

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *Living Simply*

SERIES: *Core Values*

SCRIPTURES: *Psalm 62:10; Ephesians 4:28; Ephesians 5:16-17; Matthew 5:37*

SPEAKER: *Shaun Kipe*

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Well good morning and welcome to Five Forks church. It is so great to worship with you today.

We are in this series where we are looking at the core values of the BIC church (**TITLE SLIDE**). And said, really there are two key reasons for this series.

First, and primarily the core values reflect God's character. They show us God's heart and therefore how he expects his followers to live. And because these core values reflect God's heart, we just find them all over Scripture. So this series is a great way for us to study some of the major themes in the Bible.

And second, the core values help us to focus on our identity. As individuals, families, any groups we are a part of there are certain things that are important to us, our core values.

If you hang around Five Forks long enough, you'll hear us talking about these kinds of things, because they're at the core of our identity.

And a reminder to you, that if you are interested in reading in more detail about these core values, there's a book you can grab out at the connect station about the core values. No cost, you grab one. If we run out of copies, we can order more.

We have looked at 8 of the core values so far and this morning we want to consider the 9th core value. The 9th core value is **Living Simply**.

"We value uncluttered lives, which free us to love boldly, give generously, and serve joyfully."

We have a problem in our world...**clutter**. We have been taught to accumulate, acquire, save, store, keep and this life style entangles, complicates...clutters our lives.

How can we, as followers of Christ, unclutter our lives in this increasingly complex world?

I just want to challenge us this morning, to consider three specific areas where the Bible challenges us to simplify our lives.

And of course the most obvious area where we are challenged to simplify is in relation to our STUFF...our material possessions.

I. SIMPLIFYING OUR STUFF

The wisdom literature of the Old Testament speaks of the way our material possessions entangle us...

Psalm 62:10 – “...though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.”

Proverbs 11:28 – “He who trusts in his riches will wither...”

In fact, Jesus during his time on this earth, spoke more about “economics/possessions/ownership” than about any other social issue! He was well aware of the lure of material possessions. Listen to some Jesus statements on this subject...

Jesus said, ***“No one can serve two masters...you cannot serve both God and money.”***

“Do not store up treasure on earth, but store up treasure in heaven.”

“Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions...”

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus and said *“what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

Jesus said ***“Go sell all that you have...”***

“It is harder for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.”

See we need to talk about simplifying our stuff, because we live in an affluent culture. An economic system that very much encourages us to acquire and accumulate. And that stuff clutters...it entangles, complicates, and consumes our lives.

I started thinking about my own life and just how easy it is to become cluttered with material items.

I was thinking about this with Keagan, our youngest, starting kindergarten this year. He regularly comes home with a folder full of papers, pictures he drew and colored. Little art projects and letters/words he's learning to write. And I think to myself, "that's so cute, I can't throw that away." That's a memory of little Keagan, and he won't always be little, and we want to remember this moment, this picture. Throwing that paper away, feels like we're throwing Keagan away. So we keep it. But then the next day, there's another paper and another and another...and it becomes never ending pile of papers. And what do you do with all of them? And then the task of organizing them. And I realized that's only the beginning of clutter.

And in our house it's not just Keagan, we have Landon and Ady. And they all have papers. And it's not just papers, it's clothes they grow out of, but they looked so cute in it or you shared some special memory with it. And it's not just clothes, it's toys or stuffed animals or blankies.

And it's not just the kids' stuff, it's my stuff and Jenny's stuff.

Tools in my shop, dishes in our kitchen cabinets, it's clothes in my dresser, it's TV's, cell phones, cars, shoes...

See how that happens? And we quickly are in the business, our lives become "acquiring more stuff" and our time is spent managing that stuff and our resources are spent maintaining that stuff...and pretty soon our stuff, clutters, entangles, consumes our lives.

Now it is important to clarify...living simply, does not mean that material possessions are evil. The Bible clearly and consistently teaches that creation and the material world are good and they are to be enjoyed.

So, not saying you shouldn't own anything or that living simply is defined by certain rules. Like a certain income or square footage of your home or number of Televisions in your home. Simple living is not defined by legalistic rules. In the end, living simply is about keeping material possessions in their proper perspective.

So, this week, your challenge is to take an inventory of your material possessions.

Richard Foster has written a book on Biblical disciplines, ways to train yourself to live the abundant life of Jesus. And he's got a great chapter on living simply and just gives some really practical advice about how might keep material possessions in their proper perspective.

Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status. Don't purchase items just to keep up with ever-changing trends.

Eliminate things that have become addictive. If your TV or phone or social media accounts or Netflix, or Vera Bradley purses have become addictions, then they are cluttering your life. or by all means rooting for the Steelers has become addictive remove it from your life. If certain foods or drinks (soda, caffeine, sugar or Starbucks pumpkin spice lattes have become addictive, then Foster says...remove them from your life.

