

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

www.ffbic.org

**SERMON:** *Simplicity*

**SERIES:** *Hurry Up*

**SCRIPTURES:**

**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*

**DATE:** *2021 - 2 - 21*

---

*\*Credit to John Mark Comer (Ruthless Elimination of Hurry); Richard Foster Celebration of Discipline; Walter Brueggeman (resistance);*

Well good morning, it so great to worship with you. Want to say welcome to all of you in this room and to so many gathered on-line, at home, tuning to the live stream.

Today we are in the final week of our sermon series “Hurry Up” (**Series Graphic**). We have taken the last 5 Sunday’s to talk about one of the most significant threats to following Jesus in our world today...and it isn’t secularism or temptation or threats to our religious freedom...according to Dallas Willard it’s our hurried, overly-scheduled life-styles.

Willard writes that if you truly want the life of Jesus you must **“ruthlessly eliminate hurry.”**

And again I’m indebted to John Mark Comer and his fantastic book “The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry” as our primary guide through this series.

One of Comer’s line’s has been central in this series. He says, **“If you want the life of Jesus, you must practice the life-style of Jesus.”** And so part of our series has been looking at various practices that were part of Jesus life and wrestling with how we put those same practices into our own lives. Like **solitude**. Jesus was regularly getting away for quiet time. And **Sabbath**. Jesus understood and practiced the true

heart of Sabbath rest. This morning one final practice for us to consider...as we seek to ruthlessly eliminate hurry. **Simplicity.**

The challenge we face is that we live in a...

## **I. Consumer Culture**

**Consumer-ism** is a life-style driven by consumption and where getting more is associated with happiness.

When our family goes to Wal-Mart or Target...sometimes we take a walk through the toy section...you know...for the kids! But you have to be careful...because to a little kid you get back there and you just see massive walls of toys. **(PIC OF KEAGAN)**

And you find heart whispering, "I want that. If I had that I'd be happy. And if I had one of those and one of those and one of those."

But it's just not our kids, is it? The focus of our consumerism changes as we age, but it seems like that consumer mentality stays. You know what I mean...what's that store that keeps whispering... "I want that." For some of you it's Lowes. Looking at the newest grills in the spring or a new lawn mower or a snow blower. Or for some of you it's walking through Michaels or Hobby lobby. I've told Jenny I'm not taking her to Maurices anymore, walking through there is un-Godly. She said that's, "*you don't have to take...I find all that stuff on-line anyway.*" But you just find yourself saying, "I want one of those and one of those..."

There are different study's done on this. But I was reading about one done by Stanford University that found that when you see pictures of items you'd like to buy, a region of your brain with dopamine receptors is activated. Dopamine is what helps to control the "pleasure center" of your brain. In other words, buying stuff, makes you feel good and can be a similar "high" like a person gets from drugs or alcohol. It

feels good...for a little while. But the only way to get the sensation, and then get it again, is to consume more.

From the time we are little, we are trained to associate getting more with “happiness.” What is the center feature of our birthday celebrations...gifts! What is at the center of the Holiday season...extravagant shopping?

And I want to be careful, because I believe that gift giving is actually a good thing, ok? Don't misunderstand me. Giving gifts was actually God's idea and He does it better than anyone. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only son...”**

But consumer culture is when getting more, buying more, having more...takes a place in our lives it was never intended to take...it becomes the central driving force of our lives. And that's the world we live in. Let me just read you a few statements that Comer highlights in his book about how consumerism has become engrained in our lives.

Paul Mazure, was a Wall Street Banker, living shortly after WWI and he said:

**We must shift America from needs to a desires culture...people must be trained to desire, to want new things, even before the old have been entirely consumed. We must shape a new mentality. Man's desires must overshadow his needs.**

E.S. Cowdrick called it, **“the new economic gospel of consumption.”**

The primary driving force of life.

In 1927 one journalist observed this about America: **“A change has come over our democracy. It is called consumptionism. The American citizen's first importance to his country is no longer that of citizen but that of consumer.”**

(Comer 182)

The French sociologist, Jean Baudrillard has made the point that in the Western world, **consumerism has become the new dominant system of meaning**. He argues, **atheism hasn't replaced cultural Christianity, shopping has**. (Comer 179)

This consumer culture permeates everything we do and think...how we live, what we value, what we idolize. Think about it, what is the number one factor in determining the success of our country in any given year: economics, wall-street, and stock-market.

I'll just give you another example of how this consumption mentality has penetrated so deeply into our culture.

I'm gonna show you some images: **Oprah, JK Rowling, Cinderella, Spiderman, Kelly Clarkson, Dolly Parton, Leonardo DiCaprio, Halle Berry...**

What do all of these folks have in common? **Celebrities/Heroes** in our world.

