

## Simplifying

### What exactly is simplicity?

In a general sense, [simplicity](#) means “freedom from complexity.” With regard to accomplishing goals, simplifying involves dividing tasks into parts to make them more manageable. When involving a person’s actions, simplicity means a “lack of ostentation” or a lack of outward show/display that is intended to impress others. Taking that a step further and getting at intentions behind actions, simplicity means a freedom from “deceit or guile.” When intentions are simple and not focused on impressing others, they are sincere and natural. In a nutshell, simplicity with regard to actions and intentions means that what’s happening on the outside is a true reflection of who the person is on the inside.

#### **1. Evaluate your life with regard to simplicity. What areas would you like to simplify? Keep these in mind as you proceed through this study.**

As with so many aspects of a person’s character, there exists a positive side to pursue and a less appealing side to subdue. So too is the case with simplicity. (For example, simplicity can also indicate plainness and a lack of mental acuteness, which is not appealing to most people.) With that being said, let’s now focus on integrating simplicity into our lives as a way of **feeling true freedom** from being overwhelmed and feeling like life is way too complicated. Let’s **choose to simplify** our actions where possible and to make our intentions as simple and as pure as we can. Doing so will hopefully lead us to a place where we feel like we are living life instead of having life simply happen to us.

One additional point must be made about simplicity before proceeding with this study. Simplicity is not a one-size-fits-all character quality. In other words, simplicity comes in various shapes, styles, colors and sizes to find the uniqueness of each individual. While gaining ideas on how to simplify from others is not only wise and encouraged, doing so must accompany the realization that no one person will implement the same balance of simplicity in exactly the same way. In fact, what looks simple to one person will seem complex to another. So many factors come into play such as personality and temperament, and the true gauge for whether or not a life is balanced with regard to simplicity is in the **lack of feeling overwhelmed and over-stressed**. As individuals, we can appreciate each other’s implementation of simplicity while pursuing our own view of a simple life.

#### **2. Think of two or three people who you view as having a simple life. What approaches to simplicity might you consider adapting for your life?**

### What does the Bible say about simplicity or simplifying?

God’s word offers quite a lot of instruction in the way of pursuing simplicity, and this study will look at **five areas** where simplicity helps to increase a person’s overall effectiveness in every area of life.

#### Prayer

#### **3. Read Matthew 6:5-15 and take note of how we are instructed NOT to pray as well as how we are ENCOURAGED to pray.**

This portion of scripture talks about hypocrites who are showy in their prayer lives, meaning they pray in public and in a way so as to impress others. Their prayers tend to sound repetitious and complicated and have a tendency to lead others to doubt their own ability to pray effectively.

Prayer is simply private communication with God. Sure, there is a place for public prayer, but intentions need checked before proceeding. In addition, asking whether or not public prayer is the only prayer is important in assessing one’s motive for praying.

The Lord's Prayer (found in Matthew 6:9-13) offers a simple pattern for prayer. This does not mean we HAVE to or even SHOULD pray exactly with this pattern, but it does serve as an example and a guide for one's prayer life.

#### **4. Write down the pattern for prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13?**

This pattern of prayer begins with praise, includes a time of praying for God's will to be done, encourages time talking to God about daily needs, and ends with bringing struggles to Him and asking Him for help with those struggles. This pattern of prayer, if done with a sincere heart focused on God, helps lead one to connect with a personal and loving Savior. Praying in this way indicates trust in God to provide for daily needs, which truly **simplifies our lives** because we then have a lot less to worry about and focus on. As we offer sincere, simple prayer, God will help us recognize and not give in to temptation. This is **yet another way to simplify** life as it takes the burden off us doing it all on our own.

#### Appearance

This is a touchy and highly individual topic, so let's proceed with caution but also with minds open and assumptions laid aside. First, understand that dress is unique to the individual and should not provide the basis upon which we judge others' intentions and hearts. With that being said, also realize that the way a person dresses does provide an indication of respect for self as well as for the situation at hand.

