

Alright. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad you are here with us. Whether this is your first time or you're here every week, we are so glad that you are here. I'm glad you're here because Jesus is here and you can feel Him and you can experience Him and you can encounter Him and He's real and He's alive and He's moving and He is here to meet with you. And so, come on, whatever campus you're at – whether you're in Denton, Flower Mound, Gainesville, Lewisville, or Online – can we just welcome each other together for a moment? We are one church that meets in multiple campuses that carries the hope of Jesus to thousands of locations. Hope is here. Everyone is welcome. Jesus changes everything. We are a Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, Life-giving church. And sometimes you just need to be reminded that you are a part of something significantly bigger than yourself.

You see, we've been in this year-long series together called A Different Way: Do What Jesus Did. And we're taking basically an entire year to answer the question, "Who are we becoming? Who do we want to become? And what does it look like to actually be a disciple of Jesus?" And all year, we've been using this little phrase. We just keep saying that if you want to do the things that Jesus did, you have to do the things that Jesus did. If I want to do the things that Jesus did, like have peace, contentment and joy and passion and life and healthy relationships and deep connection with God and a life of purpose, then I first have to do the things that Jesus did – the practices, the lifestyle, the disciplines that He took on, like prayer and Scripture and meditation and confession and silence and solitude and sabbath. If I want to live the life that Jesus lived, I have to first live the life that Jesus lived. If I want His health, I have to take on His habits. If I want to do what He did on the spot, I have to first do what He did behind the scenes. And so, we're taking a look at the lifestyle of Jesus – His practices, His habits, His disciplines – and allowing Him to teach us how to live our lives. And we've just used this verse that says, "Train yourself to be godly." Don't try to be godly. Don't wait around and hope one day you'll be godly. Don't allow the world to train you to be worldly. No, train yourself. Take on practices and disciplines and habits. And then, what we've said is that these spiritual practices, these spiritual disciplines, are simply doing what you can do now so you can do what you can't do later. A discipline – a practice – is just doing what I can do now so that I can train myself to become the kind of person that can do what I want to be able to do later. Like, if I can't play the piano now, what can I do? I can back up and practice or train myself every day, practicing the piano. And eventually, I will learn how to do that. And so, as we've looked at these practices in season three, we've broken this up into four seasons to get through the whole year. We're in season three. We're just about done with it. We've gone through a lot of practices and what I just want to keep reminding you, I've tried so hard in this series to just remind you that these practices are not religious duties. They are not religious expectations. They are not have-tos. They are not obligations. These are invitations from God – means of grace, ways of opening yourself up to the life of God to flow through you and to move through you. You don't have to do any of these. They're all invitations from God to train yourself to be godly. And so, as we've gone through these, if you've struggled, if it's been hard, if you've not been able to do it like the way that you've wanted to do it, that's okay. We're all learning and growing together. And even though I'm the one up here every week teaching these to you, I don't have

it worked out in my life either. Some of these I've been practicing for years. Some of these in the last few seasons. And some of these I'm learning how to apply in my life in the here and now. And so, my hope for you in this whole series that we've been in is that you will be able to say, "I love what we're doing, I love where we're going, and I love how it's going in me." Which brings us to the last practice for season three, and it's the perfect practice to pull all of season three together. And it is the practice called simplicity.

Simplicity. You see, Jesus practiced simplicity. When we look at Jesus' life, one of the things that we discover is that His life was very simple. It wasn't complicated. It wasn't complex. Jesus wasn't overextended or over-committed. He didn't fill His life with a bunch of possessions and materialisms and commitments and duties and responsibilities and obligations. He had this incredibly simple life that allowed Him to seek God's kingdom first. In fact, Jesus says about Himself, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can only do what He sees His Father doing because whatever the Father does, the Son does also." In other words, Jesus says, "I only do what I see the Father doing. If you want to know what my life is about, my entire life is doing what I see the Father doing, going where I see the Father going, and saying what I hear the Father saying." He says He'd arranged His life – He's ordered His life – in such a way that there is margin and space for Him to be able to respond to whatever the Father was inviting Him to do, go where the Father was going, say what the Father was saying, do what the Father was doing. He practiced simplicity. And when I say "simplicity," simplicity does not mean boring, mundane, routine, purposeless, lack of adventure. No, this is Jesus, the most significant, powerful, needed, influential, adventurous person who has ever walked on the face of the earth. Jesus, the creator and redeemer and sustainer of all things. Jesus, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the Ancient of Days, the Rock of Ages, the Good Shepherd, the Prince of Peace, the one in whom life exists in Himself. He did not complicate His life by bringing a bunch of worldly things into His life. He practiced simplicity by arranging His life in such a way that He could seek God's kingdom first. Now, imagine if Jesus arranged His life the way most of us arrange our lives. Imagine if Jesus was not only a carpenter, but He was also a fisherman and had a tax collector business on the side. Imagine if Jesus on the side was part of an MLM olive oil business adventure that promised one drop will make your child a genius, will cure all your sicknesses and allow you to sleep well every single night. Imagine if Jesus had a house in Galilee, a house on the Mediterranean coast, and a house in the mountains. Imagine if Jesus consumed Himself with keeping up with the latest fashion coming out of Greece. And all the while, He was training to be a Roman gladiator. Imagine how different the Gospels would read. They would read very different because Jesus wouldn't have any time to do what the Father was doing or go where the Father was going or say what the Father was saying. He practiced simplicity. And simplicity does not mean poor. I know some poor people whose lives are incredibly complex, and I know wealthy people whose lives are incredibly simple. Simplicity does not mean poor. Jesus was not poor. We think of Jesus and we put Him in this poverty mindset. Jesus wasn't poor. He was a successful carpenter. His ministry was so significant that wealthy women funded it. His disciples carried around a money bag, which means they had stuff to be able to do the things that they were doing. He often ate at fancy banquets and

