

## HABIT 5: KEEP IT SIMPLE

I want to help you develop the habit of running everything you do, everything you spend, and everything you pursue through a life filter. The filter is a simple one. It involves asking yourself, Does this help me seek God's kingdom first? (See Matthew 6:25.)

Many people have a misconception about the Kingdom of God. They subconsciously believe that when we get saved, we are all waiting around to die so that we can enter heaven and experience the Kingdom of God. No, we are not waiting around to get into the Kingdom of God; God is actively trying to get the Kingdom of God into us now. The more we live in His Kingdom, the more we will desire of it.

Remember: Whatever you eat consistently will be what you crave consistently. Jesus said to "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). Richard Foster said, "The person who does not seek the kingdom first doesn't seek it at all."<sup>3</sup> When we run our decisions through that filter first, it helps us keep God first.

This habit, admittedly, will be one of the hardest ones. It goes against everything our culture tells us. The world we live in says, "Do what you want, buy what you want, and pursue every dream that you have." Jesus came with a very different message of "Resist your flesh, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and take up your cross." One seeks the kingdom of me; the other seeks the Kingdom of God. One leaves us empty at night; the other leaves us full. The kingdom of me will leave us horribly let down. The Kingdom of God will leave us completely and utterly satisfied.

### **This habit covers three areas:**

Everything we do (time)

Everything we spend (money)

Everything we pursue (dream)

#### **1. Everything we do**

If you want to see where a person's heart is, look at how they spend their time. Maybe you spend ten hours a day at work, and are thinking to yourself, Well that's not fair! I have to go to work. Absolutely. Bills have to be paid, I get it.

What I'm talking about is not what you absolutely have to do, but what you get to do. How do you spend your free time? Do you spend the time outside of work on things that are going to last eternally? Do you prioritize godly relationships? Do you prioritize time in God's Word? Do you prioritize rest and worship? Do you prioritize delighting in the Lord? Do you prioritize serving others? Do you prioritize the Kingdom of God?

When adding things to your calendar, start asking yourself, Am I keeping it simple here? Will this time spent be worth it?

#### **2. Everything we spend**

Money is such an interesting thing in our culture. I think Richard Foster sums it up perfectly with this quote: "The modern hero is the poor boy who becomes rich, rather than the rich boy who purposefully becomes poor. We call being covetous ambition." Wow.

Keeping it simple is a habit many Western Christians struggle with because it directly opposes our affluent lifestyle. We buy things like new cars or bigger houses to impress people we don't know instead of buying things that genuinely will make our lives better. Ironically, we buy things we don't need hoping to find fulfillment through them instead of using that same money to be generous to others, which would give us far more fulfillment than the thing we will eventually throw away.

Keeping it simple allows us to have money instead of money having us. Here are a few things to ask yourself regularly that will help you keep it simple:

Have I already tithed and given the Lord what is His?

Am I buying this to make my life better or to be impressive?

Can I actually afford this?

Do I really need the newest version of this?

Would this purchase be good stewardship of what God has given me?

Is there something that I could do with this money that makes more sense?

Do I need it now?

Is there something I could give away?

### **3. Everything we pursue**

We've already talked about the resource of time and how valuable it is. But it's not just what we do that matters eternally, it's what we think about. What dreams do you find yourself thinking about over and over again? What goals do you have for yourself and your family? Everyone has goals. Whether they've ever been written down or said out loud doesn't matter. We are all pursuing something. What is it that you are pursuing with your life? Is it worth chasing?

I know a man who spent time in prayer every day for fifty years. He would daily ask God to show him which dreams he needed to drop and which ones he needed to pick up. He told me when he started that daily prayer, his dreams looked much different from what they look like now. Fifty years ago he had hopes for a big piece of property with a massive ranch house. He was hoping to retire early and take his dream car to car shows with his friends. He had even picked out a little beach house he'd hoped to afford, so he and his wife could play golf half of the year while most of the country was freezing during the winter months.

After half a century of praying, his dreams are totally different. God did give him the piece of property, but he has no desire to retire. God also gave him a ranch house with lots of room for guests. He and his wife have dedicated themselves to the ministry of marriage and pour into people throughout the year in their home. They give away over half of what they make and are filled with immense joy. Notice how many of his dreams did come true when he held them with an open hand and sought the Kingdom of God first! He kept it simple, and it led to being satisfied.

So ask yourself: Will my dream matter in fifty years? Will it help others or just me? Do I like where I'm headed? With each decision, ask yourself: Will this help me or hurt me in seeing Jesus? You can do this. Keep it simple.

## 6 HABIT: FIND A GOOD COACH AND BE SPECIFIC ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS

**Step 1: Ask.** Find a coach who fits the criteria mentioned. Take him or her to coffee, breakfast, or lunch, and offer to pay. Be clear and intentional about what you are asking.

*“I look up to you more than you know. Not just what you do but how you do it. I think I could really learn a lot from you about life in general, but even more than that, I think I could learn a lot from you spiritually. Would you consider discipling me over the next year?”*

**Step 2: Clarify.** Once you’ve found someone who has agreed to disciple you, set up a framework for the discipleship. This step is hugely important. The goal is to find someone to disciple you who knows exactly what you are desiring, and has that same desire to give back to you. Clarity is important!

When and how often will you regularly meet? How can you work together to make sure that the relationship is discipleship and not mentorship? In what areas of their life can you regularly be included? Is there a portion of the Bible you can walk through together? What are some areas of life that you need to work on submitting to the

Lord? What are some areas you need accountability with?

**Step 3: Be Prepared.** Actively learn and be respectful of their time. If you don't have a small notebook, buy one. Bring the notebook and a pen with you every time you get together. Come prepared with thought-out questions. They can be family questions, Bible questions, financial questions, or just general life questions. Never show up to meet with the person discipling you without questions to ask them.

A good mentor is going to have questions for you because he or she cares about you, but don't get it twisted. The point of your time together is not for you to talk about yourself or impress them. The point of the relationship is for you to draw out and take advantage of the wealth of wisdom sitting across the table from you. You should be doing the majority of the listening.

When your questions are answered, take notes. Apply what he or she tells you. When someone sees that the time invested in you is making a difference, that person will want to invest more.

**Step 4: Bless.** Figure out ways you can be a blessing. Your mentor is solving a problem in your life. He or she is helping to solve the problem of a lack of spiritual intimacy. He is helping increase your biblical literacy. She is helping guide you in making good decisions. How can you help them? Is there some way you could make their life easier? You don't have to solve a massive problem for them, but when you actively look for ways to invest back, to show your gratitude by blessing them, you will always be better off for it.

Find a coach and let them coach you like a rookie.  
Give them access to every area of your life and the  
permission to say the hard things that you don't  
always want to hear. Discipleship can be messy.  
But if you'll let this habit become a part of your  
life, you will see the fruit of it for generations to  
come.

Go find a coach.