

Week 5 | Part 2: Pursuing Simplicity in Our Commitments

Overview

One of the problems with our modern age is that we are driven to do more and more. In this mad rush we don't have sufficient time to think about and act on what is really important for in our lives and we are deprived of time for what is essential to nourish our soul and to cultivate our spiritual growth. For the most part, this is what we experience as people in this culture of overcommitted, overstressed, overworked lives.

But, are we really overcommitted in our lives?

In reality, we are not overcommitted we are under committed. How can this be you ask? Very simply, if we were really committed to God and time that nourishes the soul, we would never be in a position to be overcommitted to anything else. It is our under commitment to God and to things with deeper meaning and spiritual importance that causes the over commitment to everyone and everything outside of this.

We have to change this anxiety-ridden picture.

This week we will evaluate our commitments so that we can better understand where our time is given. As a result of this, we will have a higher level of awareness to discern the real meaning of events in our lives and when to take action and when to let go. This intentional change of committing our lives more to things that ultimately matter and less to other time-consuming worldly commitments will not be easy, *and* it will not happen in a week's time. As Linda Breen in her book *Choosing Simplicity*, Linda Breen Pierce summarizes this process nicely. She says:

"Simplifying [our] life is not accomplished in a few weeks, or even a few months. Many people need an initial period of three to five years to make basic changes toward a life of simplicity. And you never really get there. Simplicity is not a destination but a life-long process, a way of looking at life, a form of mindful living that will take on different shapes as you go through life. Recognize that what may be a life of simplicity for you now might look radically different in ten years. Refinements and adjustments are ongoing."

It is with this long-term focus described by Pierce that we try to actively move towards simplifying our commitments so that we can find true purpose, contentment, spiritual growth, and nourishment for our soul in the beautiful lives God has given us.

Weekly Readings and Media

Please watch the following short film highlighting the business of our lives. It is titled "Where does all the time go? And, while it doesn't deal specifically with all of the commitments that consume our time, it does stimulate our thinking about how much time we spend in our lives in certain areas. Enjoy!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjsNj6grLeo>

Read the attached chapter from the book *The Cost of Discipleship* by German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Read this chapter while evaluating your current lifestyle and commitments.

If you have time, read the attached chapter titled "Time" from the book *The Simple Living Guide* by Janet Luhrs. It's a longer reading, but provides some good ideas on how to simplify your time.

Assignments

This week's assignment is only one activity, which will combine the reflection and readings for pursuing simplicity in our commitments (all the weekly readings, media and assignments from week 4 and 5). The activity is to summarize your thoughts through writing about how your current commitments in life either positively or negatively contribute to what your life is about, and write about how you can make changes to align your choices and commitments to what your life is about.

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

Idea for More In-Depth Practice

1) Evaluate your current commitments and ask yourself:

- Is this activity or task enhancing my life or consuming it?
- Does this activity or task reflect who I am and what I value?
- Am I genuinely excited and passionate about what I am doing, or has my life become about shoulds?
- Will this activity or task help me get where I want to go?
- If I could live my life any way I wanted, what would it look like?
- Am I staying busy and hectic so I don't have to look at those personal issues that are difficult to address?

2) Reflect on the following list and answer the following questions.

1. Seek God. Our limitations remind us how much we need Him.
2. Take control. Don't blame others for your overload.
3. Say "no." Prayerfully consider every request.
4. Set boundaries to protect your family time.
5. Seek solitude in order to sift through your daily problems and brainstorm solutions.
6. Ax the guilt. No one can do it all.
7. Refuse to compare your weaknesses with someone else's strengths.
8. Decide what things matter most in light of eternity.
9. Realize that kids will someday be grown up. Enjoy them now.
10. Spend quality time with your spouse. Encourage each other.
11. Don't get caught up in the "extracurricular activities" trap. There are many successful adults who never played t-ball or took piano lessons.
12. Realize the values children learn from down time and home life will set a foundation for their future households.
13. Get a good night's sleep.

- In light of your current choices and commitments, which ones are you focusing on and which ones are being neglected.
- How is your life, physically, mentally, and spiritually speaking, being nourished by you choosing in your to make this a priority in your commitments?
- Why are you neglecting others, and what would change if you chose to make these also a priority?
- What would it take to start changing your mindset and choices to incorporate these into your life both now and in the future?