elaborate dinner parties. In fact, when Jesus dies, the Roman soldiers gamble for who's going to get His clothes because they were so valuable. So, simple does not mean poor. Simple means "my life is arranged in such a way that I can seek God's kingdom first." In fact, one day it says, "As Jesus was walking along with the disciples, a man said to Him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus replied, 'Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has no place to lay his head.'" In other words, Jesus says, "Hey, your life is way too complicated to actually be a disciple. My life is way too simple for you to follow me because I have practiced simplicity from the very beginning." You see, if we want to do the things that Jesus did, we have to do the things that Jesus did. And I don't think there is a person in this room that doesn't want to do the things that Jesus did, like live under an open heaven and have a Mount of Transfiguration experience and hear the Father speak directly to them and have stories to tell like the woman at the well and raising Lazarus and Zacchaeus and the blind men and the lepers. But if we won't practice simplicity, our life will not be arranged to be able to do those kinds of things. In fact, because Jesus practiced simplicity, His life was arranged that He had the margin to take on all the other practices of His life. When we don't arrange our life around simplicity, that's why we don't have the margin or space to do all the other practices we've been talking about.

Are you with me on this? Okay. Do you remember the story of the rich young ruler? He's rich, he's young, and he's a ruler. Which means he's youthful, he has great wealth, and he has power and influence. What a hard hand that man has been dealt. What a burden to bear. The hand that he was dealt is the hand we all think we want, but we don't realize how hard of a hand that actually is to play. It is a burden to bear because it takes profound character to play that hand well. So many of the young people that we know that are in our church have been handed that same exact hand, and it is a burden to bear because it takes great character to play it well. And he comes to Jesus one day, even though he is rich and he is young and he is a ruler. And he asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" In other words, the man realizes there's more. He's hungry. He's thirsty. He's got this deep stirring in his soul. He has this intention for more of God. And so, he asked Jesus that. And Jesus says, "Well, keep the commandments. Do not lie. Do not steal. Honor your father and mother. Do not commit adultery." The man says, "All these I've kept since I was a boy." "Jesus looked at him and loved him." Remember, love means goodwill. So, in this moment, Jesus' will for the man is good. "'One thing you lack,' He said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' At this, the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'" With goodwill, Jesus looks at him and He says, "Go, sell everything you have, give to the poor. Then come, follow me." In other words, here's what Jesus is saying. He's saying, "Hey, your life is too complicated to actually follow me. You've got too much stuff in your life, too many possessions, too many activities, too many duties, too many materialisms, too many side hustles, too many side businesses, too many things that you are worried and concerned about that you have great care for." Look what He says. "Go, sell

everything you have," which doesn't just mean the man has piles of cash in the bank. It means he's used that cash to acquire a bunch of stuff that has incredibly complicated his life. So, what He is saying is "you got to get rid of some of the complications. You got to simplify some things and give to the poor." Notice, He doesn't say, "Give it all to the poor." He's not telling the man He has to be poor. He's saying, "You need to simplify your life because all these complicated things that you've acquired and taken on and are responsible for, that you're concerned about, are keeping you from following me." But the man went away sad because he had great wealth. He had a life full of complicated things that he had acquired over his life. And Jesus looked at the disciples and says, "How hard is it for the rich to enter the kingdom of God." See if you can catch this. In any area that you are rich, that is the place that it is hardest for you to enter the kingdom of God. In any place that you're rich – wealthy, don't think money, any place where you have an abundance – that is the place that is hard for you to enter into the kingdom of God. Why? Because the kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God. It's where His will is done. And when I'm wealthy in an area, it means I have to submit and surrender my kingdom and my will to His. But the more wealthy I am in an area, the harder it is to do that. Like, if I'm wealthy with money, it's the hardest place for me to enter into the kingdom of God. If I'm wealthy with family – I have this abundant, prosperous family – that is a place that is hard for you to enter the kingdom of God. If you're wealthy and influenced, that's a place that's hard to come under. If you're wealthy in time – you own your own time, you have an abundance of time – that is the hardest place for you to submit and surrender to the kingdom of God. This is why Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall inherit the kingdom of God." In other words, in whatever area you're poor and you don't have a lot, that's the place that's easiest for you to come into the rule and reign of God. I mean, think about this. Have you ever heard anybody sit there and say, "I'm just so wealthy that I've decided I need God. My life is going so well, I've decided I just need to arrange my life around God. My family's crushing it. I'm successful. I have so many followers on social media. I just need more of God." No. What do we hear people say? "My life is broken. My spouse left me. I lost my job. I'm sick. I have nothing. I need Jesus." Whatever area you're wealthy in, that's the place that's hard for you to enter the kingdom of God. So, can I ask you a question? Where are you wealthy? Not finances. Maybe that's one of them, but wealthy – prosperous, abundance – that is a place you have to work 10 times harder to submit and surrender to the lordship of Jesus because that is the place that Jesus says it's hard for you to enter into life from above. In fact, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich, a wealthy, person with abundance to enter the kingdom of God. And I tell you this story because as I was studying and praying for you this week, the Lord showed me the story. And I was like, I think this story is so many of our lives in the different way journey. I think so many of us hear the invitation for A Different Way and the rich, young ruler – we have this heart, this interest, this excitement, this longing, and we come. And as we've been sitting through the course of this year, if you've been here with us, hearing about A Different Way, what I think Jesus has been saying is, "Hey, your life is too complicated. You got to simplify it. If you actually want to follow me, you got to create some margins, some space. You got to rearrange some things because you've taken in too many responsibilities, duties, materialism, possessions, things, stuff, commitment, and you got to create some space

