

simple

the more or less life

Week 1 - More or Less Better

Monday – Luke 12:13-21, Matthew 5:24

The Parable of the Rich Fool. We are going to be reading this parable together throughout the week. *God's image bearers have the power to be peacemakers.* In these two stories, Jesus is pulling himself out of the situation and calling people to go and make things right in their relationships, then come back to him. So often we pray for God to fix a relationship that has gone wrong. God's way to answer that prayer is so often for God to empower us to be the peacemaker. What relationship comes to mind when reading these two passages? What can you do to be a peacemaker in that relationship? Pray for God to give you the strength to go and be a peacemaker.

Tuesday – Luke 12:15, Ecclesiastes 5:10

More equals better? Our American culture leads us to believe that more equals better. However, when we experience more, so often we just want even more. Possessions and money turn into this endless path we keep traveling on with no dead end. This is what it means to be driven by greed. God calls us to watch out for greed in our own lives and to be on guard against it constantly. Write out ways in which you are being driven by greed now. What are ways that you can consistently evaluate yourself against greed in the future?

Wednesday – Luke 12:16

You are the rich man. Many of us read this story and say it has nothing to do with me because I am not rich. However, our idea of wealth and Jesus' idea of wealth are two different ideas. We picture the rich as people who have everything we WANT. Jesus pictures the rich as those who have everything they NEED. The fact that you are reading this means you have had what you needed to get to today. Make it a point to write out everything you have or have had to get you to this point. Then pray to God a prayer of gratitude for every resource he has given to you.

Thursday – Luke 12:16-19, Philippians 2:1-11

What do you do with your blessings? The rich man in the story receives a blessing and the first question he asks is, 'What will this do for me?' Jesus Christ came to teach us that our first thought should never be, 'What will this do for me?' but rather, 'What can this do for others?' We are all the body of Christ. This means when we are blessed, our call is to bless others. Christ had everything but emptied himself so that we could inherit everything. Now it's our job to empty ourselves so that others could inherit everything. One way to practice this is to look for opportunities to be generous five times a month. Watch how God uses you to be God's image in the world through these acts of generosity.

Friday – Luke 12:16-21

Being rich towards God is being rich towards others. In the end of this story, we see that the reason this guy was a fool was because he put his purpose, his faith, his means to an end in the possessions. He thought his purpose was to get as much money and possessions as possible. He thought if he put his faith in his possessions, it would bring him joy. But at the end of the story, God informs him that his possessions led to nothing but death. The only way to experience a rich life is to be rich toward God and the only way to be rich toward God is to be rich toward others. This drives us toward a life of contentment in what we have. This also drives within us a desire to have less which leads to having more to bless others with. How are you going to be rich toward God? Thank God five times a day to experience gratitude toward what you have.

Week 2 - More or Less Free

Monday – Luke 18:18-25, Matthew 7:7

The Rich and the Kingdom of God. We are going to be reading this parable together throughout the week. *Ask God your questions.* In the story of the rich man, we see him ask Jesus a question. This is good, this is healthy. He asks in an authentic, sincere way that is pleasing to Jesus. This is exactly what God calls us to do. God calls us to ask questions because when we ask, seek, and knock to find truth, we will find life that really is life. Then, where we find life is where we find God. Today, write out some of your questions. Write out some of your doubts or things you wrestle with. Then, continue to ask, seek, and knock and see where God guides you.

Tuesday – Luke 18:18, Deuteronomy 32:7

The grand ol' question. The rich man asked Jesus a powerful question. The question the rich man asked looks different in today's world. The question today might look like this, 'What is the purpose of life?' Whether you are religious or not, everyone asks this question either to themselves or to those close to them. Find time this week to ask five people that you look up to or respect this question. After asking them this question, then ask them why they believe that is the purpose of life. Was it their upbringing? Was it from the Bible? Was it from experience? After asking them the questions, ask yourself the same two questions and write it out. Meditate on this throughout the week because what you believe your purpose in life is drives almost everything else you do.

