

Simplicity

TEACHING NOTES



Living the new life (Colossians 3:1-16, Ephesians 4:21-24)

Taking off and putting on

...throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.
(Ephesians 4:22-23)

How will pursuing simplicity help?

KEY VERSES

Colossians 3:1-6

Ephesians 4:21-24

Philippians 2:12-13

KEY THEMES

Living the new life

God's power transforms us

 **True meaning and fulfillment in life will never be found by giving into what our sin nature desires**

Practicing solitude in your life

 **God's power transforms us (Philippians 2:12-13)**

Lesson Objective:

To develop spiritual practices in our lives to help us live our lives in Christ and grow our faith in Him

PERSONAL STUDY**Study 1****Prepare your heart and mind**

Open your time with an expectation for what God is going to show you during this time with Him. Ask Him to help you focus and see what He wants to show you.

Simplifying Your Life

Understanding our motives and the overall goal as we make changes in our lives is critical. To pursue a simpler life for the mere sake of ease and having more free time would miss the mark of this spiritual practice.

Jesus urges throughout His teachings for us to stay focused on God's plan and purposes. Pursuing a less complex, less busy life helps us to better maintain this kind of staying in step with the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

**Read Ephesians 4:21-24 & Romans 12:2**

How are these passages directing us to live differently than the culture around us? Consider various aspects of your life as you write your response.

How do you currently allow the Holy Spirit to renew your thoughts and change how you go about your daily routine? When do you reflect and spend time talking to God about how He wants you to live your life?

Taking Steps Toward Simplifying

Until we see a need for change in our lives, most of us are not motivated enough to take steps towards actually pursuing life differently. We live life the way we do because we think it works and we have accepted the results – even if they are less than we hope for.

Jesus was always calling His followers to a different way of life – away from just following the crowd’s method for finding value and fulfillment. He wanted His followers to find life through being aligned with the mission of God. Often He would challenge a person’s current worldview, basically asking them, “*How’s that working for you?*” He would then follow-up with a re-definition of where life is actually found and encourage them to change their current pursuit of earthly things and start pursuing heavenly ones of eternal value.

For the remainder of this personal study ask God to help give you an accurate awareness of what your life is currently pursuing. God knows best what needs to shift in our lives. If we will be open to His guidance and ask the Holy Spirit to help us make the changes He leads us to, we can experience the life change talked about in the above passages.

Imagine if someone were to follow you around for a couple weeks and observe how you spend your waking hours and what you typically think about during an average day. How would they answer the following questions?

What are you striving after or pursuing in your life?

What are you clinging to or worried you might lose?

What are the top two things that consume your time?

When trying to get a handle on your personal finances the first step is to look at what you are spending your money on. The same is true for our time and what we think about most often. This will give you an accurate picture of where your heart is currently focused. Read back through your answers above and ask God to give you His perspective on where your life is currently focused.

In light of what currently consumes your life, respond to the following questions to help you become more in step with how God desires you to live.

What are a couple things you could stop doing to spend more time with God or your family?

What is something you need to stop trying to hold on to or control and trust God with the outcome?

Are there any things, with regard to your finances, that would help simplify your life? (*Ex. You could get a cheaper cell phone plan or drop cable to free up not only money, but time.*)

With any change you desire to make, it can be very helpful to find a trusted person to share your proposed changes with and ask them to encourage and pray for you. Is there someone in your life that could be that person for you? Schedule a time to share these key changes you are pursuing to help you better align with God.

Prayer time

Ask God to help you know where to start simplifying your life. Regularly talk to the Holy Spirit throughout your day asking him to give you direction, wisdom, and discipline to stick to what God has shown you. Thank Jesus for not only saving you but also inviting you into a life with Him that is full of meaning and purpose.

Key verse

Use the provided scripture cards to memorize Ephesians 4:23. Placing the verse somewhere you will see it multiple times a day will help with the memorization process.

Study 2

There are lots of sources to which we can look for answers in our life. Our minds can become cluttered with other people's ideas finding it hard to know which ones are the right ones. We can simplify by going to the Word of God for answers; after all, He is the authority over all He has created.