in order to be able to follow me." But because we have taken on so many things in our life and are so wealthy with the abundance of worldliness, our face falls and we go away sad. Because it's hard for when I have a lot of things to enter into the kingdom of God. And so, we're trying to take all of these things and yank them through the eye of a needle as if somehow I can bring all the complicated realities of the world that I have chosen and yank them through into the kingdom and live a different way. This is what I think is happening to so many of us. If it's been hard for you to do any of the practices, if you've been inspired, but then not able to move forward, maybe just maybe it's because Jesus is saying your life is too complicated to actually do it. In fact, Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Think how much of our life is storing up treasures on earth – storing up the things, materialism, possessions, commitments, activities, influence, all these things – we gather it all up, and moths eat it, rust destroy it, thieves break in and steal it. So, we spend much of our life repairing the holes that the moths have chewed, getting the rust off of the things that corrode over time, and spending a whole lot of time, energy, and money on insurance and security systems to keep things from being lost, stolen, and broken. And because that's become the consuming thing of our life, that's my treasure. That's where my heart will be also. This is why Jesus goes on to say, this is the Sermon on the Mount. This is why there's so much worry and stress and anxiety in our life because we have chosen to complicate our life by taking the things of the world and bringing them into our life in a way that just eats us from the inside out. Or how about this that says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." If I want to do the things that Jesus did, I got to first do the things that Jesus did. So, if I want contentment, I have to choose to be godly to be like God, to live like Him, simply. "Godliness with contentment." The problem is a lot of us this phrase would read "worldliness with discontentment." We've arranged our life around the world, and therefore it's discontent. We've taken all the things of the world. We just keep trying to acquire and accumulate. And I'm just not talking about stuff and money. I'm talking activities and select sports and business travel and vacations. I'm talking about all of it. We complicate our life. We bring all this worldly stuff in. We have this deep discontentment, and we wonder why. Did you ever notice how interesting it is? Whatever you have, you want more of that thing. Whatever it is that you have, you want more of that. You have money, you want more money. You have influence, you want more influence. You have time, you want more time. You have possessions, you want more possessions. You have God, you want more of God. So, here's my question for you. What is it that you have that you want more of? "People who want to get rich" – don't think money, think complicated life, worldly influence, and significance – "fall into the temptation and a trap into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men and women into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." This is a passage worth really meditating on in your own life because He basically says, "People who want to complicate their life, who want to take in all the things of the world, fall into a trap. They experience ruin and destruction." The love of money" – right? The love of money,

goodwill. The love of money is my will is for the good of my money when my will is supposed to be for the good of God and the good of humanity. That's what it is. Money is not the problem. The love of money, my will, goodwill, is for the good of my money over the good of God and the good of humanity. "Will ultimately cause me to wander from the faith and I pierced myself with many griefs." In other words, I complicate my own life, and then I get mad at everybody else for how hard it is. That's what He's saying. Now, this is really important to say. Simplicity does not mean poverty. Okay. God does not care if you have stuff. He cares if stuff has you. So, we're all real clear on this. God is wealthy. Psalm 24 says, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who dwell among it." So, it's all His, but ain't none of it have a hold on Him. So, God doesn't care if you have stuff. He cares if stuff has you. I know a lot of poor people who have nothing, and that nothing has a hold on them. And I know a lot of wealthy people who have everything, and that everything has no hold on them. So the question is, "What do you have, and does it have a hold on you?" That's the difference between a life of simplicity and a life of complication. In fact, I love this. "But the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things, come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful." In other words, all these worldly things that I pull into my life, the desires, I pull all this stuff in to think "this is going to make a good life" actually becomes the very thing that chokes the life of God out of my life and causes my life to become unfruitful.