But more than that. Do you know what they have in common? **The poor underdog, who becomes rich**. That is the pinnacle of our understanding of "making it" in this world. The consumer mentality is so engrained in us that it permeates even our understanding of "making it." Richard Foster writes, ***"The modern hero is the poor boy who purposefully becomes rich, rather than the rich boy who voluntarily becomes poor."***

Evidence that the grip of consumerism reaches into our core identity and ambitions for life.

Now let's just make **the connection between consumerism and hurry**.

Alan Fadling writes, ***"The drive to possess is an engine for hurry."*** (Comer)

Here's what happens in a society when consumerism becomes the primary motivation in life (dominant system of meaning)...**our wants become needs.**

You know what I'm talking about right? We start to believe that we can't live without certain things. I need a phone and then a newer phone. I need a car and then a newer car. I need clothes, but I need certain styles of clothes and then newer clothes.

**"...the system of commodity requires that we want more, have more, own more, use more, and drink more.** And this rat-race of consumption leads to a **restlessness...and...anxiety that is often at the edge of being unmanageable.**

(Brueggeman Xii)

Consumerism and the drive for more...runs us ragged.

We are trapped in the whirlwind of more, more, more...and the only way to fulfill that void is to consume more, work longer, start earlier, fill that schedule, and hurry, hurry, hurry through life.

And pretty soon we build our life-styles around maximizing our abilities to get more stuff, better stuff, bigger stuff. Our lives, time, resources are spent...consuming, fixing, buying, upgrading, organizing, re-organizing our purchases. Consumerism leads to more hours at the office, more debt, more years working a job you don't feel called to so you can afford the life you think you want.

To the core of our identity as human beings we are trained to believe that more and bigger is always better. So much so Foster writes (pg. 80) that, **"We buy things we do not want, to impress people we do not like."**

I do this all the time...I don't like the tie I'm wearing today, I bought this tie I'm wearing today just to impress all of you. (SMIRK) I'm just kidding.

*But what if we were not mostly created for consumerism? What if more stuff does not equal more happiness?*

*What if more stuff leads to less of what actually matters in life? Less time. Less financial freedom. Less generosity, which according to Jesus, is where joy actually lies. Less peace. Less focus on what life is really about. Less relationships. Less margin. Less prayer. (Comer)*

There has to be a better way to live, doesn't there? There is. **“Come to me all you who are weary burdened and I will give you rest...”** But how Jesus? **“Take up my yoke...”**

If you want the life of Jesus. You have to practice the life-style of Jesus.

## **II. Jesus and consumer culture**

And it turns out, Jesus had a lot to say about consumerism, possessions, money...

So are you ready hear what Jesus said? Now hold on to your seats...just gonna roll through some of this...statements Jesus made and you just take it in, soak it up...and listen for what Jesus might be asking of you...

**“Therefore Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink or about your body what you will wear...is not life more than food and the body more than clothes.”**

**“You cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money.”**

**“Do no store up for yourselves treasure on earth...”**

**A certain rich man came to Jesus and said, “What must I do to inherit eternal life.” And Jesus said... “Go sell all you have and come follow me.” The rich man turned and walked away sadly.**

**“Watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”**

**“It easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”**

After I read that last verse about the rich and entering the kingdom of Heaven...I thought, *“Huh, that seems crazy.”* And uncomfortable...knowing that I’m part the richest 10% of people on this planet, I wasn’t sure I liked that verse.

So I thought, surely Jesus didn’t mean that. Maybe the original language would clarify it for me. So I did what Pastors do and I looked up the Greek word for RICH, the word is **“plousin”**...and do you know what rich means in the original language...yep...RICH!

Now, one of the things I want you to notice is that Jesus is not legalistic about this. He doesn’t say how big your television can be or that you shouldn’t own 8 pairs of shoes or an expensive car. If he’d have known about Maurice’s, he may have forbidden that...but...I’m just kidding. He’s doesn’t give specific rules about consumerism, wealth and possessions.

We need to be so careful about getting legalistic in our approach these disciplines. We talked about this last week in relation to Sabbath. What qualifies as work and what doesn’t? What kinds of things are appropriate to do during our time of Sabbath rest and what aren’t?

Simplicity falls into a similar category. We must guard against becoming legalistic about simplicity. How much stuff can own and still be ok?

Notice, Jesus does not call money or wealth or material possessions evil. Jesus did not ask everyone he met to sell everything they own. God intends that we have

adequate material provision. Simplicity is not about forced poverty... simplicity isn't mostly about "having nothing", it's about choosing to have less.

