

Sermon Study Guide

THE MAIN THING: Pursue Simplicity: Fall 2015 Series

In addition to pursuing simplicity in our life schedules and relationships, we are also called to pursue simplicity in our finances. God's Word gives us principles to follow.

Watch the Bill Hybels' video session at <https://www.rightnow.org/Content/Series/1178#4>

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. In this session's opening vignette (Bill Hybels' DVD) we are introduced to Bucky. Scripture served as an encouragement to him after he made the decision to distance himself from gang life. Describe a time when God's Word played a significant role in your life during a key decision you made.
2. What is/has been your greatest source of joy and delight?

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Read the passage Matt 6:19-34 at least 3 times (have a different translation read out loud each time). Ask group members to mention what stands out for them from the readings. Why?
2. Why is the 'eye' a significant reference here? What is it symbolically drawing our attention to?
3. Pastor Henry gave two foundational principles for simplifying your finances (see summary). What are other principles that you can discover from: Prov 14:30; (Matt 6:19-34); 11:28-30; Phil 1:21; 4:8, 12,13; I Tim 6:9?

PURSUE MISSION: *Seek to be the community of God's people in your community as you live out your calling*

1. What practical obstacles — time? energy? desire? something else? — would you have to overcome in order for God's Word to more consistently guide your life? (Participant Guide, p. 77)
2. Reflect on what you do worry about. Are there areas in your life where you avoid obeying the Lord?
How can the group pray for you to trust God more in these areas?
3. Choose one of the verses to memorize and focus on this week.

THE WORD (NIV)

Proverbs 14:30

A heart at peace gives life to the body,
but envy rots the bones.

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Philippians 1:21

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 4:8, 12,13

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. . . .¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

I Timothy 6:9

⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

Sermon Study Summary

Finances. Whether it is fretting over how you are going to make ends meet, or losing sleep over how to invest your money, it is something that adds anxiety and complexity to our lives. 80% of divorces can be attributed to finances in one way or another. Many purchase in three years what it took their parents thirty to achieve, and most people in North America now owe more than they own. Is it any wonder why so many are stressed over finances these days? God doesn't want us living this way, and, if you are in this anxious state over finances, neither do you.

We long to simplify our lives by simplifying our finances. How can we do that? Matt 11:28-30 is Jesus' invitation to come to Him with our burdens. If we submit to Him and learn from Him we will find rest for our souls. Matthew 6 gives us principles that are foundational to simplifying our finances.

1. Put your trust in God and God alone. Matt 6:24-25 says we cannot serve two masters. When it comes to what we have and what we are pursuing in life we must make a choice. That is, putting our trust in God or money. We are created such that we can only serve (in an all-encompassing passionate devotion) one God at a time. You have to make a choice. Paul made his choice despite the challenges he had in life (Phil 1:21). We see this in his priorities, values, relationships and his finances. They all stemmed from his relationship with Jesus (Phil 4:12-13). Are you clear about who or what you are giving your life to, and who or what is the sole object of your trust and worship? For you to live is . . . what? How you answer this will impact your mission and values, your priorities and lifestyle, your relationships and eternal trajectory, and your finances. We do something Godly when we work; it's God's gift to us. Making money is not wrong. It is when we sell out to these things that do not last and make them our identity.

Jesus says if you want to know where your heart is really at then look at what you really treasure (Matt 6:21). Cultural anthropologists say that North Americans are not so obsessed with money as they are with what it says. More money says they are significant, competent and successful – and vice versa! If this is your treasure then your passions and money will go in that direction affecting your home, car, the vacations you do and the clothes you wear. Hence we tend to be unsatisfied with what we have and always want more, and fear losing it (Matt 6:25). We worry and hoard money and possessions. Many are not content with the provision that God has given to them and go into debt and financial bondage in order to impress others. In doing so, we struggle with being generous. To let go of our money is to let go of that which defines our significance in our culture. Hence Jesus' statement: you can't serve both God and money. Is your source of your identity God? Or what He created? To answer that, ask yourself these three questions: Am I holding my loved ones, my work, my money and possessions with an open hand? What do you worry about? Where do you resist obeying God's Word? If therein you find an idol you have a decision in your life of whom you will serve and trust.

2. Focus on the eternal things of God. Matt 6:22 is a metaphor Jesus uses. What you treasure in life and the degree of contentment depends on how clearly you see this life through God's eyes – through His perspective. If this life is all there is you will invest your time and money differently than if you think that this life is a warm up for an eternity with God. Advertising seeks to create dissatisfaction in us and plays on our God-given desires. This can be distorted to stimulate our appetite for more, and unless we get it under control it will wreak havoc in our lives (1 Tim 6:9). How do we say 'enough'? Jesus says the answer is a singular focus upon Him and His Eternal Kingdom. This will lead us to set our sights on eternal things rather than the temporary, or lesser, things. Immortality is not found in making a name for yourself here on earth. Safety and security cannot be found here, but ultimately in God. Paul found contentment (Phil 4:8) through this one focus in intentionally not exposing his mind to anything that had the potential to lead to ruin. Having the singular focus is to be content with what you have, and avoid comparisons with others. Covetousness is the opposite of contentment. Most people are not discontent because they have too little but because they believe they don't have as much as someone else (Prov 14:30).

Jesus challenges us to seek first His Kingdom (Matt 6:33) for in doing this all that we need and often worry about will be provided in His way and in His time. He challenges us to keep our spiritual eyes on that which matters to God – the eternal things that break His heart. Live simple lives so that others can simply live, and trust that God does satisfy (Ps 103:5). Two challenges: Firstly, love people over things. It is the quality of our relationships with God and others that will matter in the end. Secondly, seek to please Jesus rather than trying to impress others.