

The Christian Woman and
Simplicity

Key Verse: To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: (*Ecclesiastes 3:1; KJV*).

Sleep would not come. Restlessly, he turned toward the opening that let in the night breeze. Light filtered through the tiny pin-holes called stars while the moon drifted out from behind the clouds. Solomon walked out onto the small balcony and looked toward the heavens. God was up there somewhere; He had once seemed so near, but it had been a long time since he felt Jehovah's presence. That absence left Solomon a hollow man.

Solomon concluded that all of life was vanity, a chasing after the wind. Toward the end of his life, however, he finally came to terms with the searching, the chasing, that had consumed him. He concluded that the duty of man was to fear God and obey His commands. So, Solomon penned his wise sayings and wrote Ecclesiastes, providing an explanation for all he had discovered.

In Ecclesiastes 3, Solomon declared there is a time for everything. Each event in our life occupies its own time and place and has its own purpose. However, things do not always remain as they should; unplanned events happen, and life just piles up.



Possessions

A two-story house, plus garage, now holds what once fit into a small apartment.

Credit cards now supplement the payday that once covered all expenses and still left some for a movie or a trip to the favorite fast food. The body that was slim and firm now struggles just to keep up with everyday life. Time spent together has become a household where paths cross without even a nod as the day begins. It is time to simplify, to rid our lives of clutter, and return to the purpose Solomon discovered those many years ago.

A time, a place, a season for everything that affects our lives almost demands organization. So, the goal becomes organize to simplify. That is something everyone would like to experience, but it is so hard to accomplish.

How do you organize 20 or 30 years of accumulated “stuff”? Do you buy shelving units and place everything in its place? That works for some of it, but too much still remains. Solomon said in verse 6 of chapter 3 that there is “a time to keep and a time to throw away.” So, get out the trash bags.

Jesus taught in Luke 12:15 that real life is not measured by how much we own. Possessions are not sinful, but greed is. That is why your possessions should have their proper place in your life.

Matthew wrote of Jesus’ teaching that we are not to be concerned about these things, for God knows what we need and He has promised to provide our needs daily, as we live for Him (Matthew 6:31-34).

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Luke 12:15

Exploration and Interaction

Read Ecclesiastes 3 in several different versions. Compare the wording in each version to aid understanding.

What motivates you to accumulate possessions?

Do you have an inordinate desire for possessions?

What steps do you need to take to simplify your possessions?

Reflection

Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount* taught practical living that put all things in their proper place. In Matthew 6:19-34, His focus was on money and possessions. Read these verses and compare your life to Jesus' teaching. Commit to making your life one that honors Christ, putting your treasures under His authority, and trusting Him to supply all you need.

Money

Closely akin to possessions is money. Jesus taught often about money and man's love for it. The bottom line is: you cannot serve God and money at the same time. In fact, Jesus plainly said that in Matthew 6:24. He was drawing a line between serving ourselves and serving Him. Whoever or whatever we serve is our master.

It is easy for focus to shift. Needs once were simple and easily managed. Still, the desire to have, to provide the best life

possible, hangs just out of reach, so credit cards enter the picture to make it happen. The debt may not be the result of desire but due to some unforeseen disaster; regardless, the problem remains. In time, debt spirals out of control, and one card is used to pay the minimum on the others. The financial cliff fast approaches. It is time to organize.

Several financial plans are available, and most work well. One of the most well known is Dave Ramsey's *Financial Peace*. The means used to organize and simplify debt does not matter. The trick is to consistently follow the guidelines as given. In verse 3, Solomon said there is a time to tear down and a time to rebuild. It is time to rebuild.

Exploration and Interaction

Discuss what life lived according to Ecclesiastes 3 would look like. What changes would most people have to make?

Do you think a simplified life is worth the commitment to make it a priority? Explain.

Do you tithe?

Do you have more than one credit card?

Do you have a savings account?

What do you think you need to do to become debt free?

Reflection

God promised to supply all of our needs as we live for Him. Scripture never declares the Lord will give us our wants, the things we desire but do not need to sustain life.

Make a list of your needs. Has God provided those?

Now, make a list of your wants, regardless how trivial they may seem. How much money do you spend each week on securing these “wants”?

These trivial wants provide a good place to start in simplifying your finances.

Health

The pursuit of wealth and possessions drives modern man, often to the detriment of physical and spiritual health. People work long hours, seven days a week, trying to “get ahead.” Relationships with God, family, and friends are kicked to the sideline in the name of providing, of being successful. In the end, the body breaks, and the spirit seeks a place away from the searching of God’s Holy Spirit. The most precious possession

of man, his physical and spiritual health, is gone. Solomon reminded his readers there is a time to kill and a time to heal; there is also a time to be born and a time to die (verses 2-3).

It is obvious that for body and spirit to heal, life must be simplified and that is accomplished through organization. Perspective is reestablished in line with God's Word. Desires to own, to succeed, fall under the authority of the Word of God. God's will becomes the dominant factor in one's life. Economized work schedules allow for healing of body, mind, and spirit. When all things are brought to its place, in time, health is restored. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 139:16: "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." God has granted each person a certain number of days; we determine how each day is lived.

Exploration and Interaction

Keep a journal of your schedule for one week. Record the time spent on your job, with family, hobbies, sports, etc., and time alone with God. How much time have you reserved for God?

Maybe it is time to reorganize your schedule and prioritize. What adjustments do you need to make to simplify your life as it pertains to your health?

Reflection

After Solomon spent a lifetime chasing the wind, pursuing all his heart desired and his mind could imagine, he realized the best life was a simple life with everything in its place and according to its time. That includes God, first and foremost.

Organize to simplify.

About the Author: Dianne Sargent recently retired from Randall House Publications after 15 years in the editorial department. She now resides in Kinston, North Carolina, near her son Brian.