



practicing the way
simplicity

Introduction

Overview

People don't usually experience significant growth or development without big and affecting change. When we allow the impact of change to reverberate in our thinking and feeling, we catch a glimpse of what could be a better way, and we are empowered to move in a new direction. When one learns an instrument, it's the first chord rightly played that promises the possibility of mastery. When one begins to make radical decisions about diet and exercise, it's this palpable sense of change in the body: This feels better.

Anyone can just get rid of excess junk. It's not that hard, and it doesn't really change much. The invitation Jesus extends to his disciples isn't for more space in their garage or a more hip, minimal apartment. Jesus calls his apprentices to freedom from the tyranny of excess.

Most of us have things we hold in a closed fist rather than an open palm. Most of us have things with which the idea of parting seems uncomfortable, even scary. If we allow God's Spirit to pry open our trembling hands—to experience and feel the letting go—we might see our first glimpses of the freedom Jesus offers. Before we explore the practice of simplicity in detail, let's begin with an experiment.

Practice

This week begin to list the possessions with which you feel most anxious attachment. If you're not sure, think through the things you have and ask yourself, "What if I got rid of _____?" If you feel a strong reluctance at the idea, that's probably it.

It might be:

- Clothes
- Shoes
- Accessories
- Home furnishings
- Books
- Records
- CDs
- DVDs / Blu-rays
- Video games

- Jewelry
- Appliances
- Kitchenware
- Kid's toys

Relax. No one is going to guilt you into getting rid of something you want to keep. But as we begin this practice, the invitation is to reach into your particular area of attachment and consider parting with something. You might sell it, donate it, or give it away.

If a wardrobe is your thing, how would you feel if you parted with a few outfits you like? What if you gave up some records in your collection? Some books on your shelf? A few pairs of shoes?

Start small. Take note of how the process makes you feel. Follow that feeling through the proceeding practices.

Closing Questions

1. How could parting with something you want to keep affect you differently than getting rid of something you don't really care about?
2. Can you already list the kinds of possessions with which you feel a certain attachment?
3. When you consider the idea of parting with something you think you want to keep, how do you feel? Why?

Close in prayer