Think about this with me for a second. Think about how many of us, this is how we live, right? I live like this at times in my life. Just think about it. We dream about getting the thing. Whatever your thing is, you dream. We dream about getting the thing. And we plan for the thing. We save for the thing. Then, we buy the thing. Now, we've got the thing, and so we use the thing. But now, we have to store the thing and fix the thing because the thing always breaks, and rearrange our life around the thing. And then, eventually, we end up complaining about how much time, energy, and money the thing takes from us. Or how about this? We dream about the activity. Whatever your activity is, we dream about it. We plan for it. Then, we sign up for the activity. Then, we pay for the activity. Then, we start doing the activity. Now, we got to rearrange our entire family life around the activity. Then, we get exhausted by the activity. And then, we blame the leaders of the activity for leading it poorly and say, "It's not going well." Why do we do this? Because there's an orphan spirit still alive in a lot of us that wants to hoard all the things of this world. We're still convinced that we are what we have and what we do. So, this pride and this insecurity takes in all the things of the world. I mean, did you ever just... did you ever just stop to think about it like this? The more you take, the more you lose. The more you release, the more you gain. This is why Jesus says, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" Because if you try to save your life, you'll lose it. But if you lose your life, you'll find it. In fact, Jesus says, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required." Did you ever stop and just realize that whatever God has given you, there is a requirement to steward that, to be responsible for it, to oversee it, to use it wisely for his purposes on this earth? And you can get overwhelmed with, "Well, I'm required to do something with the things that God has given you?" Yes, the things God has given you, He's giving you a grace to oversee them, to steward them, to use them wisely. But what about the

person that takes much? What about the person who goes beyond what God has given them and takes things of the world? Are they prepared for what will be required from them? Because there's no grace given for the things we take that are outside God's design for our life. So, when I go take a bunch of things and bring them into my life, I have to ask myself the question, "Am I prepared for what it's going to demand of me? Am I prepared for what it's going to require of me?" And the answer is no. And this is why we're burned out, stressed out, anxious, irritated, frustrated, defeated, because we take things into our life that complicate our life that there's no grace to actually live out.

This is why Jesus says, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed"—this constant sense of more, more, more. I have a house, but I need a bigger house. I have a car, but I need a better car. I have this in the bank; I need that in the bank. I got this for travel; I need that for travel. I'm on this team; I need to be on that team. This constant thing of greed. "Because a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." In other words, Jesus says, "You are not what you have and what you do. You are who has you and what has been done for you." You are who has you. Who has you? In Jesus, I'm included in Christ. He holds me in the palm of my hands and He has given me His name. And I am what He has done for me – the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. I am not what I have and what I do. That is a broken thinking of the world that thinks my identity, my relationship, and my purpose is what I have and what I do. No, my identity, my relationship, and my purpose is based on who has me and what has been done for me in Jesus' name. In fact, that's why I love this verse that says, "This, however, you must know: I find that God made man simple; but man's complex problems are of his own devising." God created you to live a very simple life. And if you will arrange your life in such a way that you can seek His kingdom and do what He is doing, you won't have complex problems in your life. But if I take in all the things of the world, just understand, God is not mad at you. He's not out to get you. He's not trying to shame you today. He's just saying, "Hey, all those complex problems are of your own creating." It's not spiritual warfare. It's not if your spouse would just get their act together. It's not if your parents would just let you do what you want to do. No, you chose to bring it in your life. In fact, in the Old Testament, God even had a law that had people arrange their life around simplicity. "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your fields or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over the vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I'm the Lord your God." You say, "what?" He says this, "Don't live to the edge of your life. You need to leave margin." Margin for what? Margin for the move of God, the work of God, the Word of God, the people of God, the mission of God, the life of God, the grace of God, the Spirit of God. Our problem is not only "do we not leave margin" – we live to the edge and we live way beyond the edge in such a way that complicates our life because we're trying to take that which hasn't been given to us and much is required, demanded from those who take that which does not belong to them. And you are not ready to pay on that payment. You're like, "I like silence and solitude better." Fair.

