

# Less Is More

SIMPLE LIFE #1 – Pastor Gary Combs – January 7, 2024 – Matthew 4:18-22

**INTRO:** Good morning church! We're starting a new series today called: "SIMPLE LIFE: How Simple Commitments Create Great Life Change." Doesn't that sound attractive? People are starving for simplicity because the world has become so overwhelming and complicated.

You see, everything in your life takes up space. Whether it's mental space, physical space, relational space or calendar space, you only have so much room. Everything you own, everything you do, and everyone you spend time with costs you something. Simplifying your life will give you more time, space, and energy. The more space you have, the freer you'll be to truly enjoy everything.

But how do you make more space for a better life? That's what today's sermon, entitled Less Is More, is about. It's about making space in your life for what really matters, what really brings a better life.



**ILL:** There are a lot of books and blogs out there about how to simplify your life. There are even websites set up to help people simplify their life, like [bemorewithless.com](http://bemorewithless.com) or [becomingminimalist.com](http://becomingminimalist.com). You'll find articles on sites like these entitled "24 Ways to Simplify Your Life in 2024," or "The 10 Most Important Things to Simplify in Your Life." Here's an example from some of these lists:

1. Reduce your screen time (phone & TV).
2. Declutter your closet.
3. Reduce your wardrobe to a few versatile items
4. Create a morning routine. (Meditate, read, journal)
5. Process email only twice a day.
6. Go to bed early.
7. Make room in your calendar for rest.
8. Create a weekly meal plan.
9. Automate your finances.
10. Set your clothes out the night before.
11. Make your lunch for the next day the night before.
12. Make time to catch up with an old friend.
13. Just say no.
14. Consolidate and payoff debt.
15. Go for a walk outside.
16. Do things at home as much as possible
17. Don't get caught up in other people's drama.
18. Focus on a simple, but healthy, eating plan.
19. For every new item you buy, set two free.
20. Focus on one thing at a time.
21. Want what you have, not what you don't.
22. Take a breath and slow down!

**Need:** Now, you're probably thinking, "Wow, these sound like good ideas, but also a lot of work! I'm already overwhelmed, now you're giving me a to-do-list?" No, while these are all good practical tips for simplifying your life, what I want to offer you is something more simple.

**Trans:** What if there was one singular and simple secret for having less useless and harmful clutter in your life and having more space for a better life? Well, there is...

**BODY:** In the book of Matthew, Jesus called His disciples by simply saying, "Follow me." Jesus called them to a relationship with Him that would lead them into full and abundant life, a better life. Of course, this meant leaving many other things behind. Jesus makes this same simple call to us. How do we answer His call? The text gives **three simple commitments** that lead to a better life in following Jesus.

**Read text:** Matthew 4:18-22 (ESV) <sup>18</sup> While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." <sup>20</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup> And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. <sup>22</sup> Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

## THREE SIMPLE COMMITMENTS THAT LEAD TO A BETTER LIFE:

### 1. Reorder your life around being a fully devoted follower of Jesus.

**EXP:** (19) "Follow ME." This is the first commitment. Don't let the loud call of the urgent matters of the day muffle the quiet but important call of Jesus to follow Him. Jesus calls us not to a religion, but to a relationship, not to a philosophy, but to a person. Jesus calls us to Himself! Answering this call, we receive a new identity! We say, "I'm a follower of Jesus! That's who I am."

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“**Follow ME**” (19) (Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, *deute opisō mou*) - imperative; Lit., “come follow after me.”

“The disciple is one who, intent on becoming Christ-like and so dwelling in his faith and practice, systematically and progressively rearranges his affairs to that end.” — Dallas Willard

**ARG:** **How did the apostle Paul describe himself in his letters? He had a new identity in Jesus!**

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus...

2 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus...

Galatians 2:20 (ESV) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**ILL:** Where do you find your true identity? Identity is a big issue today. Who am I? Building on my reading of Tim Keller’s work on identity, I’ve come to see three different ways people try to answer the question of identity. What Keller called the traditional view was that people got their identity from their family, their village, those around them told them who they were. Today, what Keller called the modern view is that you look within yourself to discover who you are. However, the Christian view is to look to Jesus for identity. I see these three as 1) Outward, 2) Inward, and 3) Upward. Where do you look? Let’s look up to Jesus!

