

Last week we discussed how Jesus tells us that “the eye is the lamp of the body.” We are to live our lives “full of light” so that others may see Christ through us. Simplicity is the way we reach out and grasp “truly life”. Have you considered making changes in your life that will help you live this way?

The Practice

We will discuss 12 practices (not rules) that Jesus taught us to help us live out a life in line with the kingdom of God.

1. **Before you buy something, ask yourself, what is the true cost of this item?** – This entails things like what is the cost to maintain it, how much time will this take of me, does this add value to my relationship with God, what will this do to my pace of life? What items can you think of that you have or may have some day that you should consider this?
 2. **By buying this, am I oppressing the poor or harming the earth?** – The things you buy will someday end up in a landfill. Will they deteriorate or break down so not to harm the environment? Are the things you are buying made from slave labor? The majority of the textile industry is made by developing countries but some of those countries are run by corrupt governments and dictators. How can you determine what products to purchase and what products to not purchase?
 3. **Never impulse buy.** – Wasteful purchasing is an affront to God’s blessings. To exercise control and not buy something can be a great experience as often the desire to buy quickly passes. The larger the item, the longer you should wait. Can you think of a time when you waited to purchase an item only to determine you no longer wanted it?
 4. **When you buy, opt for fewer, better things.** – “Buy it once” is a great motto to live by. It is often better to save and purchase the best rather than purchase more and the cheaper item. As a steward of God’s money, we are to be wise in the quality of what we purchase. Have you ever had regrets after purchasing the cheaper item? What example can you think of?
 5. **When you can, share.** – Why buy when you can share? Here, we are talking about using services like Airbnb, Uber, Lyft, etc. There are many options today for services rather than having to buy. A vacation home is a good example. Can you think of other ways to simplify by using services to use rather than purchase?
 6. **Get into the habit of giving things away.** – “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” We all have things we don’t use and others could use. By giving things away, you unclutter your life with material things. Can you think of things you could give away to help unclutter your life?
 7. **Live by a budget** – A budget is a good way to stay out of debt. It will show you what your spending habits are and make you think twice about making purchases, especially large ones. Make sure your treasure is going to the right place and not being squandered. Do you have a budget, or have you ever considered making one? If you did, could you stick with it?
 8. **Learn to enjoy things without owning them.** – Our culture tells us that we must own things in order to enjoy them. God has given us a beautiful earth, friends and family, art, music, and culture. We are surrounded by things in our life to enjoy. Take a moment to identify these things and cherish your time with them at no cost. What are some things you enjoy that cost you nothing?
 9. **Cultivate a deep appreciation for creation.** – The material world itself has the opposite effect on us than materialism. It spiritualizes our souls. Taking in the beauty of God’s creation has the potential to wake us up to our creator. Have you ever experienced a spiritual moment when absorbing nature or other creations of God?
 10. **Cultivate a deep appreciation for the simple pleasures.** – As we all know, life is short. Spiritual pleasure can be experienced through simple things – a walk in the country, coffee with a friend, interesting conversations, sharing experiences with others, daily work satisfaction, to name a few.
- Ecc. 2:24-26** – “A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.” What is God telling us in this scripture?
11. **Recognize advertising for what it is – propaganda. Call out the lie.** – The world popularizes materialism as a source for happiness and fulfillment. See advertising for what it is, the quest to separate your money from yourself. As you are exposed to advertising in many forms, try to identify the lies in it. Can you think of some that stand out to you today?
 12. **Lead a cheerful, happy revolt against the spirit of materialism.** – Simplicity does not have to be a painful sad process. Saint Francis and his band of followers led a cheerful and happy revolt against the spirit of materialism. Spreading the message of Jesus is spreading the message of joy. Can you be happy and peaceful about choosing a life without materialism?

Ask yourself the question: What would Jesus do if he were me?

And pray that the Holy Spirit will fill you with peace and joy as you work to simplify your life from the clutter of materialism.