But most of us, "as long as you can afford it, it's fair game." That's why Jesus words are challenging to us. We don't really give any thought to "choosing to have less when could have more" as a practical application of following Jesus.

Richard Foster (pg. 85) **"The majority of Christians have never wrestled with the problem of simplicity, conveniently ignoring Jesus' many words on the subject. The reason is simple: this Discipline directly challenges our vested interests in an affluent life-style."**

Jesus statements on consumerism, rather than legalistic rules are intended as general statements about how humans were created. "You can't serve God and money." That's just the way you were made. It's not mostly about how many pairs of shoes you have. It's about the grip that those shoes (money, wealth, possessions) have on us. For Jesus it's about keeping possessions in proper perspective.

**"A carefree unconcern for possessions is what marks life in the Kingdom."**

(Foster)

Jesus goal is to free us from consumerism, not by giving us everything we want, but by teaching us to value what really matters in life. What were really created for... loving God and loving others....that's where abundant life is. That's why simplicity is if want to follow Jesus in a consumer drenched world.

For Jesus, you are transformed on the inside, by living the life of Jesus, such that possession and money and wealth are no longer the driving influence in your life.

Richard Foster says it best: **Simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward life-style.**

And think about this...it's not just that Jesus spoke this way about throwing off consumerism...he lived this way. The story of Jesus flies in the face of our consumer culture. Jesus is the ultimate hero of literature...but his heroism is of a totally different kind. Jesus is the hero...

**Philippians 2 - Who being in very nature God, did not regard equality with God as something to be used to his advantage, but made himself nothing, taking the nature of a servant.”**

Or as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians...

**2 Corinthians 8 - <sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.**

The Gospel story, the story of Jesus, the One who your life is to imitate...is the story of the One richest of all, becoming a peasant, born to an unwed Jewish girl, in a backwoods no-name town, in a stable and laid in an animal feeding trough.

When you go seeking the life of Jesus...this is the lifestyle you find.

Consumerism is when possessions and wealth become the priority in life. Simplicity is the practice that helps us to keep our priorities straight. Jesus knows that possessions and wealth never satisfy. And if they become the focus of your life, you'll miss out on the abundant life he wants you to experience.

Part of ruthlessly eliminating hurry...will be rooting out, fighting our cultural tendency towards consumption. So let's get practical...

### **III. What simplicity looks like for us today.**

And I want to be really careful here again. Remember legalism is not the answer.

We are all different. Different backgrounds and opportunities. Convicted differently. Simplicity may look different for various persons. We don't compare ourselves to others. Just was pretty clear on this as well... Jesus said... "Do not judge." In other words worry about yourself.

But I want all of us to challenge ourselves on what this might look like. Because I fear far too many of us have never been challenged by the call to simplicity and we have simply let ourselves off the hook. And if you never wrestle with the call of simplicity you will never take seriously the lifestyle of Jesus and you will quickly be consumed by our consumer culture.

So here are a few of my suggestions to try and you might have way more creative ideas. But challenge yourself in this area, in ways that make sense to you and your family and life situation.

The best phrase I could come up with to help us think about practicing simplicity in our world is: **Choose less when you could have more.**

### **A. Choosing less with your possessions:**

Choose less in your **wardrobe**. Crazy thought...every hanger you own doesn't need a piece of clothing on it. Every drawer in your dresser doesn't have to have something in it. Now, I know you'll find this hard to believe but I'm not the most stylish person in the world. But there is a new fashion craze in our world that I think in many ways can be beneficial, or the idea behind it...called a **capsule wardrobe**. Idea is editing your wardrobe down the essentials of clothing...just your favorites. Consumer culture often leads to drawers and closets stuffed full of clothes and many we probably just don't wear. I was talking to our kids about this the other day. And

little Keagan took it to heart. He came walking up with all of his underwear...what deems as non-essential clothing for a 7 yr old.

Choose less in your **budget**. If possible, look at your monthly bill payments...see if there's a payment you could eliminate or downsize. (Or try it for a while and see what happens.) Obviously I'm not talking about your mortgage or electric bill. I'm thinking more along the lines of the wants that you've started to believe are needs, eliminate Netflix or Amazon Prime. Be careful about when and how you "splurge".

Choose less with your **phone**. Comer has some really great things to say about this...he suggests turning your Smartphone into a dumb phone. He's basically talking about how our phones complicate life.

