



## Session 6: Living Simply



### Do you long for a more simple life? How can we resist the pull of acquiring more, consuming more and doing more?

The spiritual practice of simplicity brings freedom, joy and balance. It is more than a lifestyle choice – it involves cultivating an inner life of love and trust in God. Simplicity liberates us from status, self-importance and showy extravagance.

#### Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

### Read

*Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.*

*As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.*

**Shockers** – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

**Blockers** – something from the text that raises questions for you.

#### Luke 12.13-34

A man in a crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to give me my share of what our father left us when he died."

Jesus answered, "Who gave me the right to settle arguments between you and your brother?" Then he said to the crowd, "Don't be greedy! Owning a lot of things won't make your life safe." So Jesus told them this story: A rich man's farm produced a big crop, and he said to himself, "What can I do? I don't have a place large enough to store everything."

Later, he said, "Now I know what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones, where I can store all my grain and other goods. Then I'll say to myself, 'You have stored up enough good things to last for years to come. Live it up! Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.'" But God said to him, "You fool! Tonight you will die. Then who will get what you have stored up?"

"This is what happens to people who store up everything for themselves, but are poor in the sight of God."

Jesus said to his disciples: I tell you not to worry about your life! Don't worry about having something to eat or wear. Life is more than food or clothing. Look at the crows! They don't plant or harvest, and they don't have storehouses or barns. But God takes care of them. You are much more important than any birds. Can worry make you live longer? If you don't have power over small things, why worry about everything else? Look how the wild flowers grow! They don't work hard to make their clothes. But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth wasn't as well clothed as one of these flowers. God gives such beauty to everything that grows in the fields, even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow. Won't he do even more for you? You have such little faith!

#### Setting the scene:

- Rabbis often got pulled into disputes and questions on how to live out the law. Here Jesus is asked to resolve an issue over inheritance. Jesus refuses to get embroiled in this – his focus is to bring people to God, not property to people.
- Jesus issues a strong warning against greed which is connected to idolatry (see 10th commandment in Exodus 20.17) using a story about a self-indulgent farmer. Here he contrasts the accumulation of wealth with richness towards God.
- Worry is connected to greed. We accumulate to provide security and comfort for the future. The antidote to worry is not more stuff, but more trust in God who looks after us.
- Instructing his disciples how to live, Jesus focuses them on life in the Kingdom of God. Your treasure and your heart go together – we treasure what we value most of all.

Don't keep worrying about having something to eat or drink. Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father knows what you need. But put God's work first, and these things will be yours as well.

My little group of disciples, don't be afraid! Your Father wants to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give the money to the poor. Make yourselves money bags that never wear out. Make sure your treasure is safe in heaven, where thieves cannot steal it and moths cannot destroy it. Your heart will always be where your treasure is.

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

## Reflect

*After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.*

*Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.*

### You might also like to explore these questions:

**Q1.** What kind of inner life do we need to develop in order to live more simply?

## Group Prayer

You might like to pray for each other regularly this week as you seek creative ways to experience the freedom of finding ways to begin living simply.

## Respond

*Living Simply challenge: As a group, create a challenge to help you to trust God more this week and live more simply, or choose from the following.*

### Challenge ideas:

#### 1. Three 'Simple' Questions

To help you focus on ways to create some simplicity in your life this week, reflect on these questions: What should I do less? Where should I have less? What should I do more?

#### 2. Detox

Simplicity brings freedom. What are you addicted to that might be good to live without for a while? You might like to eliminate or cut down on alcohol, coffee, fizzy drinks, your phone, Facebook /Twitter, chocolate, TV, impulse buying, or using your gadgets. Think about things that have an element of control over you. Desire to be captivated by Jesus more than by these things.

#### 3. Downwardly Mobile

Find ways this week to resist the pull of status, greed or self-importance. In terms of status you might like to practice serving people in secret each day this week. In terms of greed you could be generous with money, possessions or time towards others. In terms of self-importance consider ways to counteract 'showy extravagance' or even simply telling people how busy you are – make some lifestyle choices this week that make an impact in these areas.