Resist the temptation for gadgets. The United States has become addicted to gadgets. Because so many of us have excess resources, we tend to use our resources on gadgets. And again, I'm not getting into how many gadgets are ok before I'm no longer living simply. Just that so many of us, spend our resources acquiring useless gadgets. Think about it like this... The US makes up 6% of the world's population, but we use 33% of the worlds energy resources! And just makes you wonder how much of those energy resources are dedicated to our useless gadgets.

Learn to live on less, even when you could afford more. Our culture has told us, if you can afford it, or even its slightly above what you can afford, then you have earned the right to have it. But that's simply a cultural standard, not God's standard.

Just because you can take a 30 mins shower and never run out of water or heat, doesn't mean you should.

Foster use the example of air conditioning. The United States alone uses the same amount of energy on our air conditions as does the entire country of China. It's not that our air conditioners are evil or that we shouldn't use them. It's that often without thinking about it, we use them more than we need to.

Why on earth, would you choose to have less, when you could afford more?

Ephesians 4:28 – Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ¹

Don't steal. Work honestly. Live on less. Why? So that you have something to share!

Acts 2:44-45 – ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

See the problem is, that when our focus is so much on our material possessions it blinds us to the needs and suffering of our neighbors, our community and our world.

Does anyone recognize this young man? **(PIC OF BRADEN BAKER)** Just heard about this young man a couple of years ago.

His name is Braden Baker. He was born 75% deaf and so has been wearing specially made, state of the art hearing aids almost all of his life. But he grew up in a fairly wealthy family. And one time, he got careless with his rather expensive hearing aids, left them laying around, and his dog chewed them up, destroyed them. His parents weren't happy, but they could afford another pair so they bought him another pair of expensive, state of

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Eph 4:28). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

the art hearing aids. Like most young boys, he got careless again, left them laying around and his dog chewed them up again.

In his mind, he was thinking, well my parents can buy me another pair. His parents realized that their wealth was blinding their son to the needs of others. So they sat him down and talked to him about the hundreds of children around the world, who have the same hearing problem he does, but will never be able to hear, because they will never even have one pair of hearing aids.

This struck Braden's little 10 year old heart. He never knew, he never really thought about the rest of the world this way before, blinded by wealth. So this young man decided to start a GoFundMe account, decided he was gonna raise \$1000.00 to buy hearing aids for kids who could not afford them. And he began doing honest work, and sharing about hearing loss problems with all the people he knew, telling them what he was trying to do.

Once he stopped focusing on himself and his hearing aids, this little guy raised over \$30,000.00. And for his 11th birthday, he took a trip to Guatemala in Central America to begin personally handing out hearing aids to kids who otherwise would never have this opportunity.

When our lives are cluttered...just so easy to ignore hurting neighbors and drug epidemics...

When our lives are cluttered...just so easy to ignore young boys and girls all over our world sold into sex trafficking, slave trade, bullying, abuse.

When our lives are cluttered...just so easy to ignore the world's hunger problem or homelessness or refugee crisis.

"We value uncluttered lives, which free us...give generously..."

Second, important to realize that we clutter our lives with more than just material possessions. Some of you in here do a great job of eliminating material clutter. So let's talk about our schedules...

II. SIMPLIFYING OUR SCHEDULES

Turn with me if you would to...

Genesis 1:5 – God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. ²

From the very beginning, God established a pattern, a rhythm for life...day and night. God gave us light, daytime...for our activities, for work and play and productivity. And then He gave us night for resting, stopping, slowing down.

Or think about the concept of Sabbath. The Sabbath day...also known as the day of rest.

Exodus 20:8-11 - Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work....

¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. ³

Coming from the heart of the creator and built into creation, God implemented a pattern of work and rest. We were designed to follow this pattern. Time for work and activities and play and using up our energy and then time to stop and slow down and rest.

It's fascinating I was reading an article about recent **sleep deprivation** studies that are being done. In this one study, they took 48 adults and restricted their sleep to 4, 6 or 8 hours of sleep for two weeks straight. And then they had one group that was deprived of sleep for two nights in a row.

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Ex 20:8–11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

And throughout the study they then evaluated these 48 test adults on a whole host of factors. Comparing the 4 hour sleepers with the 6 hours sleepers and so on... Tested their cognitive performance, their reaction time, their mood. Specifically asked them if they felt “sleepy.”

What they discovered is... actually before I share this with you. I just want you to take a guess, on average how many hours of sleep do you think you get per night? Go ahead and tell the person beside you. Your best guest, how much sleep you get each night. Ready for this...study found that...

Subjects who got six hours of sleep a night for two weeks straight functioned as poorly as those who were forced to stay awake for two nights in a row.

In addition...worse yet...

One of the most alarming results from the sleep study is that the six-hour sleep group didn't rate their sleepiness as being all that bad, even as their cognitive performance was going downhill.

In other words, the folks sleeping 6 hours a night were performing at the same level cognitively, as the group that didn't sleep for two nights in a row...but they didn't realize it! They were unaware, they thought they were doing ok!

