

Simplicity Worksheet

The goal of this worksheet is to give us guidance to live within our limits. The practice of simplicity is the embrace of intentional limitations for the sake of what matters most: the love of, and from, God and others. One of God's gifts to us is that we are human and limited. This gives us the freedom to not have all things, be all things, do all things, and know all things. On the other side of embracing limitations is contentment. "There are two ways to get enough. One is to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less" (*G.K. Chesterton*).

The way that we do this is by creating audits that reveal to us the reality of our possessions, money, time, etc. The reason we take this step is because "as life becomes more outwardly simple, it becomes more inwardly rich" (*Jan Johnson*).

Before you begin any "audit"

1. **Pray.** Spend time in a simple prayer to God. Ask God to expose current realities, to give grace where we have put too much emphasis on possessions or money, and to give freedom where we are attached to things we should let go.
2. **Remember the goal.** Remember the "point of simplicity is not efficiency, increased productivity or even living a healthier, more relaxed life. The point is making space for treasuring God's own self (Mt 6:19-21)." We must align our lives, time, money, and possessions with the life God has called us to more than the life the world has called us to.
3. **Release shame.** Before any of the audits, be prepared to notice things you might not have before. Revelation of our spending habits, possessions, or time can bring shame. We must be ready to face reality without shame. Before stepping in, release any shame to the grace of Jesus.
4. **Remove Comparison.** Part of the problem is our cultural norm of comparing to those around us. Remember that this is not about what you have in comparison to those around you. It is mostly about the love of God and those whom God has put around you.
5. **Be open to what is revealed.** We all have habits that need to be exposed. Be ready for them to be revealed and permit yourself to accept your current reality as it is. Jesus' love is not found on the other side of any of these practices. It is found here and now.
6. **Give yourself grace and patience.** This practice will take much time to initiate. Give yourself plenty of time. Give yourself 9 months // a year // two-years to simplify.
7. **Beware of distractions.** One of the main temptations that will come up is to distract from what must be done to simplify. This is hard work, but on the other side is the experience of contentment in Jesus.
8. **There is nothing to prove and no one to impress.** Remember that this practice is not here for you to prove anything to God or others. Rather it is to open yourself up to Jesus' invitation to a life of contentment.

Values

The way that we spend our money, time, and attention tells us a lot about what we value. As followers of Jesus what we need to do is to name our values, desires, and what matters most and then take the intentional effort and time to align our lives with those values. As we look at simplifying our lives, we must do so around our values. Take time to answer these questions to get a picture of where our attention and resources should be aimed.

- *What is My Ultimate Purpose?*
- *Who Matters Most in My Life?*
- *Who Do I Want to Impact with My Time?*
- *How is My Current Vocation Impacting Others?*
- *What Will Matter in the End?*
- *What/Who is Right in Front of Me?*
- *What Lies from the World Am I Believing?*
- *What is Jesus inviting Me Into?*
- *Write a List of Family/Persona/Couple Values.*

AUDIT: POSSESSIONS + STUFF

Step 1: Pick somewhere to start.

- Pick a room in your apartment or house. // Start with your car. // Start with a closet. // Start with a drawer.

Step 2: Analyze ALL your stuff in your starting place.

- Take it all out and place it somewhere. // Write everything down somewhere. // Take everything out one at a time.

Step 3: Place the contents in five piles.

1. Keep
 - a. *If you keep it, find a designated home for it.*
2. Give away
 - a. *Think of a person or a family in need or someone else that can use it.*
3. Sell
 - a. *Decide how you could use the money to not buy more stuff. Save the money, pay off debt, or give the money away.*
4. Throw away/Recycle
 - a. *There will be many things you end up just throwing away. Beware of justifying keeping things just because you do not want to throw them away or “waste” them.*
5. Wait
 - a. *Create a rule around waiting. Find a place to put these things and put a reminder to check on them at a certain time. When you check on these items, if you have not needed them, reconsider one of the other options. If you often used it or needed it then find a home for it.*

Step 4: Celebrate Progress

- Take before and after pictures. This is a great way of seeing progress.
- Spend some time in the room or environment that has been simplified.
- Spend time praying and thanking God for the contentment found in him.

