

A Life with Simplicity

Proverbs 30:7-9 (New American Standard Bible)

Two things I have asked of You;

Do not refuse me before I die:

⁸ *Keep deception and lies far from me,*

Give me neither poverty nor riches;

Feed me with the food that is my portion,

⁹ *So that I will not be full and deny You and say, “Who is the LORD?”*

And that I will not become impoverished and steal,

And profane the name of my God.

1 Timothy 6:6-10 (New American Standard Bible)

⁶ *But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷ For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either. ⁸ If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

Introduction

A man worked as lawyer in NYC. He was in his early 50s. As you imagine, he made tons of money. The only problem was that he wasn't happy with his life. For some reason, he couldn't shake off his depression. So, one day, he quit everything in the City and retired into suburbs.

I am too young to relax at home doing nothing, he thought. So, he got a new job. Newspaper delivery. He would get up early in the morning, 4 a.m., and drive around the neighborhood delivering the paper. He became a happy man. What did make him happy? Not the money he was making. But the lack of stress and the freedom from the complexity of city life. A simple life with a simple routine, I would call. That's the kind of life I am going to talk about this morning: a life with simplicity in the Lord.

Content

For the word, *simplicity*, I looked up in the online dictionaries: *the quality or condition of being easy to understand or do, the quality or condition of being plain or natural, a thing that is plain, natural, or easy to understand.*

Here's another interesting thing about the word 'simplicity': there are '812 opposites of simplicity,' one place claims: (www. Powerthesaurus.org) such as *Complexity*.

Complication. Difficulty. Shrewdness. Ambiguity. Confusion. General Psychology. Darkness. ...
Well, I would love to see just a few antonyms of 'simplicity,' not over 800!

Here's my own definition upon which I am going to build my message this morning.

Simplicity: the quality or condition that captures the essence of life (such as love, joy, peace, contentment). The simplicity in life brings us happiness, fulfillment, contentment, and even room for others. That's my understanding of a life with simplicity. If you agree with me so far, let me ask this question:

How's your life quality and condition right now? Does it capture the essence of life? Does it bring you happiness, joy, and contentment, or even some room for others?

Imagine you travel abroad. Let's say you visit Laos, the country right next to Vietnam, one of the poorest countries in the world. For your information, their annual income per capita is \$800 (that of the USA is \$36,000 in 2019). You visit one of the remote villages. One thing you notice right away; no electricity, no TV, no computers, no internet access, no cars. They walk everywhere. No indoor plumbing. No refrigerators or washers. Forget about privacy. Often, they live together with large family; grandparents, uncles and aunts, parents, and siblings and cousins, all under one roof. Their meal is very simple. They don't even have a table or chairs to sit around. They scoot down and eat their meal. Their meal consists of a couple of things: cooked rice and another side dish. They have no savings in the bank. No cultural activities such as concerts and movies whatsoever. No access to medical or dental care. Just day by day survival. Their life is harsh. It is minimal living: eating, drinking, sleeping, working in the field, cooking. Repeat. Day after day. No vacation. Yet, one thing you starkly notice is their hospitality. They have room in their heart for a guest even for a stranger. They cook a chicken for you, a rare treat for themselves. You also notice that they look happy. They are content. They don't complain about life. According to our western standards, their living condition is under par, far below average, yet they are happy. From the western perspective, Laos wouldn't cut in the world's happiest countries, though.

For our amusement, let's check out the list of

WORLD'S HAPPIEST COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES in 2021

149 countries are ranked by per capita income, social support networks, healthy life expectancy, individual freedom, philanthropy, and the absence of corruption in government and business.
(<https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/non-economic-data/happiest-countries>)

Top three happiest countries:

- #1. Finland (cf. suicides: 13.4/100K) (cf. 70/1K antidepressant users)
- #2. Denmark (cf. suicides: 7.6/100K) (cf. 85/1K antidepressant users)
- #3. Switzerland (cf. suicides: 9.8/100K)

Yet, look at the high suicide rates and antidepressant users. Something is not right, here. Here's more.