"So, what then is simplicity?" you say. "Well, simplicity is simply arranging your life in a way that you can seek God's kingdom first. That's how I define simplicity to you. It's just arranging the reality of your life in a way that you can seek God's kingdom first. "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you." This is Jesus in the center of the Sermon on the Mount. This is like the thesis statement. Seek first His kingdom, His rule and reign, His will in your life, His righteousness, His goodness. So, seek first God's will to be good to you – His good rule and reign over your life – and everything else will be added unto you. The problem is we arrange our life around everything else and hope to find Jesus in the process. Simplicity is arranging my life that I can do what the Father is doing, say what the Father is saying, and go where the Father is going. So, my question for you is, like Jesus, He can only do what He sees the Father doing. Do you know what the Father is doing in your life right now? If I just said, "Hey, what's the Father doing in your life right now?" Do you have an answer? Do you know? And if you know, can you actually do it? Have you actually arranged your life in such a way that you're free to respond to that which God is doing and saying and where He's going? One of the things that I can tell you God is doing in your life right now is A Different Way. You say, "No, that's what He's doing in your..." No, if you're a part of this church, that's what He's doing. So this is something that God is doing. Do you see it? Number one. And then, number two, have you arranged your life in such a way that you can do it? Because if you get to the end of this year and you don't do any of the things that we've been trying to do as a people, you've missed a year window of your life where God was trying to do a profound thing in you because your life was too complicated to have the margin and the space to actually do it. And this is our problem: I think our life is too complicated to actually be a disciple of Jesus. And we're too exhausted to actually follow Him. So, we have to simplify, and to simplify requires humility. So, the question is, "Do you have the humility for it?" And you say, "Well, how do I do it?" Well, because our lives are also complicated in so many different ways, I think there's these simple principles that you can apply to your life. So, are you ready for this? Everybody take a breath and say, "I'm ready." Okay. If you're going to actually practice simplicity, you got to slow down. We live way too fast – busy, hurry, stress. We talk about it last couple of weeks. We think busyness is a sign of success. Busyness is an indicator that you're failing at that which matters most. We spend way too much of our life being in a hurry, being in a rush, running around. So, we got to slow down. Listen, I'll tell you a story that I didn't really want to tell you, but I'm going to tell it to you. That's a good start, isn't it? Last year, my son turned 16. And like any 16-year-old, he was very excited about his first car. And so, he saved up money and we were talking about what we were going to do. And we weren't sure, and the school year was starting. And so, it was one of those deals where I was like, "Well, what if every once in a while, just to start, I'll just let you take my truck and I'll have mom drive me to work and it'll be fine, whatever." And so, that happened a day or two. And then, one day I was studying and it was the day he was going to take my truck, and I assumed Colleen was going to take me to work. So, I was studying and doing all my stuff, and then, I got ready and I came out and no one was home. And so, I was like, "Well, all right." I grabbed my little backpack, and I walked to work. I live a couple of miles from the Flower Mound campus. And so, it's about 25-to-30-minute walk. And I walked, and it was hot. And I got to the office,



and I was all sweaty. And everybody's like, "What? You did what? What?" And I was like, "It's okay. I just walked here." It's like, "It's no big deal." And so, that night, we laughed about it at home. Whatever. A couple of days later, it was one of those like, "Hey, can I take the truck again?" And I was like, "Yeah. I'll walk to work again." And my son, "What? Who are you? What?" And I was like, "Yeah, it's fine. I actually enjoyed it. It wasn't that bad." So, long story short, for about nine months last year, two to three days a week, I would walk to work. Now, if you know at Flower Mound, it's 407 and 2499, six-lane, double-lane roads. I had to press the little crosswalk button there and stand there every time. And I often wondered if you drove by and saw me what you would think. And a couple of times, my neighbors would pass me and they would stop and back up, be like, "You okay?" I'm like, "Great." And then, I'd have to rely on other people for rides. And I'd have to ask Jason or Ben or Justin, "Hey, could you give me a ride home?" And I'd have to wait for Colleen to come and get me. Okay. And I tell you that... I didn't want to tell you that story, but I tell you that to this. It was a practice of slowing down for me. When I would walk 25, 30 minutes to work, my blood pressure would go down. My heart rate would lower. I would talk to God. I would be at peace. It's like on the days I walk to work, I feel like I noticed more fruit of the Spirit in my own life the rest of the day because I had chosen to slow my life down along the way. See, we live 100 miles an hour and we brag about it. "I'm going 100 miles an hour." Jesus lived at three miles an hour, literally, because that's the speed that a human can walk, three miles an hour. He walked everywhere. So, somewhere you got to figure out how are you going to downshift from 100 to 3. And you say, "Well, how do I do that? I have to walk to work?" Please don't. Do things like this: When you get to a red light, pick the longest line to get behind, not the shortest. Just trying to help you. Actually drive the speed limit – not because you're worried about getting a ticket but because you're practicing slowing down. When you park in a parking lot, don't pick the closest spot; pick the furthest one away that will require you to walk in. Don't do a mobile order; actually go in and order your thing. Have to talk to a human and wait for it to be prepared for you. When you check out at the grocery store or the Lowe's or whatever, don't use self-checkout; find the longest line to get behind and wait. You say, "That's ridiculous." No, what's ridiculous is living your entire adult life complaining about how busy and tired you are. That's ridiculous. So, if we're going to practice simplicity, we have to practice by starting to slow down.

