

SIMPLICITY & GENEROSITY



SPIRITUAL FORMATION SERIES









How much is enough?

The Normalization of Excess:

- We consume 2x number of goods as 50 years ago
- Size of American home has tripled - 300K items
- Home organization is \$8B industry
- 1 out of 10 Americans rents off-site storage
- Average American buys 68 garments/year, and throws away 80 pounds/year
- Average woman owns 30 outfits
- 98% workers in garment industry don't making living wage

We never intentionally set out to buy more than we need or spend more than we make. But here's the problem: Mindless consumption always turns into excessive consumption. And excess consumption results in more stress, more burden, more pressure to impress, more envy, less financial freedom, less generosity, less contentment—and I haven't even begun to mention the environmental impact.

Joshua Becker

Upward mobility often ends not in satisfaction and peace, but in exhaustion, disappointment, and emptiness.

Robert Roberts

I increased my achievements. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made gardens and parks for myself and planted every kind of fruit tree in them. I constructed reservoirs of water for myself from which to irrigate a grove of flourishing trees. I acquired male and female servants and had slaves who were born in my house. I also owned many herds of cattle and flocks, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. I also amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I gathered male and female singers for myself, and many concubines, the delights of men. So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me. All that my eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself any pleasure, for I took pleasure in all my struggles. This was my reward for all my struggles. When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2

Don't wear yourself out to get rich; stop giving your attention to it.

Proverbs 23:4

Contemporary culture is plagued by the passion to possess. The unreasoned boast abounds that the good life is found in accumulation, that more is better. Indeed, we often accept this notion without question, with the result that the lust for affluence in contemporary society has become psychotic: it has completely lost touch with reality. Furthermore, the pace of the modern world accentuates our sense of being fractured and fragmented. We feel strained, hurried, breathless. The complexity of rushing to achieve and accumulate more and more threatens frequently to overwhelm us; it seems there is no escape from the rat race. Christian simplicity frees us from this modern mania. It brings sanity to our compulsive extravagance, and peace to our frantic spirit.

Richard Foster



CONTEXT

This is why I tell you: Don't worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying? And why do you worry about clothes? Learn how the wildflowers of the field grow: they don't labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these! If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won't He do much more for you—you of little faith? So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'