Common Areas of Difficulty:

- **Organizing over Simplifying.** There will be a big temptation to organize your stuff rather than simplify it. Organizing often leads to the accrual of more things. More baskets, boxes, and storage units.
- **Clothes.** Try to think of your clothes objectively. We can have emotional attachments to clothes and feel a need to express our identity through what we wear. We can also feel the need to have some type of outfit for every occasion that we can think of. Experiment with different ways of limiting clothing.
- **Papers.** Papers are very hard to go through and we all have many papers around our homes. Consider digitizing your papers on Google Drive.
- **Collections.** What to do with your collections is a decision you must make. Through prayer you must decide if your collections match with your values, goals, and mission.
- **Memories attached to possessions.** Some of the hardest stuff to part with are those things that we have memories with. The toys our son used to play with. The old possessions of our grandma that is no longer with us. The possessions that remind us of an old life or what could have been. We must go in with awareness that we are going to have these things and with prayer make a decision that aligns with our vision and values.

AUDIT: MONEY

Step 1: Set a time to do a Money Audit

- This is a good idea, but a better practice. The only way for this to go from idea to reality is with intentionality. Set a time and commit to following through.

Step 2: Name any lies that you are tempted to believe.

- Money is a touchy subject. We can believe that our identity is tied to how much we make. We can feel shame and guilt around money. We can be afraid by looking at our spending. Name these and bring them to the Lord.

Step 3: Display all your current money realities.

- Put on display everything that currently exists. How much money do you make? How much money do you typically spend a month? What is everything you spend money on? How much debt do you have? What investments have you made?

Step 4: Create a Budget that matches your values.

- Reflect on your Values before you look at your budget.
- Get out a calculator and your pay stubs and a place to organize your budget.
 - a. Two great systems are “[Everydollar](#)” and “[Financial Worksheet](#)” from the book ‘Free’”
- Pray and decide how much money you will designate for giving each paycheck.
- Do everything you can to live under your means – and continue to find ways for your money to match your values.

Step 5: Build a system for accountability.

- Commit to your budget for a set time. (*ex: 30 days, 2 months, etc.*)
- Share your budget with a friend, roommate, spouse, or somebody you trust to hold you to your commitment. A level of accountability to both how you intend to spend your money, and how you actually spend your money is very wise and helpful.
- Adjust as necessary along the way.
- Set a time to do a money audit (*annually, semi-annually, etc.*)

AUDIT: TIME | OBLIGATIONS | MEDIA

Step 1: Take an honest look at how you use your time.

- Attached is a schedule. Fill out what your typical week looks like. Be as honest as possible.
- Make sure to write down your amount of sleep. Don't forget to include things like eating, driving, etc.

Step 2: Take an honest look at your media use.

- Use the Screentime app to see how much time you spend on social media apps or your phone. Also, look back to see how much time you spend watching television. *(Reminder: None of this is to build shame but to bring to our attention our use of time)*

Step 3: Look at your schedule with fresh eyes.

- Every yes is a no to something else and every no is an opportunity to say yes to something else. We all have limited time, obligations, and choices to make. Look at your weeks ahead with a few things in mind.
 - 1. Some obligations are not optional, like work. Make sure that there are disciplines like time with the Lord and time with key people, like family, that also make the 'not optional list'.
 - 2. Make sure you know the obligations you want to commit to. Keep this in your mind because committing to these will mean saying no to other desires.
 - 3. Make an intentional decision to set a media limit. Set a limit on media usage *(ex: 4 hours a week, 30 min a day, etc.)*
 - 4. Build margin. We are all busy. Set limits in your schedule, like a weekly sabbath.

Step 4: Experiment

- There is no one-size-fits-all schedule. We are all in different seasons of life. Some of us have newborns, some of us have college assignments, some of us have grandkids, some of us have new jobs, some of us have extra work to pay off debt, etc.
 - Embrace the life that is right in front of you.
- Try whatever works for you in this season with a few things in mind
 - Prioritize relationships.
 - Prioritize the way of Jesus.
 - Limit Media.
 - Create Margin.
 - Align with values.

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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