The article goes on to say that recent studies by the CDC suggest 1 in 3 Americans get less than 7 hours of sleep per night. And that most of us overestimate the amount of sleep we are getting by almost a full hour of sleep. In other words, if you just told the person sitting beside you that you think you get 7 hours of sleep on average per night, it's likely you actually are only getting about 6 hours of sleep per night.

Why do we do that? Because we have cluttered schedules. We have maxed out and over-maxed out our schedules.

Esther Spurrier says it this way...

Today, technology enables us to circumvent these natural rhythms. Electricity and modern transportation allow people to work at any time of the day or night.... At the midpoint of the 20th century, analysts were even predicting that a 30-hour work week would soon be the norm! Nevertheless, people are now working more hours rather than fewer, and recent health reports warn that modern people are not getting enough rest.

And unhealthy habits like not enough sleep...leads to all kinds of other unhealthy habits not eating well, increased stress levels, anger, anxiety etc.

Please don't misunderstand... "I'm not saying working night shift is wrong". Also not saying that Sunday is the universal day of rest and that nobody should work on Sundays. For many of us, and the jobs we work, Sunday still happens to be the most common day of weekly rest. But if you know anyone who works in the medical field for example...aren't you glad that some doctors and nurses work Sunday's... as long as that doctor or nurse, or whomever is getting adequate rest in their life schedule.

[Ephesians 5:15-16](#) – Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ⁴

If you don't determine how you will spend your time, you can be sure that others will decide for you.

This week, the challenge is, sit down with your calendar and consider... "schedule inventory"

Are you getting the proper amount of sleep? How many hours are you working? How many are you playing? How much quality time are you spending with the important people in your life? You need to become aware of where your time is going.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Eph 5:15–17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Two of the most powerful words, in the English language are two of the smallest words in the English language. These two words can radically shape your life based on how and when you choose to use them. You know what those two words are? **“YES”** and **“NO”**.

Because those two words determine how cluttered, complicated, consumed your schedule becomes.

Shaun, will you coach youth soccer this fall? Yes or no?

Will Landon take piano lessons every Thursday afternoon this fall? Yes or no?

Will Adalyn participate in gymnastics twice a week? Yes or no?

Will Keagan play soccer twice a week? Yes or no?

Should I binge watch the newest series on Netflix? Yes or no?

How much time is appropriate checking out my social media accounts?

There are no easy answers. You want to take advantage of the opportunities you have available to you and for your kids, your family. You don't want to miss out and yet, and yet, just so easy to fill our schedules so full...that we actually miss life because our schedules are cluttered.

Simplify your possessions, simplify your schedule, and third and finally this morning...

III. SIMPLIFYING OUR SPEECH

Probably not what you expected as the third part of this message. But believe it or not, we live in a world cluttered with words. And so in the core values book, Esther Spurrer dedicates an entire section on “simplifying our speech.”

We love to hear ourselves talk. We love to talk about ourselves.

I told you I enjoy country music, several years ago there was a popular song it was actually called “I want to talk about me...”

I want to talk about me

Want to talk about I

Want to talk about number one

What I think, what I like, what I know, what I want, what I see

I want to talk about me

Think about it...

Have you ever said things about yourself that weren't exactly true because you were trying to impress someone? Or have you ever spoken about someone when that person wasn't around, using words you wouldn't have used if that person were around? Have you ever tried to "act informed" about something you didn't actually know much about? Have you ever raised your voice, so that you could be loud enough to make sure you get your own way?

Author Mark Twain was once riding a train home from Maine after three weeks of really successful fishing – unfortunately the states fishing season had closed several weeks prior. On the way home, he bragged about his huge-but-illegal catch to the only other passenger in the club car. As he shared about his successful fishing trip, the passenger grew increasingly uncomfortable with Twains story. When Twain finished sharing, he finally asked the other passenger who he was and what he did. The stranger replied that he was The State Game Warden of Maine, in charge of enforcing all wildlife, hunting and fishing laws.

"And who are you?" the warden then asked.

"To tell the truth," Twain said, "I'm the biggest liar in the United States!"

(Ortberg – The Me I Want to Be)

See the problem is that we use our words to manipulate, connive, lie, flatter, excuse, justify, influence etc. all in an effort to make ourselves look good, or better than we are, or to make others look bad. We clutter our speech with useless words.

James 1 - ¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak... ²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

James 3 - ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.

Remember Jesus words from the Sermon on the Mount...

Matthew 5:37 - ³⁷ All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

So this week, the challenge is take an inventory of your words. Where has your speech become cluttered? Where can you say less and listen more? Where can you speak honestly about what you know and leave what you don't unsaid? Where have you raised your voice or lost your temper that this week you can speak quietly and gently?

We often live, cluttered lives...too many material possessions, busy schedules, and too many words not intended to benefit others. We live in a world of too much. This week let's seek to be a different kind of community...a community that values, strives for,

"...uncluttered lives, which free us to love boldly, give generously, and serve joyfully."