

Week 1 | Recognizing the Need for Simplicity

Overview

For the first week of this study, the focus is on recognizing or remembering the need for simplicity not only in your life from a spiritual, physical, and mental sense, but also on a global perspective as we are ambassadors of Christ's body to the world.

Weekly Readings and Media

If you haven't see it already, I encourage you to watch the *The Story of Stuff*, which is a short 20-minute which takes viewers on a provocative and eye-opening tour of the real costs of our consumer driven culture—from resource extraction to iPod incineration. This is specifically linked the United States, but I think it is applicable to other industrialized countries that are striving for prosperity and the "American Dream". The film can be downloaded at the following address:

<http://www.storyofstuff.com/film.php>

For those of you familiar with the Czech or Slovak languages, it can be downloaded at the following address with Czech subtitles:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8527248226048886347>.

If you have seen the film already, it is still encouraged to watch it again.

It is also recommended that you read the attached excerpt from Will Samson's book *Enough*. The chapter is entitled "People Consumed By Stuff".

Throughout the week, read the following text, at least a couple of times but as often as you want, from Mathew 6: 25-33, which is taken from The Message.

"If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds. "Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them. "If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God's *giving*. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met."

Assignment

After watching (or re-watching) the film *The Story of Stuff*, and reading the excerpt from the book as well as the text in Mathew, write about how this affected you or how they provoked thought around the idea of simplicity. What stood out to you in what you experienced? What made you uncomfortable? And, how do you feel God wants you to respond to this? What do you need to leave in God's hands to help you grow? Change? Understand? Cope with the problems highlighted in the texts and the film?

Included in this week is also the daily prayer and the weekly journaling.