



## EXERCISING YOUR MIND IN **Simplicity**

March 10–11, 2007

### Focal Passage

### Focal Teaching and Preparation

### Suggestions for the Lesson



16106 Middlebrook Dr  
Houston, TX 77059  
281-488-8517  
www.ubc.org

### Matthew 6:19–34

- Of all your material possessions, which one would you miss the most if you had to give it away? Why?
- The spiritual discipline of simplicity involves focusing on God and his kingdom as the main priority in life, and trusting in him to provide what we need.
- Simplicity is an inner reality that results in an outward lifestyle. We cannot separate the two. If we attempt to develop an inner reality of simplicity without practicing it outwardly, we have something similar to faith without works—a dead thing. If we practice the outward lifestyle of simplicity without having the inner reality, we fall into the pit of legalism. In his book, *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster writes that simplicity that has both the inner reality and the outward expression in balance 1) sets possessions in proper perspective; and 2) sets us free to receive the provision of God, as a gift that is not ours to keep, but can be freely shared with others.

### Discussion of Text (5–7min.)

- Discuss how to go about storing treasures in heaven? Why does our heart end up where our treasure is? Our heart—our executive center—is focused on the things that we consider treasures (6:20–21).
- Read Matthew 6:22–23. How are these verses relevant to the context? If you can see this reality of the kingdom, you will live the way God intended. If you can't, then your life will be filled with anxiety and frustration.
- Why is it impossible to serve two masters? At some point our allegiances will conflict, and we will be forced to choose one and reject or hate the other (6:24).
- In what ways can money become our master?
- According to Matthew 6:25–34, does worry have a place in kingdom living? If not, why do we do it? It can be an indicator of a lack of faith or trust.
- Do these verses suggest that we shouldn't work for a living? No, they say that we shouldn't worry about having enough.
- Do these verses teach that it is wrong to have a lot of money or a lot of things? No, but they should not be our treasures. We have to be careful, because we may be blind to our true feelings about them (6:22–23).
- Do these verses suggest that we should sell all we have and give the proceeds to the poor? No, and even if we did, we could still be filled with anxiety about provision and security.
- Do these verses suggest that no harm will come to us if we have enough faith? No. Do you worry about preserving your life? If so, guess what your life is? A treasure on earth.
- Can we decrease our level of anxiety in life by just trying to be less anxious? No, we need to have a different focus. (6:33).
- What does it mean to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness (6:33)? We start by considering the overall mission of God—He loves people and wants them to know him. He is searching for the lost and revealing himself to those who are seeking him. We seek his kingdom by seeking him and joining him in his mission. We invest our lives in things that are eternal—God and the people he loves. And, don't worry (Philippians 4:6–7). These are some of the ways that we store up for ourselves treasure in heaven.

## **Exploring the Biblical Material**

- ***The Inner Reality (10 min.)***

Read or paraphrase for the group: Jesus makes it clear that freedom from anxiety is one of the inward evidences of seeking first the kingdom of God. Richard Foster writes, "Freedom from anxiety is characterized by three inner attitudes. If what we have we receive as a gift, and if what we have is to be cared for by God, and if what we have is available to others, then we will possess freedom from anxiety. This is the inward reality of simplicity. However, if what we have we believe we have gotten, and if what we have we believe we must hold onto, and if what we have is not available to others, then we will live in anxiety."

- Which of these inner attitudes do you have? Which ones could be improved?
  1. What you have is a gift from God?
  2. What you have is to be cared for by God?
  3. What you have is available to others?

- ***The Outward Expression (15 min.)***

Richard Foster offers the following examples for practicing the outward expression of simplicity. Each statement is followed by some suggested questions for discussion.

1. Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status. What are some examples of things that are bought for status? Cars, clothing, houses.
2. Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you. What are some examples? Caffeine, chocolate, television, newspapers, money.
3. Develop a habit of giving things away. Do you pay for extra storage to store all of your things? Do you feel compelled to buy a bigger house because your possessions are crowding your space? Do you really need to keep all of it?
4. Do not be propagandized by the custodians of modern gadgetry—don't be fooled into thinking that you need to have the latest technology products. Christian author Ravi Zacharias says, that the heart desires wonder and magic, and that technology is what man uses to supplant the desire for wonder. What the heart is really longing to do is worship, to stand in awe of a God we don't really understand and can't explain. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. Learn to enjoy things without owning them. What are some examples? Enjoy a beach without feeling like you have to own a piece of it. Check out books from the library instead of buying them.
6. Develop a deeper appreciation for creation. How? Get outdoors - go hiking or camping. Make a point each day to watch the sunrise or sunset.
7. Look with healthy skepticism at all the buy now, pay later schemes. Is it possible to buy the things that you need without borrowing money?
8. Obey Jesus' instruction about plain, honest speech. "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one." (Matthew 5:37).
9. Reject anything that breeds the oppression of others. What might be some examples?
10. Shun anything that distracts you from seeking the kingdom of God.

***Other Questions on Simplicity can be found at [BeTheBody.com](http://BeTheBody.com)***

## ***Concluding the Lesson (2 min.)***

- Is seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness the first priority in your life? If not, what intentional steps can you take to make it your priority?
- Is your life filled with anxiety? Confide in a trusted friend, and ask them to pray for you. Help each other to seek the kingdom first.
- Take an inventory of your "stuff." What can you give away?



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## Inductive Bible Study Worksheet

Scripture	Questions for Understanding	Observations
<p><b>Matthew 6:19-34</b>  <sup>19</sup> <i>Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.</i></p>		
<p><sup>20</sup> <i>But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.</i></p>		
<p><sup>21</sup> <i>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.</i></p>		
<p><sup>22</sup> <i>"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.</i></p>		
<p><sup>23</sup> <i>But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!</i></p>		
<p><sup>24</sup> <i>"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.</i></p>		





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Scripture	Questions for Understanding	Observations
<b>Matthew 6:19-34</b>		
<i>25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"</i>		
<i>26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"</i>		
<i>27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"</i>		
<i>28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin."</i>		
<i>29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these."</i>		
<i>30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"</i>		
<i>31 So, do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"</i>		
<i>32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."</i>		
<i>33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."</i>		
<i>30 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."</i>		