Second thing is give it away. You say, "Give what away?" Yes. Think of how much stuff we've acquired in our lives. Think of how much stuff you have. Think of how many clothes you have in your closet you haven't worn in the last two years. Think of the 50 pairs of shoes you have. Think of the 25 rifles that you have that literally you never shoot. They're still in the box. Think of once a year you have to undo your entire garage with all the junk, and reorganize it, and put it all back in there. Think of all the closet space that you have, full of storage things that you're just saving for one day. And then, guess what? You're consumed with it. It's complex. You have to have insurance on it. You're managing it. You're trying to take care of it because the moths are eating it and rust is destroying it. So, what if I just started giving some of that stuff away to un-complicate my life? Jesus says it's more blessed to give than to receive, right? Do you ever ask yourself why? See, I think one of the dumb things we do is we just, "Okay, it's more blessed

to give." Jesus, why do you say that? Do you ever ask Him that? I mean, I don't know about you, but I've been blessed by so many people who have given me something from their life, but they were more blessed than I was. Why? Because the moment they gave it away, they just simplified their life. That's why it's more blessed because you uncomplicate your life and you detach yourself from this world, and you free yourself from all these things you have to manage and oversee and take care of. I mean, what if you only kept things in your life that you found purposeful, meaningful, or beautiful? And everything else you got rid of? What if you only kept it? It's purposeful. It's accomplished as a purpose in my life. This is meaningful. This was like a childhood memory. I want to keep this. Or it was beautiful. Like, it inspired you in some way. What if you just got rid of everything else? How different would your life be? See, we ask questions like when it's time to get something, we ask questions like, "Can I afford it?" We think about it just in terms of money. Money is important, but you also have to ask if you can afford it in terms of time. See, when I take things into my life, I have to ask, "Can I afford it?" And here's the problem. We live in a world that teaches us to live in debt as if debt is normal. The Bible tells us that the borrower is slave to the lender. In other words, the moment you take debt, you're a slave to someone else that immediately complicated your life. And think of the word we use, "consumer debt." So, I have enslaved myself to someone else to consume something of this world. Now, I realize this might be the most radical thing I've said in the entire thing. You'd be hard-pressed to find a single verse in the Bible that supports taking on debt. Now, I'm not telling you there's not a place for a mortgage or a business loan or a car that you need to get to work. I'm saying before you take any debt, you need to seek God to make sure this is a part of your life and purpose in this season because we become slaves to the lender and therefore, we can't be servants to God. Why? Because my life is now too complicated. "Sorry, God, I can't do what you're asking me to do because I got to pay back the lender." Who's my God then? So, it's a choice. So, I have to ask that. And I know that's not a fun conversation because debt, it just crushes people. And so it hurts and it's offensive and it brings it up. And if you're there, then you got to start backing out and you start by simplifying the rest of your life. And you say, "I don't want to live that way. I don't want to live in a rush, and I don't want to live as a slave to some bank." Okay. But then, you also got to ask, "Do I have the time for it?" We might be able to afford it financially, but do you have the time for it? If it's going to take you away from tucking your kids in every single night, you don't have the time for it. If it's going to take you, if the only time you can use that thing is on Sundays, you don't have the time for it because you can't neglect gathering with the people of God to worship God. Do you ever ask yourself the question, "Can I afford this via time, not just money?" Significantly important.

Third thing, quit the right things. Quit the right things. Here's what happens. We get so complicated, so busy, so overwhelmed. We just break. And we're like, "I got to eliminate some things. I got to quit some things." And we quit all the wrong things. We quit going to church because "I just need to sleep in on Sunday mornings because I'm so exhausted." We quit our Circle because "I just don't have time for that. My life is just too busy." We quit our serve team because "I just got too much going on with all the other activities. I can't make that

commitment." We quit engaging Scriptures because "we're just so exhausted in the mornings. We can't get up and do it." We quit engaging, having meaningful conversations with our family because "we just need five minutes to veg out and watch some shows on TV." Okay. I would just encourage you to define what you're actually quitting. What you're saying is you're so busy in your life, so complicated, you don't have time to worship God, to grow as a disciple, to be a part of the body of Christ and serve, to pursue the wisdom of God, and to engage in the relationships that matter most in your life. Just call it then what it is. Fair? Okay. You still all like me? Okay. So, parents, ready? This one's really significant, and I would like you to give me permission for two minutes to talk to you as a pastor. I never say stuff like this, so just try to hear what I'm trying to say, okay? I've been here almost 20 years. In the almost 20 years that I've been here, conservative estimate, we've had more than 20,000 teenagers be a part of our church in some way, shape, or form, okay? Conservatively. It's probably way more than this. I went conservative on all these numbers. 20,000 teenagers. And I'm not saying like showed up for one event one time. I'm saying they were a part of our church in some capacity. Out of those 20,000, there are less than 50 that we are aware of that went on to get a significant scholarship in athletics, music, theater, dance, sports, academics, whatever it may be. And of those 50, there are less than five that we're aware of that went on to go pro. Okay. I want you to think about this, 20,000 to 50 to 5. And what happens in the area that we live in is we have been taught that you need to arrange your life around the select sport, music, academic, theater, whatever the thing is, and it becomes all-consuming. So, we take a decade of the most formative years of our students, and we pivot the arrangement, and we say, "We're going to arrange our life around this thing and hope we find Jesus in the process." And 10 years go by, and what we all forget is after that sport, that theater, that music, that dance, that thing ends, they still have a soul. And they will have a soul for the rest of their life, and they will have a soul for all of eternity. And so, what we've done is we've trained our children to arrange their life around the world and hope to find Jesus in the process. Now, if that's what you want to do, that's fine. My encouragement to you would be then call it what it is. Don't say, "We're Christians. We're disciples. We're people of the kingdom, but my entire life is arranged around the world." No, just tell your child, "We're arranging our life around baseball or music or academics because we think that's most important. And we hope when you grow up, you will find Jesus somewhere along the way." Say it what it is because what happens is the church is left with the 35-year-old version of your kid who has been trained to think being a disciple of Jesus is to go to church on Christmas and Easter, live like the world 363 days of the year, and call themselves a disciple. Don't clap. Don't clap. Don't clap. No, because that's hurtful to people. I get it, but it's very important. And probably, those of us that would clap, it's like we participate in this dysfunctional cycle. My point is we've got to call things what they are because otherwise, we set a worldview and people that is almost impossible to break down the road. The rich, young ruler, he's handed a really bad hand. We think it's a great hand. You're like, "I'm doing everything to help my kid be a rich, young ruler." That's terrible parenting. I actually want to help my kid be like Jesus. Now, hear me, if you're like, but... Okay. Again, I don't like talking about myself. Listen, I played college lacrosse. I had a scholarship. I played international lacrosse, the highest level of lacrosse in my generation. I was on those teams. It's