Wednesday – Luke 18:18-23, Matthew 16:24-26

Following Jesus often leads to self-denial. The rich man genuinely wants to follow Jesus and Jesus genuinely wants the rich man to follow him. But the rich man doesn't end up following Jesus. Why? Because he was a wealthy man and Jesus wanted him to give up his wealth. Jesus is always molding and shaping us. We are constantly being sanctified by God growing in His grace, but this requires self-denial. For this man, self-denial meant giving up his wealth. For Jesus Christ, self-denial meant becoming a human and dying on a cross. For you, God is guiding you towards self-denial. What is God asking you to sacrifice? What is the barrier between your desire to follow Jesus Christ and following him?

Thursday – Luke 18:18-23

Do more possessions free you up for your life's purpose? Last week, we discussed the false myth that having more possessions would equal a better life. This week, Jesus shares with us the false idea of more possessions giving you freedom in life. With this wealthy man, Jesus is saying your possessions are what tie you down in life. So often, we have so many possessions that we become enslaved to our possessions rather than freed by them. Our life purpose becomes the possessions rather than the possessions going towards our life purpose. How can you free yourself from becoming tied down by possessions? How would having less possessions help or hurt your mission of leading people to an active faith in Jesus Christ?

Friday – Luke 18:18-25

Don't let material possessions define the trajectory of your life. When we plan out the trajectory of our lives, we often define it by material possessions. When possessions become the way we define our lives, it makes the way we collect those possessions the primary focus. That is why in the American culture we have so many people living to work rather than working to live. Work is a God given thing; however, it should not be the thing that defines everything else. How can you reimagine a life not based on possessions, but based on the things you listed earlier this week as the true purposes of life? Does that dream look like working less? Does it look like retiring now to volunteer more? Does it look like no longer moving based on jobs? Does it look like changing your profession making less money, but doing something you're passionate about and created for? Start to imagine your life based on why God created you rather than what possessions you want and see what new dreams you have.

Week 3 - More or Less the Life I Want

Monday – Luke 12:22-34

Do not worry. We are going to be reading this parable together throughout the week. Jesus tells his disciples not to worry when it comes to the worries of their day. For them this would have been food and clothes to wear. What we today call the essentials. Many of us however do not have to worry about the essentials. Our worries are much different. Today, make a list of all the things you worry about. Then, say to God, "Here are my worries God." Go through the list with God. Not asking him to do anything but rather just listen.

Tuesday – Luke 12:22-26

Why do we worry? The first century Jews worried about food because they wanted to live another day. They worried about clothes because first off, it was socially unacceptable to not wear clothes. Second, clothes protected their skin from the sun and kept them warm when it was cold. Yet, Jesus tells them not to worry for nothing good will come out of worrying about these two things. Today, go over your list from yesterday. For everything you listed, ask yourself why you worry about each concern. Then ask God what good would come out of each worry.

Wednesday – Luke 12:27-31

Trust in the Lord. Jesus tells his disciples not to worry and then he goes to the heart of their worry. They worry because they do not trust God. Trusting God creates a peace that can withstand. A peace that can transcend everything. Trusting in God does not mean you get everything you want. Trusting in God is looking through an eternal lens realizing God has given you everything you need. God will always hold you close and never let go. When you begin to trust, you embrace suffering just as much as you embrace the joyful moments. Name a time God has got you through a time of suffering. Name a moment you experienced God through a time of joy. Are you more like Christ after going through these things? How?

Thursday – Luke 22:32

What is the Kingdom of God? Many of us pursue money, possessions, kingdoms of this world because of what we believe it provides us. We believe it provides us power, security, freedom, and love. However, Jesus says that God didn't give us possessions or money but rather God's kingdom. What is God's kingdom? How do we experience the Kingdom of God? Why did God give us the kingdom?

Friday – Luke 22:33-34

Seek first the kingdom of God. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist tradition, lived differently because of seeking first the kingdom of God. His rule of life was to save all he could and give all he could. When he was at Oxford, he had an income of 30 British pounds a year. He lived on twenty-eight pounds and gave two pounds away. When his income increased to sixty pounds, ninety pounds and one hundred twenty pounds per year, he still lived on twenty-eight pounds and gave the rest away. John Wesley lived differently because he chose to seek first the kingdom of God. How can your life look different because you seek first the kingdom of God rather than money and possessions?