**APP:** What does it look like to reorder your life around being a fully devoted follower of Jesus? First, confess Him as your Lord and Savior. Then, decide to reorder your days and weeks around beginning them in looking to Jesus, praying, reading His Word, worshiping Him. Start your days and weeks by having a daily quiet time and being faithful in worshiping Jesus together with other believers every Sunday.

## 2. Make room for healthy relationships with other followers of Jesus.

**EXP:** (12) When Jesus said, “Follow me,” to whom was He speaking. Context: Peter, Andrew, James and John. Following Jesus meant you had to hang out with His disciples. Can you imagine Peter saying, “I want to follow you Lord, but I can’t stand that guy Judas. Do I have to hang out with him?” Plus, He used the plural: “**You**” (19) (ὑμεῖς, *humas*) (plural) - you, you all. Southern: “I will make y’all fishers of men.”

We hear people say, “I love Jesus, but I don’t like church or I don’t need other Christians.” Or maybe they convince themselves that they don’t have time for fellowship. But following Jesus, we need one another.

**ARG:** **Following Jesus, we have become members of His body and of one another.**

Ephesians 4:25 (ESV) ...for we are members one of another.

**It’s important that we make room for being together with other believers.**

Acts 2:44 (ESV) And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

**ILL:** **5 Benefits of Healthy Relationships** — Dr. Sheehan Fisher, <https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/5-benefits-of-healthy-relationships>

1. **Less stress.** Having healthy relationships is linked to less production of cortisol, a stress hormone.
2. **Better healing.** A little emotional support goes a long way toward helping a person recover from a procedure or illness.
3. **Healthier behaviors.** It’s a lot easier to take on healthy behaviors when you surround yourself with people who are doing the same.
4. **Greater sense of purpose.** Having healthy relationships can give a person a sense of well-being and purpose. In fact, it’s possible that having a sense of purpose can actually add years to your life.
5. **Longer life.** Speaking of adding years to your life, research suggests that having social ties can increase longevity.

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In Dan Buettner's book, *Blue Zones: Secrets for Living Longer*, he identified areas in the world where people lived longer and better into their 90s and 100s. He calls them "blue zones." He and his team of researchers identified nine factors that these people had in common. It was no surprise that factors like physical exercise and healthy diet were among the nine. But what was surprising was that the most dominant factors for determining a longer and better life was having a life purpose, engagement in spirituality or religion, engagement in family life, and engagement in social life. Indeed, five of the nine factors involved engagement with other people in community.

**APP:** Will you make room in your life for healthy relationships with other followers of Jesus? We have two practical ways to help you get started in this: 1) Join a Community Group. 2) Sign up for Life on Life Discipleship. Also, you might choose one of those practical tips for simplifying your life, like what we all clean out our closets and donate to Goodwill or post it on Have a Need. Post a photo of your clean closet!

### 3. Pursue the purpose that Christ has for your life.

**EXP:** (19-20) Following Jesus, He gives us a new identity, a new sense of belonging, a family, and He gives us a new purpose. He says, "I will make you fishers of men."

"I will make" (19) (ποιέω, *poieō*) (future, active) - to make, to be the cause, to make ready, to prepare. It is Jesus who prepares us for this new purpose. He gives us this purpose: to tell others about Him!

"Immediately" (20) (εὐθέως, *eutheōs*) - straightway, immediately. There is an urgency to this calling.

"Left" (20) (ἀφίημι, *aphiēmi*) - to let go, give up, to leave behind. Saying yes to Jesus, we say no to others.

**ARG:** Our new purpose is to "lift up" Jesus and glorify Him and He will draw people to Himself.

John 12:32 (ESV) And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

**ILL:** As the body of Christ, we are given spiritual gifts and functions of service within the body.

Romans 12:4-8 (ESV) <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup> the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

**APP:** Are you pursuing the purpose Christ has for your life today? He made you for a purpose! You were made to glorify God and to lift up Jesus with your life, with your time, your talent and your treasure. Are you living out this purpose today? Are you inviting people to come and follow Jesus with you?

**CONCLUSION:** Are you tired of the busyness and confusion of this life? Are you exhausted and running on empty? Why not come to Jesus? Why not answer His call to follow Him today?

Will you commit to...

- 1) Reorder your life around being a fully devoted follower of Jesus?
- 2) Make room for healthy relationships with other followers of Jesus?
- 3) Pursue the purpose that Christ has for your life?

Let's pray.