#19. U.S.A. (one of the most depressed countries in the world) (cf. suicides: 14.5/100K—2019, WHO). No. 1 country in antidepressant users (110/1K— one out of ten people) (<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/03/these-are-the-happiest-countries-in-the-world/>)

#56. Japan (cf. suicides: 12.2/100K)

#62. South Korea (cf. suicides: 21.2/100K)

I can safely say that all the wealth and conveniences in the Western world don't guarantee happiness, contentment, and even lower suicide rates.

Let's go back to our simple lifestyle.

No matter how you may define or understand a life with simplicity, one thing is for sure. For most of us in America, our life is too complex. We are too busy. We need to slow down. We need to unclutter our busy life and return to the simple lifestyle that exudes the essence of life. I am going to share with you what I believe

A Simple life Is...

A Life with Purpose. Consider mothers. Why are they strong? An expression: *A mother can raise ten children, but ten children cannot support one mother.* Mother is strong because she has a clear purpose in life: to raise/protect her child.

In terms of life's purpose and meaning, our Lord Jesus is our role model. E.g. He lived a short life (33 years) yet left the greatest impact on humanity. He said in John 6:38: *For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.* He lived His life with undisturbed focus: *Do God's Will.*

Here's what the Bible says about God and us: He created us with a purpose. E.g. *Washers are made to wash. Cars are to drive, and planes to fly.* Likewise, we are created to have a loving relationship with God. To worship and adore our Creator. To love God and love our neighbors as ourselves. We are created to glorify God through our good deeds. We are called to care for God's creation. We are created to take care of our families and help those in need. We are called to seek justice, to do mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. We are called to do God's will in our lives. We are called to be the disciples of Jesus Christ and to be a blessing to others. In a nutshell, God is our purpose in life [1 Corinthians 8:6. *There is but one God ... for whom we live (NIV), or we exist for Him (NASB)*]. We don't live for pleasures, money or possessions, but for God and His pleasure. If you live for money, for example, you will end up with emptiness. E.g. A man made a million dollars in cash overnight through drug trafficking. He was so empty inside that he uncontrollably cried sitting on the floor.

Live out God's will in your life---that's God's purpose for you. Secondly, a simple life is...

A Life with Gratitude. Be grateful for what you have: for life and health. For food, clothing, and shelter. Be content with what you have. Don't strive to be rich for yourself. Remember the prayer in today's text? He is asking the Lord to give him not too much or not too little. "... Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion,⁹ So that I will not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the LORD?" And that I will not become impoverished and steal and profane the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:8-9).

Be thankful for what you have. Finally, a simple life is...

A Life with Fellowship. Nowadays, many a people do social networking. For instance, Facebook. Some of us have hundreds of friends on Facebook whom we never met before, let alone knowing them personally. Yet, billions of people doing it all around the world. *Religiously. Every day.* Why? Not because they love Facebook itself, but because they want to stay connected with their family and friends. *No man is an island* (John Donne). A simple truth about humanity: we are created to be together. In fact, being alone is evil in the sight of God (Genesis 2:18). To be alone is not good for our health, either.

We too need social networking in the Church. In fact, we've been doing it for 2000 years. We just don't call it social networking. We call it Fellowship. Out of many different types of social networking, the one in the Church is the best. This one has been around over two millennia. Still going strong. This is what we do in our fellowship: on Sunday morning, during worship services, we share our joys, concerns, and praises with one another. We laugh together. We cry together. We encourage each other. We pray for each other. We even admonish each other. We build up each other.

So, join in the fellowship with other believers. Join the worship services each Sunday. Join the prayer group/Bible study during the week as well. You don't have internet, smart phones, and iPads? No problem. Just stay connected with God's people through your presence, phone calls and cards. That will do it.

Stay connected.

Conclusion

Having everything in life doesn't mean that you will be happy and content. Don't strive for it. Money helps a little for happiness, but the love of money does not. So, starting today, live a life of simplicity by doing God's will every day, by being thankful for what you have, and by being there for each other. Amen.