#### **5. What does 1 Peter 3:3-5 indicate should be our level of focus on appearances?**

In this portion of scripture, we see that while we must avoid being obsessed with fashion, we must still take care of the physical self. In other words, our focus should not lie "merely" (meaning only) with external appearances but also with the "hidden person." This inner person is to "hold the quality of a gentle and quiet spirit" that God finds so precious. In no way does this mean we are to be wallflowers, but it does provide critical instruction as to how God wants us to proceed with presenting ourselves.

#### **6. What does 1 Timothy 4:8 indicate about a focus on the physical self?**

In 1 Timothy 4:8, Paul is saying that a focus on the physical does have a place in our lives, but it is not to be the focus. Taking care of our physical selves does have benefit in this life, but that benefit does not carry into eternity except that in that it allows for us to more effectively accomplish what does carry into eternity.

Living in either extreme – focused too much or too little on appearances – complicates life. Our focus should instead be on true beauty, meaning our attitude and our inner spirit. This type of beauty is what Paul indicates as "*holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*" As we focus on our eternal selves, other areas of life become simpler too because we begin to function in a more natural state that seems almost effortless. Of course, it's not effortless. The effort is simply placed more in the hands of our loving Savior and less in our own hands.

#### **Conduct**

While our discussion about dress and appearance touched on the idea of our conduct and the way we present ourselves, the Bible has more to say about our conduct in addition to how it relates to our beauty.

#### **7. Please read 2 Corinthians 1:12 and note what two aspects are included in "the testimony of our conscience."**

Holiness and godly sincerity should guide be the testimony of our conduction. Holiness is a word that many believe means "perfection," but that's not what it means. Instead, holiness means to "be separate." (For more on how to become separate by adapting as God leads you to do so, please read [Go](#)

[Against the Flow.](#)) “Godly sincerity” means being real and transparent in our relationships. [Clark’s Commentary on the Bible](#) explains that the word “sincerity” in this passage indicates *“the splendor, or bright shining of the sun; and here signifies such simplicity of intention, and purity of affection, as can stand the test of the light of God shining upon it, without the discovery being made of a single blemish or flaw.”* Simply put, living with holiness and godly sincerity means living in a way that separates us from the world and that stands up under the light of God’s perfection. Again, this does not mean we are to be perfect, for we know this is impossible. But, we are to do our best and to come to the altar of forgiveness when we mess up to be washed in His grace and mercy.

As practical application, this portion of scripture indicates that we don’t have to make a point to let everyone know our testimony. Instead, our actions should tell the story for us. That is why focusing on true beauty is so important; it allows for our testimony to be accurately and effectively told.

Sincerity is a key point of simple conduct. Life is a lot less complicated when our inner and outer lives, meaning our private and public lives, don’t contradict. Conversely, fleshly wisdom (impressive human knowledge) creates a complicated life. Trying to impress others never ends, and it can’t exist within the simple life. (Not to mention the fact that it often leads to gossiping, spreading rumors and second-guessing, which significantly adds complication to life.) Being real and transparent is a lot less complicated way to live.

## **Giving**

### **8. What is the very simple approach to giving indicated in Luke 6:38?**

A lot of people pay a lot of money to discover how to become wealthy financially. Unfortunately, the focus on these teachings is often on what our own actions produce as well as only on money. In reality, as Luke 6:38 points out, the key to abundance is really quite simple: Give and it will be given to you. (What is “it”? Consider that “it” is whatever you give and anything you give.) Not only will “it” be given to you, but you’ll receive a *“good measure – pressed down, shaken together and running over.”*

So does this mean that if we give money that we’ll then find ourselves in an abundance of money? Not necessarily. But what it does indicate for sure is the need to give with the intent of treating others generously, graciously and compassionately. When we treat others this way, these qualities will come back to us in abundance. Oh yeah, contentment tends to be a result as well. Giving doesn’t get much simpler than that.

## **Speech**

### **9. What does 1 Thessalonians 2:3-7 indicate as the right approach and the wrong approach to the words we speak?**

Speech that pleases God is absent of error, impurity & deceit. Speech that pleases God is not aimed to please man, does not simply have the goal of flattering, and does not seek glory from men. When our words are gentle, our speech pleases God.

