

Small Group Lesson for March 7, 2010

**SMALL GROUP STUDY**

Think about "Prepare for the Word" and **Do "In the Word" before your group meets** so that you have optimum time for discussion on the first and third section during your group meeting.

**Prepare for the Word** (Leaders, take about 15 minutes for this section.)

If my life were simplified, I would feel \_\_\_\_\_

To me a simple life means \_\_\_\_\_

If I were to simplify my life, I would \_\_\_\_\_

What keeps me from simplifying my life is \_\_\_\_\_

**In the Word** (This section is **to be done before group**, to allow optimum time for discussion of Apply the World. It does not have to be discussed unless help is needed or questions are asked.)

Simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle (discipline). The central point of the discipline of simplicity is to first seek God's rule and desire. When this is done, the other things that are needed will come in their proper order. The outward practice of simplicity will bring an authenticity and deeper experience of living in the kingdom of God instead of the kingdom of self. Whatever we genuinely have the say over is in our "kingdom." Whatever we allow God to have the say over in our lives becomes the Kingdom of God. This impacts how we live and how we deal with possessions. (Richard Foster)

1. In the movie *City Slickers*, the leathery tough cowboy—Curly—tells Mitch that what is important is to find "*the one thing*". What is Jesus saying is "*the one thing*" in Matthew 6:33?
2. Look at Matthew 6:33 again. What is Jesus saying and what is the meaning behind the words?
3. What is the Kingdom of God to you?
4. If one has the inward reality of simplicity, how is that seen in the outward reality of dealing with possessions?
5. What would "seeking first the Kingdom of God" look like in your life and what would be some of the barriers to this?

How do you orient your life around this teaching of Jesus?

Read Psalm 46.

Underline verse 10 and read it aloud several times, putting emphasis on the separate parts each time you read it. Think hard on what you are reading. Record any thoughts you have.

What implications do those words have for you, personally—and for your family?

The first third of this scripture makes a great “**Breath Prayer**”. When you feel anxiety, when you cannot ‘think straight’ because of the confusion around you, or when you cannot stop your mind ‘from running’ at bedtime do this as a Breath Prayer. Inhale as you say or think “Be still”: exhale as you say or think “and know that I am God”. Continue to do that until you are relaxed, letting the presence of God come over you. Then, continue your work or fall asleep – whatever got you here in the first place. Take a minute and try this now.

Read Luke 4:42 and 5:15-16.

What are Jesus’ priorities in these verses and what do they tell us about our own priorities?

**Apply the Word** (Leaders, This is the main part of the lesson for group discussion.. Allow 30 - 45 minutes, plus at least 15 minutes for prayer.)

If everyone did their homework and you are starting at this point for your lesson, go back and read the verses referred to aloud, just to refresh and spur your thoughts for this section.

Is simplicity something that we ought to pursue as Christians? Is our busyness an example of us pursuing the “pattern of this world” rather than being transformed by God?

Read Luke 12:13-21.

How does this story go against our worldly society?

Today’s advertising tells us to ignore verse 15. What differences in lifestyle result from believing Jesus versus advertisements?

Verse 16 “the ground” implies that the man was blessed with good and fertile soil, giving him a rich crop. (Remember the Seed and the Soils parable we did a few weeks ago.) If you had a sudden influx of wealth, what would you do with it?

Does your previous answer fit a life of simplicity?

Verse 19 is a commentary, even a life goal, for many people in our society. How does God respond to this?

In conclusion: Richard Foster said, "Superficiality is the curse of our age." John Ortberg said that our greatest enemy in the spiritual life is hurry. How are hurry (busy-ness) and superficiality related?

Are you under the curse of superficiality?

God's call is to seek His Kingdom first and His righteousness. Spend some time in prayer and meditation and define how that would look in your life. Write down three things that you will do this week to help simplify your life.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

*Bring this list the next time you meet. Break into pairs and share how you did with your list.*

How can we pray for you this week?

A small but mighty book - consider buying *Simple Living for You, God's Guide to Enjoying What Matters Most*, published by Zondervan. Makes a great gift too!