

The Discipline of Simplicity

Excerpts from Richard Foster

Preliminary Considerations

1. The Christian Discipline of simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward life-style.
2. Contemporary culture lacks both the inward reality and the outward life-style of simplicity.
3. We should take exception to the modern psychosis that defines people by how much they can produce or what they earn

The Bible and Simplicity

1. The Old Testament takes exception to the popular notion of an absolute right to private property. The earth belongs to God, says Scripture, and therefore cannot be held perpetually (Lev. 25:23).
2. Constantly the Bible deals decisively with the inner spirit of slavery that an idolatrous attachment to wealth brings (cf. Ps. 62:10; Prov. 11:28).
3. Jesus declared war on the materialism of his day. (And I suggest that he declares war on the materialism of our day as well.) The Aramaic term for wealth is “mammon” and Jesus condemns it as a rival God (cf. Luke 16:13; Matthew 6:24).
4. Jesus speaks to the question of economics more than any other single social issue. If, in a comparatively simple society, our Lord lays such strong emphasis upon the spiritual dangers of wealth, how much more should we who live in a highly affluent culture take seriously the economic question (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9).
5. Having said all this, I must hasten to add that God intends that we should have adequate material provision. There is misery today from a simple lack of provision just as there is misery when people try to make a life out of provision.
6. Simplicity sets us free to receive the provision of God as a gift that is not ours to keep and can be freely shared with others.

A Place To Stand

1. The focal point of simplicity is the Kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 6:25-33).
2. The central point for the Discipline of Simplicity is to seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness of his kingdom first and then everything else will come in its proper order. Nothing must come before the kingdom of God, including the desire for a simple life-style.

The Outward Expression of Simplicity

1. Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status.
2. Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you.
3. Develop a habit of giving things away.
4. Refuse to be propagandized by the custodians of modern gadgetry.
5. Learn to enjoy things without owning them.
6. Develop a deeper appreciation for the creation.
7. Look with a healthy skepticism at all “buy now, pay later” schemes.
8. Obey Jesus’ instructions about plain, honest speech (Matt. 5:37).
9. Reject anything that breeds the oppression of others.
10. Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the kingdom of God.