possible. But what you have to do is you have to eliminate everything else. So, you put Jesus first. Then, you say, "We're called to do this. We're going to be called to go after this sport or this thing or this whatever." But it means you can't do football and baseball and basketball and bowling all and be an excelled triathlete in the midst of that. You literally have to say, "Jesus has to be first. But then, we're acknowledging that this thing is so significant because we think it's part of the purpose of your life." David only served God's purpose in his generation. You know what that means? That means David didn't go fight any battles, build any buildings, acquire any things, go do anything that wasn't outside of his purpose for his generation. Do you know what your purpose is for your generation? Just make sure, however, whatever you're quitting that you're quitting things that are outside of that purpose. And you say, "Well, that's like a boring, insignificant life." If you've read David's life – Jesus did more in three years than you'll do in your entire life by practicing simplicity. It's not boring and irrelevant. It's adventure and freedom because now I'm available to be used by God. Are you with me? Y'all still like me? Just think about it. You think about your kid and why your kid's going to break the mold. That's fine. I'm just telling you, this is the mold. And 20 years and where we live, this is how the game goes. 20,000, it's less than 50, and it's less than 5. I'm being generous and giving you some hope. Fair?

Re-evaluate often. You gotta re-evaluate often because life doesn't move towards simplicity; it moves towards complexity. At the end of every quarter, month, year, season, school year, whatever it is, sit down and ask yourself the question, "Are all the things we've taken into our life, are they helping us become the person we want to be?" At the end of every single year, Colleen and I sit down and we re-evaluate education for our children. Every single year. We do not have a set-it-and-forget-it mindset on it. And we've done homeschool. We've done public school. We've done private school. We've done faith-based, and we've done secular. Because every year we ask the question, "Is this helping us and our children accomplish God's purpose for their life?" When was the last time you sat down and reevaluated all these things, that car you bought 10 years ago and are just sitting on? That investment, that side hustle, that business, that desire for the next house, the third house, the next thing, the closet of hobby mementos that you've kept? Do you ever just ask, "Are these still helping me have the freedom and margin to follow Jesus? Or do I need to release some things and trust God and move forward?"

And the last thing is ask God first. Do you know how much pain you would eliminate from your life if you just ask God? "Should I buy this? Should I sign up for this team? Should I take on this promotion? Should I travel for work? Should I be a part of this activity, this club? Should we move?" We just don't ask God, and then we do it. And then, we get mad by how overwhelmed we are. Because why? Because to whom much is taken, much will be demanded. So, I took something that wasn't for me and it demands a lot. God doesn't... Just so we're clear, to whom much is taken, whoever takes much, much will be demanded. God doesn't demand it from you. It demands from you. And it is a terrible master. And it's exhausting. And then, we burn through our life and we get grumpy and cynical and skeptical and jaded. And it's everyone