- Disable all notifications so that your phone isn't constantly calling you back.
- Take email off your phone. (If possible.)
- Take social media off your phone and only use it on your desk top, and schedule times during the week when you will do that, so you don't get sucked into the social media vortex that's on your hand held device.
- Eliminate several apps...especially ones that aren't helping you become the person you want to be and are causing you to waste a lot of time.
- Set your phone to grayscale mode...Comer says this does something nuerobiologically, related to decreasing dopamine rush when you pick up your phone! I did this a couple of weeks ago. Every time I pick up my phone I'm kind of reminded...do I really need to look at my phone right now.
- Parent your phone. Pick a specific time when you are putting it to bed at night and then don't sleep with it by your head and don't turn it on until your morning devotions are complete.

## **B. Choose less in your schedule:**

*(Indebted to Comer and his brilliant closing chapter on slowness for most of these practical suggestions!)*

Instead of adding another event to your schedule. Choose not to. Leave time available, free, and open. Your kids don't have to be involved in everything, and they don't have to have something going on every season of the year. The idea here is "slow down your body, slow down your life." Train yourself to slow down.

### **Drive the speed limit.**

Revolutionary new idea...if the sign says 45 MPH, do it! Train your brain to detox from the dopamine rush of a life of speed.

The only time most of us ever did...was during the driving test with the instructor looking over our shoulder. But learning to slow down, take a deep breathe and rest while you drive is good for your soul, resistance against hurry sickness.

### **Instead going the shortest way to work, take a different path.**

Drive 10 mins out of the way, through the mountains, or by a park or drive downtown.

### **Purposefully walk slower.**

You'd be surprised how this practice might influence your life. Jenny is really good for me in this regard. I have long legs. I like to move fast. Jenny has short legs and likes to stroll. The other night Jenny and I were out picking up some groceries, and it doesn't happen often, but it was just the two of us. When I shop, I'm on a mission. I'm in and out, shortest path to the items I need. Grab 'em go. Jenny said, "*Let's walk down this aisle.*" I said, "*What do we need in this aisle?*" She said, "*Nothing, I just like to see what they have.*" My first thought was "*What, that's insane. Just walk to see what they have.*" I was thinking "*Why walk, just to see what they have? What a waste of my time.*" I was agitated, ancey....you know what I mean. I started Willard's words, ruthlessly eliminate hurry...I thought. "*I began to think yeah, why*

*not just slow down, walk to see what they have and just enjoy being with Jenny.”*  
That’s a walk worth taking. Purposefully walk slower and enjoy life.

**When you’re checking out at the grocery store,** every once in a while **look for the longest line and get in that line.**

In our efficiency based culture this seems to make no sense. Getting in a longer line, is purposefully wasting time. But just stand and be with God. Thank him for people. For grocery stores. For an abundance of food. For convenience. For life.

**Cook your own food.**

Engrained in culture is something called “fast-food.” And it’s a good thing. We are glad for it. But real food, and truly, healthier food, takes a little TLC. Slow down enough to cook your own food. Make it part of your life-style. It will be worth your while!

**Single-task instead of multi-tasking.**

I may get some hate-mail on this one. Part of what causes our hurriedness is that we have started to believe we can do more than what we actually can. But in many ways the concept of multi-tasking is a fraud and unrealistic. We are finite humans, with finite attention, space, time and physical body limitations.

Multi-tasking often amounts to doing a lot of things hurriedly and poorly.

Brueggeman writes, **“Multitasking is the drive to be more than we are, to control more than we do, to extend our power and effectiveness. Such practice yields a divided self, with full attention given to nothing.”**

So slow down, do one thing at a time and be fully present and focused on that one thing.

Now if you're looking at some of these ideas and thinking "*man, that seems hard. Or that would never work.*" One, don't get legalistic, be creative and come up with your own ideas. But challenge yourself. If it's too easy, you're probably not making progress. Jesus said, "*unless you take up your cross and follow me, you can't be my disciple.*"

Dallas Willard has this great line, he says "**The cost of discipleship is high, but the cost of non-discipleship is even higher.**"

Yes, it will cost you to follow Jesus in his way of simplicity in our consumer culture. But it will cost you far more not to.

There's more to life than increasing speed and buying more stuff. Simplicity is the discipline, where we learn and train ourselves to remember that "all our stuff, money, wealth, possessions, even our time" belong to God. And it is simply on loan to us. Don't fly past it and miss out.

### **Benediction:**

2000 years ago, Jesus started a community of followers. A group of people who decided Jesus was Lord, Master...choosing to take up their cross and follow the lifestyle of Jesus. That's why we are here today. But there are threats to the community. And in our world today, the great threat is hurry. It's all around us. It's destroying us, down to the core of our identity. We must call it out. We recognize it in our own lives. We must ruthlessly eliminate it by following Jesus...in solitude, Sabbath and simplicity.

If you want the life of Jesus...contentment, rest, joy, peace...a life free from hurry sickness...you must practice the lifestyle of Jesus.