

Spiritual Trainer Series

*Simply
Content*

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1 Saddleback Parkway
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Simply Content

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
(Philippians 4:12-13)

CHECKUP: Are you living a simple and contented life? Put a mark on the 10-point scale.

1.....5.....10
Not doing well Making progress Doing well

- ❖ What are the main areas of your life in which there is some measure of complexity and discontentment (i.e., finances, possessions, relationships, career, faith, self-esteem)?

What are the Benefits of Leading a Simple Life?

An Old Saying:

You can make yourself rich by having few wants!

Our culture has become distracted by an insatiable “hunger for more.” Many continue to drive themselves to the brink of personal, spiritual, and financial ruin in the pursuit of happiness and success. But, until people fully understand the benefits of cultivating the simple and contented life that God intended them to live, inner peace will continue to elude them. Life is just a temporary assignment to prepare you for an eternity with God. Think about that for a minute!

- ❖ If you really believed that *life is just a temporary assignment*, how would it affect your view of cultivating a simple and contented life in this world?

So... what are the benefits of living a simply content life?

In Your Personal Life:

- More free time to rest and relax
- Better health
- Reduced ego
- Sounder sleep
- Less guilt

In Your Spiritual/Church Life:

- More intimacy with Jesus
- Invigorated worship
- Greater focus on ministry and mission work
- Better fellowship
- Increased spiritual growth

In Your Family/Home Life:

- Greater availability to spouse and family
- Fewer repairs (broken toys)
- Fewer arguments about juggling schedules and priorities

In Your Finances:

- Less stress over money
- Fewer creditors to dodge
- Increased generosity

In other words...you will live with greater peace of mind, which is a life of deep satisfaction and joy!

- ❖ Which are the three most important benefits to you?

Why Do I Need To Simplify My Life?

Simplifying your life will give you freedom from complexity, conceit, greed, and pretentiousness. It will produce sincerity in you and give you a sense of contentment. Paul had this to say about contentment in 1 Timothy 6:6-10:

*But godliness with contentment is great gain.
For we brought nothing into the world, and we
can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and
clothing, we will be content with that.
People who want to get rich fall into temptation
and a trap and into many foolish and harmful
desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.
For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.
Some people, eager for money have wandered
from the faith and pierced themselves
with many griefs.*


- ❖ What is a common temptation or trap for those in pursuit of money? For you?

1. Because spending too much time, money, talents, and energy on *getting*, leaves nothing left for *giving*.

Misdirected or fragmented focus of your life ultimately leads to frustration. One of the best secrets of how to focus is elimination! Downsizing unnecessary activities and material goods creates opportunities to give yourself away in ministry and mission work.

*In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
(Acts 20:35)*

- 2. Because more is not always better.** You've heard the old adage: "He who dies with the most toys wins!" In reality, this creates a serious pressure to pay for bigger houses, finer cars, more club memberships, more expensive hobbies, more exotic vacations, and fancier "toys." While these things may fill your days with excitement, they will also leave you with little-to-no time for the better things, like growing in the Lord or relationships.

 Read the entire story of a rich man in Luke 12:16-21 who wanted to build bigger barns to store his excess crops. Here's what God said to him:

*...You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?
(Luke 12:20)*

- ❖ Imagine that you are the rich man in this story and that you are looking back on your life, knowing that God had called you a *fool*. What (if anything) would you have wished you had done differently?

The Daily Grind

The daily grind too often overshadows the quiet contentment of God's presence, making us forget that He is in control, not us. He holds the world and the resolution of all its chaos in His hands. When we forget to live a contented life, **we miss out on opportunities** to...

- chat with a neighbor
 - watch children playing
 - enjoy the beauty of a sunset
 - roast hot dogs over a fire at the beach
 - picnic with our family
 - listen to the rustle of leaves under a towering oak tree
 - feel the freshness of a cool breeze on our face
 - relax to the soothing sounds of music
 - spend time alone with God, praying and listening
 - share our faith with a friend
- ❖ What opportunities are you missing out on because your life is too busy or too complicated?

Mistaken Beliefs


1. **Acquisition = Happiness!** Advertisers have succeeded in convincing many people that their “stuff” can give them a feeling of happiness, self-confidence, power, importance, and invincibility. The irony is that “stuff” has a strange way of disappearing or becoming outdated (i.e., theft, market devaluation, broken, natural catastrophe like an earthquake, divorce settlement, forced sale, bored of it), and if your sufficiency is not in Christ, your self worth will be destroyed. God must be your top priority and deep joy in life. You are to have no other gods before Him.

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,
where moth and rust destroy, and where
thieves break in and steal.
(Matthew 6:19)*

- ❖ List one or more worldly things you *could* eliminate in order to simplify your life.

- 2. You create your own success.** Egotism causes you to *buy into* the mindset: “Look at what I’ve achieved; look at the beautiful house, car, and clothes I’ve earned.” This mistaken belief causes you to forget that your Creator is the true source of your abundance, talents, giftedness, and blessings. He measures your success by looking at your heart, not at any external markers.

*Every good and perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,
who does not change like shifting shadows.
(James 1:17)*

-  Read James 4:13-17 which tells a story about a businessman who thinks he’s got his future all figured out. He says, “Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.” (NLT)

- ❖ What did Jesus have to say about the “Lord’s will” in that story? Do you agree?

- 3. You are solely responsible for your own significance in life.** In order to make a significant contribution in major areas of your life, you might feel that you must give 100 percent to your job, family, friends, and God. But, in reality, climbing the corporate ladder or trying to be “*Super-Parent, Spouse, Friend, or Ministry Leader*” is like an unstable scaffold that will collapse and crush you. It is God who assigns significance to your life. Let Him direct your steps in His priority areas for your life—at a godly pace, not a frenzied one.

