

Breathe

Module: INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Lesson 5: SIMPLICITY

Objectives:

- Students will discuss the things they need to be happy.
- Students will evaluate how we prioritize and value things.
- Students will discover how we can still make God a priority even though these things make us happy.

Materials Needed

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Pens, Markers, Pencil Crayons, Crayons
- ☐ Pieces of paper
- ☐ White board and dry erase marker (optional)
- ☐ Jar of honey

Minds On

Get youth to start thinking about the things they value and desire.

Ask: If you found \$50, and there was no way to find out whose it was or return it to its previous owner, what would you do? What would you do with a free \$50 for you to spend on whatever you like?

Allow some time for students to give you their answers. Help students see if their answers trend towards consumption, such as things to eat or wear, or things to do. After enough answers have been given, discuss these questions:

Would the choices change if the amount changed?

What do you think takes first priority in your life or has a high value?

Do those things come with a price tag or \$ sign?

Action

Take a jar of honey and hand it around your group. Let each student taste a little bit of the honey, perhaps by using a squeezable container and giving out saltine crackers. Then have a student read Proverbs 25:16 and allow your students to discuss what they think of it. Ask them what they think the point of the verse is.

Ask: What do you need to be happy?

Make a list on a white board or chart paper. Be sure to try and build a consensus.

Answers can vary wildly and that's ok. They could be things like food, water, shelter, or even girl/boyfriends, books; anything your students decide are needs they have in order to be happy.

Next have a student read Philippians 4:11-13.

Ask: What kind of things did Jesus need to be happy? Or Paul?

Prompt: Paul has gone back and forth from having plenty, to having very little, to having plenty again, and back to having very little. What does Paul see wrong with having plenty? (Answer: Nothing...). In this proverb then, what is wrong with having honey? (Again... nothing). If you look at the list that we made together, we have actually created a list of needs. Nothing in and of itself is wrong with anything on this list, but just like having too much honey is bad for you, too much of anything can distract us from God. Paul learned to be happy in any situation because he relied on God to make him happy. This is a spiritual discipline called ‘simplicity’ and it’s when we begin to prioritize God over all these things in our lives.

Think/Pair/Share: Have students pair off and discuss: “What obstacles do we face in living a simple life?” Typical answers include: Media pressure, peer pressure, comparing ourselves to others, trying to find happiness and satisfaction and identity.

After a short while have them come back as a group and share some of their thoughts.

Consolidate/Debrief

Ask the group to identify common obstacles to living a simple life. If it doesn’t come up, ask your students if they think sometimes wanting a simpler life is the biggest obstacle.

Prompt: It can be hard to imagine how our lives will change before we really put the change into place, and simplicity can be even harder to imagine because we have so few examples of it in our culture.

Ask your students whether they see any appeal in the spiritual discipline of simplicity.

Prompt: Simplicity can be a helpful discipline for many reasons: saving time, money, and stress, but why do you think it is considered a spiritual discipline? (Allow youth to share their thoughts.) There is a saying that the more stuff you own, the more your stuff

owns you, what do you think of that? Tell a partner. (Again, allow a few moments for conversations.) Simplicity is a spiritual discipline because it protects us from becoming so wrapped up in acquiring or upgrading our belongings that we run out of room in our lives for God.

Breathe In: Matthew 6:20 (which your students will be very familiar with if they took last lesson's challenge of reading this chapter daily!) – says **store up** for yourselves treasures in heaven, but so often we become consumed by collecting treasures on earth that can be broken, worn out, or stolen. Have students reflect, “What do I really treasure?” Encourage them to journal these thoughts.

Breathe Out: Challenge your students to simplify their lives this week by choosing one item per day to donate, recycle, or throw away. The purpose is not to have youth waste their possessions and then need parents to replace them, but to identify belongings that simply fill space in their lives without being useful or loved. Depending on your group, it might be more appropriate to have them choose one item per day to be put away in a box for a week (or a month!)