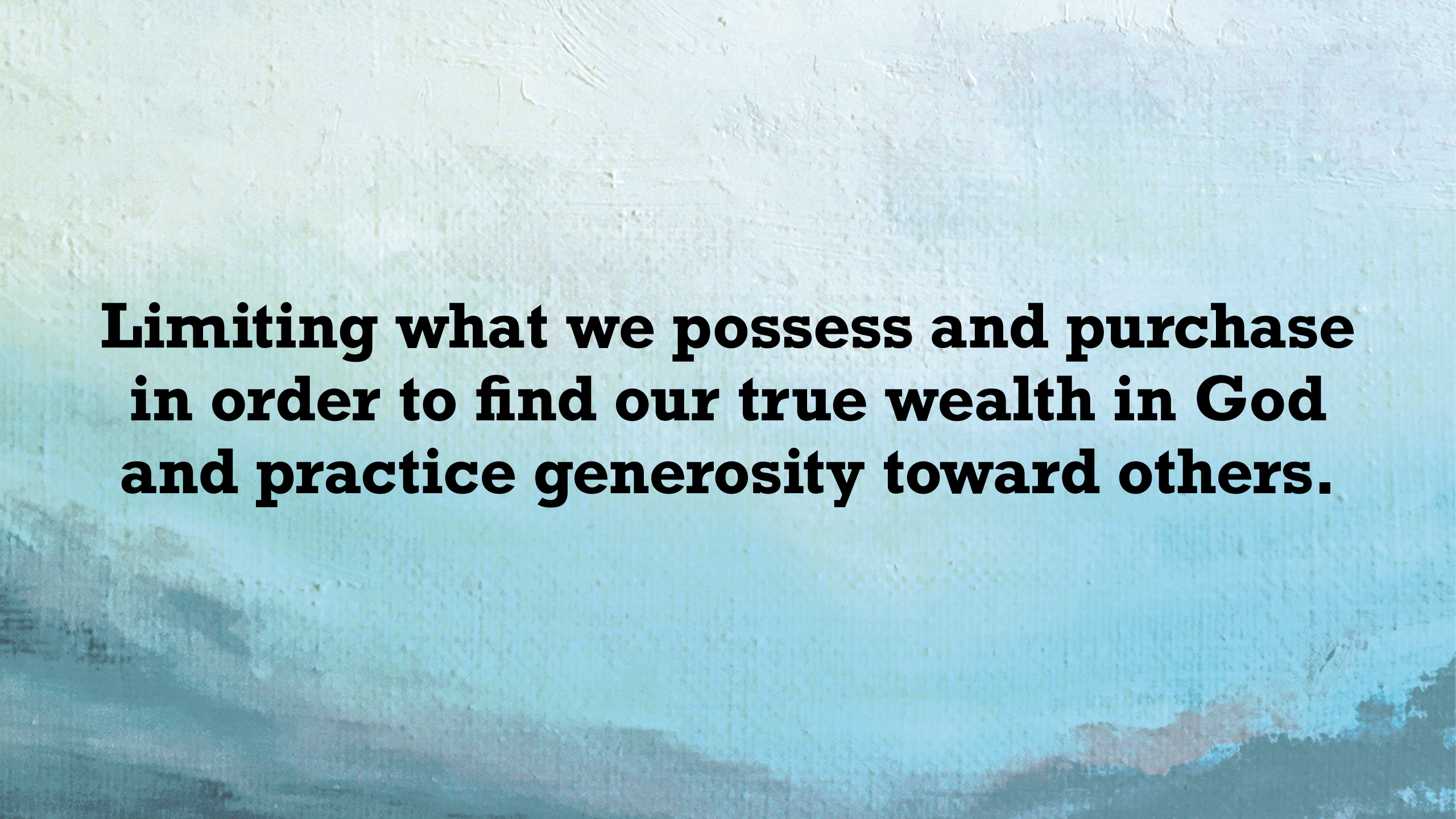
Matthew
6:25-31

Come now, you rich people! Weep and wail over the miseries that are coming on you. Your wealth is ruined and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your silver and gold are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You stored up treasure in the last days! Look! The pay that you withheld from the workers who reaped your fields cries out, and the outcry of the harvesters has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived luxuriously on the land and have indulged yourselves. You have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. You have condemned—you have murdered—the righteous man; he does not resist you.

James 5:1-6



What is Simplicity of Stuff?



**Limiting what we possess and purchase
in order to find our true wealth in God
and practice generosity toward others.**

Keep falsehood and deceitful words far from me. Give me neither poverty nor wealth; feed me with the food I need.

Proverbs 30:8

Also, the women are to dress themselves in modest clothing, with decency and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel, but with good works, as is proper for women who affirm that they worship God.

**1 Timothy
2:9-10**

Your beauty should not consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold ornaments or fine clothes. Instead, it should consist of what is inside the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very valuable in God's eyes.

1 Peter 3:3-4



How do we Simplify our Stuff?



CONTENTMENT



Inward Contentment with God

Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, I will never leave you or abandon you. Therefore, we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Hebrews 13:5

God, of your goodness, give me yourself, for you are
enough for me.

Julian of
Norwich

All plenty which is not my God is poverty to me.

St. Augustine



**Outward Contentment:
Limit Your Possessions & Purchases**

There are two ways to get enough: one is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less.

GK Chesterton



De-Owning

Minimalizing Our Home & Clothing

- **Start with Vision**

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- **Set a limit for a simple, reasonable lifestyle**

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- **Start with Vision**
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- **Move from idea to action:**
 1. **Start small and easy**
 2. **Touch everything & ask discernment questions**
 3. **Sort into piles - giveaway, sell, recycle/trash, wait, keep**
 4. **Get rid of duplicates & collections**
 5. **Watch out for “I may use this someday”**
 6. **Seek out help & accountability**



Discerning Purchases

Richard Foster on making wise purchases:

- Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status
- Quality of life > Quantity of life
- Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you
- Enjoy things without owning them
- Look with skepticism at all buy now, pay later schemes (I.e. Credit card debt)
- Reject anything that breeds oppression of others
- Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the kingdom of God
- Know the difference between significant and self-indulgent travel
- Develop the habit of homemade celebrations

Questions to Ask:

- Does this add value?
- Am I purchasing this for its usefulness?
- How long do I plan to have this?
- Will the quality of this product enable it to be long lasting?
- Is this purchase connected to an addiction/undisciplined craving?
- Can I enjoy this without owning it?
- Could I rent/borrow/buy second hand?
- Could someone else share this with me?
- Is this purchase breeding the oppression of others?
- Does this purchase honor the resources of our planet?
- Is this distracting me from seeking God first?

**As for apparel, I buy the most lasting and, in general,
the plainest I can.**

John Wesley



GENEROSITY



Financial Promiscuity

Give to everyone who asks you, and from one who takes your things, don't ask for them back. Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them.

Luke 6:30-31

We must live in the kingdom of God in such a way that it provokes questions for which the gospel is the only answer.

Leslie Newbigin



Radical Class Distinction



**This week's practice:
Contentment & Generosity**

Now the one sown among the thorns—this is one who hears the word, but the worries of this age and the seduction of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Matthew 13:22