*Many are the plans in a man's heart,
but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails.*
(Proverbs 19:21)

- ❖ How do you feel about God being the pilot and you being the co-pilot of your life?
- ❖ Has the desire to keep up with your neighbors, acquire more things, be involved in more activities, and/or excel in the workplace taken over your life and messed up your priorities? If so, how and at what cost?

Memorize this verse and pray it regularly:

*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,
“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*
(Hebrews 13:5)

Call to Action

Have you acknowledged and embraced God as the finest treasure you have? If so, you know that you already have **everything you need**. Even if you were to lose every possession, you would still possess **everything worth having**. You must willingly embrace this concept before you are ready to pursue what truly matters.

Here are some steps to help you grow in this direction:

1. **Surrender your possessions to God daily.** Without question, simplifying your life will require surrendering everything you own to the God who created everything! Become aware of the degree of your attachment to your possessions. If you have a spouse and children, include them in a conversation about surrendering material things.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.

(Revelation 4:11)

- ❖ Is there anything you would have trouble parting with? If so, why do you think that is true?

2. **Listen to the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, about how to simplify your life.** He will tell you the truth about how to be content.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.


(John 14:16-17)

“...Please root from my heart all those things which I have cherished so long and which have become a very part of my living self, so that Thou mayest enter and dwell there without a rival.”

- A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

- 3. Trust in God to supply all your needs.** He has promised to supply all you need for your finances, family, and future.

*Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you,
do not worry about your life, what you will eat;
or about your body, what you will wear.
(Luke 12:22)*

 Read Luke 12:22-28 in its entirety.

- ❖ In what area of your life do you need to trust God to supply all your needs (i.e., food, shelter, clothing, medical bills, tuition, career, childcare)?

- 4. Slow down long enough to show gratitude for all you have been given!** A grateful heart will make you content with what you have.

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with
praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the
LORD is good and his love endures forever; his
faithfulness continues through all generations.
(Psalm 100:4-5)*

Action Steps

Prayer: Ask that your focus be on God's purpose for your life, which is to love Him and to love your neighbor as yourself. Pray that you will soon experience the contentment of living simply. Pray this Scripture slowly back to God:

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.
(Matthew 6:33)*

Circle one or two of the Action Steps below that you will take:

1. Start a gratitude journal. Make a list of people and things you're thankful for, beginning with Jesus' sacrifice for your sins. Periodically read your updated list and voice your thanks to God aloud.
2. Learn to say no to yourself, to your children, and to other people's agenda for your already busy life!
3. Reduce your personal inventory. Share with others. Give away things you don't use. Discover how to enjoy things without having to own/lease them.
4. Choose a Feed-Back Partner and seek suggestions from each other for moving from an earthly focus to an eternal focus. Together, list the areas in each of your lives that you plan to "downsize" over the next six weeks. Don't forget to help each other on how to deal with your family and friends' resistance to change.
5. Read the "Spiritual Trainer Challenge" on page 12 to see if you are being prompted by the Holy Spirit to disciple someone on this topic of simplicity and contentment.

Great Resource

Intimacy with the Almighty by Charles Swindoll (Anaheim: Insight for Living) 1996.

If you are frustrated with your spiritual life or you feel like you are in a spiritual rut, this book is for you. Swindoll shares his wisdom and thoughts about four disciplines that will recharge your spiritual batteries and draw you closer to your Heavenly Father. Included in the book are sections designed for you to write your own discoveries and thoughts.

Spiritual Trainer Challenge

Is the Holy Spirit encouraging you to be a Spiritual Trainer to another Christian in the area of simplicity and contentment? Is someone in your family, small group, or ministry ready to take the next step in his or her spiritual walk? Would you like to share this booklet with a parent, child, sibling, friend, neighbor, or co-worker? If so, here are simple steps you can take:

Things You Can Do to Prayerfully Prepare for a Spiritual Training Appointment

1. Pick up a copy of *Life Training: Spiritual Habits* and read through it. This booklet will give you a good understanding of why it is important to develop spiritual habits like time alone with God, confession and repentance, prayer, Scripture memorization, worship, contentment, praying the names of God, etc. It will also give you some excellent advice on how to be a great trainer/discipler.
2. Ask someone if he/she (same-sex as yourself, unless it is a family member or your fiancé) would like you to disciple him/her using this booklet, *Simply Content*. Pick up a copy for that person. Set a date and time for a one-hour meeting—with a reminder to bring a Bible.
3. Re-read this booklet, *Simply Content*, paying special attention to how it is organized and what sections helped you the most.

Things to Do During the Appointment

Important Note: This lesson has four sections, each of which will take approximately seven minutes. So, you will probably need 28 minutes to cover the content of the lesson. **Please allow 50-60 minutes for the entire discipleship session, including fellowship and prayer requests.**

1. Open with a brief prayer and a few minutes of fellowship.
2. Read through the booklet with your trainee, taking turns sharing the reading. Ask your trainee the questions as you move through the material. Take your time; don't rush.
3. For the “Call to Action” section, slow the pace as you pray, answer any questions, and discuss the action steps.

Notes:

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Thank you for using the Saddleback Church Spiritual Trainer Series materials entitled *Simply Content*. We hope that this has been a beneficial experience and has provided you with an opportunity to draw closer to God.

If you are interested in exploring more of the Saddleback Spiritual Trainer Series tools, please call the Maturity Team at Saddleback Church, (949) 609-8201.
www.saddleback.com/maturity