Prepare your heart and mind

Last week you learned that preparing your heart and mind starts with preparing a place to meet with God where you will not be distracted. For today's personal study time be sure you have a Bible, something to write with, and a dictionary. You may also want to have access to the Internet for further research if that will not be an added distraction for you. Now, settle in for a special time of hearing from God.

Read Hosea 6:3

As you read, remember God wants to tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

Let us acknowledge the Lord: let us press on to acknowledge Him. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear; He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth. (NIV)

Read it a second time, underlining or highlighting the words from the verse that stand out to you.

An example of this would be with the word acknowledge:

Let us acknowledge the Lord: let us press on to acknowledge Him. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear; He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth. (NIV)

For each of the words that you underlined, ask God to help you answer the following questions: Why did this word stand out to me? What do I understand this word to mean?

Look up the words in a dictionary for alternative meanings that you may not know. Also, it is helpful to look in other versions of the Bible. Write down what you discover.

After researching the word “acknowledge” from the passage, you will learn that in several Bible versions the word is not ‘acknowledge’, but ‘know’.

Now look at what the verse is saying to you about God?

In the example, you see that God deserves our acknowledgement.

Look at the beginning of the second sentence again: “*As surely as the sun rises he will appear*”
What do you know about the sunrise? What does this tell you about God’s reliability?

God can use the Scriptures of old to speak to us today, but it is important to always consider when, where, and to whom it was written. It helps us to gain further insight into the metaphors God uses to express Himself. Look at the last half of the verse. God refers to winter and spring rains. Use the Internet to gain information about winter rains in Israel. Write what you find out in the space below.

How does what you found out about winter rains increase your understanding of Hosea 6:3?

The earth needs water. When the rain comes it waters the earth. It takes a good amount of water to give the earth a solid soaking. Like a metaphor, this part of the verse should not be taken literally. The earth and the rain represent other things. What do you think they represent?

Earth –

Water –

What is God telling you in this part of the verse?

Now rewrite the entire verse below in your own words from what God has revealed to you through your time with Him.

It might look something like this: *I am to recognize God and give Him the respect that He deserves. I am to seek to know Him, and when I do, He will come to me without fail because He is reliable. He alone has what I need and He will pour it out on me and soak me and when He does I will rejoice and give Him praise.*

Prayer time

Now take some time to respond to what God has just spoken to you about Himself and your relationship to Him through Hosea 6:3. Turn your response into a prayer of confession, petition, thanks or any combination of those. Allow yourself time to sit in this moment with God.

Key verse

Continue working on memorizing Ephesians 4:23. Attempt to write it out from memory below.

PARENT GUIDE

This week we are tackling a subject that makes a lot of people nervous. It makes us nervous because it looks at the areas of our lives that we don't like or want to talk about. It asks us to make changes and adjustments that are hard to do. We are talking about the concept of living simply. This is hard because we tend to love our stuff and don't like people messing with it or our schedules. Here are a few table talk questions that you can use with your family to get the conversation started.

Table Talk

What do you think of when you hear the word simple? (For younger children you would want to ask them to simply define the word and talk about what they think it means.)

What do you think it means to live simply? (For younger children you could have them make a list of things they do everyday that are simple. You could also ask them to make a list of the things that they think are hard or complicated. Then work together to compare and contrast the two lists.)

Parents, take a few moments and share with your family what you have been learning about simple living in your Personal Study time. Share and explain any verses that really spoke to you. Be honest and open about where you are. It is good to share your heart with your family even if you are struggling.

How does your family do when it comes to living simply? (You could ask each member to rate your family on a scale of 1 to 5 on how you do with living simply. A 1 would mean you live real simply and a 5 would mean you don't live simply at all. Make sure everyone explains why they chose the number they did. Their answers will give you a good idea of where each of your family members is at when it comes to this topic.)

How simple do you feel our family's schedule is? (Encourage them to give examples to explain why they feel the way they do.)

How simply do we live when it comes to our stuff? (Again encourage them to give example and explain why they feel the way they do.)

What could we do together to move toward living more simply? (Make a list of ideas and then set some goals that you all agree upon. Make sure you also discuss how you will track your own progress. Set a date in the future when you will talk about this again.)

Pray about this whole conversation and process. Ask God to guide and help you reach your goals together.