else's problem that made – no one else makes you choose the job you have. So, don't complain about your work. Has anyone ever told you, "You have to have this job?" Maybe a 15-year-old that his parents make them work at McDonald's for a year. But I'm serious. Think of how much you complain. We complain about our job. You chose it. Don't complain about your house. You chose it. Don't complain about your payments. You bought the stuff. This is complexity versus simplicity. Fair? Last verse. "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands." Do you know that verse is in the Bible? It's a shocking one, isn't it? Because in evangelical circles, we've been taught for so many years, like, "Life with God is an adventure." And then, it feels like this flies in the face of killing giants. What I think this is saying is make sure your ambition is to have a simple life that is arranged in such a way that you can tend the garden that God has entrusted to you. See, there is apathetic life, there's quiet life, and there's busy life. There's non-existent life, there's simple life, and there's complicated life. And for most of what I've been talking about is people that have chosen complexity and busyness in their life, that it's an exhausting, dysfunctional way to live that prevents you from being who God's called you to be. So, the practice of simplicity is simplifying so you can move to simple and quiet. But then, over here, there's some of you that have been sitting here this whole time. You're like, "This is great. None of this applies to me." Because you've chosen a non-existent life. You're right. You don't have anything to oversee, anything to manage, anything to take care of, any job to pursue, any things to arrange, any things to pay for or take responsibility for. You have chosen a non-existent life, and that is just as dysfunctional as the complicated life. That's why he says quiet life, work with your hands. You were created to tend a garden, a garden that is beautiful and purposeful to take dominion over this earth. No, this is a lot of young people. No, you don't need to live like the generation before you that you saw overwork and workaholic and overcommitted, but you also can't live like you're your own God and your job is to sit around and eat grapes all day. You have a garden to tend, a life to pursue, a purpose to fulfill, and only you can accomplish that which God created you to do. You are a part of the body of Christ. And so, some point in time, you have to wake up to be like, "My ambition is what?" Is to live a different way and do the things that Jesus did so I can do the things that Jesus did.

So, here's your practice plan. Your practice plan this week. If you're new, every week we do one of these. Ready? You're not going to like it. Refuse to be in a hurry and... You're like, "Oh, there's an 'and' to this week?" There's an "and." Give one significant thing away. Okay, ready? Your practice plan this week is refuse to be in a hurry. What does that mean? That means don't be in a hurry. Don't rush. So, this entire week, have a mindset to say, "I'm not going to be in a hurry." And you will start hurrying. And then, you will catch yourself hurrying. And then, you will remind yourself, "Okay, don't be in a rush." Think of things we say. "Oh, just pull me up. I just got to run in quick. Oh, I'm just going to do this real fast." I mean, just the language we use implies hurry and rush. Okay. Can you just not be in a hurry this week? What does that mean? It means don't rush to work. Don't rush in the morning. Don't rush to get your kids. Don't rush, run down the halls. Can you just be at peace? And if you're like, "I actually can't," what that'll show you is that your life is arranged in such a complicated way that you don't have margin for

the life that God wants to give you. And I hope that leads to healthy repentance that says, "Okay, I need to do some things different." And then, give one significant thing away this week. If we're talking about simplicity, then I have to uncomplicate my life. And it only comes by giving something away. You say, "What is that thing?" I'm not talking about garbage that you don't want. Like, don't ever give a hole, pitted-out shirt to CCA or something like that. Just no. No. Something significant, something that costs you. It might be a hobby. It might be a side hustle. It might be an investment. It might be that third car, that fifth car, that eighth car. It might be saying "we're not going to upgrade on the house." It might be saying "we're not going to do this activity anymore." It might be saying, "Hey, I've got this hobby collection. It's been great. I'm going to move on from that." And I'm not saying you need to give it away at a loss. Maybe God tells you to sell it. I'm just saying, if you don't actually remove something from your life, are you moving towards simplicity? Otherwise, we just nod our heads. We're like, "Wow, that was a lot. Let's go get some lunch." But if we actually want to live a different way, which is what God is doing in your life right now to align with it, I actually probably need to take a step of faith. And it will take faith. It will take faith and it will take trust to believe that God has more for you than what you're giving away. Remember: the more we take, the more we lose. The more we release, the more we gain. So, what am I gaining by releasing more of God, more of your life purpose, more margin to hear His voice? You're gaining a healthy soul. A healthy soul. If you're really wealthy, you need to make sure you interpreted everything I said but God is not against wealth. He's against wealth having you. And if you're really poor and you're offended and frustrated by all this stuff, you need to rethink about what resting and depending and walking with God looks like. If you're offended about anything else, just give it the benefit of the doubt and say, "God loves me enough to poke on the places in my heart that I would never poke on myself. And that's why I'm a part of a church because God moves among us to take all of us on our individual journey and our collective journey to where He's leading us."

So, Holy Spirit, thank You for moving and speaking in our lives. Thank You for the invitation to simplicity. Jesus, I don't want to live a complicated life full of the things of this world. I want to live a simple life that has margin to do what I see the Father doing, to go where I see the Father going, and to say what I see the Father saying. Holy Spirit, I just ask that you'd release courage and faith and wisdom this week. You are the great counsellor, and You promise if we need wisdom, You will give it to us. And You promise that You instruct us and counsel us and You will watch over the way that we will go. So, may... Let me just free you. If you feel any sense of religious obligation to do either of these, in Jesus' name, you're free. Don't do them. Only participate in the practice plan if your heart is longing to live a different way and move towards Jesus in this direction. It's okay. There's no pressure. You do not have to do it. I've told you from the beginning, you do not have to do this, but reflect on the rich, young ruler passage who didn't have to give away everything. His life was just too complicated to actually follow Jesus. Holy Spirit, may simplicity be a practice that becomes a main reality in our lives as, again, a holy defiance in a world of busyness and complexity. In Your name, we pray. Amen.