

The Practices of Jesus: practicing resurrection

The practice of simplicity

Simplicity is not a renunciation of material goods and condemnation of those who have them. Rather simplicity is about freedom, cultivating the great art of letting go. Simplicity aims at loosening inordinate attachment to owning and having, taking note of why we are driven to accumulate and consume, and inviting God to meet us there. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun writes that the goal of simplicity is "to uncomplicate and untangle my life so I can focus on what really matters."

"We live in a materialist culture, and we want money and possessions, and very few people have heard a powerful voice telling them to resist those impulses, or how to resist those impulses ... organized religion ... has not done a good job of challenging people to examine their lifestyles."

Robert Wuthnow

"Simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle. Both are necessary."

Richard Foster

"I make myself rich by making my wants few."

Henry David Thoreau

I) Read and reflect:

A) Read and spend time meditating on the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:19-21:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

B) Take a few moments to reflect and journal your thoughts and responses to these questions:

- Take a moment to think of your possessions - which of these do you feel the strongest, perhaps most anxious, attachment? Which of these would you be very reluctant to get rid of?
- Has the idea that "more is better" been part of your life or upbringing? How has that idea shaped your life today?

- Think of a time in your life when you were most content. Did contentment take intentionality, or come naturally?
- Is generosity part of your current practice with your finances? How does giving money away affect you?

II) Watch it:

Get together with a few friends (or hold a watch party) to see the documentary “The Minimalists: Less is Now” (streams on Netflix) that explores some of the shaping powers and problems of living in our consumer economy.

III) Practice It:

A) Play the 30-day Minimalism game with a friend or your family (you can find it here - <https://www.theminimalists.com/game/>)

B) Take a walk through your home, going room by room. As you do, ask yourself: “When is the last time I/we used this?” With that question in mind, sort the stuff of your life into into five categories:

- Giveaway: what can you give away, to a friend, a neighbour, or the Thrift Store.
- Sell: what items can you sell
- Toss or recycle: what’s beyond repair or further use. Get rid of it.
- Wait: if you’re like me (a secret pack-rat) I’m always thinking “I could use this in the future.” Maybe, maybe not. Put these things in a bin or bag and put it away for a few months. After a few months, check out the box and you might discover the items are easier to give away.
- Keep: whatever you feel is good, useful, beautiful, and has a purpose in your life as a follower of Jesus.

A few good guidelines as you get started:

- Start with the easy stuff and save the difficult decisions for last.
- Hold each item and ask yourself: do I need this? Will I use it? Is it beautiful or hold sentimental value? Does it aid me or hamper me in my desire to live the way of Jesus?
- Avoid duplicates and collections.
- Relax - no one is going to shame you into getting rid of something you want to keep. Remember, it’s not a rejection of material goods but about finding freedom from inordinate attachments to things.
- Pray as you go - if you are giving things away or throwing something out, thank God for the gift and usefulness of it, for how it served your life. And keep praying for a freedom from stuff and a contentment centred in the goodness and grace of Jesus.