to participate, you should do so with care and caution. Not all exercises are suitable for everyone. Before you begin this program you should have permission from your doctor to participate in vigorous exercise. The instructions and advice presented here are in no way intended as a substitute for medical counseling.

We recognize that 20 minutes a day, one day a week is not a physical workout routine, but we include it in here for fun, and to point out the importance of regular physical care.

Thanks to Wendy Stanley, a kick-boxing instructor, for her assistance in this part of the BeTheBody workout.