

# Live to Give

The Christian Rationale  
for Living Simply

*“For even the Son of man came . . . to give”*

– Mark 10:45.

Should Christians live simply? Does it matter? Do the Scriptures give direction for simple living? And just what is “simple living”?

Most of us, especially those of us from Christian backgrounds, have at least some idea that believers ought to live simply. Most of us also know that “living simply” can mean many different things to many different people.

## What Is “Living Simply”?

What does living simply mean? Let’s first consider what it doesn’t mean.

**What it is not.** It doesn't mean "getting back to nature." It's not unusual for people to think that living simply means eating more raw foods and avoiding processed ones, using "natural" methods of healing, canning or preserving one's own foods, "going organic," and those types of things. Those things are not wrong; some of them are good and will be a part of some believers' simple lifestyle. But they do not, of themselves, constitute Christian simplicity.

Nor does Christian simplicity mean doing things the old-fashioned way. Living on a farmette, milking a cow, raising chickens for meat and eggs, doing without some modern conveniences and technologies, and generally trying to live as our great-grandparents did—these things can be part of a simpler way of living. But again, just doing those things does not constitute simple Christian living.

In fact, when believers begin to make those kinds of things too important, they detract from the kind of simple living I'm talking about.

The simple lifestyle I'm talking about can be lived by believers *anywhere*—in the country, in

the city, in the town, in the North, in the South, in the village of a third-world country. Anywhere God calls believers to live and serve Him is a fitting place to live simply.

**The root of simple living: a spiritual commitment.** The simplicity I'm talking about is rooted in a simplicity of commitment—a simplicity of purpose. As believers, we have a nonnegotiable commitment to keep God's greatest commandment—the one that encompasses all others. Jesus said, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (*Mark 12:29, 30*). Further, we know we cannot keep that first and greatest commandment without keeping Number 2: "And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (*v. 31*).

These greatest of all commandments are repeated throughout the Scripture, though in differing words. Consider these:

“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?” (*Deuteronomy 10:12, 13*).

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (*Micah 6:8*).

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (*Ecclesiastes 12:13*).

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (*Matthew 6:33*).

Christian simplicity of life is rooted in a simple spiritual commitment to love God with all our hearts. Jesus used the word *single* to describe the simplicity of that commitment. He said, “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of

darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (*Matthew 6:22-24*). “Singleness of heart” fittingly describes the meaning of *simple* as I am using it in the term *simple spiritual commitment*.

**What it is.** This booklet does not attempt to say exactly *how* to live simply, but tries to give a clearer understanding of what simple Christian living is. But, to begin with, here is a short description: *living simply is a result of allowing our commitment to loving God to affect our lifestyle as we use all that God sends our way to further His cause*. I call it simple living because it involves choosing to use our stuff (our money and our things) much less for ourselves than the average unbeliever around us does. The result of such choices is (at least in North America) a lifestyle that is simpler than our world-focused neighbor’s is.

Defined that way, every sincere believer would have to say, “Yes, that’s for me.” However, living