A person does not have to be powerful and assertive, which is what our society promotes, but can be gentle (love in action), considerate and seek to meet the needs of others. A gentleness with regard to speech allows others to talk and indicates a willingness to listen to and learn from anyone.

How does this type of speech aid in simplifying life? When one seeks to speak in a way that pleases God, life is simplified through an honest and sincere reflection of who that person is. In other words, speech that flatters and seeks the approval of man is usually dishonest and misleading, which is very difficult to conjure as well as to maintain. Matthew 12:34 tells us that *“For the mouth speaks out of that which fills*

*the heart.*" Simply put, leading a simple and honest life from the heart produces speech that pleases God.

### **What will simplicity in our lives accomplish?**

The purpose of simplicity in our lives allows for God to be glorified more as we are able to eliminate the need to be acknowledged. (Matthew 6:1-4). Simplicity in our devotion to Christ eliminates the heaping on of rules and complications that often come with false teaching (2 Corinthians 11:3, 4) and in that way defeats the advances of Satan. When our focus is simply on being honest in all we do, cultivating inner beauty as we pursue holiness, edifying others and glorifying Christ, we eliminate the distractions that come with dishonesty and selfish pursuits. Such pursuits steal our focus, weaken our commitment to Christ and increase distractions that threaten devotion to Christ.

If we are to remain pure in an evil world, there is one action that must be done regularly. Romans 16:19 tells us that we must regularly study God's word so that we do not become fooled by falsehood. Our lives are simplified through this in that we don't have to worry about and study all of the false, worldly teachings that exist because knowing the good (the Truth) protects you.

As we seek to simplify our prayer lives, focus on inner beauty that lasts forever, purify our conduct, give to bless, and speak to edify, we find that simplicity gradually increases our lives. This happens because whatever does not fit within what God desires for us begins to fall away as we simply focus on Him.

**10. Consider the following two quotes: "Life is not complex. We are complex. Life is simple, and the simple thing is the right thing." (Oscar Wilde) and "A little simplification would be the first step toward rational living, I think." (Eleanor Roosevelt). How do these quotes reflect some significant points about simplicity that God teaches in His Word?**

While increasing simplicity in our lives really is quite simple when we follow the instructions in God's Word, doing so is not necessarily easy. The world and its prince seek to distract us through outright lies and temporary pleasures. This is why a **deliberate** and **intentional** seeking after of simplicity is so crucial if we are to pursue a life that pleases our Creator.

### **What are some practical ways to simplify?**

*"Nothing can be done except little by little."* - [Charles Baudelaire](#)

*"It can be helpful simply to make a written or mental list of the things you do each day. Then give yourself a mental credit for each of them, however small. This will help you focus on what you have done instead of what you haven't gotten around to do. It may sound simplistic, but it works."* - [David D. Burns](#)

*"We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee."* - [Marian Wright Edelman](#)

Because we know that it's the small changes that add up to make a huge difference over the long term, here are some practical suggestions for making those small changes that will simplify your life.

- 1.) Buy the book "100 Ways to Simplify Your Life" by Joyce Meyer and start implementing some of her suggestions.
- 2.) Enlist help. What can your kids do? Your husband? For example, one mother taught her two boys how to do laundry and expects them to do a load a week of their own clothes. They fold them too! You don't have to unload a lot of tasks on them, but a few small chores can really help lighten a mom's load.

- 3.) Keep a master list. Ever feel like there's too much going on in your head and you can't remember everything you need to accomplish? Write it all down. Then, every morning, choose 3-5 items from that list that you want accomplish that day.
- 4.) Organize your grocery shopping & meal planning. Check out this resource for ideas.
- 5.) **Learn to say no.** This is actually one of the key habits for those trying to simplify their lives. If you can't say no, you will take on too much.
- 6.) Limit media consumption. Chances are you'll find a great deal of extra time just by deliberately choosing to turn off the various media sources (TV, cell phone, computer, etc.) in your life.
- 7.) Read [Simple Living Manifesto: 72 Ideas to Simplify Your Life](#).
- 8.) Create a daily and weekly schedule and stick to it as best you can.
- 9.) Clean out your closet. Get rid of what you don't wear anymore.
- 10.) Take a Sabbath rest. Having that day of rest makes for a much more productive week.